

Part 1 - A Short History of the Parish, continued.

It seems extremely doubtful that there was a settlement at Stock in early Saxon times. At this time the population of the area was concentrated at Buttsbury, 1½ miles to the west. This early predominance of Buttsbury explains why, until quite modern times, Stock village was divided between the two parishes of Stock and Buttsbury, the parish boundary running through the middle of the "Cock" Inn. Postcards of quite recent date show the portion of Stock High Street by the green as "Buttsbury High Street".

Later on in the Dark Ages a hamlet grew up at Stock, The question arises - how did the name of "Stock" originate? The earliest known version is in 1234, when it was known as Her(e)ward(e) Stoc(ke), similar versions occurring in 1238, 1251, 1268, 1334, and 1372. In 1370 it was Herwarstok; in 1373 Herefordstok; and from 1467 to 1472, Harwardstok. In 1476 we come across the version Herford Stocke, and by 1608 Harvard Stock or Stock Harvard had emerged as the form in common use. In more recent years the prefix (or suffix as the case may be). "Harvard" has been dropped, and the village has been simply described as "Stock", except in official documents.

The Essex historian Morant states that the name was derived from the Saxon word "stocce", meaning "a log of wood". Most of Morant's place name derivations, however, are dubious, and this particular suggestion seems somewhat unlikely, for it conveys no particular meaning.

The most probable theory, and the generally accepted one, is that the name originated from "Stoks", meaning a place within another district. As I have already mentioned Stock was originally a hamlet within the parish of Buttsbury. A steward was probably appointed to administer the "Stoks" in Buttsbury. The Saxon word for "steward" is "Hereward", thus giving us the other part of the 13th century "Herewarde Stocke". I have already shown how this finally became "Stock".

There is no separate entry for Stock in Domesday Book, since it constituted part of Buttsbury, or "Cinga" as it was then called. At the time of Domesday Book the countryside provided a very different picture from what it does today, Most of the land was still covered in woodland, and Stock would have been a clearing in the great Forest of Essex.

In 1381 the discontent of the working classes of the country was reflected in the Peasants Revolt. Stock played an active part in this uprising, as is shown by the following extract from the "Coram Pege Roll", originally reproduced in the Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society, Volume 1 (New Series) - "Inquisition at Chelmsford ... before Robert Tresilian and his associates ... It was presented that numerous persons of Fobbyng, Stanford, Mokkyng, and Horndon, with a certain weaver dwelling in Billerica, and one John Newman of Raverth, a common thief, and many other men of the villis of Rammesden, Warle, Herwardstok, Gyng, Bokkyng, Goldhanger, Reynham, Weide, Benyngton and Gyng atte Stanē (Ingatestone) rose up against the King and gathered to them many malefactors and enemies of the King, and made congregations at Brentwood on the Thursday after the ascension, and they made assault on John Gildersburgh, John Brampton, and other justices of the peace, with bows and arrows, pursuing them to kill them .." The document goes on to record that the rebels went to Creasing, and destroyed the Prior's house there, and took away his goods. They then broke into the house of the Sherrif of Essex at Coggeshall, and took away £1,000 and afterwards "rode about armed in a land of peace and did many ill deeds."

After Richard broke his promcbeses, and Wat Tyler was killed at Smithfield, the Essex members of the revolt fled to Billericay, and barricaded themselves in Norsey Woods, between Billericay and Stock, with carts and ditches. Here they were pursued by an army led by Sir Thomas of Woodstock and Sir Thomas Percy. They were no match, however, for the trained soldiers and in the resulting Battle of Billericay over 500 rebels were killed. No doubt among those dead on the battlefield were many from Stock..