

Holidays with a religious connection

The Diocese of Salisbury – Day 7



The exquisite church of St Peter, Stourton – alas, now undergoing expensive repairs due to the greedy and selfish actions of lead thieves.

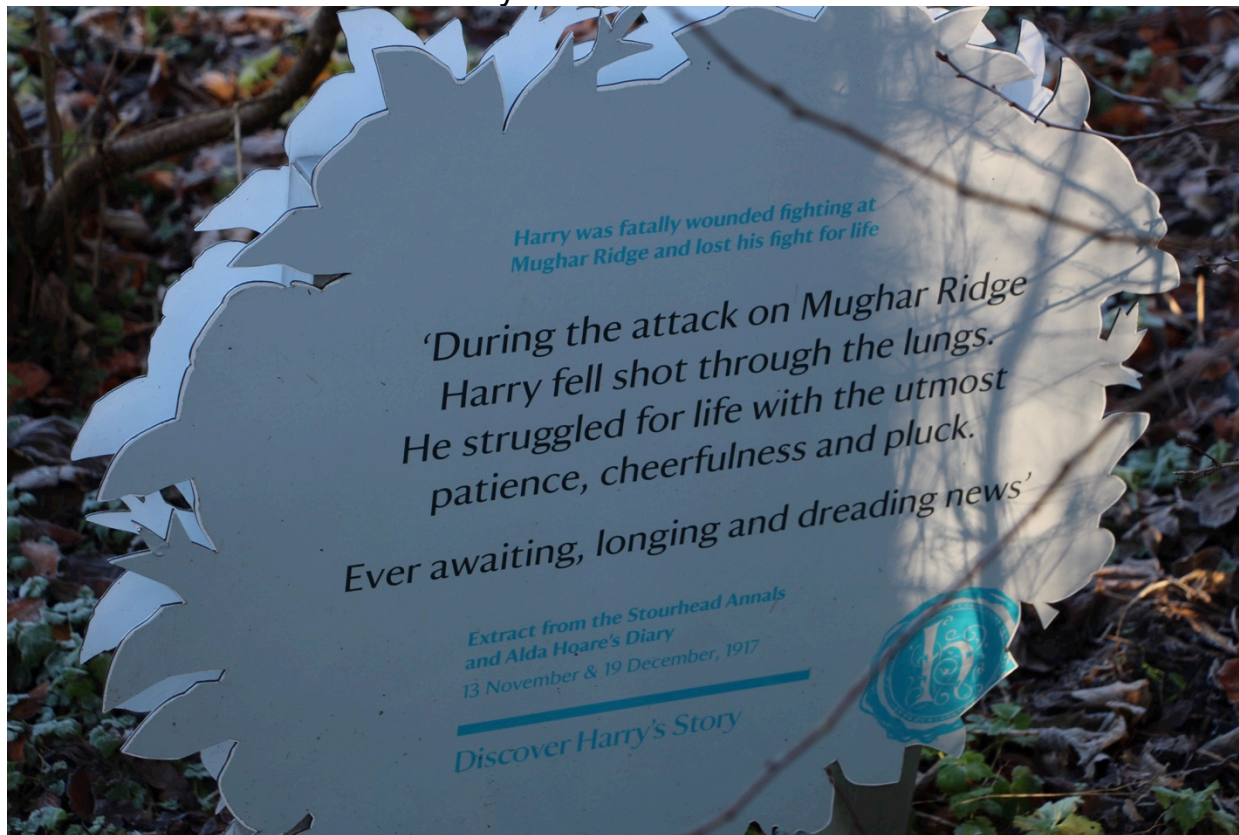
Day 7

Our final day in the Diocese of Salisbury was spent at one of the most beautiful National Trust properties Magda and I have ever visited - **Stourhead**.



Stourhead is a very extensive property with a beautiful lake in the grounds.

Arriving at the Visitor Centre and Restaurant, visitors make their way down a zig-zag path to the House, Village and Lake. Beside the path, there are boards carrying snippets of the story of the **Hoare family** that owned the house in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



After an idyllic childhood on the estate, the heir joined the army during the First World War. He was fatally shot at Mughar Ridge in December 1917.

The medieval church of St Peter stands immediately outside Stourhead Gardens, looking out over the neo-classical 18th century landscape designed by **Sir Henry Hoare II**. The earliest record of a church here dates from 1291, and it seems likely that the north nave arcade and tower date from that time. The lords of the manor were the Stourton family, and their family vault is under the present north aisle.



St Peter, Stourton was the family church of the Hoare family.

In 1717 the Stourton estate was purchased by **Henry Hoare**, and he renovated the medieval church in 1722. Hoare built a large altar piece to span the entire east wall, and built his own family vault. A later rebuilding in 1848 inserted a Hoare family pew, complete with its own fireplace for comfort. There was an extensive reordering and renovation of the church in 1887.



The chancel at St Peter's, Stourton.

It was essentially a family church for Stourton, then the Hoare families, and there are many effigies and memorials to family members around the church.



