

STOKENHAM OCCASIONAL PAPERS

General Preface

The purpose of these occasional papers is to put on record information collected during a continuing study of Stokenham parish, so that the information remains readily available and does not drop back into obscurity.

In each paper, the document or event which is recorded is supported by sufficient additional information to give it a context and a background.

Each paper deals with a single topic and stands along.

1980

W A Roberts

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QUEEN KATHERINES RENTAL: 1547

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Henry VIII gave Stokenham Manor as a wedding present to Katherine his sixth and final bride. When Henry died in 1547, the Dowager Queen Katherine caused a listing to be made of all the properties in Stokenham, the names of the families who held them and the rent which they were paying. This paper reproduces that picture of Stokenham 450 years ago.

WRECH OF SEA: 1588

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A lord of the manor of Stokenham writes to Queen Elizabeth in 1588 complaining that when a treasure ship, probably from the Spanish Armada, was wrecked on Slapton Sands certain named men of Stokenham raided it and carried away bags of bullion which they had refused to yield up to hi. He asks for redress from the Queen's court.

THURCH CHURCH OF HURDESTOKE; 1198

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A lawsuit at Westminster records a dispute over who was entitled to appoint the parson to the church at Stokenham, then called Hurdestoke.

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Appendix: Rental details for customary holdings

Because of probable interest in the association of Stokenham family names with farms and villages in 1547, the detail of that part of the rental is now listed more fully in this Appendix.

Some abbreviations have been necessary.

' means tenement and implies a holding which includes a dwelling and outbuildings. The land size of the holding is indicated by 'f' or "'f and so on. 'f' means a ferling and that is a very local land measurement of about 30 acres. The ferling, which goes by other names in other parts of Devon and other parts of the country, is an uncertain measurement because it relates to productivity rather than to linear dimensions, having at one time being derived from the land area necessary to support a family. 'w' is widow. 'c' is cottage or minor land holding. 'g' is garden. 'a' is acre 'm' is a miscellaneous holding not exactly specified. The monetary rental is shown because it indicates relative size.

Henry VIII gave Stokenham Manor to Katherine, his sixth and final bride, as part of her marriage dowry.

When Henry died in 1547 Katherine caused her officials to make an exact assessment of the rental income she would get from Stokenham. The 'rental' which resulted is a useful document² in the study of Stokenham's history.

On the 18th of March in 1547 a special session of the manorial court was held at Stokenham. To this court of the Lady Katherine, Queen Dowager, came representatives of all her tenants from Stokenham town and the surrounding villages of the manor. The Queen Dowager's steward, in charge of the court, assembled, with the help of those attending, a complete list of all the parts of the manor, the names of those who occupied each part and the rental which they were paying.

This present paper is a summary and discussion of Queen Katherine's Rental. The rental is a useful document for the study of Stokenham in Tudor times. It occurred at a moment in history when the old feudal system of all-powerful lords and servile bondmen tenants was giving way to a new era of estate landlords and yeoman farmer tenants.

The feudal principle

It is worthwhile to consider first how it happened that Henry VIII had possession of Stokenham Manor and could give it to his sixth bride.

Under the original feudal system so firmly established and entrenched by the Norman conquerors after 1066, all the land of the realm belonged to the king who might, however, put possession of an area of it such as a manor into the hands of a favoured supported or courtier in return for military, political and financial support. The king might do that by direct grant or, more commonly, through an intermediate overlord. In either case the land remained ultimately the property of the king and the holder of it for the time being was there only by the king's grace.

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QUEEN KATHERINES RENTAL: 1547

When a lord of the manor died, possession of the manor might pass to his son, but only after successful application to the king and a payment to the king. If the potential heir was a daughter then the king might control or arrange the choice of her marriage partner, for to the marriage partner possession of the manor would pass. If the heir or heiress should be under age then the king would take the heir into wardship and the manor into possession until the heir was of an age to apply for possession under the king's favour. If there was no heir then possession of the manor lapsed to the Crown or to the overlord on behalf of the Crown.

If any of the various possessors of the manor should offend the king then they were likely to have their estates stripped away from them: and if they should be judged guilty of treason they were likely to lose not only their estates and their honours but also their head.

Each of these hazards occurred at one time or another to the manor of Stokenham during its lively history.³ The end of the reign of Henry VIII was one of those periods when the manor of Stokenham had fallen back into the hands of the king. So it was that Henry was able to give Stokenham to his sixth bride.

The parts of a manor

The principal component parts of a major manor such as Stokenham which might be expected to feature in a manorial rental are those which follow:

- a. The demesne: At the operational centre of each manor lay the manor house, occupied by the lord of the manor when one was present. In the same group of buildings would be the court house and the home of the steward, who administered the courts and the manor on behalf of the lord. In the same group were the homes and working quarters of some other officers and servants of the manor. Around the manor house was the lord's home farm, by far the largest

agricultural unit of the manor and needing its farm buildings at or near the site of the manor house.

- b. Customary holdings: These holdings, commonly of 30 or 60 acres, were held by villain tenants and were clustered round the separate villages and hamlets of the community, in which the tenants' homes were grouped. In the early days of feudal manors these villains had been bondmen to the lord and held their land from him in return for personal labour on the lord's home farm as specified by the codified customs of the manor (hence 'customary holdings'). As the bondmen found freedom the compulsory labour and service was increasingly commuted to rental payments and that process was nearly complete in 1547.

