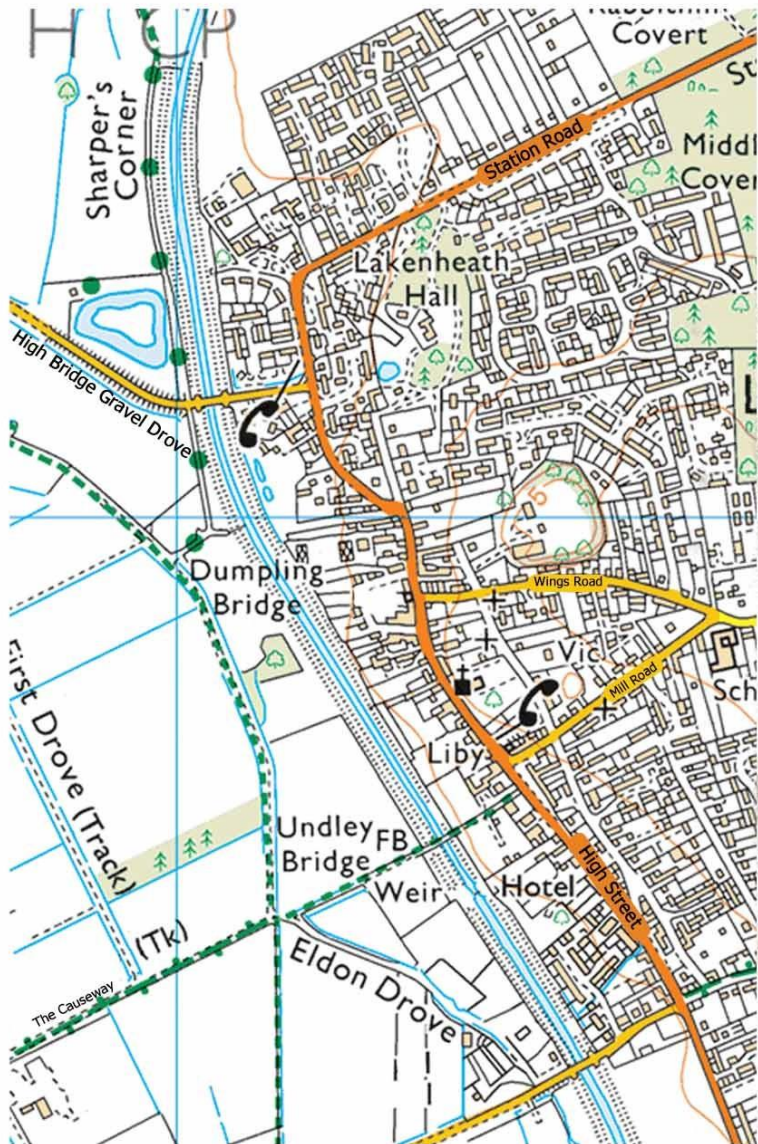




**HERITAGE TRAIL**



## Modern Lakenheath



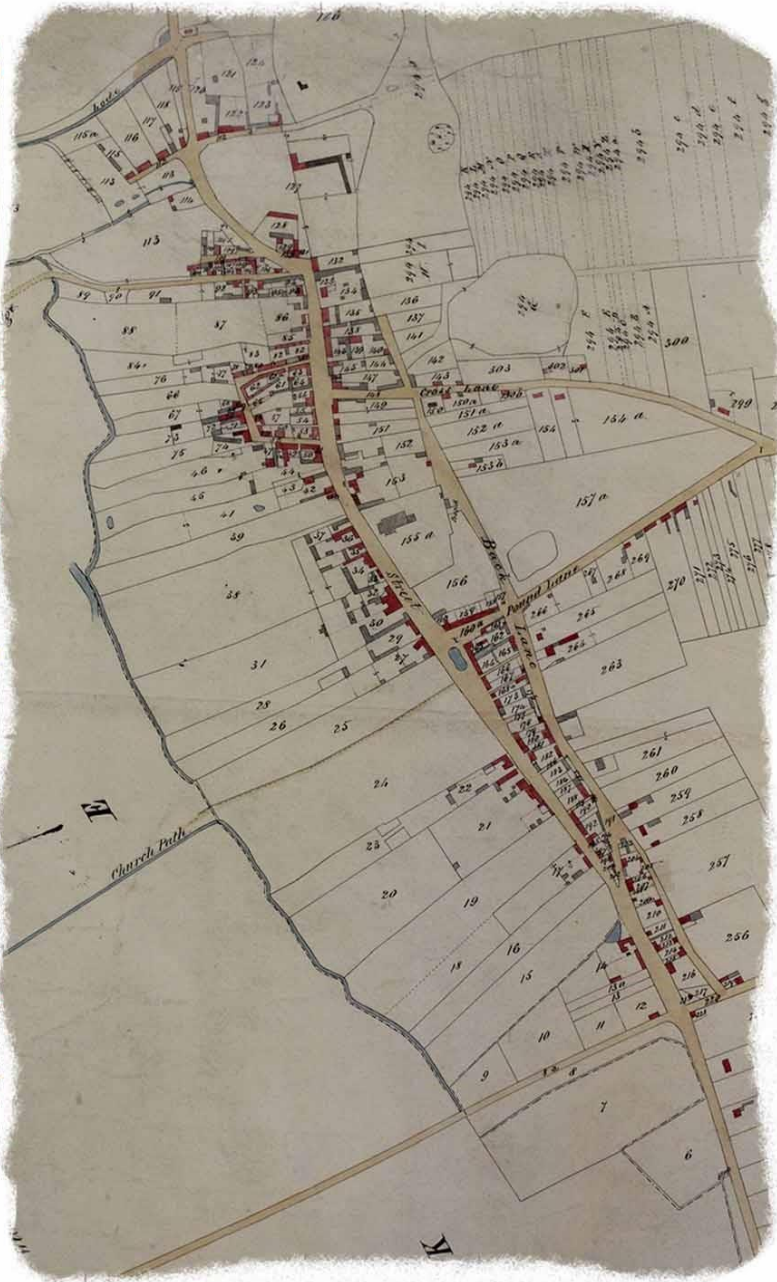
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OS (100061394)

The historic core of Lakenheath still remains after 160 years.

Note some road name changes:

2019	1853
High Street -	The Street
Back Street -	Back Lane
Wings Road -	Cross Lane
Mill Road -	Pound Lane
The Causeway -	Church Path

