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THE BOOK OF STINSFORD

THOMAS HARDY'S MELLSTOCK

Kay Kearsley and Mike Cosgrove

The parish of Stinsford has hamlets and settlements at Higher and Lower Bockhampton, Stinsford, Bhompton, Higher Kingston, Kingston Maurward, Coker's Frome, Frome Whitfield and Waterston Ridge. Perhaps because of the proximity of Dorchester, two miles away, there is no shop, school or village hall and no pub, whilst the beer-shop at Lower Bockhampton closed in the 1860s! The parish is now no longer dominated by the two great estates of Stinsford and Kingston Maurward but much of the land is now occupied by Kingston Maurward College.

Thomas Hardy, poet and novelist, was born at Higher Bockhampton in 1840 and in his novels he used the name Mellstock for the parish of Stinsford. His birthplace, Hardy's Cottage, is visited by many thousands of people each year from this country and abroad.

Stinsford is a popular place to live in and visit. There are a large number of listed buildings and its character is protected by conservation areas. The parish has five large country houses, Birkin House, Frome House, Kingston Maurward House, the Elizabethan Old Manor House and Stinsford House. Their history, the stories of their owners, those who worked in them and the people who lived in the parish have been collected together in this book.

Stinsford and Bockhampton Village History Group was formed in 2004. The group's ambition has been to share the results of its research by publishing a book of photographs, recollections and memories of people living in the parish and others who now live elsewhere, including Second World War evacuees. In 2005 it held two exhibitions of photographs from the collection, visited by over five hundred people. As a small group with limited financial resources it is glad to realise its ambition through the Halsgrove Community Histories series.



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