

## Pen Selwood History Society Draft notes

(please advise any corrections and additions to Geoff for revision).

hosted by Peter Fitzgerald, Pen Mill 13th Jan 2015

21 people attended

**Where and what is Egbert's Stone?** Introduced by Peter

Egbert was Alfred's grandfather and was King of Wessex.

*"The location of Egbert's Stone, where Alfred gathered his army before the battle of Ethandun, has been a subject of debate for many years. There are several possible locations, but clear evidence*



*is very slight, and the conclusions drawn by historians are really only based on calculated guesswork. Wiltshire folklore indicates two sets of sarsen stones which are in the right general area and which might be Egbert's Stone. The first is the boundary stone (ST773312), which was traditionally set up by Egbert at the side of the river Stour where the borders of Wiltshire, Somerset and Dorset meet. The place where three roads or boundaries meet is a powerful place in folklore, and this might indeed be a favoured location for a meeting-place. The other place is at Kingston Deverill, where some sad-looking sarsen stones are propped together in an enclosure near the church. We are told in Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine that in 1877 "certain large stones were examined: they are called 'Egbert's Stones' or 'King's Stones' and are spoken of by the Saxon Chroniclers; they were brought by a farmer from King's Court Hill, where King Egbert is traditionally said to have held court..." The Haunted Landscape*

Peter prefers the boundary of the 3 counties as the true location and can lead us to the stone.

Looking at an 1815 map the boundary is where the old main road, which followed Long Lane and went straight on to Zeals, crosses the River Stour - seems like a good place to meet!

Peter read from a translation of the Saxon Chronicles (here is the Britannia's translation)

*"In the Easter of this year King Alfred with his little force raised a work at Athelney; from which he assailed the army, assisted by that part of Somersetshire which was nighest to it. Then, in the seventh week after Easter, he rode to Brixton by the eastern side of Selwood; and there came out to meet him all the people of Somersersetshire, and Wiltshire, and that part of Hampshire which is on this side of the sea; and they rejoiced to see him. Then within one night he went from this retreat to Hey; and within one night after he proceeded to Heddington; and there fought with all the army, and put them to flight, riding after them as far as the fortress, where he remained a fortnight. Then the army gave him hostages with many oaths, that they would go out of his kingdom.*

*They told him also, that their king would receive baptism. And they worthiest men that were in the army, came to him at Aller, which is near Athelney, and there the king became his sponsor in baptism; and his crism-leasing was at Wedmor. He was there twelve nights with the king, who honoured him and his attendants with many presents."*

<http://www.britannia.com/history/docs/871-78.html>

There was a lump of earth near the stone - a burial mound perhaps, though it has never been excavated.

## The History of the Church introduced by Charles Buckler



Charles first quoted from Arthur Mee's book "King's England"

You'll find dates and facts about the church on the village website at <http://penselwood.ning.com/page/church-1> There is a Norman doorway and a Norman font. William Barnes visited and included the doorway in his Somerset engravings. Charles passed round a copy.

It is a 14th C church the tower was rebuilt in 1450.

Charles particularly drew attention to engraved ends of pews. Richard Place has photographed these in his collection (see Peter to borrow the folders). They were carved by Mrs Angel, and depict figures engaged in agricultural pursuits and there are 3 panels containing the name of people liable for Lay subsidy, and the names and occupations of the tithing men of 1560 and 1569.

He gave us details of the bells. Again facts and figures are on the website.

Charles estimated that at the time of Domesday the population stood at 100+



[All pictures by Richard Place]

### Where was the Common Land in Pen Selwood?

Peter introduced this topic and shared some fascinating maps, which identified two large areas of common land which were later split into 'allotments'. [Peter, what were their names?] Leigh Common is probably a third.

Enclosures - a division of common land. For more background see <http://www1.somerset.gov.uk/archives/ASH/Encs.htm>

There is a good radio programme with Melvyn Bragg discussing the Enclosures at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00b1m9b>