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QUEEN KATHERINES RENTAL: 1547

- c. Cottagers: In the earliest feudal system the lesser serfs held perhaps five acres or just a cottage in return for correspondingly limited labour or service on the lord's home farm. These were the people who were able to hire themselves to the villains or to the manor farm as farm workers. Some of them were able to use this greater measure of personal freedom to develop as craftsmen or even as tradesmen.
- d. The holdings of free men: In each manor there were commonly a few holdings possessed from earliest times by free men owing no compulsory servile duties to the lord. They had been working their holdings before the manor was created and their rights as free men passed with their land to any subsequent possessor. They paid to the lord a money rent and they might have minor duties symbolising their allegiance to the lord. They were free to dispose of their land if they chose and to leave the manor if they wished. In all those respects, and especially the last two, they were greatly different from the bondmen who formed the manor part of the feudal population and even in 1547 they still had a status and treatment differing from that of the villains.
- e. The free boroughs: If a lord had on his manor a community situated favourably for trading purposes, being, for example, on a principal road, he might consider it commercially worthwhile to release those bondmen from their compulsory service on his home farm so that they could develop as traders and merchants with a regular market. The fees, levies and rentals which he could then extract from them as burgesses of a free borough could be more profitable to him than the products of their personal labour. Chillington became such a borough within the manor of Stokenham.

Divisions of the rental:

In Queen Katherine's Rental the Stokenham tenancies are divided into the groups shown below, in the order listed, and that is a convenient sequence in which they can subsequently be discussed:

	£	s	d
Holdings of free men	7	10	6
Customary holdings (Villeins & cottagers)	98	13	3
Demesne tenancies (Parts of the home farm which had been let)	29	8	10

Churchwardens' rents 3 8

Total 135 16 0

The figures are useful only as indicators of relative group sizes.

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QUEEN KATHERINES RENTAL; 1547

1. Holdings of free men: Among the holdings listed in the rental under this category, the most prominent item is the rental from the free borough of Chillington which is shown as 68s. 3d. An item of interest yet to be explained is the sum of 40/- from 'Lady Katherina Champernon, widow, with Philip Champernon, for the township of Dodbrooke'.

Wydecomb, which had been a free holding since before Domesday is coupled with Colrugge (Coleridge), also an ancient pre-Domesday holding, (4) and the two are charged to William Somaster at 25s 4d. Somaster held estates in many parts of Devon: his possession of Widdicombe and its transfer to one of his sons, Henry, in 1580 are well documented. (5) There is a wall plaque of the Somaster family in Stokenham church. (6)

William Burgyn is listed as holding land of the Rectory of Stokyngham at 11s 4d and Richard Hals pays one penny for the water course of the lord's mill.

2. Customary holdings: The great number and value of the customary holdings, scattered over so many villages, makes evident the unusual size and vigour of Stokenham Manor. At the time of this rental the manor embraced Prawle and South Allington.

For those who are interested in the distribution of particular family names among the villages and farms of four hundred years ago, details of this portion of the rental are reproduced in an appendix to this paper. For the purposes of a general account it is sufficient to extract, in the list which follows, the names of the villages, the total value of the rental for each and the number of customary tenancies named there. Such a list makes clear the way in which people and activity were distributed over the area of the manor; the order of the list is that used in the rental.

The spellings, both in this list of villages and in the family names listed in the appendix, reflect what the scribe heard or thought he heard. There was little standardisation of spelling at this time for communication was still predominantly by word of mouth and not by written words. It is common to find the same name spelt in different ways even within the same document. Most meanings in the list which follows are evident, but Beaston is Beeson, and Wolhill is Well:

Colrugge	£2 5 11..... 4	Kelaton	£8 9 1...12
Pralle	9 11 0½...13	Middelcomb	5 8 8... 5
Holacomb	10 2... 1	Wolhill & Aller	1 17 9½..3
Borough	1 18 8.....1	Durnacomb	16 7.....1
Eastekernborough	1 10 2.....4	Mollyscomb	3 18 0....4
Westekernborough	3 18 7.....5	Fritscomb	3 11 10...6
Chelyngton	9 1 8.....13	Wydwyll	3 19 10½..5
Dunston	6 0 1½	Batton & Mockewyll	

It is not only the presence of village names in that list which is interesting, and their weighting by tenancies: what is also interesting is the absences from the list. Chillington, Coleridge and Widdicombe are brought to an expected size when increased by the holdings of free men earlier mentioned. Stokenham is brought up to size when a major part of the lord's home farm, separately listed, is added. The conspicuous absences are the present-day coastal villages, though it will later be seen that Hallsands had a chapel.

The development of the coastal communities came late in the history of the parish. The fishermen had long been in operation and had their fish cellars by the beach, but they tended to have their homes a little way back from the coast in settlements such as Beeson because of the threat which had been present for centuries of roving pillaging raiders coming from the sea.

3. Demesne tenancies: The rental shows that in 1547 the whole of the lord's home farm, save only the manor house, was let off in various tenancies. The home farm was not operational as such, but the manor court rolls and this rental make it evident that the business administration of the manor continued at full activity. That activity included the collection of rents and the compulsory maintenance in good condition of fields, buildings, houses, hedges, fences and water courses throughout the manor.

Direction was by the lord's steward through the operation of the regular and frequent manorial courts. The elected reeve supervised the day by day running of the manor as an agricultural estate. Among the items of the lord's demesne shown by the rental as being under tenancy in 1547 there are some of special interest.

