



The Parish History

Stratton St. Margaret, once a village, has now become the north east part of Swindon and is rapidly becoming suburbanised. Until WWI Stratton had its own School Board, Fire Brigade and Brass band.

Stratton derives its name from the Latin strata ("paved way" or "street") after the former Roman road whose course traverses the parish north to south which ran from Glevum (Gloucester) via Corinium (Cirencester) to Durocornovium (Wanborough) where there was a Roman settlement on to Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester). Circular pre-historic earthworks were found between Stratton & Swindon New Town in fields of Marsh Farm.

According to in *Dugdale's Monasticon Volume 6 Part 2* there was an Alien Priory here in 1056.

The Domesday Book of 1086 records the toponym Stratone, when the parish was held by Nigel, physician to William the Conqueror.

Doomsday Translation – STRATONE Owner Spirtes, a priest, Tenant Nigel the Physician - originally in the hundred of Scipe, afterwards in that of Highworth. There are two manors, Stratton Superior and Inferior, recorded in the Nom. V:II, both of which, from the large extent of this estate, which was assessed at thirty hides, are no doubt included in it. The village consisted of three hamlets: The Street; the area around Green Road and Dores Road and including the few houses at Kingsdown and Stratton Green, mainly around Tilleys Lane. Footpaths and coffin-ways joined the hamlets, in 1086 there were 24 villagers, 18 small holders & 12 ploughs. The mill was worth 2/-. Land was 8f x 5f to meadow and 1 league x 5f to Pasture.

During the 13th century there was established a Benedictine Priory opposite the old vicarage this was confiscated in 15th century by Henry VI and presented to King's College, Cambridge. C.1233 Bradenstoke Priory (Simeon, prior) to John de Harnhull, shows a Grant of land in Stratton St. Margaret sold to them by Everard de Arguges¹: In Saxon times it was a market town held at the

manor on a Thursday granted 12 Jun 1257 by Henry III by charter to Baldwin de Insula and also had a fair, in extract from *The Commercialisation of English Society, 1000-1500* By R. H. Britnell - 'In 1280 Adam Hoget was said to have sold 4 ells of linen, where the linen merchants were, at Stratton Margaret Fair and on the third day of the fair at Stratton St Margaret (Wilts) 1282 a horse and three mares were separately claimed and proved in the associated Hundred court'. [Walter De Merton](#), Bishop of Rochester had a rectorship here and bought the Manor which he presented to Merton College, Oxford who retained an interest right up to recent times. In 1316 Queen Margaret had Upper & Lower Stratton in dower and began the association. In 1363 Humphrey de Bohun had the Manor, when his estate was divided in 1421 Lady Anne Plantagenet (Countess of Stafford) inherited the estate. Around 1400 these were 4 houses mentioned in area owned by Braose family and in 1439 2 of these were bought by Lord Hungerford and given to his son Sir Edmund of Down Ampney. In 1445 it is mentioned as "Margrete Stratton" and had passed to her husband's nephew Humphrey Stafford (Duke of Buckingham), by 1445 a report states the Grange to be roofless & thatch rotten. In 1450 there was a petition to King to sort out ownership of Stratton between Kings College, Cambridge and Merton College, Oxford, this was finally settled in 1494. 1484 sees Sir John Savile given land in the South including the manor of Stratton St Margaret in Wiltshire. In 1491 Stratton was on lease to a Hugh Auseley. 1554 shows a grant to Sir Thomas Bridges. During the 17th century English Civil War, Parliamentary troops camped at Penhill reportedly stabled their horses in the church. In a Church census of 1676 there were 289 people registered. During the 19th century Ermin Street was used by Welsh drovers taking their cattle and sheep to Smithfield's, London. There was also a village Feast or Revel on first Monday in August for a week which included sports such as 'back-swording', in 1845 a prize of £2 was offered for winner of Single-Stick at the Jacobs Ladder public house, Well known contestants of 19th century were Abraham, Peter & Richard Pinnock, George Hinder, George Gregory, Richard Slade & John Lewis.

The Parish was in the Hundred of Cricklade, Cricklade parliamentary borough, North Wilts & the bishopric of Gloucester & Bristol, at some point before 1194 the separate hundred of Scipe was merged with that of Worth and encompassed an area bounded by Marston Maisey, Lydiard Millicent, Stratton St Margaret.

Evening Advertiser Jun 29 1857 - The Stratton fire of Sunday June 28, 1857 was probably the largest ever seen in the Stratton/Swindon area as it destroyed eight cottages, some stables and outbuildings and several hay ricks and might have affected the whole village if the weather had been less favourable. The fire started in ricks in the yard of David Archer Esq. of Swindon Road.

In 1889 there was a proposal tabled to include Stratton St Margaret into New Swindon, this was rejected.

