

FACTS ABOUT THE HAMLET OF STONECOMBE, EAST DOWN

Stonecombe is situated to the north of the parish of East Down, and lies along the road that links the B3229, at Kentisbury Ford, to the A3123, at Coil Cross. To the north of the hamlet is Mattocks Down, the site of a fierce battle between Roundheads (or Ironsides) and Cavaliers during the Civil War around the 1650's. The narrow lane leading due south from Stonecombe, passes through Bugford before joining the main East Down road that runs through Clifton, passing the Manor, Village Hall and Pyne Arms, towards Brockharn Bridge on the A39.

The four properties that now form this hamlet were once all owned by the same family. Two generations of that family still own two of the houses there today.

Like most hamlets, Stonecombe has developed around a farm, with properties being built on the land to accommodate additional members of the family and farm workers. These additional buildings have subsequently been sold on as farming methods and family needs have changed over more recent times.

The detached house to the right of the properties adjacent to the road, was originally the dower house of the Lerwill family that owned Maddox Down Farm, 200 yards up the road towards Coil Cross. Two sisters lived here, and the other houses alongside were farmworkers cottages.

In front of the detached house there is a grassed area lying between the road and a small stream. Around the beginning of the 20th century there was a building on this piece of land and, believe it or not, it was a tailor's shop. It was a very successful business too, as the tailor made bespoke suits for many of the people living in, and around, the parish, providing a living for him and his wife, and their four children. It is hard to imagine the demand for such a product, even nowadays. When you think that the nearest bespoke tailor today is 10 miles away in Barnstaple (and I am not sure what volume of trade they do) it seems amazing that Stonecombe could support it's own tailor, especially as Kentisbury also had a tailor employing nine workers at the same time!

The tailor, and his family, lived in Combe Cottage, which is the white cottage that nestles in the hillside above the roadside properties. He rented his properties from the farm owner. There never used to be vehicular access to this cottage. Access was only by foot along a track that ran along the eastern side of the aforementioned detached house. Linking cottage to shop. Although this track is no longer in use and steadily reverting to nature, a right of way still exists for the occupants of Combsbe Cottage!