Since the latest occasion when the manor lapsed to the Crown there had not been a lord to use the manor house. It may have been used in part by the steward for the 'Steward's Chamber' is one of the dwellings rented out.

Nicholas Uppetton pays 14s 2d for gardens and other ground in the neighbourhood of the manor house. He also has the lord's mill and the land called Haywode which, says the rental, was formerly a game park. The Ley and the rabbit warren are also let to him.

The Ley and the rabbit warren were both of importance for the provision of fresh winter food – fish and rabbits. There was no way, other than salting, of keeping meat fresh through the winter, yet most of the animals had to be killed off before the winter because there were no root crops to provide winter feed and no grass seeds to produce more hay than became naturally available from the meadows.

The churchwardens paid 12d for the lime kiln on the hold farm and 4d for the chapel of St Lawrence and its associated building where the dead lay before burial.

Chillington Mill, with its profitable monopoly, was let to Richard Hals for 26s 8d. Start and Beacon Hill, both part of the lord's personal demesne, were let to William Abraham for 46s 8d.

John Geffray had the Culverhay and the two pigeon cotes there, another important source of fresh winter food, for which he paid 33s 4d. The Steward's Chamber, as earlier mentioned, was let: so also were the 100 acres of timber in Coleridge Wood. It seems to be only the manor house itself which does not appear on the list of demesne tenancies.

4. Churchwardens: These items appear right at the end of the rental and although they are minor compared with others they have a special interest.

The churchwardens of Stokenham pay 20d for the building know as the Church-house and the land associated with it. They pay 12d for a chapel and associated building near Hallsands and 12d again for a chapel and associated building near to Prawle.

It may be speculated that these chapels at Hallsands and Prawle, with their associated buildings, had the same function as the St. Lawrence chapel earlier mentioned at Stokenham. Their presence immediately on the coast may have something to do with the availability of sea transport. A funeral procession travelling from Prawle or Hallsands to Stokenham churchyard by the narrow pack horse lanes, rocky in summer and deeply muddy in winter, could otherwise have a difficult and distressing journey.

The rental indicates that the site at Prawle had a religious use 'from ancient times'.

Colrugge:

Wilmot Colles t2f	19s- 4 d
Richd Strete t2f	8 - 4
Joan Stone w 1f	9 - 2
Jacob Perot tm	8 -11

Pralle:

Thos Beryng t2f	13 - 0
John Haredon t1f c	18 - 6 $\frac{1}{2}$
John Hardy t2f	10 - 6
Wm Partridge t5f	61 - 7 $\frac{1}{2}$
Wm Pynwill t3f	31 - 9 $\frac{1}{2}$
Joan Rouell t3f	18 - 6
John Collyn c $\frac{1}{2}$ f	5 - 4
Benedict Locke c g	8
Wm Collyn c	4
Alice Lovell w c $\frac{1}{2}$ f	6 - 9 $\frac{1}{2}$
Stephen Churchill m	10 -11 $\frac{1}{2}$
Walter Thome m	12 - 4
Robt Garland m	8

Holacomb:

Richd Lyffe t1f	10 - 2
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Borough:

Robt Soolooke t4f	38 - 8
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Eastekernbourgh:

John Tabbe 1f	9 -10
John Tabbe m	5 - 3
John Player m	5 - 3
Wm Newman t1f	9 -10

Westekernbourgh:

Kath Horseman t1f	19 - 8
Richd Lowde t2f	19 - 8
Wm Lamastell t2f	19 - 8
John Warryn t1f	9 -10
John Geffray jnr t1f	9 - 9

Dunston:

Thos Helman t1f	10 - 0
Joan Cosyn t1f	10 - 0
Margt Hardyng t2f	23 - 5 $\frac{1}{2}$

Dunston: contd.

Joan Treby t2f	20 - 0 $\frac{1}{2}$
Nich Colles t2f	20 - 0 $\frac{1}{2}$
John Pretijohn t1f	10 - 1
Wm Pynwill t3f	26 - 6

Chelyngton:

John Tabbe t	
Sandeheyde & Holbr.	62 - 8
Wm Newman t	
Groloparke & mede	30 - 4
John Halsewyll t1f	5 - 1
Joan Winter	
3 fields & c	7 - 3
Alice Collyn w	
c & field 8a	16 - 0
Isabella Tabbe w	
4 fields called	
Newmans Ground	25 - 0
John Trowte	
c Broldonhouse	4 - 6
John Wigger c	1 - 6
Margt Winter	
spinster c	1 - 0
John Golde m	9 - 3 $\frac{1}{2}$
Thomas Godfray m	10 - 5 $\frac{1}{2}$
John Cutland m	4 - 9
Robt Gefferay m	3 -10

Beaston:

Joan Player w t1f	
& in Huccom $\frac{1}{2}$ f	14 - 9
Michael Knight t2f	19 -10
Wm Goodyere t2f	
& 1 field $\frac{1}{2}$ f	27 - 4 $\frac{1}{2}$
John Poope t1f	
& in Huckom $\frac{1}{2}$ f	14 -10 $\frac{1}{2}$
Michael Poope t1 $\frac{1}{2}$ f	14 - 9
Elinora Weymout t1f	9 -10
Robt Mortymer t1f	9 -10
John Garland t1 $\frac{1}{2}$ f	14 - 9
Cristina Fynche w t $\frac{1}{2}$ f	5 - 1
Agnes Inbroke w c	10
Agnes Harrys t1f	11 -10 $\frac{1}{2}$

