

CHAPTER ONE

FROM SAXON TIMES

STOKE POGES

THE DOMESDAY BOOK

THE HASTINGS AND THE TUDORS

STROKE POGES

The land that makes up the estate we call Stoke Park has been the most important landholding in Stoke Poges for the past 1,000 years. What was the origin of the name, Stoke Park, and the village of Stoke Poges?

I am grateful to the research carried out by local historian Lionel Rigby, for his notes on Stoke Poges which appear in his book, *Stoke Poges, a Buckinghamshire village through 1,000 years*.

According to Rigby, the earliest known owner of the manor of Stoke and Ditton was Siret the Saxon, vassal of King Harold. After the Norman Conquest at the end of the 11th century, Siret was turned out of the manor and William Fitz-Ansculf from Picardy was granted tenancy of Stoches Ditton. This was not his only tenancy, as he was also lord of fifteen other manors in Buckinghamshire, twelve in Berkshire and 68 elsewhere. His principal seat was at Dudley in the Midlands. His daughter, Beatrice, married Fulc Pagnall and



The illegitimate son of Duke Robert I of Normandy, William the Conqueror's claim to the English throne was based on his assertion that in 1051 Edward the Confessor, a distant cousin, had promised him the throne. He was supported by Emperor Henry VI and the Pope. He invaded England in September 1066, defeated King Harold and was crowned at Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day. He consolidated his conquest with strategic castle-building and the creation of 'honours'. He put in hand the Domesday Survey which was completed in 1086.

this family held Stoches Ditton until the end of the 12th century, when Hawse Pagnall married John de Somerie. The Somerie family then held it for eight generations until 1322. According to Rigby, the last reference to the lordship was in 1438.

Fitz-Ansculf's tenant, Walter, was named in the Domesday Book of 1086, as follows:

Walter also holds STROKE (Poges) from William.

It answers for 10 hides. Land for 10 ploughs; in lordship 2.

10 villages with 3 smallholders have 6 ploughs;

a further 2 possible.

4 slaves; 1 mill at 4s; woodland, 500 pigs

Total value £5; when acquired £3; before 1066 £6.

Sired, Earl Harold, held this manor; he could sell.

A Freeman, Tubbi's man, held 1 hide of this land, he could sell.

A hide was a measurement used for tax purposes and was the amount of land a single family was deemed to need to support itself. The acreage varied but it usually measured between 100 and 120 acres. It was a heavily wooded area and provided enough acorns to feed 500 pigs.

The village population was about 70, made up of ten villagers (the upper class), three smallholders (the lower class), and four bondmen or slaves, plus wives, relatives and children.

Walter's descendants, who were tenants of the manor from 1086 to 1291, took the name of de Stoke, or Stoches in the Domesday Book. The word *stoke* comes from the Anglo-Saxon, meaning 'the place'. There are many Stokes through-



Son of King John, Henry III was only nine when he became King. Many of his nobles, led by Simon de Montfort, were unruly, and Henry was forced to fight them. He defeated them at the Battle of Evesham, in which de Montfort was killed.

out England, and the name was probably given to the most important house in the area.

At the beginning of the 12th century, Hugh de Stoke and his wife joined with Aluredus (Alfred), the priest of Stoke, to make over the church and tithes of Stoke and Ditton for all time to the Priory of St Mary Overy in Southwark. In the 13th century Richard de Stoke held the manor, and by the middle of that century Humbert or Imbert de Pogeis or Pugeys had custody of Stoke as guardian of Amicia de Stoke. Imbert Pogeis had come to England in 1236 with Eleanor of Provence when she married Henry III. Imbert became steward of King Henry III's household between 1257 and 1262. The family probably took their name from the village of Poges on the Normandy coast, near where the Black Prince fought the Battle of Crécy.

THE DOMESDAY BOOK

In 1813 the owner of what was then called the Mansion House (the present Stoke Park Club) and the Manor House wrote what he called AN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT of Stoke Poges. It is, for us, an extremely valuable document. Inter alia, he wrote:

STOKE POGES, is a village in the hundred of Stoke and deanery of Burnham, about four miles North West of Windsor [note – no mention of Slough]; the manor and mansion house of which belong to JOHN PENN, Esq. This place received its present appellation from the intermarriage of the heiress DE STOKE with the family DE POGEYS, in the reign of Edward the first. As the descent of this lordship has never been fully and regularly drawn out, and as the place itself has been notable in different periods of our domestic history, the following extracts have been carefully made from Dugdale and from authentic documents; comprising an uninterrupted historical and chronological account of its descent, from the reign of King Edward I, to the present time, to which is subjoined a list of successive possessors.

From his account, and in modern English, we can follow the ownership of the estate.

After the victory at Hastings in 1066 William Fitz-Ansculf was given the use of the estate by King William I. In the Domesday Book of 1086 he is listed as holding the manor (one of his many estates) as tenant 'in capita' (direct from the Crown). Prior to this, it was owned by Siret, the vassal (servant) of the Saxon King Harold.

Ansculf's descendants called themselves de Stoke, and later they purchased the estate from the Crown. In c. 1120 Hugh de Stoke is registered as owner of the estate, and following Richard de Stokes' death in 1262, Humbert de Pogeys (Pugeys) became guardian of his daughter, Amicia.

Humbert's son, Sir Robert, a knight of the county for Edward I, married Amicia in 1291. Their marriage also gave the village its current name, Stoke Poges. The manor had been called 'Stoke Ditton' until 1322, and appears as such in the Domesday Book.

It was their granddaughter, Gille (de Poges), who married the Treasurer to King Edward III, Sir John de Molyns, in 1331. In the same year he inherited the estate and obtained a royal licence to fortify the manor house and enclose three woods. He also rebuilt St Giles' church, creating a boundary around the estate.

