

# DOWN MEMORY LANE

## Medieval Stewkley

### The Moated Site at Nuneham Hill Field

The second of the three evidential medieval sites in Stewkley is another moated site, created some time in the 12th or 13th-centuries, and lying 200m south-west of St Michael's Church. It is set in the slope of Nuneham Hill Field and today is an important feature in the private grounds of Tythe House. This moat measures some 38m both north-west to south-east and north-east to south-west between each outer bank. Three of the arms contain water between 8 and 10m wide and up to 3m deep, with the eastern corner being dry. In medieval times, the island may have been used for horticulture, and more recently, the moat was used as an element in an ornamental garden landscape.

This site, and the other at Stewkley Grange (*Grapevine March 2023*), may offer some clues to the two discrete estates in Stewkley at the time of the Domesday Book in 1086. They certainly form a noteworthy class of medieval monument, signifying wealth and status in the countryside, rather than defensive positions. Interestingly, there appears to be no evidence of building or settlement in the case of the Nuneham Hill moated site. Indeed, the Manor House, a little further along today's High Street, may have been a late or post-medieval replacement for this moated site.

The site has long been associated with the church in Stewkley. Estate documents and enclosure award maps of the 19th-century show it to have been held by the church. The 1811 Enclosure Award Commissioners' map has the moat lying in a meadow marked as the Glebe, and the 1814 Award map has the land held by William, Bishop of Oxford, and his tenants.

The setting of this moated site and its historic relationship with Stewkley Church make it of prime importance to the village and locality today. In recognition of this, it was listed and protected by Historic England in June 2013 as Scheduled Monument No 1405589.

*The Grapevine Heritage Correspondent thanks Historic England and the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society for access to Records of Bucks archives in researching this article.*



© Images used in Grapevine are produced with the permission of the persons supplying them, are copyrighted to them and may not be reproduced. We are not able to supply copies.

#### FROM THE GRAPEVINE

##### 10 YEARS AGO...

From April 2013, there was much rejoicing in the Vale as the Dorcas Lane wind turbine proposal was refused by AVDC...the Annual Parish Meeting was due on 30 April with reports on all PC and village group activities in 2012...SLHG announced the launch of a village wells and pumps survey...the vicar, Rev Derbyshire, had a rant at the increasingly secular establishment, fearing the country's complete descent into some pagan moral black hole...the Short-Mat Bowls Club was about to line up in the final of the John Robinson Cup...young Cricket Club players Thomas Faulkner and Ben Peacock had been selected for county and district development squads...local artist Diana Sheldon had paintings selected by the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours in London...Nature Watch reported the arrival of spring with male and female catkins on the alder tree in the Reserve...and the Players own 2014 *Calendar Girls* calendar was a sell-out.



#### FROM THE GRAPEVINE

##### 20 YEARS AGO...

From April 2003, the Methodists were planning events to mark the centenary of the building of the High Street church in 1903, contact having been made with all those still living who were baptised or married at the church...the village mourned the passing away of Anthony Askew, a 'sound' wizard with Stewkley Players...detective work had been exploring a Stewkley letter postmarked Leighton Buzzard on 31 May 1844 with confirmed date mark arrival in Aberystwyth on 1 June 1844. The letter's provenance was the sleuthing matter, but how quite remarkable that in the days of the horse-drawn mail, a letter could be delivered 200 miles away next day with a 'tuppenny blue' postage stamp (heads-up Royal Mail!) ...the Tennis Club were victorious off-court for the third occasion in the Scouts' Quiz run by the Dakin family...and the Friends of St Michael's School were organising new annual publication, a Stewkley Directory.

