The Beginnings of Prosperity. 1400-1500.

Life in the village began to settle down and more land became available to rent following the 'Troubles'. It became possible for ambitious villagers to increase their leaseholds and become small tenant farmers, perhaps employing a labourer so that productivity could be increased. People with specialised skills such as a blacksmith, could earn their living largely by their trade. Locally sheep farming was now of major importance.
The increased prosperity of the village had allowed more wall paintings to be added in St. Mary's and it now had a tower with a peal of bells.

M Bailey in Medieval Studies. Ed. Franklin and Harper
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1440-Camping Close.

Do you know where Camping Close is located? It's a lot smaller now than it used to be. Was it a camp site?

'Camping' was a game not unlike rugby, but often much more violent.

The game took place *"amid shouting and roaring of the population. Players were not disposed to treat one another gently. Some games even turned so nasty that there was serious injury and loss of life".*

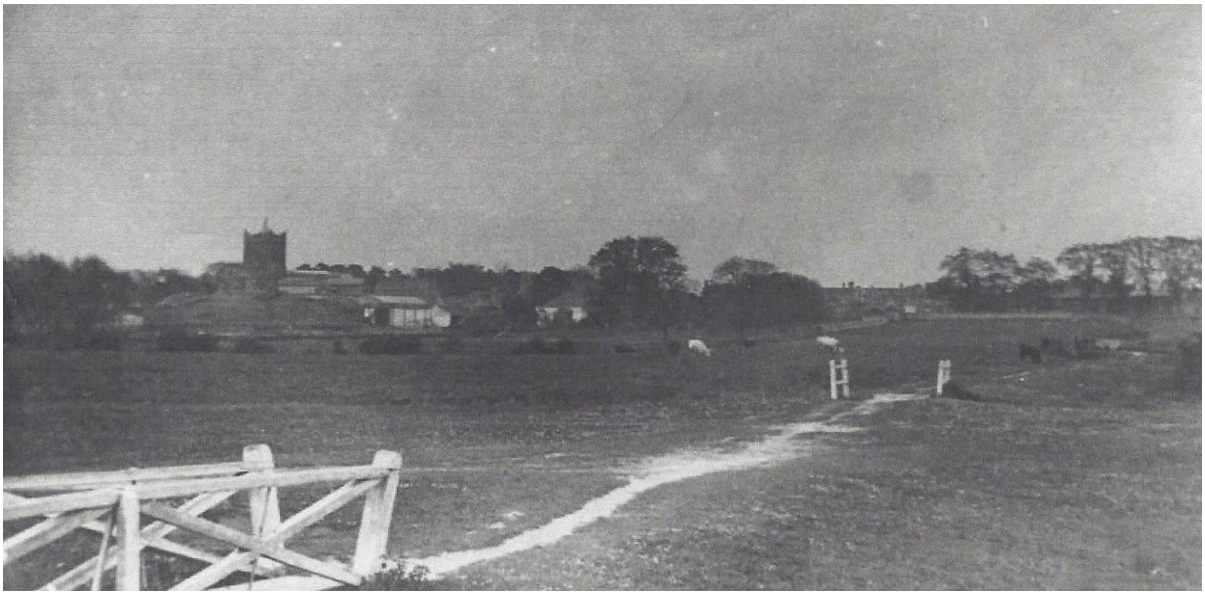
Moore. Historian and observer 1823.

Camping, campion or camp-ball was very popular, particularly in East Anglia and was often so violent that eventually a special camping ground or 'close' was set aside for it to reduce property damage. Games often took place after Church so the close was situated nearby as in Lakenheath. It was probably the site of the archery butts also. Archery practice had been made compulsory for all males in the reign of King Henry III in 1252.

Wikipedia

Games often took place between different parts of the village, for example, North v. South and on occasions villages would challenge each other. The game died out in the 19thC but it continued here, in living memory, during the Annual Fair which took place on the Camping Close.

To find what's left of Camping Close follow the path at the side of the Brendan Fulham Centre.



The Lakenheath Boy Bishop.

At Christmas-time it was common to choose a boy to act as a 'spoof' bishop who would parody the role for a few days. He would hold a humorous 'Ecclesiastical Court at which judgements were given, fines or forfeits imposed and 'sermons' preached; he had a licence to poke fun at individuals and gave out lead tokens as rewards for good service during his brief period of office.

Wikipedia

We know that this custom was followed in Lakenheath due to the discovery of one of these tokens by RON MORLEY some years ago.

1460-83 St. Mary's Church.

Greater prosperity enabled the number of bells to be increased; one dated 1460 is still rung and has an inscription which reads, "Saint Katherine Pray For Us".

In 1483 WILLIAM LACY, a wealthy villager, bequeathed money to provide new benches (pews) for the church. The benches which are still in the church, are said to be amongst the most important examples of medieval woodcarving in East Anglia.

The rest of the bench ends can be seen on the Wall Paintings website
https://web.archive.org/web/20231203174026/http:/lakenheathwallpaintings.co.uk/index.html
click on CHURCH.