

## **Clyst St Mary and Sowton: Historical Overview**

Below is an overview of some of the important sites, features and buildings within the Neighbourhood Plan area. It is based on information currently held on Devon County Council's Historic Environment Record (HER).

Archaeological evidence indicating prehistoric activity is recorded in the wider landscape. Neolithic and Bronze Age flints have been found and a number of possible prehistoric or Roman enclosures and field boundaries have been identified through geophysical survey or are visible as crop marks. Both the A30 and the A3052 to the east of Clyst St. Mary are thought follow the lines of Roman road although its route west across the Clyst is not clear.

Documentary and place name evidence indicate that Sowton, Bishop's Clyst and Clyst St. Mary have medieval or earlier origins. Buried evidence for former buildings or structures may well be present, therefore, within the historic cores of these settlements and these may be affected by any development here. There is also the potential for the survival of earlier historic building fabric within apparently later structures.

The old bridge is a key feature which played an important part in the prayer book rebellion of 1549. It is first documented in 1238 and the two low arches at its western end may date from that time. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The leat and tailrace to/from the former Clyst Mill are also important features. Although the present mill building is thought to be 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century in date, there are documentary references to a watermill here in the late 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. This may have stood just downstream. The leat and its associated tailrace likely, therefore, to be also medieval in origin.

Bishop's Court was originally the site of a palace of the medieval Bishops of Exeter. Although the building was remodelled in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, medieval fabric survives. To the south-east is a former tithe barn probably dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century; the adjoining stable clock is early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Branching off the A3052 to the east of Clyst St. Mary is a medieval hollow way leading to Oilmill Cross which once formed part of the boundary of the medieval estate of Clystwicon. The parish boundary runs along it.

It is notable that a number of the listed buildings in Sowton date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, while the village hall is thought to have originated as an 18<sup>th</sup> century barn. In Clyst St. Mary, Craigs Cottages date to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Brockwell (not listed) is suggested to date to the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Newhouse is thought to have a 17<sup>th</sup> century core. Within the wider landscape, Dymonds Farmhouse for example was built in 1676 and Old Kiddicott is a 17<sup>th</sup> century remodelling of an earlier house. Opposite, to north of the present Shepherds Farm is the site of the former farmstead which reputed to be that of a medieval manor house.

There are also more modern features of interest within the neighbourhood plan area. The weirs and leat to the former Sowton Mill survive, which are probably at

least 18<sup>th</sup> century in origin. 38 and 39 Sidmouth Road are the former Sandy Gate toll house built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Both parish churches were considerably altered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Along the 3052, Linden Lee is a small traditional early 19<sup>th</sup> century cottage. White Lodge and Red Lodge are former lodges to Winslade Park. White Lodge is the earlier and more elaborate, built in 1812. Sowton Lodge, Court Lodge and East Lodge were built in 1834 as lodges for Bishop's Court.

Within Westpoint is Home Farm, a planned farmstead built in 1846. Between Westpoint and the Cat and Fiddle Estate is the site of a former 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century brickworks.

Of recent date, are the two nissen huts in the grounds of Oakview House which were part of a German prisoner of war camp at Dymonds Farm. There was also a military camp in the grounds of Bishops Court. In Sowton, the War memorial stands as an important reminder of all who gave their lives in the first and second world wars.