

Minutes of the meeting held on the 23rd of June 2026 at 7.30 pm in Stoneleigh Village Hall

N.B. Due to the excessive heat, refreshments were served at the start of the meeting.

1. Apologies: Pam Baker, Bruce and Ruth Oliver, Maggie Moorhouse, Barry Nutter, Celia Baly and Pam Long. There were 18 members present and 1 visitor.
2. Notices: None
3. Sheila and Lisa began their presentation :

‘Tales from the Churchyard Stories of Stoneleigh burials – Part Two’

The presentation relates to St. Mary’s churchyard, Stoneleigh and has been divided into several different sections beginning with:

Interesting people – Lisa began the presentation by talking about:

Derwent Ratcliffe

He came from an important local family, and who along with his family had an interesting war service. (Connections to the new almshouses too.) For more detailed information about Derwent see page 4 of this document.

Sheila told us more about:

Hilda Chattaway.

Born in the early 20th century, Hilda came from a well-known Stoneleigh family and was related to Ernest Aris. As a young girl she went to work in London and shortly after left the UK for Canada. She remained there for the rest of her life working as a school chef in Oakville , Ontario. She was well loved in the area and at her funeral service there were over 250 people present. In her will though, she asked that her body be brought back to Stoneleigh for burial.

Further information about [Hilda](#) can be accessed via the Stoneleigh History Society website.

Sheila told us more about:

Charles Heath

He was an 18th century park keeper on the Stoneleigh estate. He and his family lived at Park Farm in Stareton.

His family are very proud of their links to Charles, particularly having in their possession a gold waistcoat which Charles wore to his wedding in 1755. Sheila showed a recent picture of a great grandson wearing the waistcoat. He was approximately 8 or 9 which shows how much smaller people were centuries ago.

Charles’ tombstone is very difficult to read but the one of his son Ralph , made of slate, is much clearer.

Further information about [Charles](#) and [Ralph](#) can be accessed via the SHS website.

Sheila told us more about:

People from afar –

Cyril Goult and his wife **Eva** have a headstone which features a Tudor rose. This is due to their origins being in Yorkshire and Lancashire. The couple were married in Jerusalem as Cyril was a member of the Palestinian Police Force. They lived in Palestine for many years but after WW2 they returned to the UK. Their daughter **Helena Catherine** was born in Jerusalem in 1937 and on return to the UK went to Lyng Hall Girl's Comprehensive School in Coventry. She later taught at Binley Park Comprehensive School also in Coventry.

Her gravestone is also in the churchyard under the name **Helena Catherine Ranson**.

NB As a pupil at Binley Park, Helena was my personal tutor and also the staff member attached to the school senior hockey team. I was Captain of the team and got to know her very well. I treasure an official school photo of the team with Helena beaming proudly.

When I secured a place at Teacher Training College she bought me an Asterix the Gaul book and wrote a lovely inscription inside. She was a truly lovely person. I also knew her husband Stewart who was in the year above me at school. Sue Crofts (nee Evans)

For further details of [Cyril](#), [Eva](#) and [Helena](#) access the SHS website.

Lisa continued the theme of *people from afar* by telling us about:

Alphons Garcia - An American Pole

Tadeusz Horko - A Polish freedom fighter

Adolf Mirecki - Probably an Austrian Jew who escaped Nazi Germany.

Albino (Ben) Trincas - An Italian prisoner of War

Much more information about these 4 individuals can be found from page of this document.

Graves or inscriptions which were of interest-

Teachers and children:

Jane Gray and **Hugh Holbeche**.

Jane Anne Gray was the daughter of a Stoneleigh schoolmaster in the 1840s. She died very young as did Hugh Holbeche who was the son of a Stoneleigh schoolmaster, George Holbeche in the 1870s.

Again, more information available on the [SHS website](#).

Sheila updated us with more information about:

Rev. James Wentworth Leigh and family – wife **Frances**, daughter **Alice** and son **Pierce**

As we know from Sheila's previous presentations on the Leigh family , Frances Leigh (nee Butler) was from Georgia. She and James travelled back and forth from their plantation in Georgia to England over a period of 10 years. Recent research by Sheila has uncovered a stained glass window in Hereford Cathedral which contains a commemoration to Frances.

This fits in well with what we know about James' official posts within the Church of England.

