

Stoneleigh History Society

Minutes of the meeting held on the 28th of October 2025 at Stoneleigh Village Hall 7.30 pm.

1. There were 24 members present and 6 visitors. Apologies were received from Sheila Woolf, Pam Baker, Margaret Wallis, Quentin Compton Bishop, Kate and Phil Jones, Jane Taylor and Joe Ball
 - A. Notices: Lisa welcomed everyone by saying that she felt honoured to be chairing the meeting with Sheila being away. She hoped Sheila was enjoying some sunshine in the Lake District and having a relaxing time after her busy October, which started off with a very successful talk about Jane Austen and her connections with Stoneleigh at the Warwick Words History Festival. Then yesterday Sheila appeared on Bargain Hunt, not as a contestant, but as the expert they have on the programme. The programme was filmed over Easter at Stoneleigh Abbey, and the BBC had asked her to talk about Cordelia and her diaries. [Bargain Hunt - Series 72: Stoneleigh 10 - BBC iPlayer](#)
 - B. Our November meeting on Tuesday 25th will be the first “out of house” talk since January! Following a recommendation from Peter Thompson we are welcoming Chris Kirby of the Royal Fusiliers Museum in Warwick to tell us about Hannah Snell, an 18th C woman who disguised herself as a man and fought in the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745. Please come and support the meeting.
 - C. The 2026 programme has been finalised and is on the Society’s website. Again, most talks will be by members. Many thanks to all those have agreed to participate.
 - D. The website continues to be updated - [Stoneleigh History Society](#)
 - E. The VE Day 80 display in the Leigh Chapel will be taken down after Remembrance Day. If you haven’t yet seen it, or taken family to do so, please go along before you miss it.
 - F. The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust have asked for copies of all our booklets for their archive, which is rather an honour! Sheila has taken them over to Stratford.
 - G. Sarah gave members early notice of the Christmas Quiz and Social which will be held on the 16th of December. Drinks, food from M&S and the Quiz will be provided for the amazing price of £4. Sarah and Sue have organised the evening and Sarah will be collecting the £4 from members at the November meeting. All agreed that it was enjoyable last year so let’s make it even better this year.
 - H. Sarah asked for members to bring their diaries to the November meeting so that she can organise the Refreshment Rota for 2026.
2. Lisa introduced the Speaker for the evening:
Sue Crofts, who talked about ‘**North Lodge, Deer Park, Stoneleigh**’.
Sue began by asking if anyone in the audience had a family connection to North Lodge or other lodges on the Stoneleigh estate. Lisa said she and her family had briefly rented in 2007. Paul Cadden and Angie from Deer Keeper’s Lodge were visitors for the evening. Shirley Ball was present and after having grown up in Stoneleigh she knew residents of North Lodge and had kept in contact with one family that moved to the US.
Sue then went on to place the talk in context by explaining that neither she nor her husband Bill had any previous connection with Stoneleigh before moving here in 2011.

Bill is a true 'Coventry kid' having been born and raised in the City. Sue was born in Leicester, but her parents moved to Coventry when she was a baby.

They found themselves at North Lodge in October 2011 after a house sale fell through in the north of Warwickshire.

Despite a very bad condition report given by the surveyor they decided to go ahead due to the lack of close neighbours and the large garden. They accepted that it 'was a project' but at the time never realised how much of a project it was going to be.

Sue showed slides of architects drawings of North Lodge originating from the 1820s and 1830s. North Lodge was one of a number of lodges built to control entry to the Stoneleigh Deer Park and estate. Close to North Lodge was London Lodge, Beehive Lodge and Deer Keeper's Lodge. Other lodges such as Rocky Lane, Mary Lodge and East Lodge were closer to the Abbey. All are still inhabited today although unfortunately East Lodge is now sandwiched between the entrance to Stoneleigh Park and HS2!

After having lived in modern houses in Coventry Sue and Bill knew nothing about the restrictions of living in a Listed Building and the trials and tribulations of the planning application process.

In 2012 they began to tackle the internal problems with the house such as the old heating system, rising damp and woodworm. By 2015 they turned to the wood framed double glazing and the crumbling stonework. They had countless meetings with the planning officer about possible window replacements as well as conducting lengthy research into window makers and stonemasons.

By early 2018 planning approval was granted and in the summer work began to replace stonework which had been removed in the early 1990s and install windows which looked as close as possible to the originals.

As the months went by other projects were added such as a new garage and shed as well as repairs to the 'soakaway', part of the septic tank which is housed in the woodland the other side of Coventry Road.

