

Invaders!!

Saxons, Danes & Normans:

After the Romans left – circa 350 AD, the name of Stuston starts to appear in the history books.

Rather than a violent transition, it is thought that the Saxons started arriving as migrants from the other side of the North Sea, merging with the incumbent population and farming the land as the Romans had done previously.

However, it doesn't appear to have always been peaceful, with struggles for power in what became the Kingdom of the East Angles (East Anglia) from about 570 AD.

There is excellent evidence of the wealth of the area which can be seen at Sutton Hoo with the burial of Raedwald around 624 AD.

However, whatever peace there was, was shattered by the arrival of the "Great Hethen Army" (Danes) in 866 who saw rich pickings in the easily accessible lands of East Anglia – culminating in the capture and murder of King Edmund at Hoxne, just down the road from us in 870 AD.

East Anglia then became part of the administrative area known as the "Danelaw" and was (relatively) peaceful until the arrival of the Normans in 1066.

In the Domesday Book (1086) much of the land in the village was owned by the Abbott of St Edmundsbury and Ralph of Fougères: There were a total of 18 freemen, 11 smallholdings, 3 plough teams, 4 villagers and 7 pigs (in woodland).

It was also noted that the value of the village was £3 5s and 12d (£3.25 to the younger readers) making it one of the top 40% wealthiest parishes in the Country!

The fact that so much land was held by the Church in the village and throughout Suffolk, would indicate that the land was fertile and worthy of being farmed profitably.

Stuston's other common.

Are you aware of our "other common"?

That's the area where we have held more than a few successful fetes and other gatherings.

For this, I thought for reference, I would take the "plate" which is post mounted adjacent to the area in question facing on to the Old Bury Road, which confirms the date of incorporation as it were as being in June 1975 under legislation within the Commons Act of 1899.

This legislation identifies more than a few "restrictions" including posting bills or placards, use of the common as a thoroughfare in any form, or for the catching of birds and taking eggs.

I'm pleased to say that games are allowed, provided reasonable care is taken and as long as the event does not exceed two hours (I think we might take a bit of license on this for future events).

It would not be possible to graze cattle or sheep on the area without lawful authority, equally the Parish would have the right to remove any obstruction or vagrant which might infringe the bye laws.

Having said all that, I was a bit surprised to see that the "plate" mentioned above clearly refers to Barking Parish Council!

Whether or not Barking has our "plate" or Mid Suffolk District Council had two plates done at the same time without checking the details is anyone's guess, but after nearly 50 years, does it really matter?

The "other common" is also the home of the Coronation Oak – see if you can find it when in the area.

People:

Apart from our village “founder”, the Stut we have, over two millennia, had a few “characters” residing within the village.

A short summary is as below:
The Domesday Book records, under lands granted to Ralph de Fougeres, a manor in Stuston held by Wulfsi who was a freeman under the patronage of Gyrth.

[note the mix of Norman and Saxon names]

Also listed separately in the Domesday Book:
The Abbot of Bury St Edmunds held lands in Oakley and Stuston.

Subsequently there were four manors; three eventually devolved to the Cornwallis family and the fourth to the Castleton's and then on to Christ's Hospital.

The Castleton Family – please see details within the church.

Stuston Hall was built by Richard Nix, Bishop of Norwich, 1500 to 1535 and was later the home of the Castleton's. It was demolished in 1780 when the present Hall Farm was built.

Sir Miles Yare – Rector 1570

Fell out with Henry VIII for attending a secret mass – thought to have ended up in Norwich goal.

Rev Dr William Broome 1713–28

Writer and associate of Alexander Pope.

Rev Edward Heneage Paget 1859-1868

Responsible for much of the remedial works carried out within the church and instrumental in the building of the school.

A well-respected and popular member of our community.

Sir Edward Kerrison, Lord of the Manor

Granted land and was the founder of the school in 1862, educating up to 45 day scholars & 65 Sunday School scholars.

Erwin Rouse Borthwick MA RN 1910-1925

A former Royal Navy Instructor & Chaplain, from a lively and innovative family, installing a gas lighting system within the rectory.

Population – Timelines:

In terms of population, the records show that in the Domesday Book of 1086, 18 residents were recorded, a population that was consistent for about 500 years when 91 adults were recorded as living here in 1603.

According to the census figures, the greatest number of residents was in 1851 with 241, thereafter, steadily dropping to around 150 inhabitants by 1981.

Of the residents, unsurprisingly, most were involved in agriculture, but many residents were becoming involved in “supporting” trades such as blacksmith, carpenter, builder, postmaster, brickmaker, shopkeeper, and auctioneer and the publican – The Swan Public House opening for trade in 1844.

Also in 1831, 14 residents were described as being in domestic service.

The village had a school from as early as 1623 where 2 schoolmasters were recorded to be in place and reflecting the growing number of inhabitants of the village by the mid 1850’s a schoolmistress was teaching 36 pupils.