The headstone to the family can be found to the rear of the church. Their children Alice and Pierce are also buried in the churchyard.

Once more, additional information available on the [SHS website](#).

Example of a crumpled monument:

Audrey Cecilia Leigh

Audrey was the daughter of Edward Chandos Leigh and died after being an invalid for some time in 1923. Her memorial was a very attractive angel statue which has recently toppled over. More details about [Audrey](#) and a photograph of the statue can be found on the SHS website.

Vicars –

Lisa told us more about two former Vicars of Stoneleigh:

Canon John Thomas Thorn and the Rev. Cyril John Noble Page

The latter requested a simple cross on his grave "in memory of the nameless dead, all those who have no stone to mark their resting place"

Unfortunately, his simple cross is not in good condition, and the top part of the cross has now fallen off.

4. The meeting concluded at 9 p.m. Thanks to Sarah Ballinger and Margaret Brown for providing the refreshments.
5. The next meeting of the SHS will be the trip to the Museum of Bygones at Marton . This will be on Tuesday the 11th of August at 2pm.
6. The next regular meeting will be on Tuesday the 22nd of September at 7.30 pm.

Stoneleigh Churchyard Talk 23 June 2026

Captain Derwent William Ratliff (1 Dec 1882 - 1 Jul 1963)

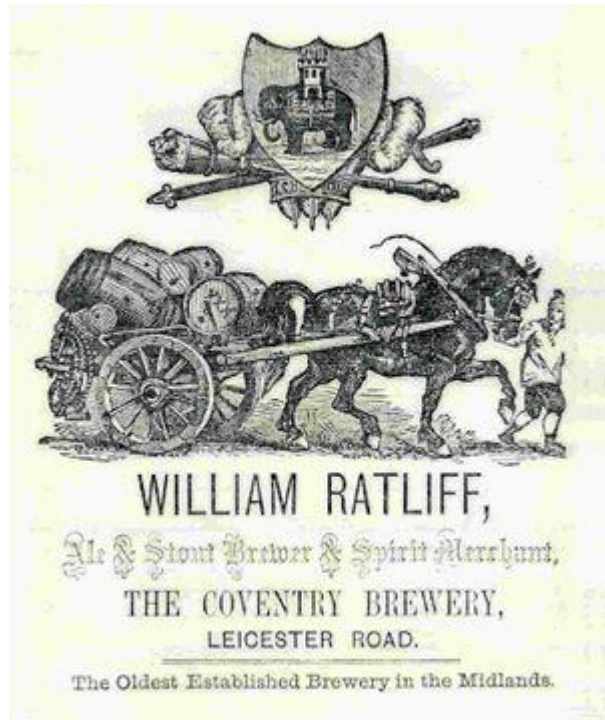
The Ratliff family were prominent Coventry ribbon manufacturers in the nineteenth century His great-grandfather, Cleophas Ratliff, served as the fifth Mayor of Coventry in 1839.

Derwent's grandfather, William Ratliff, owned the Coventry Brewery Company until 1890 when it is sold to Phillips and Marriott Ltd. William was reportedly among England's wealthiest men at the time of his death in 1898, leaving £125,832 equivalent of £14.5 million today.

Arthur, Derwent's father, was one of eight children. He and his three younger brothers—Henry, George and Frank—played for Coventry Rugby Football Club, and Henry captained the team in 1874, when his brothers were also in the side.

Arthur married Ethel Mavoureen Murray in Coventry on 17th April 1879 and had two daughters and a son, Derwent being the youngest born in December 1882.

In June 1885, when Derwent was two, the family moved first to Canada and then to New York. They appear to have left for Canada after Arthur had been ostracised by his family, as Ethel later testified in their divorce proceedings in a Chicago court in December 1891, she stated that Arthur, was one of the best educated men in England, but was finally cast off by his family. She went on to say "I remained with him, however, and went to Canada, where we stayed for a short time, but he could not break off his drinking habits. We went to New York, and there he lost several good positions because of intoxication." The divorce was granted. In February of the following year, Ethel married Baron Alfred de Turckheim in Illinois and later returned to



England with him and her children. Arthur remained in America, remarried in 1900, and died in 1922.

By 1897, Derwent was being educated at St Paul's School in Barnes, London and in June 1900 he entered the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. Ten years later in 1910 he married Dorothy Murray Pearson in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. By 1911, the couple had settled at Raleigh House in Claygate, Surrey, where Derwent served as chief engineer and manager of a motor car company.

