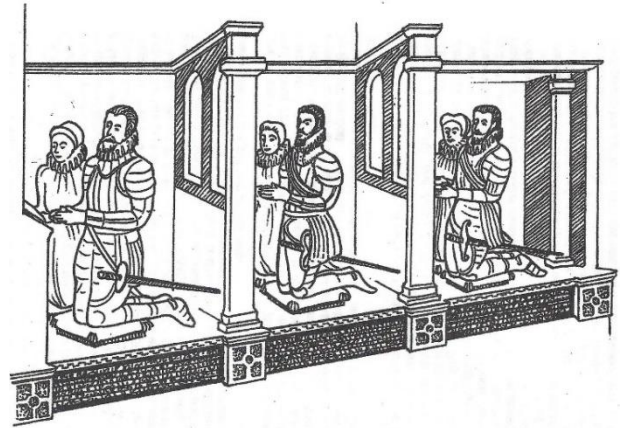


Musbury Heritage – The Drakes of Musbury

In November this year, Lieutenant Colonel Anthony John Mervyn Drake of Musbury Barton turned 90 years of age. Former Coldstream Guards Officer, High Sheriff of Devon, Chairman of Devon Council, Chairman of Musbury Parish Council and East Devon District Councillor, also simply known as Tony Drake to those better acquainted.



Colonel Drake is a direct descendant of the 'Drakes of Musbury', who go back much further than those immortalised in the Drake Memorial in St. Michael's Church. These Musbury Drakes are an ancient family, probably descendants of the Dracos or Dragos, the Anglo-Saxon tribes. Perhaps they inhabited the Iron Age hillfort that we now know as Musbury Castle? They certainly lived in Mount Drake and Ashe House many centuries ago. They were also the Lords of the Manor of Musbury from the 16th to the 18th centuries. This included Ashe House, plus a great deal of property and land in Musbury. They also held the advowson of the living (the right to appoint the clergy) for St. Michael's Church.

This means the Drakes wielded considerable control over our village, but it was to come to an abrupt end. In 1733, William Drake the 6th Baronet died without issue. The baronetcy became extinct and he left all his property to his widow, to the exclusion of his own family. Lady Drake died in 1782 and Ashe, the advowson of the living and all the estates were disposed of. This brought to an end the Drake family's connection with Musbury.

By the time the Drake family's involvement in Musbury ended, there were many branches of the descendants of the couples depicted on the Drake Monument in the church. Lt. Col. Drake is descended from one of those branches. Many Drakes have held high offices, senior ranks in the military, clerks in Holy Orders and other influential roles. There are also family members spread around the world, particularly in the U.S.A. And we must not forget that Elizabeth the sister of John Drake, the 1st Baronet, married Sir Winston Churchill (1620-88 of Minterne Magna, Dorset) and was mother to John Churchill who became the 1st Duke of Marlborough. If you follow that line of descendants, you will arrive at a rather more famous Sir Winston Churchill!

We may be a small village, but Musbury has, most definitely, made its mark on British history.

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