

Stoneleigh History Society

Minutes of the meeting held on the 21st of May 2024 at 7.30 p.m.

1. Sheila welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. There were 12 apologies, 21 members present and 5 visitors.
3. Notices: a. Sheila congratulated all those involved in organising the 'Blossom' event in Stoneleigh orchard last Saturday. b. On behalf of Phil Jones Sheila informed us that the Stoneleigh Male Voice Choir will be having their 'Summer Serenade' in the walled garden at Stoneleigh Abbey on the 7th of July. (more information available in the Stoneleigh and Ashow News)
4. Sheila introduced the Speaker Tim Clark. Tim is the Church historian at St. Mary's Church in Warwick.
His talk was entitled '**The history of St. Mary's Warwick in 6 people**'.

"You can see the influence of each of the six people in the church today. It's a story of social mobility. The Earls of Warwick were patrons of the church from the 13th to the 15th centuries.

The first individual Tim identified was the second Earl of Warwick, Roger de Newburgh, also known as Roger de Beaumont. He is associated with the Crypt which is the oldest part of the present building. It is unusually large and contains interesting brickwork begging the question about it's use. There is no documentary evidence about it. During the second earls' time there was a dispute with the Bishop of Worcester over who controlled the 'college' in Warwick.

The second person is Guy of Warwick. As to his existence there is doubt but there is mention of him in Wells and Gloucester Cathedrals. The Earls of Beauchamp very much liked to be associated with Guy. The east wall of Warwick Castle was built by Beauchamp and at the same time St. Mary's was also being built. During the Elizabethan period the name of Guy of Warwick was revived by Robert Dudley.

The third person is John of Buckingham. He is believed to have come from quite humble origins, but he rose through the ranks and became a powerful figure in the church and government. He was Canon at St. Mary's but after becoming Bishop of Lincoln in 1362 he resigned from all other offices.

The fourth person was Robert Skyllington. He was a 'master mason' and is credited with being responsible for the tower in the old Coventry Cathedral, John of Gaunts' apartments in Kenilworth Castle and the Chancel at St. Mary's. The vaulted ceiling in the Chancel is unique with it's 'flying' or 'skeleton' ribs. It also has the Beauchamp coat of arms in the roof.

The fifth person is Anne Beauchamp, Countess of Warwick and wife of Neville the 'King Maker'. She is associated with the commissioning of a number of works of art. The first is the Beauchamp Pageant – an illustrated family tree, also known as the Rous Roll after the creator John Rous. The second is the Beauchamp Chapel at St. Mary's which contains very skilled glasswork similar to that found in Eton and Kings but of superior quality. It also contains some of the finest ecclesiastical statuary to be found in this country. It is all original and has not been defaced. It is likely to be the most expensive statuary in England apart from in Westminster Abbey.

The sixth person is Samuel Dunkley. He was a master stonemason and is credited with the rebuilding of St. Mary's along with the Smith brothers. He was another man of humble origins but was hugely respected."

5. Sheila thanked Tim for his presentation and invited questions from the audience. One question was about damage done to St. Mary's during the Reformation and Civil War. Tim felt that this was minimal and may have been due to the power and influence of the Earls of Warwick and also the respect that existed for the extraordinary skill and artistry in evidence within the Church.
6. The meeting broke for refreshment and concluded at 9.15 p.m.
7. The next meeting will be on the 25th of June.

Addendum: Sheila would like to apologise for the poor reproduction of Tim's presentation on screen. This was due to a software compatibility issue. Following the meeting a number of members expressed an interest in visiting St. Mary's. Tim has offered to give the society a guided tour. Contact Sheila if interested.

Sheila would like to let members know that the funeral for Mike Baker will be held at Stoneleigh Church on June the 20th at 12.30.

Sue would like to thank all those who have supplied Christmas Quiz questions. We have 19 so far and more promised. Keep them coming!!

SMC 24/5/22