Moysen:

Wm Gefferay t60a	22 - 2
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Beckerton:

Michaell Knyghte $t\frac{1}{2}f$
 & 8a & $\frac{1}{2}f$
 & 1 meadow 31s-11 d
 Thos Lome t1f
 & 2 meadows
 containing $1\frac{1}{2}a$ 13 - 0
 Margt Boyet c $\frac{1}{2}f$ 3a 8 -10
 Adam Garland t2f 17 - 3
 Henry Style $t1\frac{1}{2}f$ 14 - 6
 John Watts c 6
 John Poope t1f 9 - 8
 John Derrant $t\frac{1}{2}f$ 5 - 6
 John Poope t1f 9 - 8
 Alice Cornysche t1f 9 - 8
 Richd Lyffe c 3a 1 - 6
 Joan Seyman w $t\frac{1}{2}f$ 4 -11
 Walter Sancomb c 6
 Thos Gylle, John
 Gylle & John Knight
 for 1 toft with t to
 be rebuilt 4

Gotmore:

Thos Poole $t1\frac{1}{2}f$ 15 - 3
 Wm Gefferay t30a 10 - 2
 & share of t having
 15a 5 - 1

Downe:

John Shath $t2\frac{1}{2}f$
 & 1f elsewhere 35 - $7\frac{1}{2}$
 Robt Putte t3f 31 - 6
 John Hardyng $1\frac{1}{2}f$ 15 - 9

Kelaton:

John Lyff $t2\frac{1}{2}f$ 24 -11
 Gilbert Edward t1f 8 - $8\frac{1}{2}$
 John Lyffe t2f 19 - 8
 Wm Goole $t1\frac{1}{2}f$ 10 - 8
 Joan Cornysche $t1\frac{1}{2}f$ 15 - 0
 Florence Shath t1f 11 -11
 Thos Matscomb $t\frac{1}{2}f$ 9 - $10\frac{1}{2}$
 Alice Style w $t\frac{1}{2}f$ 9 -10
 John Stone mill 1f 43 - 0
 John Shathe m 8 - 9
 Thos Tucker m 5 - 9
 John Gytte c 4

Middelcomb:

John Williams t1f
 & 1 field
 & $\frac{1}{2}f$ in Hucckom 17 - 6
 John Bastard $t1\frac{1}{2}f$ 14 - 9
 Walter Edward t3f 29 - 6
 Joan Stede t3f
 & 1 close 32 - 1
 John Poope $t1\frac{1}{2}f$ 14 -10

Wolhill & Aller:

Eliz Lyfte $t1\frac{1}{2}f$ 13 - $5\frac{1}{2}$
 Alice Randell m 13 - 4
 John Halswell t1f 11 - 0

Durnacomb:

Richd Haukyns t2f 16 - 7

Mollyscomb:

Wm Lancastell t3f 29 - $1\frac{1}{2}$
 Joan Whytocke t2f 9 - $8\frac{1}{2}$
 Richd Matheu t1f 9 - $8\frac{1}{2}$
 & t1f 9 - $8\frac{1}{2}$
 Joan Whytocke w t1f 19 - 5

Fritscomb:

Edwd Ferres t1f 12 - 4
 Wm Derent t1f 10 - 4
 John Ewyn t1f 10 - 4
 John Pralle t1f 10 - 9
 John Derant t1f 10 - 4
 John Gold m 5 - 9
 Joan Pralle m 5 - 9
 Walter Thome m 5 - 9

Wydwyll:

Wm Bryghtrigge 2f 19 -10
 Joan Player $t\frac{1}{2}f$ 5 - 0
 Robt Philip t2f 19 -10
 Anasticia Pers w $t1\frac{1}{2}f$ 14 - $10\frac{1}{2}$
 John Gelard t2f 19 -10

Batton & Mockewyll:

John Randell t1f 9 - 9
 Wm Goole $t1\frac{1}{2}f$ 14 - $8\frac{1}{2}$

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Batton & Mockewyll: contd.

John Baker	9s- 9 d
Thos Edward t30a	9 - 9 $\frac{1}{2}$
& t $\frac{1}{2}$ f	4 - 10 $\frac{1}{2}$
Margt Ewen w t2f	19 - 6 $\frac{1}{2}$
Joan Blank w t1f	10 - 5
John Myngoo c	12
Wm Goole c	10

Sowthalyngton:

Isabel Goole 3c 1f	13 - 4
Wm Abraham t3f	27 - 3
Joan Shote c g	16
Isotta Walter w t2f	18 - 2
Gardina Fuller w c g	2 - 0

Matscomb:

Joan Gefferay w t1 $\frac{1}{2}$ f	16 - 1
Michael Gefferay	
t1 $\frac{1}{2}$ f	16 - 1

Wottecomb:

Thos Martyn t2f	18 - 8
Richd Martyn t $\frac{1}{2}$ f	5 - 3 $\frac{1}{2}$
John Pounds t2f	19 - 3 $\frac{1}{2}$
Richd Abraham t2f	22 - 9 $\frac{1}{2}$

Stokyngham:

Thos Gefferay 3c	4 - 3
Wm Warde c	13 $\frac{1}{2}$
John Trowtt c	13 $\frac{1}{2}$
Thos Abraham t1f	5 - 8 $\frac{1}{2}$
John Gefferay m	8 - 11 $\frac{1}{2}$
Robt Gylcomb m	5 - 8 $\frac{1}{2}$
Joan Randell c	13 $\frac{1}{2}$

Huccomb:

Richd Dayman t2f	19 - 8
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End.