The area of the parish was originally much larger. GORSE HILL was a hamlet of one or two houses and a public house called the 'Tabernacle', it grew through the building of Avening, Chapel, Hinton, and Bright Streets, and the long terraces on the west side of the Cricklade Road. Both districts were taken into the local board area for public health purposes in 1880; it was joined to New Swindon for all purposes by order of Wilts County Council, confirmed by Local Government Board Order, dated 24 September 1890.

Stratton Fire Brigade was originally a group of volunteers in the 19th century becoming a full uniformed Brigade in 1905 finally merging with Swindon in 1924.

In 1931/32 the Parish was divided into 2 St Margaret's and St Phillip's.

West End was an area of fields and cottages mostly built on now by the Pressed Steel (BMW) car plant, West End Road was originally call Pump lane after the deep well hand pump installed at the end of road in Swindon Road, after a Cholera epidemic, it was removed during road widening works in 1989, the row of terraced cottages were originally called West End Terrace. Balls farmhouse, now demolished was dated 1691. At the top of West End Road were the last two thatched cottages in Stratton, the last occupant being Mrs Mulcock, they were demolished after 1960's gales brought a tree down across their roofs. Edward Day had a clay pit here for his brickworks, used by the locals for fishing, swimming and ice skating in winter it was filled in when the factory was built. One of the street's Day's Close is named after him. At the top end of the road a footpath lead up to and joined the coffin way to Upper Stratton. It was the people of Pump Lane and Tilley's lane that made up the nucleus of Stratton Green Baptist Chapel.

A [Parish Council](#) has served Stratton St Margaret since [The Local Government Act 1894](#) which introduced elected councils at district and parish level.

Extract from Evening Advertiser 1947: 'Mr W Townsend was elected chairman for the Stratton Parish Council. He received seven votes, while retiring chairman MR S C Casson received three and Mr W J Hathaway, the third nominee, withdrew. Tribute was paid to the courteous and efficient manner in which Mr Casson had carried out his duties.'

The present Parish Council dates from 1973 following [The Local Government Act 1972](#) the first clerk being John Elwyn Thomas The Parish Council's main priority is to provide high quality, well maintained open spaces including safe, interesting and innovative play areas. The Council employs around 55 full and part time staffs who help deliver the various services not available from the Borough on behalf of local residents. In 1978 the Community Centre in Grange Drive was built the first manager was Bob McMillan and the caretaker was Brian Cripps.

The large corporation housing scheme at PINEHURST was planned by [Sir Raymond Unwin](#) (1863-1940) just after 1918. In 1928 the borough boundary was extended to take in these parts of Stratton St. Margaret. At the same time the first Council Estate was built at Wildern Square originally named 'The Quadrangle', another in Kingsdown Road was originally called 'The Crescent' but is now part of Beechcroft Road and another group of houses were built in Green Road.

In 1929 the Reading Rooms Bowls Club was set up on the Vicarage field. This became the Stratton Churchway Bowls club in 1931. A ladies section was added in 1934.

14th May 1932 - An 'Air Pageant' was held on fields of Penhill Farm Upper Stratton.

7th November 1935 at 3:00pm Mr Darling County Councillor planted a Cedar Tree at the Recreation Ground in commemoration of King George V Silver Jubilee. The tree was donated by Mr Blake JP.

WWII

In the summer of 1940 members of Stratton St Margaret Women's Institute bottled more than 800lbs of jam.

In August 1940 string of 20 bombs landed by Catsbrain Farm, the nearest attempt to hitting Short Aircraft site.

On Sunday 7th December 1941, while children were waiting to go into Sunday school, a Canadian spitfire pilot, Sergeant Norman W. Barbeau aged 20, crashed in Ermin Street by the Willow tree at Church Street junction. The plane was seen to break up before it crashed and one wing landed in a nearby street. The local bobby P.C. Fillamore did his best to keep local children from getting too close.

Sid Casson was the Chief Warden and T. P. Jones was the Home Guard Captain.

The Old Powder works were used as a base for the Pioneer Corps.

A Ministry of Aircraft Production (M.A.P.) estate was built at Kingsdown to house personnel brought from all over the country to work in the new Short Aircraft Factory, later to become Vickers. These prefabricated buildings were made at aircraft factories as a method of supplying quick easy build accommodation..

POST WAR

The M.A.P. housing estate was used to house Polish Military personnel who wanted to settle in U.K. with their families.

In 1946/7 after a long planning debate there was a Speedway Motor Cycle track at Stratton Park and in the same year a Greyhound track at Marshgate Work's site.

18/03/1950 - Wiltshire CC. Cricklade Rd., Stratton St. Margaret. Compulsory Purchase Order, Cricklade Rd., Stratton St. Margaret..¹

In 1951 the corporation acquired 250 acres for a housing estate by the purchase of PENHILL Farm, fields which lay in Stratton St. Margaret just outside the borough boundary. The following year the boundary was extended northwards to bring all the land acquired within the borough.