I can’t find any reference to the actual location of a school before 1891 when a “small school” was established – at School Lane but closed as the population started to diminish in 1912 with children having to travel to Palgrave or Diss – so not much changed there!

1912 also appears to be a definitive year for the village as it was the year in which The Swan Public House closed, presumably due to the same loss of clients as the school but on a more positive note 1912 was the year the Golf Club was established.

Population changes:

Whilst the population within the village was consistent for several hundred years.

Towards the end of the 1800's there was a considerable reduction in the number of residents in the village and into the early 1900's.

Following a conversation with Peter West of Brome, a truly knowledgeable historian and author of publications on the history of the area, it became clear that the reduction in residents within the parish was very much in line with world events such as the opening up Britain to cheap imports of grain from the Americas, the advent of steamships making crossing the Atlantic quicker and safer, together and more mechanical and efficient farm machinery reducing the need for labour.

The "perfect storm" appears to have been compounded by the mills and industrial complexes of Lancashire & Yorkshire effectively destroying the cottage industries such as weaving, etc. by offering more and cheaper goods.

All this ties in with what has been called the "Great Agricultural Depression" (1846–1896) - which resulted in agricultural workers migrating voluntarily to (new) industrial centers such as Ipswich, Norwich, etc.

This is when well-known companies such as Fison's and Ransome's (now part of Bosch Group) were founded at or around this time.

Given that there was very little support for displaced workers – the workhouses being the last resort, its perhaps no surprise that by 1891 over 23,000 Suffolk based workers had migrated to the mills in the North and another 50,000 to London, in all probability including at least some former residents of Stuston.

It is also entirely possible that significant numbers of the population migrated to America, Canada and Australia to seek their fortunes abroad, particularly with gold rushes in California and Australia in 1849 and 1851 respectively.

As mentioned previously, the population of the village has remained relatively stable for perhaps the last 50+ years, and I hope it will remain so.

Over 4000 years of human history.

Clearly, Stuston, by whatever name it has been called, has been the site of multiple occupations and activities over four millennia.

The archives of Suffolk Heritage Explorer give over 70 recorded finds throughout the village.

Given that the clay “ridge” our side of the Waveney would have offered a reasonably safe route for hunting and later agriculture there have been several finds that continue to add to the history of the village and indeed the County.

Between 4,000 – 2,300 years B.C. Neolithic man was in this area, with flints and other hunting tools being found in various locations.

Bronze Age man (2,350 – 701 B.C.) Was here too, engaging in agriculture and drainage together with evidence of kilns and pottery by “Beaker People” alongside the A143 and on the Golf Course which indicates that there was suitable clay to be worked.

Don't forget that East Anglia was the home of the Iceni People – Queen Boudica & all that, with her palace at Thetford, it's highly likely that this area was also farmed intensively by them too.

A self-contained community:

The village has never had a population of more than 250 inhabitants and rather fewer than that today.

In 1674 there were just 21 inhabited dwellings with most residents engaged in agriculture or associated trades including a cooper, clerk, and a linen weaver up to 1700.

In the 1831 census 10 residents are noted as being in retail, 2 people are “professionals” and 14 people are in domestic service, clearly representing a changing society.

By 1844 we had a blacksmith site near the village center together with a post office and a victualler - probably at the Old Swan public house adjacent to the Green.

Another legacy is the site of a brickworks and pits near the Golf Club.

It was effectively a self-contained community with access to the regular market in Diss and routes in any direction.



THE POST OFFICE, STUSTON, p.u. 1910

The post office at Stuston stood opposite the village green adjoining the old Bury road. Mr Frederick Elsey was the post-master, taking deliveries from Scole at 7 a.m. daily. He also ran a coach-building business from the adjoining buildings. The population of the village at that time was 179.

The Church and Stuston:

Christianity was introduced to the region by missionaries from the 630s onwards, but more likely by the King Guthrum of East Anglia in the 880s - either way the village has had a place of worship for well over 1200 years!

The original church was in all probability a wooden affair, but a round stone tower had been added and mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086.

Over the years there have been numerous additions and extensions, all of which are covered in the excellent presentation compiled a couple of years ago.

The base of the tower is thought to be of Saxon origin, with the rest of the church being wooden and with a thatched roof until the mid 1800's - when the population of Stuston was at its peak.

In 1582 the Church was presented with a silver chalice (possibly from Queen Elizabeth 1st) inscribed "Foar the Towne of Storstone" - another variant of the village name.

Apart from the refurbished part of the church – outlined in previous presentations, we are delighted to now add the new bird screen doors.

Along with many other churches and older buildings, we have colony of (protected) bats in the belfry.

The Common: Our claim to fame?

It has been suggested that the Common has been here since Roman times and formally identified and regulated as such under various Commons Acts which date back to 1285 (King Edward 1st).