## The Village in 1853

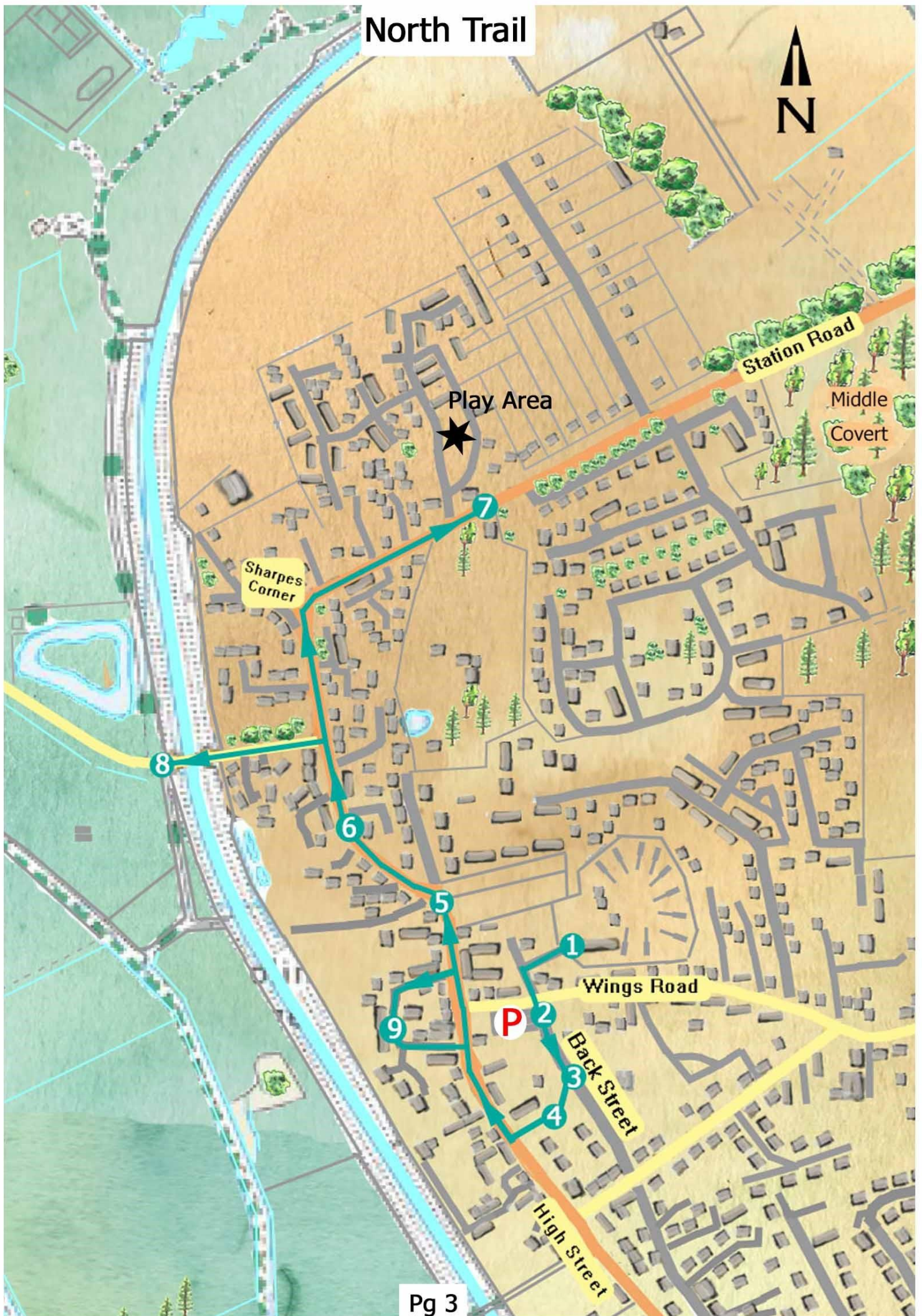


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Tithe Map and Apportionment 1854

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# North Trail





# North Trail points of interest

## Lakenheath Football Club

Map point 1  
off Wings Road



Exposed chalk slope



Clunch and flint wall



### Lakenheath Rovers

The village has a long established Football Club dating back to early 1900. They were in the South-East Anglian league soon after its formation in 1903, which became the East Anglian League in 1908. There were various regional leagues evolving during the 20th century and in 1935 the Eastern Counties Football League was formed (currently known as Thurlow Nunn) and the Rovers eventually joined this league.

The club obtained its current unique ground after WW2 when the pit was converted into a sports pitch.

**The Chalk Pit** is the largest and oldest of at least three in the village and now home to Lakenheath Football Club. The nest (as it is known locally) was worked for several centuries to extract the hard chalk known as 'clunch' (which was made before lime) and was a vital building material for the area and there are many examples of the use of chalk in the village.

Workers also extracted flints from the pit and also made lime which was used to make mortar or used on farming land. There were two lime kilns on the site right up until the 1900s. The sides of the pit are steep and over 15m deep, now largely covered in mature trees. Most of the villages along the fen edge had chalk pits.

Map points 2  
to 4  
Back Street

## Chapels and Churches



Methodist Church built in 1835

The village was at the forefront in Suffolk for non-conformist religion with both baptist and methodist chapels being built early on.

John Wesley (Co-founder of the Methodist Church) visited the village in 1757 and afterwards he attended a service at the first methodist chapel built in Suffolk that once stood in Anchor Lane.



1911



2019

Assembly of God Church built in 1815 originally the 'Independent Church'.



**St Marys Church** with its churchyard gives the centre of the village a magnificent focus and a church has stood on this location since early Norman times.

Originally built in flint and ironstone with later brick repairs, the internal timber roof is of particular interest and the Norman chancel arch is considered to be the best in Suffolk.

You are welcome to look inside.

There are some fine medieval wall paintings and carvings. The rare wooden bench ends show carved representations of medieval life and myths. Can you spot the lion looking at the mirror and the wrestlers bout?