Sue joined the Stoneleigh History Society in 2012 and began to learn about the history of Stoneleigh and the people who had lived and worked on the estate. Having researched her own and Bill's family history, she decided to find out about the families who had lived at North Lodge. Sheila Woolf and Lisa Reay helped along the way by forwarding useful bits of information and photographs.

Using Census data and the electoral rolls she has been able to piece together information showing families who have lived at North Lodge from 1841 to the present day.

In the 19th century and up to the mid 20th century, North Lodge was made up of two cottages and was inhabited by workers from the Stoneleigh estate. In the 19th century the physical condition of the lodges was carefully maintained to a good standard and families were moved about the lodges and cottages as their family circumstances changed. The Leigh family appears to have taken good care of their buildings and tenants.

Sue chose three families to illustrate this good care, by describing in more detail how the Jeacock family, the Aris family and Mrs Beesley were looked after.

Jeacock families

According to the 1841 Census Samuel Jeacock and his family lived at North Lodge, his relative Robert lived at East Lodge and over a 40 year period the families were moved from lodge to lodge according to need. In 1881 an elderly Ann Ward (Jeacock) and her niece Mary Ann Jeacock were living at No.2 North Lodge with occupations listed as Lodge Gate Keeper and Assistant.

Aris families

The Aris family lived in Middleton Cheney, near Banbury. In 1898, Alice Maud Aris was unmarried but had a child, Ernest. She was 17 and due to a Leigh family connection, Alice was found a place in service in Leamington and Ernest was placed in foster care with a local widow near Banbury. In 1902 Alice married Alfred Chattaway, a Stoneleigh man, and by the time of the 1911 Census Alice and Alfred had 2 children of their own and Ernest was living in Stoneleigh as part of the family.

He became a godson of Cordelia Leigh. From information which Sheila has recently discovered, Cordelia gave Ernest a lot of help in passing the entrance tests to join the Royal Navy. She corresponded with him and supported him as she did other Stoneleigh young men during the First World War.

While based at Rosyth, in Fife Ernest married a local girl Margaret Bird Copeland, and they had 2 children. After deciding to sign up for the Royal Australian Navy in 1924, Ernest left the UK.

Margaret, with a third child on the way, moved south to Stoneleigh. She was given housing in the village and eventually placed at North Lodge where she remained until 1942. She had a 4th child in 1931 and after Ernest got to hear about it he divorced her. Following the death of her middle child John, in 1942 she left Stoneleigh and moved to the US with her other children.

Sue talked about Gordon the third Aris child. Despite living in Akron, Ohio for most of his life he had fond memories of Stoneleigh. He sent a couple of pencil drawings and two handwritten notes to Ken Harrison a former owner of North Lodge as well as providing a hand drawn map of Stoneleigh for the Millenium copy of the Stoneleigh and Ashow News. Sue read from the letters, in which he referred to his family as 'the poor of the village'. They provided a useful insight into life at North Lodge in the 1920's and 1930's.

Mrs Harriet Beesley

Harriet was married to a Stoneleigh estate worker who was killed in an accident in 1939. She had one son James; they lived at the Kennels. Sometime later, in 1940 she had another son Arthur. Eventually Harriet, James and Arthur moved to North Lodge. From the Electoral Roll we know that Harriet was at North Lodge from 1949 until 1961. She was a cleaner at the village school for over 15 years and according to local people loved gardening. Stoneleigh villagers were used to walking across the Deer Park and talked fondly of visiting Mrs Beesley's garden to look at the primroses. Arthur was a bright boy being the first Stoneleigh pupil to gain a scholarship to Leamington College for boys. He later gained a degree from Manchester University.

In the early 1960s Harriet and Arthur moved to 17, Birmingham Road and later Harriet to the old Almshouse.

Sue concluded by saying that the stories of the Aris and Beesley families demonstrate a recognition by the Leigh family of the need to support children, wives and widows in times of trouble.

3. Lisa thanked Sue for her presentation and invited questions from the audience. Janice made the point that a lot of people were out of work after 1918 and it led to an increase in emigration. Sue replied that on the *SS Moreton Bay* which left the UK in 1924 were 60 British sailors, including Ernest Aris, who had all signed up for the Royal Australian Navy.
4. The meeting adjourned for refreshments. Thanks to Sarah Ballinger and Margaret Brown.
5. A special thanks also to Joe Ball, who despite his recent fall and stay in hospital, opened up the hall for us early so we could get everything set up for the meeting.
6. The next meeting will be on the 25th of November.

SMC 28.10.25