

INTRODUCTION

Five books have been published about Stock - "Parish Registers of Stock Harvard 1563-1770" by E.P.Gibson (published in 1889); "Annals of Stock" by E.P.Gibson (1914); "A Brief History of Stock" by L.D. Jarvis (1934); "Rectors of Two Essex Parishes and Their Times" by F.W.Austen (1943); and "All Saints Parish Church, Stock Harvard" by L.J.H. (1961) - but only one of these gives a comprehensive outline of the history of the parish - L.D.Jarvis's "Brief History of Stock", now unfortunately out of print.

The object of this book is to fill that gap by providing a short outline history of the parish, together with details of the history of its historic buildings. With this end in mind I have divided the book into two sections - one giving a general history of Stock, the other describing and tracing the history of its many historic buildings.

I would like to express my thanks to the staff of Chelmsford Public Library Reference Section, and to the staff of Billericay County Library for their invaluable assistance in the compilation of this book.

PART I - A SHORT HISTORY OF THE PARISH

Stock stands in an elevated position above the Essex plain, the highest point in the village being 318 feet. Because of its relatively high position, excellent views may be obtained of the countryside for many miles around. To the south the land drops steeply to the valley of Stock Brook; to the west and east the land slopes more gently to the valley of the River aid, and Hanningfield Reservoir respectively; to the north a ridge of land undulates gently towards Chelmsford.

Little is known of the prehistoric history of the village. It has been suggested that the village was on an ancient salt trackway, leading from Maldon by way of Stock and Kelvedon Hatch to Theydon Bois and Hertfordshire. Salt was a vital commodity in prehistoric times, and in view of the evidence brought forward to support this theory, it seems quite likely that Stock was on a prehistoric saltway.

More concrete evidence of early British occupation is provided by the traces of an ancient entrenchment, situated at the Roman Catholic cemetery. Vague traces can still be seen of a deep ditch or moat, which apparently once surrounded the site. This site commands an extensive view over the countryside, an advantage which would have attracted the ancient Britons. The purpose of this encampment could Well have been to guard the saltway I have mentioned. If this was the case, then it is safe to assume that there was a prehistoric settlement of some sort at Stock.

In the 19th century workmen digging in this area discovered various specimens of Roman urns and vases. This seems to suggest that when the Romans occupied Britain they utilised the encampment for their own purposes.

Roman finds have also been discovered in the neighbourhood of the Church, and it seems very probable that there was a Roman settlement at Stock, although it was probably not a very extensive one.

The Roman road from Tilbry to Chelmsford via Billericay (which followed the route of an old trackway) passed through Stock, and there is evidence that there were other Roman roads in the area. In his book "A Detective In Essex" Mr.Donald Maxwell traces a Roman road (which he suggests followed the line of an Old British trackway) from Maldon via Woodham Mortimer and Foxborough Farm to Stock Church, thence on to Mountnessing and Shenfield, joining the Roman Road from London to Colchester at Brentwood, Another possible Roman Road can be traced along footpaths and roads from the Roman Road at Heybridge, past Bacons Farm, across the site of an old bridge below Buttabury Church, joining the Buttsbury-Stock road at White's Tyrrells, and thence continuing to Stock.