# North Trail points of interest

Map points 5  
to 6

High Street

High Street



Chalk Farm - north side view circa. 1920

Prior to 1959 the dwelling was occupied by local farmer Mr J Wilson and his sister.

**Chalk Farm** is one of many listed buildings in the village, built in about 1700 with a 15th century core. It has alterations from the 19th and 20th centuries and became the doctor's surgery in 1959 and remained so until 1991 when a new surgery was built in the south of the village. The name Chalk Farm speaks of past times when the rural economy and local resources were critical to the wellbeing of the community.



**The Gatehouse** at the entrance to Hall Drive was built in the 19th century. The north gable wall has a blind gothic window with 'Y' tracery, made with knapped flint. Perhaps this feature was included because it faced the the main building on the estate and there was a desire to enhance the view for the estate owners.

Note the original gate pier with stone pedimented cap on the north corner.

circa. 1919 - the hall lost the thatched roof to a fire in 1962



THE RETREAT FROM THE DRIVE LAKENHEATH. 28.

There has been a substantial dwelling in the grounds of Lakenheath Hall Park for many centuries. The most wealthy inhabitants of the village have lived here and built and rebuilt their home to the taste of the times.

Occupants

**1460** John Lacey - his brother William paid for the wooden carvings in St Mary's Church.

**1532** Simon Styward - brother to the Prior of Ely Abbey

**1799** Robert Eagle - named the Hall 'North Lawn Cottage'

**1890** Sir William Dunn MP - Baronet of Lakenheath named the hall 'The Retreat'

**1937** Sir Charlton Briscoe - fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. Lady Briscoe was President of the W.I. and was responsible for several archaeological excavations in the parish and wrote 'A History of Lakenheath' in 1951

The estate has shrunk somewhat since the 1500s but an example of its dominance in the village can be demonstrated by the owners' requirement in the 17th century to have the direction of the High Street altered so it was further away from the Hall.

Map point 7

Station Road

Lakenheath Hall (The Retreat)



**North Lodge** is thought to be built by the same architect as the hall. The design is eclectic Tudor style with half timbering and Arts and Crafts influences.

Before WW2 there would have been a pair of fine wrought iron gates between the brick pillars known as 'Plum Pudding Gates'. Note the left hand pillar is original.



North Lodge circa. 1900



# North Trail points of interest

Map point 8  
Highbridge

Fenland Ways

Historically, the repeated flooding of large areas of fenland was a major problem and a concerted effort to reduce the risk started in 1630 by a group of investors known as the Gentleman Adventurers.

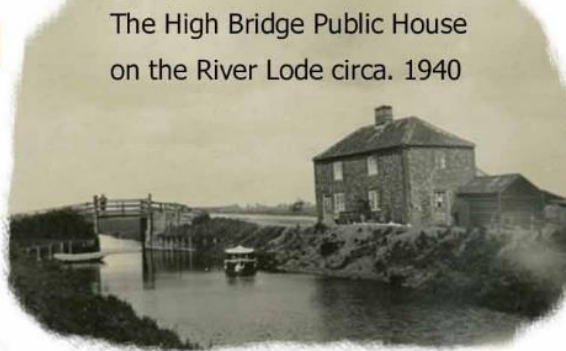
They contracted a dutch engineer Cornelius Vermuyden to carry out the work.

Civil war and local opposition meant that the first drainage system for Lakenheath Fen wasn't in place until 1665. Fen

dwellers relied on wildfowl, fish, eels, reed cutting and peat and their ancient way of life was threatened.

However, flooding continued to be a problem for the community for some time with loss of crops and the hardship that followed. The 'Cut Off Channel' that would eventually help

solve the problem was originally suggested by Vermuyden and because of the cost, didn't get constructed until 300 yrs later in 1964.



The High Bridge Public House  
on the River Lode circa. 1940



**Cut off channel** - 28 miles long from Mildenhall to Denver (Norfolk) collects water from River Lark, Little Ouse, and River Wissey.

The rich peat soil of the fens, once drained, is prime arable land. The bank beyond the field to the left is the line of the old Lakenheath Lode now filled in. Before the fens were drained the only way to Ely for villagers was by boat along the Lode.



