

Stoneleigh History Society

Minutes of the meeting held on the 23rd of September 2025 at Stoneleigh Village Hall 7.30 pm.

1. Sheila welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were 24 members present and five visitors. Apologies were received from Celia Baly, Maggie Moorhouse, Liz Sykes, Pam Baker, Margaret Wallis, Sue Line and Margaret Brown.
2. Notices:
 - a. The Stoneleigh Male Voice Choir will be performing in Stoneleigh Church on Saturday 18th October at 7 pm. Proceeds to Cancer Research UK.
 - b. The programme for Warwickshire Local History Society is available online. On the 26th of November there will be a visit to Ragley Hall.
 - c. The programme for SHS 2026 is available online. Once more there are a number of member presentations.
3. Sheila and Lisa introduced their topic for the evening:

‘Tales from the Churchyard – stories of Stoneleigh Burials.’

Lisa began by summarising the work of the project to identify and collate information about those people buried in Stoneleigh Churchyard.

The work began 10 years ago and continued the initial study undertaken by Stoneleigh WI.

Derek Robinson has photographed all the headstones while Lisa Reay, Pam Baker, Pete James and Sheila Woolf did the early research. More recently Rob Orland has created a database and added a QR code to make research easier.

Tales from the Churchyard - Stories of Stoneleigh burials...A selection

Some surprising discoveries have recently been made:

Tenant farmers were grouped by area

School teachers were also grouped by area

There are many ‘outside of Stoneleigh’ burials

There are some extraordinary stories coming to light.

Tonight's selection –

1. People connected to the Abbey
2. Notorious stories
3. Eminent people
4. The oldest memorials

1. People connected to the Abbey/ Notorious stories

George Walkerley and *Andrew Gilmore* occupied the same grave. Although they came from different parts of the country and were both stonemasons they both died very young, in their twenties. One died in 1815 the other in 1819 but no explanation as to the cause of their deaths. One theory is that they were victims of the Leigh Peerage scandal.

William Copsey was a personal servant and House Steward to the Leigh family both at the Abbey and their London residence. When he died his will was extensive and apportioned many valuables and money to identified individuals. His name appeared on a hair powder certificate along with other servants at Stoneleigh Abbey. This was paid for by Lady Leigh as one payment, of 1 guinea, was acceptable for a group of servants in one household. It is one of the more obscure sources of information for family historians.

Aimee Delagarde died aged 14 of TB and lived with her grandparents in what is now the Gatehouse at the Abbey.

Jane Savory was rewarded with a silver teapot for helping to repel '31 ruffians' who descended on the Abbey in 1844 while the family was away.

2. Eminent people.

Irene Cremer Smith and *Solomon Charles Kaines Smith*. Although Solomon's name is on the headstone he was not buried in Stoneleigh. He was a prolific author and museum curator. He wrote the original guidebook to Stoneleigh Abbey.

Eleanor Mary Charles. She is buried in the churchyard but not her husband. He was an officer in the merchant marine and was Commodore of RMS Aquitania. He suffered a health emergency while docking his ship and died a few days later.

Sir Charles and Lady Katherine Barratt lived on Beechwood Avenue, Coventry and later in Kenilworth. It's likely that Stoneleigh was their local church. He was involved in the design of the rebuilding of Coventry after WW2. She lived to be 100.

Ancient Graves.

John Cox died in 1680. It has been difficult to find out much about him.

Edward Goddard also died in 1680. He lived at 4, Church Lane and seems to have been relatively wealthy. He had 2 fireplaces in his house and paid the 'hearth tax'.

Joyce Hartley/Hartly died in 1689. She was buried in a large tomb and her family possibly had links to Cryfield and Hamstall Ridware the other Stoneleigh family estate.

Stephen and Ann Wilson were a wealthy couple and held leases on numerous properties including Cryfield Grange and Tocil Farm.

Lisa concluded by saying that research continues and further presentations are likely!

3. The meeting adjourned for refreshments. Thanks to Kate and Phil Jones for their efforts.
4. The next meeting will be on the 28th of October.

NB Please see the attached flyer for Sheila's upcoming talk. All welcome! No booking required.



Sheila Woolf

Jane Austen's
Warwickshire Family

The Court House Ballroom,
Jury Street
10.30am

2025 sees nationwide celebrations marking the 250th anniversary of the birth of one of our greatest writers, Jane Austen. Chawton House in Hampshire will naturally be central to these celebrations, but what of the writer's connection to Warwickshire?

Jane's mother, born Cassandra Leigh, was related to the Leighs of Stoneleigh Abbey. In the summer of 1806 Jane, her sister Cassandra and their mother stayed at Stoneleigh Abbey and made a variety of visits in the county. Examining the background of the Warwickshire family provides intriguing possibilities that Jane was deeply influenced by their stories in her writing: inheritance tangles, forbidden marriages and economic disputes all feature in her mother's family's life as well as in Jane's novels.

Join **Sheila Woolf** to discover new ways to view the novels through a Warwickshire looking glass.