Sir John combined the imposing duties of Marshal of the King's Falcons, Supervisor of the Queen's Castles and Treasurer to the eighteen-year-old King Edward III (1312–77) who had ascended the throne in 1327. As treasurer, Sir John had financed the King's claim to the French throne which resulted in the beginning of the Hundred Years War in 1338. This claim was not formally withdrawn until 1802.

Stunning victories at Crécy (1346) and Poitiers (1356), led by the King's eldest son, Edward (1330–76), known to history as the 'Black Prince', gave way to uneasy peace in 1360. The peace had been partly forced by the outbreak of the plague in 1348, which lasted for two years and killed half the population of England.

After failing to raise the required money (£100,000) from Antwerp money-lenders for the King's siege of Tournai in 1340, Sir John was charged with 'failing the King in his extremity' and was thrown into the Tower of London. His lands and goods were seized until his release in 1345. He was arrested again in 1355 and imprisoned at Nottingham Castle, where he later died. However, in 1359 John's son William obtained his father's lands under a settlement upon him for life, from the King.



Henry V, ruling from 1413 to 1422, made a claim on the French throne. In 1415 he captured Harfleur and went on to defeat the French at the Battle of Agincourt. He took full control of Normandy.



Sir John's great-grandson, William, was raised to the peerage. Lord William's son, also called William, was killed in 1429 fighting for Edward III's Lancastrian great-grandson Henry V in the Hundred Years War (which had been partly instigated by his ancestor Sir John), defending a bridge during the siege of Orléans. He was the last of the male de Molines, and so the estate passed to William's son-in-law Robert, Lord Hungerford.

Lord Hungerford (commonly called Lord Moleyns) inherited Stoke Park by reason of marriage to the fifteen-year-old Alianore, daughter of William, Lord Moleyns.

Like his father-in-law he was a man of action, and he fought for the last Lancastrian King, Henry VI, during the final campaigns of the Hundred Years War. In 1453 he was captured by the French at Castillon but was released seven years later after £3,000 was paid in ransom. On his return to England he fought in the Wars of the Roses with the Lancastrians, who were defeated at Towton Fields in 1461. He was beheaded in 1464 when the Yorkists, led by Edward IV, defeated Henry VI at Hexham. Robert's body is buried in the north aisle of the Cathedral Church of Salisbury.

Henry VI succeeded to the thrones of both England and France at the age of one when Henry V and Charles VI of France died within months of each other. He was crowned King of England in 1429 and of France in 1431. Later he lost Normandy to the Dauphin and Joan of Arc, and was faced with civil war in England (the Wars of the Roses). He was eventually put to death in the Tower of London by Edward IV.

THE HASTINGS AND THE TUDORS

Robert's son Thomas was also beheaded in the Tower of London in 1469, on the orders of Edward IV. His daughter Mary married Sir Edward Hastings.

Edward VI took his retribution, and the Stoke Park estate – which had continued by descent since 1086 – was fortified to the Crown to become parcel of the honour of Windsor.

The Hastings, like the Hungerfords, supported the House of Lancaster, and they shared the same fate when Sir Edward Hastings was murdered in 1484 by the command of the Yorkist King Richard III; all his lands were forfeit to the Crown. However, King Henry VII, after overthrowing Richard at Bosworth in 1485, restored to Edward all his family's lands and also the lands of Sir Thomas Hungerford, Knt., his wife Mary's father. Those lands included Stoke Park.

Sir Edward and Mary had one son, George, who inherited Stoke Park in 1506, and one daughter, Anne. George was a faithful servant of Henry VII. He took part in the expedition to France made by the King in 1513, at which time Terouenne and Tournai were restored to the English Crown. George



Edward IV ousted Henry VI and took very personal control of the government, building close relations with the merchant community. A cultured man, he rebuilt St George's Chapel at Windsor, collected illuminated manuscripts (his collection is in the British Library) and patronised the new invention of printing.



Henry VII, founder of the Tudor dynasty, unified the warring factions of the Wars of the Roses. In 1486 he married Elizabeth of York, uniting the Houses of York and Lancaster. A shrewd administrator, when he died in 1509 he passed on a full Treasury to his son, Henry VIII.

advanced to the title of 1st Earl of Huntingdon in 1529 and was one of the peers who subscribed the letter to Pope Clement VII, intimating to him that if he did not comply with King Henry in the business of the divorce between the King and Catherine of Spain, he must expect that they would shake off his supremacy. George was also one of the 26 peers whose judgement condemned Anne Boleyn to the block in 1536. George married Anne, daughter of Henry, Duke of Buckingham, and they had five children, Francis (who succeeded him to his honours), Edward, Thomas, Henry and William. On his death in 1543 he was buried in the chancel of St Giles' church.

Francis Hastings, 2nd Earl of Huntingdon, became General and Commander-in-Chief of the King's Army in 1549. After retiring from the army he spent a considerable time improving the Stoke Park estate. He rebuilt the Stoke Park manor house in 1555. He also built a chapel adjoining St Giles' church, where his mother and father lay buried, with images of them in stone. He placed a vault in the chapel for his brother William, and when he died in 1560 he was buried there with a plate of copper representing his image, in harness, with the garter and a memorial in writing to him in his arms. Francis left the estate to his son Henry.

Henry Hastings, the 3rd Earl, fell upon hard times and had to sell the property in 1581 to the Crown. He was the last person to inherit Stoke Park in a line of descent that had continued for 515 years since 1066, when his ancestors had forced the Saxon prince Siret from his lands.

CHAPTER TWO

FAVOURITES, LAWYERS AND DIFFICULT RELATIONS

QUEEN ELIZABETH I AND SIR CHRISTOPHER HATTON

SIR EDWARD COKE

THE LADY OF BLEEDING HEART YARD