Some items of odd pence having no name associated with them have been omitted

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NOTES & REFERENCES

1. See 'Wreck of Sea', elsewhere in this book
2. Public Record Office SC11/168
3. 'The Lords of Stokenham' : W A Roberts : 1979
4. See, for example, Domesday presentation in Victoria County History : Devon.
5. Devon Record Office 118M T2 & T3 20 Apr 20 Eliz 1
6. Sanctuary, north wall, left of altar. Details in 'Records of Family Names : W A Roberts : 1980

WRECK OF THE SEA

In earlier centuries, just as still today, the Crown had first claim to any material washed ashore from the sea on to a tidal beach.

When the king made the grant of a manor he devolved to the lord of the manor many of his royal rights and privileges in return for the lord's promise of military and financial support.

The lord of a manor which had a coastal boundary, as in the instance of Stokenham, might always hope that the rights included in his grant would include the right to 'wreck of sea', but that was not always the case. Sometimes the king reserved the right and often the right was retained by an intermediate overlord.

A condition sometimes attached to the right of taking possession of articles coming ashore from a wreck was that there should be no living survivor of the wreck. There are occasional macabre stories of how compliance with this condition was ensured.

The document now to be discussed¹ makes it clear that the lord of the manor of Stokenham, who was also the lord of the hundred of Coleridge, did have the right to 'wreck of sea'. He writes to Queen Elizabeth complaining that this right had been violated.

The human interest is focussed on the tale which the document tells but information of historical value is packed into the duller preamble. The text has been made more readily coherent to present day readers by the omission of repetitions legalistically necessary but adding nothing to the basic information.

Edward Ameredith and his son had possession of Stokenham manor from 1585 to 1608² and the document is a petition from the lord of the manor of Stokenham to Queen Elizabeth I. The lord in his preamble first sets out the sequence of events, starting in the time of Henry VIII which had eventually given to him, Edward Ameredith, the rights and privileges of his lordship including 'wreck of sea'.

WRECK OF SEA: 1588

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The lord then explains how certain men of Stokenham, whom he names, had raided wrecks cast ashore on Slapton Sands, had found and carried away bullion, and had refused to hand it over to him. Having no action available to him in common law, Ameredith asks the Queen to allow him to seek his remedy in her courts at Westminster.

The end of the story is not known and is not sufficiently important in historical terms to justify a laborious search. But the answer could turn up by accident one day and in human terms it would be pleasant to find a document which tells what happened to those stubborn Stokenham wreck raiders and their hidden bags of bullion.

The date of 1588 makes it probable that these wrecks washed up on the 'Long Sands' were remains from the defeated Spanish Armada, destroyed earlier that year, and explains the emphasis on bullion. The Spanish fleet of 129 great ships carried 80,000 seamen and 20,000 soldiers and it was to support a further invasion army of 30,000 men waiting on the Channel coast. Enormous resources were necessary to support this host and there were treasure ships carrying bullion among the fleet.

The Armada, travelling northwards from Spain, was harried from the time it entered the English Channel, then demoralised by fire ships sent drifting among them at Calais and then battered at sea by the English fleet of 80 ships under Lord Howard, with Sir Francis Drake. The shattered Armada could not run directly back for Spain because southerly gales were blowing in the Channel. They had to make a disastrous journey up the North Sea, round the north of Scotland

then down the west coast of Ireland, leaving a litter of wrecks along all the coasts. Among them were, it seems, the wrecked bullion ships later washed ashore on Slapton Sands and pillaged.

The abbreviated text of the petition to Queen Elizabeth now follows. The first part of the document, which is loaded with detail and may read rather tediously even in abbreviation, has to be included because of the Stokenham historical information it contains.

'To the Queen's most excellent Majesty : humbly complaining sheweth unto your most excellent Majesty your Highness faithful and obedient subject Edward Ameredith of Slapton⁹ in the county of Devon esquire

That whereas in the Parliament holden at Westminster the 24th day of July in the 32nd year of the reign of your Highness most gracious father of famous memory, King Henry VIII (1540) it was enacted that your Highness said father at his will and pleasure might give and grant castles, honours, manors, lordships, lands, tenements and hereditaments, privileges, liberties and franchises and other things unto his wife, Queen of this realm of England, for term of the life of the said Queen for Downer by reason of her marriage with the King's person

WRECK OF SEA : 1588

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And afterwards your Highness gracious father being seised of the manor of Stokenham and the hundred of Coleridge in the right of his Crown of England did by his Letters Patent bearing date the 25th day of February in the 35th year of his Highness reign (1544) give grant and assign unto Katherine his wife, then Queen of England, the said lordship or manor of Stokenham and the aforesaid hundred of Coleridge and wreck of sea within the same manor or lordship for term of her life with reversion of the premises to your Highness said father and his heirs and successors.

And our late Sovereign Lord King Henry VIII being so of the reversion of the premises seised died thereof seised.

After whose decease the said reversion did descent unto our late Sovereign Lord King Edward VI, your Highness dear brother, as son and heir of your Highness dear father. And on the 6th day of September in the 2nd year of the reign of our said late Sovereign Lord King Edward VI (1548) the said Queen Katherine died.

