

Quantock u3a Local History Group – Stogursey History Walk 15th August 2022

While we feared searing heat, on the day being caught in a thunderstorm was of greater concern! Twenty-three of us met Chris Sidaway at Stogursey Church – “the Cathedral of the Quantocks”.

Chris has a long connection with the area, and I attach his portfolio of interests and talks – let me know if there are any that strike you as of particular interest and we could book him again. He was an extremely able and enjoyable speaker and walk leader so it would be a pleasure to book him again.

He led us from the Church through the village with some insights on the vernacular architecture in the village, through the village square, down to St Andrew’s Well and then on to the Castle remains.

The first drops of rain fell as we finished up – and I think/ hope most of us escaped a drenching (I did get soaked cycling home!).

It was a comprehensive and fascinating talk and walk and I managed to capture a few random bits and bobs. Sadly, Chris has not yet managed to publish any of his research, so until he does this will have to suffice. I also took some pictures as aide memoires.



Background to the settlement/ area:

- Pixie mound at Hinckley Roman excavation replaced grave goods with coins – long pre-history of settlement and re-settlement.
- Stogursey was not the backwater it is today, but a key nexus between the Severn, Parrot and inland.
- Etymology Stockade (livestock) or stoke also holy place with a spring. Spring by church
- 2nd lord de Cursi (Norman) added name
- 1st lord Falaise knew William The Conq, same village in Normandy
- Fortified Somerset v Harolds sons went to Ireland, Godwins held land on Quantocks.

St Andrews Church:

- Alien priory because Abbey of Longlay took all proceeds
- Masonry similar to Durham
- Saxon style doorway and herringbone detail...was there a saxon building here?

This Table is sacred to the Memory, Of *ST THOMAS WROTH Bar^{ts}*,
 Late of *PETHERTON PARK* in the County of *SOMERSET*;
 Who by his own inherent Virtue, Added Dignity to the Honour derived From a very ancient Lineage;
 Who served his Country many Years in Parliament, With uncorrupted Fidelity;
 As Representative for the Town of *BRIDGEWATER*, the City of *WELLS*, & County of *SOMERSET*
 And in the Seasons of Retirement from Publick Business, Cheer'd and enliven'd his Neighbourhood
 With the Generous Spirit of Ancient English Hospitality.
 He was a Tender Father, a constant, obliging Husband, A perfectly Humane, & Honest Man
 At length having passed well through the Honours & Employments of this Life,
 He was advanced to the Rewards of a better,
 He dyed the 25th of June 1721 Aged 46.
 Buried at *NEWTON* in the Parish of *PETHERTON*,

- Notable monuments Lady Gass, Thomas Wroth
- Priory only bit left is dove cot, bits in priory farmhouse. Benedictine
- John Verney preached in English!
- Pews introduced in 16th c. Protestants veered to preaching versus festivities of mass
- Led to introduction of church houses as churches became more restricted in purpose
- Church houses (good example in Crowcombe): Often 2 stories. Downstairs bakery and brewhouse and upstairs church hall
- Outcome of church ales was encroaching on the funds raised...brawls, pregnancies
- Sanctuary ring is in a pillar on the crossing, rather than on door. Protection only lasted 40 days, then find nearest sea and walk in until picked up by a passing boat
- Acland family restored it
- Fossil in side chapel floor



Village architecture and layout:

- Vernacular 2 hall houses 15th c late 16 c



- Change from town to village...old buildings gentrification in 18th c



- Village cross: Stogursey at Domesday worth more than Nether, Over Stowey and Bridgwater
- Market place: 4 times size today cattle market infilled over time by shops and inns – an incremental encroachment
- 1225 Stogursey became a borough...but soon recused as too much cost and effort to return MPs
- Stump of original market cross on corner of St Andrew's Road...church crosses residual from bishop churches when if no church would preach from cross. Methodists tried to bring this practice back. Market crosses had tiers which allowed vendors to lay out wares around the cross
- Road known as The Portway...maybe indicate route to market, rather than harbour...
- The City that never was...book on Stogursey? Question from Roger Cuff – a very cursory google did not immediately bring anything relevant to light
- Hans Schwarz local artist lived in house on corner of St Andrew's Well alley. Came to England on kinder transport, graphic designer illustrator London and Stogursey based. Work is shown in a local gallery – Sandra – can you provide more info?





The Well:

St Andrews wells first mentioned 1473, one is soft water one hard.

More village:



- Little medieval single light for a spiral or newal stair in one of houses on St Andrew's Road



- Coaching inn (The Acland Hotel as was, now HMO) has brick gutter...very rare

- Comwich and Bridgwater have claypits where tile were made
- Hayward was someone in charge of harvest, one of top reeves amongst serfs.
- The peasants hated dovecots because doves ate peasants foodcrops



- Pawlett bell on alms houses is rung for certain services



The village dog-pound as was.

Castle and Water Mill

- Both currently owned by the Landmark Trust – Castle let for holidays, Mill as a long term tenancy
- Castle...norman motte and bailey, predates bridge at Bridgwater. Main route via a ford across Parrott
- Herepaths (army road) built for war, probably based on roman road. Saxon foundation of network which included Stogursey
- Cottage built into castle 17th c
- 1970s hippy squat
- Landmark trust investigation. Motte and bailey, followed by tower on motte. 17th c mill on site of norman mill. Moat and leat engineered at similar time.



- Loss of town status linked to change in representation, or just declined



Other links:

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/som/vol6/pp130-136>

https://www.somersetheritage.org.uk/downloads/eus/Somerset_EUS_Stogursey.pdf