

The 6th Stratford Reunion April 11th -13th 2012

This year was something of a special celebration being our 10th Anniversary since the “clan” first came together in 2002. Sadly, many of those who were with us then could not make it this year for various reasons.

David and I arrived at the ‘Craven Arms’ in Brockhampton at 11:30am, just ahead of our illustrious organiser, Sheila Duncombe. This year Sheila came on her own as Gordon was not able to accompany her. Those of us who know Gordon, missed him, having got to know him well during the last 10 years.

We were looking forward to meeting new “cousins” this year, June, Amanda, Helen and John Stratford Browne who had flown in from Australia (see Sheila’s spreadsheet for their twigs!). John, who appeared not to be disappointed, had not just come to meet us as he also has a daughter, Angela, living in the UK.

After discovering our location in the ‘Craven Arms’ we waited for everyone to arrive, it wasn’t long before this happened and we duly introduced ourselves. It did not disappoint as we were all soon chatting away nineteen to the dozen! John had had the foresight to print off a photograph in order that he could recognise most of us, it worked a treat. We drank to absent friends and remembered Gerald Stratford in particular, without whose research, neither this nor any previous reunions would have taken place.

We were delighted that Amanda could bring her children with her who are really interested in Family History, it’s good to know that our history will be in good hands in the future!

For the cousins who could not stay for long we really did a whistle stop tour to Farmcote. We managed to stand in front of St. Faith’s Church for a group photograph, thanks to Tony and his super camera. His expertise lay in being able to include himself in the shot and also demonstrated his athletic prowess! We were able to enter the church and discuss the Effigies there.

It was at this point that Helen and June had to leave us because of their busy lives. We know that they were inspired with what they saw and are now enthusiastic members of the “clan”. Those of us remaining went to the ‘Hatherley Manor Hotel’ in Down Hatherley, a lovely venue not far from Gloucester Airport, set in beautiful grounds. Having found our rooms we met

for dinner where Amanda was able to join us as her children were staying with their grandmother in Cheltenham.

After breakfast on Thursday we discussed places that people might like to visit. The first stop would be at Temple Guiting, then on to Guiting Power.

The weather was rather changeable, typical April showers and some sun. By the time we reached Temple Guiting the sun was shining. We managed to walk down the front drive un-challenged and ring the door-bell of the Manor House where some of our Stratford ancestors lived.

We had reason to believe the house was a hotel but it transpired that it was a very posh self-catering venue, which could be hired by a large party - perhaps for our future consideration!! The grounds are absolutely beautiful, with wonderful views, and there is also a tennis court.

Our lunch venue was the 'Bear Inn' at Bisley, which Sheila had booked for us. A very good lunch followed plus another photo opportunity.

We took a short walk after lunch to Bisley church but as we had heard thunder in the distance we felt it wise to dress for the occasion. A sensible decision as it happened; we had no sooner entered the church than the heavens opened to a violent hailstorm! We felt that we were in just the right place. The storm lasted for quite some time and when it finally eased off, the churchyard was covered in hailstones, as were our cars.

Dodging between heavy showers and local flooding, we managed to find our next stop which was Miserden church. This time, bathed in sunlight we were able to explore the church and grounds in a more leisurely manner.

We made our way back to our hotel for the last time and our last evening meal together. This time our numbers were reduced once more, as Amanda had to get back to her family and home.

We were somewhat dismayed that the hotel's hot water system had failed and we were unable to shower, it was kettles to the fore, but we are a stoic lot! Some of us were so tired that we retired before being able to sample the hotel's liqueurs on offer as compensation!

On Friday morning after breakfast we gathered in the room that we had been allocated for our meals to discuss possible future reunions and our website. A very useful discussion ensued and all existing and new members will be advised of the progress of both, in due course.

We agreed that the Website would be called "The Stratfords".

To include:

1.) The source of our basic knowledge, supplied by Gerald Howland Stratford.

2.) Evidence:

a) Burke's Peerage (Morgan Stratford)

b) Holinshed project

c) Visitations of Gloucestershire

d) "Long Forgotten Days to Waterloo" by Ethel M Richardson 1928 and now to be found in full on Ancestry.

In fact, all of the above can be found on the "web".

I would like to say a huge "thank you" on behalf of all of us, to Sheila for organising this event once again and to thank everyone who made it such an enjoyable occasion. It was an extremely good reunion and equal to the very good ones that we have had in the past.

I would also like to mention that John Browne has given me copies of some papers kept by his mother, regarding the Stratford family. I am in the process of trying to unravel some of the relationships mentioned and at the moment I have more questions than answers! It may prove to have a bearing on where Gerald and I fit on the "Tree" and of course our nearest cousins.