Derwent served in the First World War with the Royal Field Artillery as a second lieutenant. He sustained a gunshot wound to his right leg, which was amputated at Queen Alexandra's Military Hospital, Millbank, London, on 25 May 1917, a year after the Battle of the Somme. After his injury he was promoted to the rank of captain.



*The Birches, Hagley, Stourbridge.
A Grade II listed Georgian home set within 19.64 acres.*

After the war, Derwent did not return to Surrey, where he had begun married life and raised his two young daughters Peggy and Nancy. He was to live in The Birches, Hagley, Stourbridge, where Dorothy and their daughters had moved to after the outbreak of the war to stay with her widowed father.

It is known that Derwent and his family were still at The Birches at the start of 1921 however by the time the census was taken in June, they had moved to Stareton. He became secretary and director of Phillips and Marriott Ltd, the Midlands brewery that had acquired his grandfather's company in 1890. In 1924, Phillips and Marriott Ltd. were taken over by Bass, Ratcliff and Gretton and Derwent became district manager and remained with the company until retiring in 1954, after 30 years' service.

Derwent spent most of the Second World War in Coventry, serving as Chief Civil Defence Warden and taking part in every air raid on the city. He was

appointed M.B.E. in 1943 in recognition of this service and served as vice-chairman of the Coventry Savings Committee.

Derwent was widowed in 1943. After the war, he returned to Stareton, although it is unclear how long he remained there before moving to Capethorne on Fieldgate Lane, Kenilworth. It is possible that he moved there in 1945 following the death of his Aunt Jessie, to care for another aunt, Margaret, who was blind.



After Margaret's death in 1951, he may have moved to Crackley Crescent, where he remained until his death on 1 July 1963. His funeral was held at Canley Crematorium on 5 July, and his ashes were interred in the family plot.



Dorothy and Derwent with one of their grandchildren

Dorothy Murray Ratliff (née Pearson)

7 Apr 1887 - 28 Jan 1943

Dorothy was born in Handsworth, Birmingham. She was the daughter of Joseph Frederick Pearson, an ironworks owner from Wolverhampton, and Margaret Maria Pearson (née Murray).



New Almshouses designed by Dorothy's grandfather; James Murray

Through her mother, Dorothy was the granddaughter of James Murray, the architect responsible for designing the Coventry School of Art and Stoneleigh's new almshouses.

As discussed Dorothy married Derwent in October 1910 and then lived in Surrey before moving to Hagley, Stourbridge and then in 1921 moved to Stareton House, Stareton with Derwent and their two daughters. Their third daughter Angela was born the following year on 1st April 1922 and baptised at Stoneleigh on 4th June.



Stareton House, Stareton.

Dorothy's life was cut short when she died at Stareton House on 28 January 1943, aged 55.

Their Daughters

Peggy Murray Ratliff trained as a nurse and joined the British Red Cross Hospital Welfare Service in 1940 before being posted to the Far East.

Like Derwent, she was appointed M.B.E., receiving the honour on 12 July 1947 for her service with the British Red Cross Society in Southeast Asia. As second-in-command to Lady Edwina Mountbatten, she reached Singapore just three hours after the Japanese surrender. Her work repatriating prisoners of war also earned her the Red Cross Distinguished War Service Medal and the Burma Star.



Nancy returned to Stareton House, where she had lived with her parents before marrying Paul Glover in 1938, to be with her family for the birth of her daughter, Wendy, in 1940. At the time, Paul was serving in France with the 7th Royal Warwickshire Regiment as part of the British Expeditionary Force. Their son, Simon, was born in 1942, and the family stayed at Stareton until the war ended in 1945, when they returned to their marital home in Kenilworth.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, 18-year-old **Angela** volunteered for the ATS and was posted to Bletchley Park, where she worked on enemy wireless transmissions. There she met Edward Gawne, an Oxford academic involved in codebreaking, whom she married at St Mary's Church, Stoneleigh, in 1946.

Together, these achievements reflect the Ratliff family's exceptional commitment to service during the war years, with each member contributing in significant ways at home and abroad.

Alfons Jan Garscia was born in Wyoming, Pennsylvania, on 20 November 1907, the son of Jan Garscia and Mary (née Augusxy-Nowicz).