In 1957 The Swindon Round Table were to provide transport to take visitors to St Margaret's Hospital, Stratton St Margaret, if the bus strike was still on. There would be between 10 and 12 cars and a 32-seater coach leaving Gaumont Cinema between 2pm and 2.30pm. The transport was to be free.

1960 to 1966 saw the building of the Meadowcroft Estate.

In 1961 Swindon Corporation was authorized to develop farm-land to the east in the parish of Stratton St. Margaret. About 90 acres of this were allotted for industrial development and the rest was to be used for housing.

1962 sees Tony Benn open the Stratton St Margaret Labour Party spring fair.

By 1965 work on NYTHE and the GREENBRIDGE industrial estate had advanced commensurately, but since they all lie outside the borough boundary, any further account of them is reserved for treatment with the parish in which they are situated.

1963 to 1967 saw the development of the Coleview estate.

Between 1964 and 1978 saw the re-development of the former M.A.P. site into Queensfield estate.

21/04/1966 saw the official opening of Kingsdown Crematorium, built on site of the old Manor house.

In 1977 there was a Carnival to celebrate the Queens Jubilee; floats went from Upper to Lower Stratton finishing with a Fete on Grange Leisure Centre field.

1974 and the parish along with Highworth and most of North East Wiltshire became part of Swindon under a Government re-organisation which saw the creation of the new Borough of Thamesdown.

In 1977 the 3 mile £4M A419 bypass was opened in the October to remove the heavy traffic passing up the Old Ermin Street through the village and past its schools part of the White Hart allotments were lost to build access roads, also from Evening Advertiser 1977: 'Winning the title of "Miss Stratton" Carnival Queen was just a walkover for 17-year-old Pat Fisher for there were no other entries.' Swindon Council also issued its development proposals for Stratton for public debate the final proposals being passed by council in 1979.

In 2000 the Parish issued their own 'Stratton Remembered' book with pictures, history and memories of the Parish.

15th March 2008 - a new community radio station was launched [Swindon 105.5](#), which is one of the only stations in Swindon to broadcast local content all week. Based in the Bentley Centre, Swindon Road, formerly HQ for ISIS Construction Group, the station is run by volunteers and the Station Manager is paid part-time/part-time volunteer. It obtains its funding through seeking grants, donations, fundraising events, training courses and support-in-kind, but is not permitted any form of on-air sponsorship or advertising under the Communications Act 2003 by virtue of its location entirely within the coverage of an existing

commercial broadcaster. The original project was founded by Ian Rowe, Johnny Robinson, Richard Grace & Greg Stevens in 2004, who were all presenters at Swindon FM at the time, along with Shirley Ludford, former employee of both BBC Radio Wiltshire and GWR FM and who was subsequently appointed Station Manager.

2012 the Parish organised an 'It's a Royal Knockout' for Stratton St Margaret schools and presented all infants and juniors with a Jubilee mug. Photographs of the event can be [viewed by following this link](#)

2013 - 23rd June, Stratton has its own radio slot on Swindon 105.5, to be broadcast on the fourth Sunday of each month and again at 1 pm the following Tuesday. Slot to cover all aspects of life, events and history of the parish.

2013 the Parish re-introduced the St Margaret's 'Feast Day'. Spread over 4 weekends in July, with events throughout the Parish, the Festival on the 20th July attracted around 5,000 visitors. Photographs of the event can be [viewed by following this link](#)

As part of the Community Governance review Swindon Borough Council votes to remove NYTHE from the parish against the recommendation of their own working group and local feeling. NYTHE will be a separate parish with 7 councillors from May 2015.

WEATHER

25/04/1908 Major Snowstorm reported in local papers.

Spring 1938 Drought – only 2 small showers in 3 months.

February 1940 saw the great freeze which started with freezing rain which collected on telegraph wires and eventually brought the down.

26/12/1962 Snow started on Boxing Day and ended up lasting to Easter with temperatures dipping to -15C.

08/12/1981 Snowstorm followed by temperatures down to -20C.

25/01/1990 Gales damage Grange Junior School, 1 child is killed. Locally a lot of damage is reported.

20/07/2007 Floods affect the whole area and all main roads are closed

Christmas 2012 – first white Christmas in area since 1952.

01/04/2015 – After Community Governance Review Borough Council decided to remove Nythe from Stratton control and set up separate parish with 7 councillors to be elected in May elections.

August 2014 – Parish have new Peace Memorial dedicated, Located at Eastern end of Grange Drive it is to the memory of all fallen.

April 1st 2015 – New Parish boundaries come into operation, Business area around Sainsbury's becomes part of South Marston, Nythe Estate becomes it's own Parish and all of Stratton wood is now in Stratton.

References:

¹ - From records at National Archives, Kew