The de Stinchcombe Family

Estimated reading time: 4 minutes

The Early Years

Less than 100 years after the Norman Conquest, references to the "*de Stinchcombe*" family start to appear in the Berkeley Castle records. The earliest (c.1150-1160) refer to Roger and Harding. Roger is also mentioned c.1170-1190, as is Ralph.



French Knight, 14th Century, by Paul Mercuri (1860) Rawpixel original lithographs by rawpixel

The men who gave Piers Court its name

The Name of "Peter de Stinchcombe" now appears in the ***Berkeley Castle*** records from the early 1200s to the early 1300s.

John Smyth's ***A Description of the Hundred of Berkeley in the County of Gloucester and of its Inhabitants Vol III Sir John***

Maclean (ed) p354 says that Piers Court took its name from three or four men called Piers, Peter or Pierse who lived there. He remarks that, as far as he can remember, the last male in the line was Thomas. Smyth claims that Piers Court passed to the Bradston family during the reign of Edward III (1327-1377), but he does not know whether this was by purchase or by marriage.

Alleged Dark Deeds

The ***Origins of the Stinchcombe Families website*** refers to there being a petition against Peter de Stinchcombe (Piers de St Combe) in 1330. A few years later, in 1337, he is charged with a major felony.

Recently, I found some more information on the petition in a book called ***Petitions and Strategies of Persuasion in the Middle Ages*** edited by Thomas Smith and Helen Killick. A chapter by Gwilym Dodd refers to a French language petition from the people of King's Barton, near Gloucester, against Sir Thomas de Bradeston (Breadstone). De Bradestone is accused of allowing his wife to harbour his valet, Piers de St Comb, who has murdered his own wife by burning her in her bed. Piers is supposed to have buried the body in the garden for 7 weeks and then tried to dispose of it in the River Severn.

Piers' other alleged crime involved William de Melksham of Melksham Court. Sadly I haven't discovered any more about that yet. I suspect there is something in N. Saul's book ***Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century.*** Accordingly, I'm on the look out for a reasonably priced copy. Although Piers seems to have been acquitted, there are no further references to de Stinchcombes in the Berkeley records after 1327.

A More Illustrious Family Member

That last reference to the family locally relates to William de Stinchcombe. Lord Berkeley (Thomas III) grants this "hopefull Scholer, five pounds a year for his better maintenance until hee shall be promoted to a benefice of twenty pounds a yeare". If William was a young scholar in 1327, he must have been born when the de Stinchcombes still owned Piers Court. We do not know who his father was or if he ever lived there.

A William de Stinchcombe, probably the same one since the name, dates and profession all fit, went on to become first the Chaplain at Westbury and then the Rector of Taynton, near Newent.. Various references have been found for the period 1327 to 1377. These occur in the Calendar of the Patent Rolls , the Calendar of the Close Rolls and the Inquisitions Post Mortem Edward III.

- search ***British History On-line*** (hint: use the archaic spelling **Styntescombe** or less commonly **Stintescomb** in searches)

A Recent Find

We were happy to hear through our metal detectorist contacts that a handsome silver seal matrix belonging to William de Stinchcombe had been found in the Newent area. He would have used this to make an impression on wax seals to authenticate documents and prevent tampering. Even better was the news that the find has been properly reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme. A full description and images are included on their ***website***

Stinchcombes around the World

Regrettably, there are currently no Stinchcombes in Stinchcombe, unless you know different, but there are people of that surname elsewhere in the world, from nearby villages

to distant countries. From time to time one of them contacts the History Society – only last December I heard from a college student in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He was researching Stinchcombes in World War II for a course project.

Most of these Stinchcombes descend from later inhabitants of the village rather than from the first holders of the manor of Stinchcombe. Before surnames came into widespread use people would often be identified by their town or village of origin.

We are always glad to hear from anyone who shares the name of our village, no matter how they acquired it!