

MANORIAL HERITAGE REGISTRY HISTORICAL RECORD EXTRACT

MHR-M-0003063 • MANOR
Stoke St. Michael

Evidence status: Unverified
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Location: Somerset
Associated places: Somerset

LORDSHIP / TITLE ASSOCIATIONS

- Lordship of the Manor of Stoke St Michael | Associated | 926 | Provisional

ABOUT THE MANOR

This Manor lies four miles north-east of Shepton Mallet and seven miles west of Frome, on the north-east side of the Mendips, amid the pleasant valleys of those hills.

The Lordship is divided into four tythings: Stoke Bottom, East End, West End, and Fish Pond. The

earliest reference we have to Stoke St Michael, or Stockland, is 926 when a widow, Uffa, gave the village of Stoke, taxed at five hides, to Glastonbury who held it as thegnland. The grant was confirmed by King Athelstan who reserved the right to call the monks to the fyrd and murage and pontage.

The Lordship had passed out of Glastonbury by the time the Domesday Survey was taken in 1086, for two Thegns held it in the reign of Edward the Confessor together with Algar (Exon Domesday, 356 a).

It was held by Willaume Mohun of the King in 1086 and was worth £4 10s then, compared with 60s. In

1066, clearly a prosperous Manor and an interesting comparison with Nottinghamshire, north of Trent

being wasted by the Normans in the 1070s after the rebellion of the Earls.

William was a noted follower of the Conqueror and for bringing 47 armed knights to Hastings was

rewarded with 55 Lordships in Somerset alone and the Barony of Dunster. His grandson, also William,

supported the Empress Matilda, last legitimate heir of King Henry I, whose husband, Geoffrey the

Handsome Count of Anjou, pressed her claim to the English Throne against King Stephen from 1135. For

this support, William de Mohun Lord of Dunster, was deprived of Stoke St Michael and his other

Manors by Stephen, though it is said to have been created Earl of Dorset by the Empress (so styled by

her) widowhood to the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund.
Stoke St Michael was restored to him in 1154-5 when Matilda's son ascended the Throne as Henry II
and the Lordship was granted to the Priory of Bruton which William founded sometime before his death
in 1165. Stockland remained in his house until the Dissolution of Henry VIII and seems to have
remained in the Crown Manor has remained in the family ever since. In the person of Henry
they were
raised to a Baronetcy by George III in 1801 and Sir Edward Strachey (or Strachey), Treasurer
of the
Royal Household, was raised to the Barony of Strachey in 1911 by King George V.
The Peerage became extinct in 1973 and the family is now represented by Lord O'Hagan MEP.
THE LORDSHIP of Stoke St Michael, also known as Stoke Lane, lies in the eponymously named
parish,
four miles from Shepton Mallet. The area is noted for its woods and deep valleys and there
have been
extensive quarrying works for many centuries which have left a number of large caves, most
notably
Stoke Lane Slocker and Fairy Cave.
The Lordship of the Manor of Stoke St Michael is ancient and can be traced back to the year
926 when
it was recorded as belonging to a widow, described as a very venerable woman. She is
noted as
granting the estate, which consisted of five hides, to the monks of Glastonbury Abbey, who
then held
it as thaneland and were granted a number of immunities for service. These included
attendance in
the army during war and the repair of castles and bridges. It seems as though the monks
continued to
hold the Lordship until the Norman Invasion but it was held by a Norman. When William the
Conqueror
commissioned his great survey of England, Domesday Book, in 1086, Stoke St Michael was found
to be
in the possession of the Count of Mortain, the half-brother of William the Conqueror. His
elder
brother was the infamous warrior, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux and the Earl of Kent. In early 1066,
Mortain
had been present at the council at Lillebonne, which had planned the Norman Conquest. He
personally
contributed 120 ships to the invasion fleet according to the chronicler Wace, but severe
doubt has
been cast on this by later historians, as such a number would have been enormous at the
time. After
the Conquest, he was left to defend Lindsey, Lincolnshire, against the Danes in 1069. He was
present
at William's death bed, pleading the case for Odo, later joining the Bishop in armed
support of