After whose decease the said King Edward was seised of the said manor and hundred.

And the said King Edward VI afterward died. After whose decease the said manor, hundred and appurtenances did descend unto our late Sovereign Queen Mary, your Majesty's sister, as sister and next heir of our late Sovereign Lord King Edward VI.

And the said Queen Mary on the 22nd day of June in the first year of her reign (1554) by her Letters Patent did give and grant unto Francis, then Earl of Huntingdon, and to his Lady Katherine his wife, and to the heirs of the body of the said Lady Katherine lawfully begotten, the manor and hundred (and the remainder in default of such issue to Lady Winifred Hastings then wife of Tomas Hastings knight and heirs and then in default of issue to the heirs of the body of Margaret, late Countess of Salisbury).

By virtue of which Letters Patent the aforesaid Francis, Earl of Huntingdon, and his Lady Katherine were seised of the same manor and hundred, the reversion thereof (ultimately, after those others just mentioned) to Queen Mary her heirs and successor belonging.

And the Queen Mary so being seised of the reversion of the said manor, died thereof seised.

After whose decease the said reversion did descend unto your Highness as sister and heir unto the said Queen Mary.

And the aforesaid Francis Earl of Huntingdon and the Lady Katherine his wife, being seised of the said manor and hundred, afterward died, having issue of the body of the said Lady Katherine lawfully begotten, Henry, the late Earl of Huntingdon.

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And the said manor and hundred did descend unto the aforesaid Henry Earl of Huntingdon.

And your Highness being of the reversion thereof seised in form aforesaid did by your Letters Patent under the Great Seal of England, bearing date the 1st day of August in the 29th year of your Highness most happy reign (1587), give and grant unto the aforesaid Henry Earl of Huntongdon his heirs and assigns the manor and hundred for ever.

And he, being so seised, did in or about the 29th year of your Highness reign (1586) for good and valuable consideration convey unto your said subject and his heirs the said manor and hundred.

And your said subject, so being thereof seised, upon or about the 17th day of November now last past, ships were cast away at or about Long Sands in or near the parish of Stokenham aforesaid, and the stern of one of the said ships, no living creature being then therein, was then cast on the shore within the said parish of Stokenham laden with coins and other things, among which were two canvas bags full or very near full of money or bullion of gold or silver or both, the contents whereof your said subject knoweth not, each of the said bags being of the bigness of a hundred pounds bag or thereabouts in silver, which being a wreck of the sea did and yet doth belong to your said subject.

But so it is, if it may please your most excellent Majesty, that one Richard Phillippes of Stokenham aforesaid and one Hugh Kennaway of the same parish, having intelligence of the said wreck, did, contrary to the law, equity and good conscience, enter into the said stern and then and there they or one of them did take and carry away the said two bags and such money bullion gold and silver as was therein and would never deliver the same nor any part of parcel thereof unto your said subject but refused to do the same albeit they and other of them have been required by your said subject to whom the same doth rightly appertain.

(n tender consideration whereof, and foreasmuch as that your said subject hath no remedy by the court of the common law of this your Highness realm of England to compel the said Richard Phillips and Hugh Kennaway or other of them to deliver to your said subject such money bullion gold or silver as they had in the two several bags, as aforesaid, or to make recompense thereof unto your said subject, for that your said subject knoweth not the certain sum, quantity, quality or value of that which was in the said bags.

May it therefore please your most excellent Majesty to grant unto your said subject your gracious writ of Privy Seal to be directed unto the said Richard Phillips and Hugh Kennaway, and other of them, commanding them and either of them thereby at a certain day, and under a certain pain therein to be limited, to be and personally to appear before your Highness counsel in your honourable court of Whitehall.

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To answer the premises and to set forth upon their corporal oaths what and how much money bullion gold and silver they or either of them found or had in the same bags when the said bags were first found and who had any part or share thereof with them or either of them and who were party with them or either of them at the first finding of the said bags or either of them and to show cause if they or either of them can say they or one of them should not deliver the same or the value thereof unto your said subject and further to attend to and abide such further and final order and decree in the premises as your Highness said counsel shall deem meet to stand with equity and justice.

And your said subject shall daily pray unto God for your most excellent Majesty in health peace and happiness long to reign over us.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Public Record Office REQ2/168/28

2. References and discussion in 'The Lords of Stokenham' : W A Roberts: 1979
3. Ameridith continued to live in his previous home at Slapton after his purchase of Stokenham Manor with its deserted and probably ruinous manor house which historian Risdon described as a ruin when he wrote in about 1610.

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THE CHURCH OF HURDESTOKE; 1198

Parts of the structure of the present parish church of Stokenham are said to date from the fifteenth century, but there is plenty of evidence that this was not the first building on the site.

This paper discusses some documents of 1198 concerning an action in the king's court at Westminster over the ownership of the advowson¹ of the church which then stood at Stokenham. It is an opportunity to consider the earliest days of Stokenham church and of the manor of Stokenham.

To help construct this story there are occasional documents, scattered in date. There is also a background of general historical information which throws an oblique light on the topic.² With an occasional scrap of speculation to bridge the gaps, a coherent and consecutive story can be presented.

The Saxon settlers who flooded into the empty South Hams around 700 AD and then founded or refounded most of the villages of Stokenham parish were still pagans, through in the process of conversion to Christianity.