The boundaries of the present common were identified in the 1899 Commons Act and with a few changes remain so today.

The most recent relevant act was the Commons Registration Act of 1965 which registered all those Commons Rights.

Rights include, to graze horses, cattle & sheep.

An Act of Vandalism - in 1628 a William Cod kicked the village stocks on the common to pieces – he must have had a grudge - for which he was fined 3d.

It was also noted that the Lord Cornwallis (the Lord of the Manor) was brought before the Court for not keeping the stocks in repair something of double whammy perhaps?

The Park Meadow:

Is defined in the land specifications as Priority Meadow and woodland.

What the Romans did for us:

As mentioned in the why here, the Romans contributed much to what has become Stuston village.

The fort at Scole, was clearly located to control the safest crossing place of the River Waveney on the route between Colchester and Norwich as well as what we know as the Old Bury Road. Making it part of a chain of such military controls throughout East Anglia.

As well as the above, the Suffolk Heritage web site also identifies another Roman road through the Golf course to cross the Waveney again at Stuston Bridge.

The history books also make reference to “Villa Faustini” in the area (Warren Hills?), clearly demonstrating that the wealth of area has been in agriculture for millennia.

What's in a name?

The name “Stuston” is unique amongst English place names, the name meaning Stut's Enclosure – the “ton” originating from Saxon word for enclosure.

The open museum at West Stow gives an excellent representation of a Saxon village, a few images shown here to give an idea of what Stuston may have looked like.

The village was and still is part of the “Hartismere Hundred”, the Saxon form of local government – effectively still in use today – especially in the Church Benefice.

The name “Stuston” has experienced several “variations” over the years. We are mentioned in the Domesday Book where we were identified as Estutestuna in Latin (English didn't exist at that time).

An ancient who done it?

Back in 1984, in the middle of an exceptionally dry summer, whilst canoeing along the relatively dry River Waveney, Samantha Goodwin found what appeared to be a body at the side of the river, about 60m west of Scole bridge, with the top of a man's skull prominent through the dried out reed beds.

Police were called and thankfully identified the body parts as being particularly ancient.

Archeologists identified the skull as being from the Roman era.

The question still remains as to how the body (skull) got there, was it someone trying to avoid the roman fort at Scole, and drowned trying to cross a marsh or a gruesome murder – hidden away for over 2000 years?

Why here?

Hills and valleys:

Stuston Village lies on outcrops of glacial sand and gravels left over from an ice age about 440,000 years ago, these outcrops lie along the valley sides and underlie Stuston Common.

Believe it or not, the Waveney Valley was a channel for meltwater from glaciers which included the origins of Diss Mere.

The many ponds within the village are a legacy from depressions left by blisters of ground-ice left over from the more recent ice ages up to about 15,000 years ago.

Which means that these small insignificant looking ponds are of significant age and still form the basis of land drainage throughout the village.

Why here?

Roads, Rivers & Footpaths:

We know that the A140 is on the site of the old Roman Road (Pye Street) and was built on the most direct route between the regional “capital” of Colchester and the settlement at Caister St Edmund near Norwich.

The road crosses the Waveney at the narrowest part of the valley as to both east and west there are wide, difficult wetlands.

To protect this strategic river crossing, the Romans built a fort in what is now the Scole side of the Waveney.

What is probably less known is that what we know as the Old Bury Road is also a Roman road, servicing encampments at Ixworth, Scole and on to Lowestoft.

Believe it or not, the River Waveney was once “navigable” up to crossing of the Roman road at Scole Bridge where evidence of a “Staithe” or landing place was found.

This would be quite logical, to facilitate the movement of produce from the area from “Villa Faustini” also known to have been in this area.

Indeed, the River Waveney was once seen as an alternative mode of transport for goods as identified by the River Waveney Navigation Act of 1670, but which was superseded by the arrival of the railway through Diss and on to London.

In summary – not dissimilar to the recently built BP service station at the crossroads of commerce.

As will be seen from the maps below, all major footpaths are either to the school, the church or to Diss - not much changed over the years.

Land usage and specifications:

A free download from “Magic Maps” indicates that by far the majority of Stuston village is defined as priority habitat or wood pasture and parkland further enhancing our reputation and protected status.

Stuston Village – a unique position in the world:

This small “exhibition” is a resume of why the village is where and what it is, how we got here and a few events along the way.

Thank you to all the contributors who have generously provided insights into the history of the village, the people, places and images of historic Stuston, many of which I am unable to show here due to lack of space.

I should also mention my many sources of information and references, in no particular order as below:

- **Wikipedia**
 - **Suffolk Heritage Explorer**
 - **National Library of Scotland
(for historical Ordnance Survey maps)**
 - **Magic Maps (Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside)**
 - **Diss and District Neighbourhood Plan.**
 - **Ipswich Museum**
 - **Hidden East Anglia**
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