Robert Curthose against the Conqueror's second son William Rufus, the new King of England. In June 1088, he yielded to William. Mortain was said to have received the largest English possessions of any of the Conqueror's followers, estimated at more than 790 Manors, many of them, like Stoke St Michael, in southern England. The descent of the Lordship after Mortain is obscure. It appears that at some point it became the property of the Percy family who seem to have held it until the 15th century, but there are few details about whether this was the senior northern branch of the family who were Earls of Northumberland or, as is perhaps more likely, a southern cadet branch. The Manor was reported to be part of the family estate in 1488, along with the Manors of Downhead, Week and Staple. In 1588 Stoke St Michael was in the possession of Sir Thomas Kitson whose forbears had probably received it as a grant from the Crown. He was born in 1540, the son of a wealthy merchant of the same name. The family lived at Hengrave Hall in Suffolk, but had amassed estates in several counties. Sir Thomas made an excellent marriage to Elizabeth, the daughter of Sir Thomas Cornwallis, in 1560 and this brought him a considerable dower. As a wealthy young man he was free to indulge in his passions for art and money, and he became a leading patron of the arts in England. He was not especially influential on a national level and his Catholicism kept him from public office during the reign of Elizabeth (1558-1603). He was drawn to the circle around Thomas Howard, the 4th Duke of Norfolk and was therefore implicated in the Duke's plot to marry Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1569. He was arrested with Norfolk and questioned by the Privy Council about his knowledge of the plan. His association seems fairly obscure, but when the interrogation touched matters of religion, Kitson answered that he did not receive the Communion these 4 or 5 years but sometimes came to sermons with the Lord Chief Justice. He eventually submitted: I am rightly resolved, without any scrupulous conceit to repair to such service, both myself and my family, as by your Majesty's proceedings is now in use. He effectively gave up his religion and resistance, and was rewarded with a knighthood in 1578. By this time he was fully established in favour and received the Queen at his home: where, in very deed, the fare and banquet did so exceed a number of other places, that it is worthy the

mention. A

show representing the fairies, as well as might be, was there seen, in the which show a rich jewel

was presented to the Queen s Highness. Kitson prospered thereafter as a landowner and died in 1603.

The descent of the Lordship after this time is again obscure. Kitson s estates eventually passed

to his daughter, Margery, who was married to Thomas Darcy, Lord Darcy of Chiche, but it is not clear

whether ownership of Stoke St Michael survived this descent. By 1760 Stoke St Michael was in the

possession of Thomas Horner who had the estate surveyed in that year, when it was referred to as

Stoke Lane. Horner was the owner of Mells Park in the county and had inherited his estates in 1758

from his father, John. He lived until 1804 but by this time the Lordship seems to have been sold to

the Knatchbull family. During the 1850s the Lord of the Manor was William Knatchbull who soon

afterwards sold it to the Strachey family of Sutton Court. This family held it for the next century

until it was inherited by its present owner, Lord O Hagan, in 1973. The parish covers some 2,100

acres (approx 800 h).

Rights, customs and incidentsThe grant was confirmed by King Athelstan who reserved the right to

call the monks to the fyrd and murage and pontage.

Catalogue sourceLot #23 of Manorial Holdings Auction - December 1989Lot #3 of Manorial Auctioneers

November 2007

Associated manorial documents / archive referencesCourt Rolls 1490-1596 W Suffolk ROAccounts 1494-1540, 1566-1602Survey temp Eliz I Herts ROSurvey 1783 Somerset Record OfficeCourt Roll 1601Grants and Surrenders 1558-1603

Source notesCatalogue transcribed by the Lord of Finchingfield - a friend to learning | ((1989

Catalogue Begins)) | ((2007 Catalogue Begins))

OWNERSHIP / HOLDER ACCOUNT

Historical holder / succession informationPriory of Bruton1154|1165 • granted_to •

historical_holder_or_transfereeSource wording: Stoke St Michael was restored to him in 1154-5 when

Matilda s son ascended the Throne as Henry II and the Lordship was granted to the Priory of Bruton

which William founded sometime before his death in 1165.Knatchbull family1804 • sold_to • historical_holder_or_transfereeSource wording: He lived until 1804 but by this time the

Lordship

seems to have been sold to the Knatchbull family.

CONVEYANCE / DESCENT

- 1154|1165 | Priory of Bruton | granted_to | | Lot #23 of Manorial Holdings Auction - December 1989 | Lot #3 of Manorial Auctioneers November 2007
- 1804 | Knatchbull family | sold_to | | Lot #23 of Manorial Holdings Auction - December 1989 | Lot #3 of Manorial Auctioneers November 2007
- 1588 | Sir Thomas Kitson | | Manor Property |
- 1760 | Thomas Horner | estate survey | Manor Property |
- 1850 - 1859 | William Knatchbull | sale | Manor And Title |

RECORDED RIGHTS

- Fyrd service: The 926 grant to Glastonbury was confirmed by King Athelstan with reservation of the right to call the monks to the fyrd.
- Murage: The 926 grant to Glastonbury was confirmed with a reservation concerning murage.
- Pontage: The 926 grant to Glastonbury was confirmed with a reservation concerning pontage.
- Repair of castles and bridges: The supplied record describes the associated immunities and service obligations as including repair of castles and bridges.

DISCLAIMER

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