

STOKE BY NAYLAND

Stoke (stow = holy place) had an important Saxon monastery, endowed by the family of Byrhtnoth, hero of the battle of Maldon. Little Domesday tells us that the church had 60 acres of free land. The manor had woodland for 20 pigs in 1086, whereas in the time of King Edward 20 years earlier it had 60 pigs.

The present church, built by Sir John Howard, first Howard Duke of Norfolk, Shakespeare's Jockey of Norfolk, stands on an escarpment north of the Stour with its 120-foot tower of brick and flint dominating the landscape for many miles. It "has inspired English landscape artists from Constable to Piper" (Simon Jenkins, 1000 Best Churches, where Stoke church gets three stars).

Constable painted it many times, and selected Stoke church as one of his examples of how English landscape could provide subjects for landscape painting fully the equal of Italy or Switzerland, saying that ". . . the Tower, from its commanding height, seems to impress on the surrounding country its own sacred dignity of character."

The southern half of the parish including much of the village belonged to the Rowley family, an important naval dynasty. Their house, Tendring Hall, by Soane, was demolished except for the portico after WWII. Gifford's Hall, in the north-east of the parish, is described by Pevsner as "one of the loveliest houses of its date [early C15] in England".

The village is a Conservation Area, with many fine mediaeval houses. The parish has over 100 listed buildings, two Grade I (the church and Gifford's Hall), five Grade II* (Thorington Hall, Street House, the Maltings, the Guildhall and Downs House).



St. Mary's Church

Stoke has a Post Office/general store, a Primary school and a Middle school, and two highly successful gastro-pubs (the Angel and the Crown). The Rowley estate, as well as providing the Primary school site and a huge "Rec" in the centre of the village, has recently made available three adjoining parcels of land to a Community Woodland Group, to be managed for wildlife, education and public access.

Outside the village there are now two modern businesses, arguably rather too successful for the AONB: Copella the apple juice operation, now owned by Pepsico; and the Golf Club (Jim Lawrence Ironworks having relocated to Hadleigh).

Roger Clark at Weylands Farm ploughs using only Suffolk Punches, and Simon & Tracey Hayter at Scotland Place Farm will sell you lamb from pedigree sheep and traditionally reared pork from rare breed sows (albeit fewer in number than in 1086).

