February 2022 – Stoke Goldington

The walk this Sunday was from The Lamb in Stoke Goldington and was led by Stuart and Ruth Emmerson. The village was originally an Anglo Saxon settlement which grew around the area close to where St Peters Church now stands.

The ground here is limestone and makes a good foundation for a church. Unfortunately for the villagers, it was rather exposed and developments slowly slipped down the hill to its present more sheltered position.

At the time of the Norman invasion the village was called 'Stoches'. Subsequently, the village and surrounding area was given to Sir Peter de Goldington who changed the name to Stoke Goldington, the name found in the Doomsday book

In 1581, Queen Elizabeth 1 gave the village and nearby Gayhurst Estates to Sir Francis Drake as a reward for the treasures that he had collected for her. Drake, who needed cash to finance further voyages, sold the villages within a couple of days of being presented with them.

In 1873, the North-South mail coaches from Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and London met up with cross country East-West mail at Northampton. To accommodate the traffic, the parish had seven coaching inns in order to service the 26 scheduled mail coaches travelling through the village each day. They all required horse changing facilities and refreshment. With the advent of the canal and rail close by, the coaching inns reverted to farm houses again.

The 1841 census showed there were 247 lace makers in the village. By the end of the century, this figure had shrunk to 42 following the invention of machine made lace.

In 2005, there were just 600 residents in the village, almost the same level of population as in both 1801 and 1901. The number of dwellings had increased but families are much smaller than 200 years ago. There are now restrictions on

any housing development outside the village, and developments can only be within the village boundary.

Stuart explained that the walk this morning was to be just over five mile, with an optional shorter route for those wishing to do three miles.

Despite strong winds and possible rain forecast, 13 people (including two guest walkers and a very well behaved whippet called Iris) gathered in the pub car park to change into appropriate boots and rainwear. After booking our lunch choices, we set off at 10.30am.

After a short walk along the High Street, we turned left up Dag Lane towards the church. Walking around the perimeter of the grounds, we came upon our first taste of the muddy paths to come. Fortunately, we were able to walk around the edge of this one.

Climbing our first stile, we crossed several grassy fields before approaching the Stokelodge Farm. We waited here for everyone to catch up, before splitting into two groups. Those opting for the shorter walk took a different path through the field of Christmas trees, whereas the rest headed up a different track.

After another stile, we walked along a farm track for a while, which was rather high and exposed so we were at the mercy of the winds for a while. Despite a few spits and spots, the rain did not take hold.

We had a break half way along this track and stopped within the shelter of a high hedge. Here we took our usual group photo, but not the whole group unfortunately. With hindsight, we should have taken this earlier before the smaller group took the shorter walk back!

Eventually, we took a left turn alongside some hedging and were out of the wind at last. We were walking along the Midshires Way and passed two fields of Solar panels before turning up towards Stokepark Wood. After a short walk alongside this wood, we turned right and headed back towards Stoke Goldington.

The last track, before entering the village, took us by the side of a beautifully kept garden with an amazing snowdrop walk. This garden is open to the public during the summer months – definitely worth a visit for the rest of the garden.

Arriving back into the High Street, it was just a short walk back to the Lamb where a delicious Sunday roast lunch awaited us.