Jan Garscia was born on 11 January 1874 in Brody, Austria. At the age of 16, Jan travelled alone to the United States, arriving in Pennsylvania on 12 January 1890. On 5 June 1893, Jan enlisted in the 9th Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Army. He served for seven years, rising to the rank of Corporal — a notable achievement for a young immigrant.

Jan married Mary Augusxy-Nowicz by licence on 4 February 1904 in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Their son, Alfons Jan, was born on 20 November 1907 in Wyoming, Pennsylvania.

When Alfons was just eighteen months old, his father—serving as a police officer—was shot and killed by a fellow officer on 23 February 1909 during an attempt to arrest a resisting suspect. Following Jan's death, the U.S. Consulate classified Mary as a hardship case, and the police force helped with necessities such as food and clothing.

In the 1910 U.S. Census, Mary appears as a dressmaker, though this work may not have provided sufficient income. It is also possible that she wished

to return to her family in Warsaw. On 26 June 1911, Mary and her young son left Pennsylvania for Warsaw, then part of the Russian Empire. By 1916, after the family had settled in Gdańsk, Alfons was recorded as an American citizen at the U.S. Consulate there.

The circumstances of Alfons's later move to England remain unknown. However, by 11 November 1948, he was a British national living in Derby with his wife Lucja, whom he had married in Warsaw in May 1936. Their marriage ended in May 1955.

Alfons married again in the first quarter of 1958, this time to Isabel Betty Bennett (née Redfern) in Surrey. He died the following year, on 13 September 1959, at the Manor Hospital, Nuneaton, after a car accident just outside the town. Although he died in Warwickshire, his home address remained 17 Kingston Street, Derby.

Professionally, Alfons worked as an electronics engineer at Rolls-Royce, where in the mid-1950s he developed new apparatus and improved existing equipment. Several of these innovations were later patented.

Despite living in Derby at the time of his death, Alfons was buried in Stoneleigh. The reason for this choice is not definitively known, but the most plausible explanation is that Isabel's parents lived in Finham.

Isabel Betty Garscia (née Redfern)

was born in Hayfield, Derbyshire, on 17 December 1913, the daughter of Percy and Edith Redfern. She worked as a shorthand typist and married accountant Herbert Samuel Tison Bennett in 1940. They had two sons, Oliver (1943) and Christopher (1947), before Herbert died in 1949. In 1958, Isabel married Alfonso Jan Garscia, who died in a car accident the following year. An active member of Amnesty International, Isabel lived in Leamington later in life and died at home on 3 December 2014 and was buried on what would have been her 101st birthday.



Malcolm Pridmore and family

Malcolm Kenneth Pridmore served as Mayor of Coventry during 1914–1915.

Edith was Malcolm's wife. They were only married 6 months before she died in 1929.

Sheila Patterson was Edith's daughter from her first marriage. Her father, Thomas Caffyn, died when she was just two years old, and after her mother married Malcom she took her stepfather's name and became Sheila Caffyn Pridmore. Sheila became a noted social anthropologist and author on race relations and immigration in Britain.

Anne Clarissa Patterson was the daughter of Sheila and her second husband Bruce Patterson. She was born in Johannesburg in 1954 but sadly died in Surrey in 1974 just after her 22nd birthday. There was a private family funeral before her ashes were interred on 5 March 1974.



A sundial commemorates the five members of the Pridmore family and serves as their memorial.

Further information about this family and others can be found on our website

www.stoneleighhistorysociety.org.uk

Tadeusz Horko (1 June 1913 – 11 December 1976) was a Polish soldier, journalist, editor, and advocate of Polish–British relations. Born in Silesia, to Waldimir and Aniela Maria Horko. He grew up with three younger siblings: Krystyna, Andrzej, and Maciej. Krystyna later became a literary translator, while both brothers served in the Grey Ranks resistance movement during the Second World War and were killed during the Warsaw Uprising.

Wartime Service

At the outbreak of war in 1939, Tadeusz escaped occupied Poland through Romania and reached France, where he joined the Independent Podhale Rifle Brigade. He distinguished himself during the Norwegian campaign and was awarded the Cross of Valour for his service at Narvik. Following the fall of France in 1940, he relocated to Britain.

