

3rd STRATFORD CLAN GATHERING – 6-8 MAY 2008

Amazingly the weather changed dramatically, from being cold and showery to being very warm and dry. Word must have gone round that we were on our way!

Our first meeting point was at Gupshill manor in Tewkesbury, the probable site of the Battle of Tewkesbury (The War of the Roses in 1471). After exchanging greetings, introducing ourselves to newly found cousins and partaking of a rather good lunch, we set off for our first destination, Payne's Place in Bushley. This was where Margaret of Anjou took refuge after the battle and we were shown the room that she stayed in. Payne's Place had been a "Stratford" house between the years 1558-1678.

Mrs Troughton and her son Tim were there to greet us and very kindly showed us around the house and garden. We were also shown the visitor's book that had been signed, on November 14th 1978, by "Stratford, Earl of Aldborough".

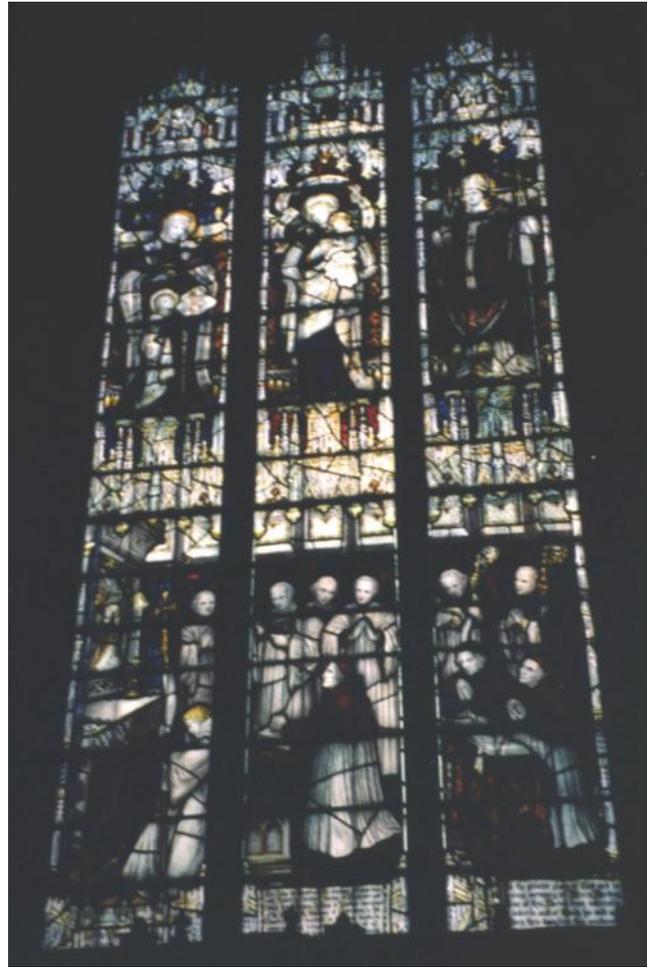


From here we proceeded to Dumbleton Church and graveyard. We then went next door to Dumbleton Hall and had an extremely good afternoon cream tea, which had been pre-arranged by Sheila, as had the subsequent arrangements for accommodation and meals. Her meticulous planning made the two days such a success.

Still bathed in glorious sunshine we made our way to Broadway and our accommodation for the next two nights. Some of us stayed in Cowley House and some in the Small Talk guesthouse. Meeting up at the Brasserie for our evening meal, we had a room upstairs to ourselves giving us time to talk and get to know one another.

On the second day our first destination was to Stratford upon Avon and Holy Trinity Church. There, Sheila's brother John us. The guide and the Verger in the church were most helpful and allowed us to photograph the beautiful stained window depicting Archbishop John de

Stratford, his brother Robert, Bishop of Chichester and of their kinsman, Ralph de Stratford who was Bishop of London.



We then headed off to Coughton Court in Warwickshire, home of the Throckmortons who were implicated in the Gunpowder Plot. Here, once again, the guides were very knowledgeable about the history of the house and the family. One of them took details of “our” Mary Throckmorton, daughter of Anthony Throckmorton, who married John Stratford of Farmcote and is hoping to be able to tell us more about her when he visits the family archives held in the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Archives. Sir George Throckmorton who married Katherine Vaux had nineteen surviving children and one hundred and twelve great-grandchildren! “Our” Mary was one of the great-grandchildren.



Returning to Broadway for afternoon tea at the Small Talk guesthouse, we waited anxiously for Nigel, Janet, Hazel, Lesley and Sue to return, as they were rather late. It transpired they had decided to go AWOL, while the opportunity presented itself, to visit Bourton-on-the-Water. They wanted to visit the cottage once belonging to their ancestors and where Nigel's grandfather was born. Their mission proved successful and the present owner was pleased to show them around. After yet another afternoon tea with delicious homemade cakes, we went to our rooms to prepare for our last evening together.

Once again we ate at the Brasserie enjoying the food and company as we reflected on the day's events and saying farewell to John who had just joined us for the day.



The following morning we said goodbye to our hosts in Broadway and headed off for Stanway to see the church and graveyard there. We wanted to see the lists of endowments made by the parishioners to restore the Church porch. Some of the names mentioned were ancestors of Janet, Hazel, Lesley, Sue and Nigel. There is a good view of Stanway House from the graveyard and we could see the fountain that rose above the top of the house from the garden on the far side. We also saw the stone cross that marked the grave of Kezia Stratford.



From Stanway we drove to Postlip Hall and Tythe Barn. Some of us managed to find it without too much difficulty (having been there before!) Fun and games with the SAT NAV, not least of which the fact that the Hall did not have its own Post Code, led to, Guess Who? being a bit behind the rest of us!

This all added to the enjoyment of the day and Sandy McMillan was a knowledgeable and delightful host. Not only did he explain the history of the Hall and church, but also explained the functions of the commune, of which he is part. It was not possible to see inside most of the Hall as eight different families occupy it. We did see what was the original Great Hall of the house and the inner courtyard that was a haven from the distractions of modern day life. We also saw inside the Tythe Barn that is a huge building and a bit of an enigma as to when it was constructed and by whom, and also for whom the tithes were collected.



With all this knowledge and the events of the last two days swirling in our heads, our last journey before going our separate ways home, was to the Apple Tree Inn in Woodmancote. After a light lunch together we all agreed that it had been a most enjoyable few days and that we hoped to replicate the experience in 2010 with other cousins who could not make it this time.