

*History of King's Stanley (including Middleyard and Selsley)*. Peter Griffin, Past Historic, 2020. 388pp, numerous b/w ill. Paperback, £15.00. [ISBN 978-1-8383718-0-7.]

Very many parish histories have been published over the past few decades, but few can rival this parish history in the use of sources. The author, Peter Griffin, was a familiar figure in Gloucestershire Archives over many years, researching all available references to King's Stanley, his family's ancestral home for over 400 years. Peter studied history at Wadham College, Oxford and taught history at Katherine Lady Berkeley's School, Wotton-under-Edge. He retired in the late 1990s and continued his research until his death in 2020. His daughter Kate Griffin finished editing his book and prepared it for publication with the assistance of Richard Bryant and Carolyn Heighway of Past Historic. Howard Beard of Stroud sourced most of the pictures.

The village of King's Stanley is located about 3 miles west of Stroud and the parish is contiguous with the parishes of Rodborough, Stonehouse, Leonard Stanley and Woodchester. It included Selsley and Middleyard until 1863 when Selsley, previously known as Stanley End, became a new ecclesiastical parish with the consecration of the church built by the Marling family.

The name King's Stanley probably dates from the period between 1160 and 1188 when the manor was in the hands of the Crown and distinguished it from Leonard Stanley, then usually known as Monks' Stanley.

The book starts with evidence of occupation in prehistory from excavations by David Evans of two Neolithic pits. Three sites of Roman occupation have been found which is not surprising considering the abundance of Roman occupation in the surrounding area with villas at Frocester, Woodchester, and Kingscote.

A market and fair were established in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century but by 1500 they had declined due to competition from neighbouring Leonard Stanley. The book describes the dual lordship of borough and manor which was held by the Earls of Arundel until 1560 and continued as a dual lordship until 1617 when the borough lordship was sold. The subsequent owners of the lordships are described, and the court records, which extend to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, are quoted extensively.

The woollen cloth industry played an important part in the history of the parish with its many mills and their owners are traced in detail ending with the Marling family who had a major influence on the parish. The rise of this family from humble beginnings to a baronetcy and their increasing involvement in the affairs of the parish, including the purchase of the borough lordship in 1863, led to disputes with various rectors who were fellows or alumni of Jesus College, Cambridge which had purchased the advowson in 1736. This came to a head over designs for the restoration of St George's church in the 1870s. Marling wanted to appoint G.F. Bodley as architect, knowing his work from the building of Selsley church, and the rector, John Gibson, wanted the architect William Burges. On this occasion Marling won but to avoid further conflict Gibson undertook work east of the chancel arch whilst Marling undertook the rest.

A chapter covers the history of the major buildings using sources such as deeds, sales particulars, census returns but surprisingly not the Lloyd George survey, the field books of which are in the National Archives at Kew.

Selsley Common is a well-known landmark in the Stroud District and was used for quarrying stone and grazing cattle and a place where large public meetings were held. There is an interesting account of disputes over the ownership. In 1852 Samuel Marling proposed the enclosure of the

common. This was heavily criticised by many influential people throughout the district and he was defeated. However later, as lord of the borough, he clashed with William Leigh who had established the Catholic church and monastery at Woodchester and had acquired the lordship of the manor, over the division of the common and one of the stone quarries. Leigh was a Roman Catholic whilst Marling was an ardent Low Church Anglican, so it is not surprising that there were disagreements.

There are numerous chapters describing, education, the church and nonconformist places of worship, local government, the military, welfare, law and order, social life, all the result of the author's many decades of research. Some chapters seem to have been added almost as an afterthought, such as a tour of the parish, perhaps to ensure that the full extent of the author's research was included.

The book contains an index but there are no reference notes and no bibliography. Whilst the absence of references does not detract from the importance of this history, a list of sources would have been especially useful for others wishing to study local history.

The only other omission which would have assisted the reader who is unfamiliar with King's Stanley is a series of historic maps. At the end of the book is a modern map showing the locations of some of the houses and farms mentioned in the text but many of the properties described in the book are not shown.

This book ranks alongside the work of the late Eddie Price on nearby Frocester as an example of a parish history written with an extensive knowledge of the area, the geography, geology, local traditions, and contacts with many families who had lived in the parish for generations. Only with these advantages coupled with meticulous research can a book of this quality be produced.

JOHN LOOSLEY

Stroud