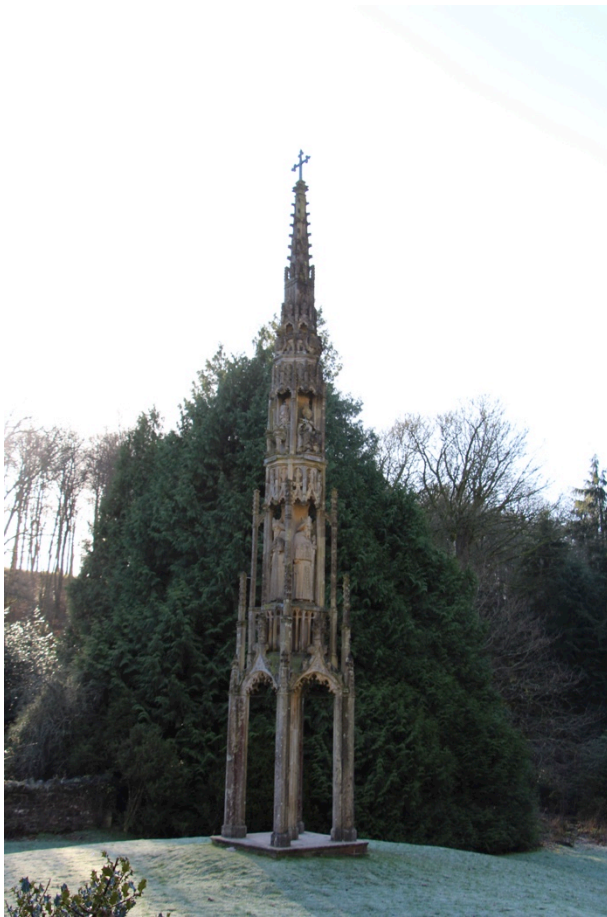
In the north chapel is a large altar tomb to the 5th Lord Stourton and his wife (circa 1536). The effigy of Lord and Lady Stourton (left) are wonderfully sculpted, with small effigies of their children kneeling in an unusual position behind the couple's heads.



On the south wall is a memorial to Henry Hoare II (1705-1785), the creator of Stourhead Gardens.



From the churchyard there is a wonderful view of the lake and the 'Bristol Cross' in the middle distance.



The Bristol Cross was erected in 1373 at the crossroads of the four major streets leading into Bristol. It stands 39 feet high and originally had niches for Kings John, Henry III, Edward III and Edward IV. In 1633 they added Henry VI, Elizabeth I, James I and Charles I. 100 years later it was causing an obstruction, so it was taken down and put into store. There were protests, so it was re-erected on College Green, land owned by the Cathedral. In 1765 the Dean gave it to Henry Hoare to ornament Stourhead garden.



Henry Hoare II, who designed the magnificent Stourhead gardens.

Henry Hoare II (1705–1785), known as **Henry the Magnificent**, was an English banker and garden owner-designer. Henry's grandfather, Richard Hoare was a goldsmith-banker and Lord Mayor of London. His father, Henry Hoare I bought the ancestral estate of the Stourtons and built a Palladian villa designed by Colen Campbell. When his father died, Henry Hoare II was 20 years old. He was educated at Westminster School.

Henry dominated the Hoare family through his wealth and personal charisma. He was a partner for nearly 60 years in C. Hoare & Co. His nickname, "Henry The Magnificent", derived in part from his influence as a great patron of the Arts, but more particularly because he laid out the gardens at Stourhead in Wiltshire, an estate bought by his father. In the thirty years after his mother died in 1741, he worked on the gardens at Stourhead, planning and planting what became a "masterpiece" of European garden design. In the 'school' of Poussin, it was said to be "more beautiful than any landscape put on canvas". The gardens were admired as a showplace^[5] and Capability Brown, the renowned landscape gardener, was well known to Henry. In 1734 he was elected Member of Parliament for Salisbury.



A view of the magnificent sweep of the lake at Stourhead. The Pantheon is in the distance across the lake.



Walking along the wooded pathways around the lake at Stourhead.



The Pantheon at Stourhead.

Famous architect Henry Flitcroft was commissioned to design the **Pantheon**. In 1753 local mason William Privett started to build it using Chilmark limestone with a brick and timber-supported dome.

Modelled on the Pantheon in Rome, it was originally called the Temple of Hercules as it was home to a statue of Hercules created by Rysbrack. It was renamed the Pantheon when statues including Diana, Flora, Isis and St Susanna were added in the 1760s.

Stourhead was Henry the Magnificent's country house and he spent 20 years and £20,000 creating the garden which showed his social status and wealth.

The Pantheon can be viewed from across the lake and is iconic to this world-famous landscape garden. It was used by the Hoare family for relaxation and as a place to entertain guests. In 1762 Horace Walpole said that the Pantheon had few rivals 'in magnificence, taste and beauty'.



As we completed our circuit of the lake at Stourhead, we saw the Temple of Apollo on the distance. This circular temple was built in 1765, by the architect Henry Flitcroft, to outdo William Chamber's earlier Temple of the Sun at Kew. It is dedicated to Apollo, the sun god. Nestled on a hilltop, the temple has delightful views over the lake.

Martin and Magda Jones

January 2017

St Peter's Stourton

<http://www.britainexpress.com/counties/wiltshire/churches/stourton.htm>

<http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/2014/06/16/stourhead-wiltshire-st-peter/>

<http://www.stourhead.colindaylinks.com/Church1.html>

Henry Hoare:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Hoare

The Pantheon:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/stourhead/features/the-importance-of-the-iconic-pantheon-at-stourhead>

The Garden:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/stourhead/features/a-classical-journey-through-the-garden>