Journalism and Editorial Career

In 1941, Tadeusz founded and became editor of *Soldiers Daily*, a newspaper serving Polish servicemen in Britain. The publication later merged into *Polish Daily*, which became the principal daily newspaper of Britain's Polish community. Recognised as an energetic and effective editor, Tadeusz expanded the paper's correspondent network and increased circulation to between 28,500 and 31,500 copies before resigning following a dispute with the publisher.

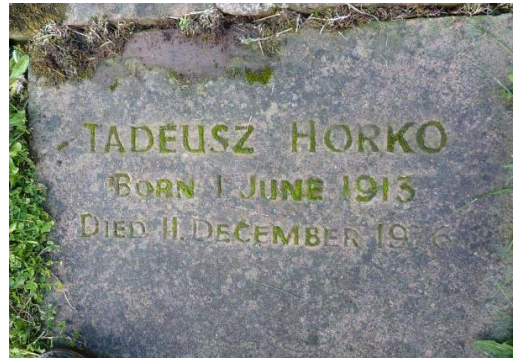
From 1959 to 1960, he edited *Kurier Polski*. He subsequently became director of European correspondents for a Foreign News Service. In 1971, he joined the editorial board of *Nowy Dziennik* in New York and also worked as a freelance contributor to the Polish Service of Radio Free Europe.

Family and Later Life

Tadeusz married twice. In 1944, he married Ingrid Georke in Kensington, London. Their daughter, Krystyna, was born in 1948. The marriage ended in divorce in the early 1950s.

On 7 May 1955, he married Sheila Caffyn Pridmore in Paddington, London. He became a British citizen on 22 September 1960, at which time his address was recorded as Hove, Sussex.

There is no evidence that Tadeusz ever lived in Stoneleigh or was buried there. At the time of his death on 11 December 1976, he was residing at his home in Hove, near Brighton. His name appears on the family headstone in Warsaw alongside other members of his family, and he is also commemorated in Stoneleigh.



Tadeusz was devoted to Britain and its way of life and had many British friends. Yet he remained a committed Polish patriot and worked hard to strengthen ties between Polish and British people.

Adolf Mirecki (1909–1967) was born in Brody, Austria, on 17 April 1909. Before World War II, he owned a furniture store in Hamburg but fled Nazi Germany because of his background, eventually reaching London, reportedly by clinging to the under carriage of a train. After a brief internment as an "enemy alien," he moved to Coventry to work for SS Cars Ltd. He later co-founded Tubular Furnishings with a business partner, Fink, and went on to establish a manufacturing business in Exhall. Between 1953 and 1957, the company became well known for its *Shuresta* folding prams and pushchairs before being acquired by Lines Brothers (Tri-ang Toys) in the early 1960s. Adolf married Mary Catherine Winifred Coulborn in 1952, and they had three children: Michael, Anna, and Daniel. The family lived in Coventry and in 1966 moved to Leamington Spa. He died in January 1967 at the age of 57.



Mary Catherine Winifred Mirecki (1923–2017) was born on 18 May 1923 in Birmingham, the daughter of dentist William Henry Joseph Coulborn and Alice Kathleen (née Lawless). She lived with her parents until marrying Adolf in 1952. Widowed at a young age, she later lived in Alveston near Stratford-upon-Avon and, by the time of her death on 26 July 2017, was residing in Guildford, Surrey. She died aged 94 and is buried beside her husband.



Albino Stefano Francesco Trincas (1920 – 2000), known locally in Stoneleigh as Ben, was born on 1 March 1920 in Sardinia, Italy, the son of Giuseppe Trincas and Grazia Trincas (née Zucca).

It is believed that Ben came to Stoneleigh during the Second World War as an Italian prisoner of war and was held at Stoneleigh Camp. Like many Italian prisoners brought to Britain after the North African campaigns, he would have been employed in agricultural and estate work to help address wartime labour shortages. Across Britain, Italian prisoners were often regarded as low security risks and, particularly after Italy's surrender in 1943, many developed strong ties with the local communities in which they worked. Some, including Ben, chose to remain in Britain after the war rather than return to Italy.

Following the war, Ben settled in Stoneleigh and, in 1954, married Diana Smith. They had a son and a daughter. The family lived at The Kennels on the grounds of Stoneleigh Abbey, where Ben worked as a handyman for the Leigh family

In October 1970, at the age of 50, he became a British citizen. He continued to work on the estate for many years and is thought to have moved after retirement to 15 Birmingham Road, one of four houses built for former Stoneleigh Estate employees.