Christianity had been adopted and endorsed by some of the Saxon leaders such as King Ethelbert in Kent and King Edwin in Northumbria, both converted and baptised under the missionary influence of Saint Augustine. But that did not mean that all Saxons had overnight become Christians. It meant only that the propagation of Christian beliefs was officially favoured and protected.

As the missionary efforts succeeded, the old pagan beliefs brought from northern Europe began progressively to yield to the Christian message spread with increasing vigour. In the south west there were missionaries from Wales, Ireland and Brittany³

In 668AD an early Archbishop of Canterbury, Theodore of Tarsus, had given form and organisation to the missionary endeavour within England. He encouraged the establishment of local centres of religious organisation from which priests or missionaries would go out on long regular tours over an area similar to that of a modern diocese, visiting the settlements in turn and preaching the gospel.

THE CHURCH OF HURDESTOKE; 1198

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On the outskirts of each settlement at a suitably prominent and convenient place the travelling priest would call together the people of the community and deliver his Christian teaching. He would not yet bring them together in a church, for pagan custom shunned meetings in buildings which, they believed, might attract unfriendly or evil spirits. For all public purposes the tradition of the early Saxons was to meet in the open air (4).

So the priest, protected against the weather by his cloak (still reflected in the vestments of the modern priest) would deliver his homilies to people brought together by the prominence of his

portable wooden cross held aloft on a local promontory such as the hill on which Stokenham church now stands.

By the late Saxon period, Chillington had become a major settlement central to a royal Saxon estate east of the Kingsbridge estuary. On the eastern edge of Chillington was its 'stoc' or dairy farm in the meadows and at the crossroads from which led the track northwards to the summer pastures of Dartmoor.

Such 'stoc' were commonplace and numerous and after a while they had to be distinguished from one another by the addition of an identifying ingredient in the name. Local examples have included Stoke Damarel, Stoke Fleming, Stokeley, Stoke Gabriel and Stoke in Teignhead, and there are many others scattered over the county and country.

In that settlement which adjoined Chillington, the name 'Stokes' alone was used for a while (5) and then, again for a while, 'Hurdestoke' meaning the 'stoc' of the herdsmen.(6). When the new Norman masters came it was for a shire called 'Stokes Herbert' after the name of the first manorial family. In still later days it became 'Stoke-in-Hamme', (7) 'hamme' being the generic name for areas of water-meadow and pasture. That last name lingered and, through intermediate variants, has become the modern 'Stokenham'.

At some time during the weakening of pagan belief, the community provided a church building at Hurdestoke to accommodate the visitations of the travelling priest and the people whom he drew together. That first shelter was certainly of wood for that was the natural and universally available building material.

By the late eleventh century the Norman conquerors had arrived and taken full control. At first the estate around Chillington, which had been a royal Saxon estate in the gift, latterly, of King Canute became simply a royal estate of the new Norman kings, and a focus for the royal hunt. Parts of it to the north were, after a while, given to favoured supports of the king but the area around Chillington remained, for the meantime, in royal hands. But finally that Chillington area, too, was given to a supporter of the Norman kings. The first lord of the new manor was Mathew fits Herbert, late in the 12th century. His family had been close servants of the kings for three generations.²

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The new lord at the end of the 12th century sought to introduce his own priest into the church of Hurdestoke, as the case in the king's court will show, and he had probably provided a new or improved church, for that was a common act of a manorial lord.

When Mathew fits Herbert sought to appoint his own priest to the new or refurbished church of Hurdestoke he came into conflict with the abbot of a religious house who claimed a prior right to the advowson of Hurdestoke and therefore to the appointment of its priest.

The dispute over the advowson of the church at Hurdestoke reached the king's court at Westminster.(8) The court documentation is quoted, in translation, later in this paper. Like many other stories of almost a thousand years ago, the tale is incomplete. However, the substance of the action is less important than the Stokenham historical information which the documentation provides.

The entries in the court rolls explain that an abbot had sought to appoint a parson to the church at Hurdestoke and had found himself opposed by Mathew fitz Herbert. The abbot wanted Mathew brought to court to explain why he was hindering the appointment.

The abbot also wanted to bring before the court the lady who was said to have given the church to his abbey by charter, so that she could confirm her gift and grant and confirm the validity of the charter. The lady, however, was a reluctant witness. She did not want to come to court, saying that she was ill in bed.

The court sent three knights to talk to her. They came back to the court and reported her as saying that she did provide a charter to the abbey, because the Queen had asked her to,

but that the land in question was not, in fact, hers at that time. She sent on to say that she did not want to come to the court and that she did not want anybody to appear for her either

In the final entry, the court sets the date for the hearing and settlement of the case, but the story does not continue. Perhaps Mathew won in argument or, perhaps more probably, the abbot withdrew, having lost the support of his principal witness. The historical certainly is that the lords of the manor of Stokenham thereafter exercised the undisputed right to the advowson of the church.

The circumstances disclosed by the detail of the court roll entries are significant in putting together the fragments of the early story of Stokenham and can more readily be discussed after a presentation of the full entries, which now follows. There are six entries and they appear in the Curia Regis Rolls of 1198 to 1200, pp44, 65, 142, 201 and 301. The first two are similar except for details. The third is cancelled in the roll but repeated with amendment and more detail in the fourth entry. The fifth and sixth entries stand separately. The entries are numbered for reference.

