

Stapleford History Society Annual Report 2023-4

The Society continues to thrive and attendances have picked up again since Covid with a good number of guests at our meetings. We held our AGM in July and welcomed two new members onto the committee but we are still looking for new committee members to replace those who started the Society 10 years ago. We are grateful to members who are not on the committee but help with other tasks: Lesley Ford who designs and prints the posters, Jane Steadman who writes the reports and others who help set up the hall.

We are grateful for the hard work that Miranda Fyfe has put into reorganising the website, uploading all this year's talks and making it easier to find particular items. The archive continues to be a source of information for people tracing their family history and the history of the village and, from time to time, we do have families visiting to trace their family history. At present it is stored in The Granary but the room will be re-developed in April so it will be moving to the Verger's Cottage by kind permission of the Vicar.

We have had a very varied programme of talks this year starting with a talk about the types of windmill found in Cambridgeshire and their construction with particular reference to the Stapleford windmill. In July Evelyn Lord came and gave a talk based on her book *The Cambridge Plague*. Gill Shapland talked about her findings when she delved into the Ely Quarter Sessions with the intriguing title *Bastardy, Bigamy Brawling and Brothels*.

The talk in December was a bit different. Chip Colquhoun is a story teller and didn't need any visual aids. *How Cambridge made England* was a fascinating talk about important events after the departure of the Romans: the arrival of the the Angles and Saxons whose names devolved into England and English the wars with the Norsemen, later called Vikings and the eventual victory by Cnut who defeated the seven separate Anglo Saxon kingdoms to become the first King of England.

In January Helen Harwood returned to give a fascinating talk about *Country Life, How the rural poor lived in the 1800s* with tales of life in Shelford and Stapleford. Overcrowding, poor diet, hard work lasting 10 hours a day, poor sanitation and diseases made for a hard life for the working classes. In March Alison Giles brought a number of artefacts for us to examine when she talked about the Whipple and Museum of Science.

In addition to the regular talks we have had some social/work sessions in Cox's Close. In November members and non members brought photos and stories of how they celebrated the Coronation of King Charles 111 while In December we visited the Christmas Tree festival in the church and the vicar gave a short history of the church and showed us some early ledgers and documents. At another meeting in Cox's Close 16 people turned up to help us sort through David Pepperell's huge collection of photographs, newspaper cuttings and articles to be added to the archive. In April everyone in the village will be invited to share their memories of the Covid pandemic and how it affected people in the village and these will be added to the archive so that future generations will know what happened here in Stapleford.

Keith Dixon
April 2024