Ben died on 17 August 2000, aged 80, and was buried in Stoneleigh on 24 August 2000.



John Thomas Thorn (1830 – 1906) was born on 17 September 1830 at Barrow, Shropshire, the eldest child of John Thorn and Penelope Jane Thorn, née Onions. He was educated at Christ Church, Oxford, and was ordained in 1855.

On 1 June 1858 he married Emily Frances Baxter at Stourbridge.

By 1861 Thorn was serving as a clergyman at Inverkip in Renfrewshire, Scotland. In the 1871 census he was recorded as Rector of Ashow, Warwickshire. Following the departure of the Hon. Rev. James Wentworth Leigh, he became Vicar of Stoneleigh in the autumn of 1873, a position he held for the remainder of his life. His wife Emily died in 1879 at the age of forty-four, from gout in head and is buried in Stoneleigh.



Emily Thorn's headstone
D26.24

In 1889 he was appointed Honorary Canon of Worcester. Canon Thorn died on 24 May 1906 and was buried at Stoneleigh on 28 May.

The headmaster, William Wells, wrote in the school logbook that:

From the time that Canon Thorn first came to Stoneleigh in the autumn of 1873 until the present week he has taken an active interest in everything connected with the school and its work. The earlier records show that he took no small part in the teaching, secular as well as religious. Since I have been Master, for a number of years he took a class regularly for several mornings a week in religious instruction, but in later years the Vicar took examinations only, at frequent intervals. For the school's success in the Prize Scheme Examinations teachers and scholars are much indebted to him for his valuable help. His kindness, sympathy and support will ever endear him to our memory; his whole character was a noble example to us all.



During his thirty-three years at Stoneleigh, Thorn devoted himself to both the spiritual and social welfare of the parish. Although naturally shy, he became one of the village's most respected figures. He took a particular interest in Stoneleigh School and served as president of the village club, secretary of the Friendly Society, and trustee of Sotherne's Charity. Beyond the parish, his most significant work was with the Warneford Hospital at Leamington, where his efforts helped ensure that the institution was exceptionally well equipped for a hospital of its size. He served as Vice-President and was

Chairman of the Committee from 1887 until 1906.

His memory was honoured in several ways. In December 1906, the Warneford Hospital unveiled a stained-glass window dedicated to him, depicting St John the Evangelist and Apostle. A brass plaque beneath it bore the inscription:

“This window was erected to the glory of God by the Committee of the Hospital, and in loving memory of the Rev. J. T. Thorn, M.A., Vicar of Stoneleigh, honorary canon of Worcester, the Vice-President of this Hospital, and Chairman of the Committee from 1887–1906.”

A marble memorial tablet was also erected inside Stoneleigh Church at the entrance to the pulpit from which he had preached for thirty-three years. Paid for by his parishioners as a token of their affection and esteem, it was



Stained glass window dedicated to Canon John Thorn after his death in 1906. Once in Warneford Hospital now in the chapel at Warwick Hospital.

dedicated on Sunday, 11 August 1907, by his successor, the Rev. Cyril John Noble Page.

Cyril John Noble Page 1867 – 1910

Cyril John Noble Page the youngest child of William and Julia Page's six children, was educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Oxford. He was ordained in 1894, and served as Curate of Bicester until 1906, when he became Vicar of Stoneleigh. Unmarried, he died at his mother's house in Kensington on 28 February 1910 following an operation for appendicitis when his heart failed.

The school log-book entry, written by Headmaster Wells, recorded:

His death is a great grief to us all. During his short time of office here - about three and a half years - he has endeared himself to children and teachers alike. He was one of the kindest and most courteous of men. He took the keenest personal interest in the school, in children, staff and fabric, work and recreation, particularly in the religious teaching, the building and equipment, prizes, play & school treats. Anything conducive to the comfort or happiness of the children had his heartiest support, and in return, the children loved him. By his death we lose a good pastor, a sincere friend, a boon companion.

He was buried at Stoneleigh on 5 March, when a conversation was recalled during which Reverend Page had said "**When I die, I don't want a stone to mark my grave; but what I should like, would be a churchyard cross in memory of the nameless dead, all those who have no stone to mark their resting place.**"