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1. Devon 1198. The Abbot of Stanley entered a plea against Mathew fitz Herbert demanding why he was opposing the presentation to the church of Hurdestoke. Mathew did not appear and was ordered to attend at Westminster to answer the plea one month from the feast of St. Michael.
2. Devon 1198. The Abbot of Stanley entered a plea against Mathew fitz Herbert asking why he impeded the presentation of a parson to the church of Hurdestoke. Mathew neither came to the court nor offered an excuse and the order was made that he should present himself before the judges to answer the complaint.
3. Devon 1200: The Abbot of Stanley entered a plea against Mabilla Patric for the warranty of the charter of the church of Hurdestoke. She excused herself from attendance saying she was ill in bed. The knights did not appear before the court to confirm that they had visited her. The sheriff was ordered to ensure that the visit was made and that same sheriff was instructed to come before the court in three weeks from Easter Day to explain why the visit was not made earlier, as had been ordered.
4. Devon 1200: William Bauzan, Werreis Bloio, William Bastard and Roger de Weston should have appeared as witnesses before the court. They were coming to testify who had been appointed as attorney by Mabilla Patric in her reply to the Abbot of Stanley concerning the church of Hurdestoke. But they neither came nor sent an explanation. Therefore the sheriff was ordered to instruct the knights to be at the court in three weeks from Easter Day. The sheriff himself was to be there also to explain why he did not have the visit made as had been ordered.
5. Devon 1200: William Bastard, Werricus Bloio and Reginald de Weston were sent to Mabilla Patric to find out whether she was prepared to support for the Abbot and monks of Stanley her charter and gift of the church of Hurdstoke made to the said Abbot and monks, and whom she wished to speak for her in the matter. The knights appeared in court and reported she had said that after Mathew fitz Herbert had taken her daughter to wife and had children by her she, at the request of our lady the Queen, made the charter to the said monks but at that time the land was not in her hands. She did not wish to come before the judges or appoint anyone as attorney in her place.
6. Devon: 1200: The lord King ordered by his writ that the plea between Mathew fitz Herbert and the Abbot of Stanley concerning the advowson of the church of Chedelington should stand over until the Friday three weeks next after the feast of St Luke the Evangelist.

Note: Part of entry 5 is ambiguously phrased. The translation probably expresses the intended interpretation, but the original is:

'quod ipsa .. fecit cartam monachis predictis et eo tempore quo terra ad quam abbatia illa pertinet non fuit in manu sua ...'

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points which arise from a consideration of these entries are the following:

1. The continuing use of the name Hudestoke (home of the herdsmen) in 1200 AD and the reference to 'the church of Chedelington' both help to confirm that the transition of the lowly 'stoc' to the status of the manorial centre was still new or incomplete. The manorial grant at about this time, the probable building of a manor house and of a new or improved manorial church, with the change of place name ('Hurdestoke; never appears again) all seem to go together.
2. Stanley Abbey is in Wiltshire and the connection with Erlstoke in Wiltshire immediately becomes relevant. Mathew fitz Herbert, first lord of the manor of Stokenham was simultaneously lord of the manor in Erlstoke in Wiltshire.(9) As discussed in 'The Lords of Stokenham' it becomes still clearer that Mathew fitz Herbert obtained Stokenham and Erlstoke by his marriage to the heiress Joan Mandeville, who was of Erlstoke, and may have been helped to that marriage by King John who later named Mathew as a supporter in the preamble to Magna Carta.

Joan's father was William de Mandeville (d. 1201) and her mother, according to the court roll entries now being discussed, was Mabilla Patric. The Mandevills, the possessors of many estates, had lands in Devon prior to the date of this case, for Yealmpton was one of their manors, said to have been granted by Henry I. It seems from these entries that land at Stokenham must have been in some way under their control. The conflict of land possession recorded in the entries could then arise from the circumstance that the land came to Mathew on his marriage to the daughter but had previously been in the possession of her parents.

A study of any extant papers associated with the Abbey of Stanley and with the manor of Erlstoke could push the certain story of Stokenham back into the even more distant past.

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Notes and references

1. The right of presentation to a benefice, known as the advowson, was always treated as a property. The patron commonly derived his title either from his initial creation of the church, or by a subsequent give (often to an abbey or religious foundation in return for spiritual benefits) or by royal seizure at the time of Henry VIII or by transactions subsequent to any of these events.
 2. There are a number of points glanced at in this short paper which are more fully developed and referenced in 'The Lords of Stokenham' : W A Roberts : 1979
 3. The early ecclesiastical history of the county is discussed in 'Devon' : W G Hoskins : 1954 & edns., chapter 12.
 4. Even their moots, the focus of local and national government debate, were characteristically held in open fields at a convenient road intersection. The 1841 tithe map for Stokenham parish identifies such a 'Mott Plot' at Batton.
 5. 'Stokes' 1242 , Book of Fees, 2 vols., 1922-3.
- 'Stoke' 1291, Taxatio Ecclesiastica (printed as a supplement to Bishop Bronescombe's Register: ed. T L Hingston-Randolph).
6. 'Hurdestome' 1198, Curia Regis Rolls, quoted in this paper.

7. 'Stoke in Hamme' 1276 Rotuli Hundredorum 2 vols. 1812-1818 and very often, with variants, thereafter.
8. The king's court at Westminster had become at this time a court of common pleas hearing actions between subject and subject, as in this instance. See 'The Constitutional History of England' : period 1, section D ii : F W Maitland 1908.
9. 'English Baronies' : I J Saunders : 1969 : Erlstoke.

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