**Anchor Lane** The River Lode was a major transport route for the village in the past with a number of quaysides along the Fen Edge. Transporting gravel, sand, sedge and stone was a thirsty business and Anchor Lane was the village hub that fed and watered the busy work force. It was also the area most likely to have housed the market place in medieval times.



The Harbour Public House (Coronation Day 1937)

**11/13 Anchor Lane** was once the 'Harbour' public house it is a listed building with a 17c core The view to the left side gives a sense of a route down to the waters edge.



1853 Tithe Map of Anchor Lane

Serving the Quayside

Map point 9  
Anchor Lane



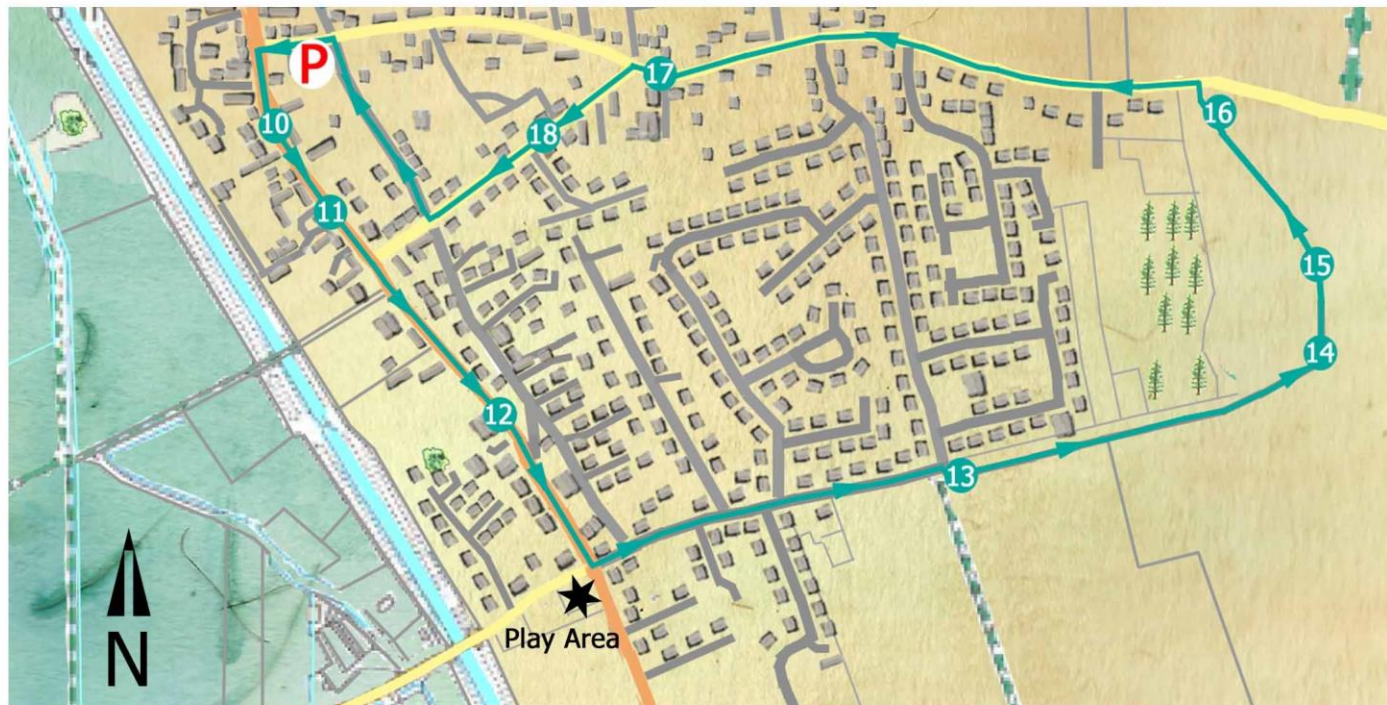
**Anchor House** was formerly the Anchor public house and would have been frequented by the bargemen from the nearby quay. Around the corner used to be the local brewery known as Bala House that also supplied beer to the 'Tap Inn' in the high Street.

The village was granted permission to have its first market by King John in 1201 at this time the village belonged to the monks of Ely who charged tax and rent and controlled what work was done within the manor.

The market would have traded wool, rabbit meat and fur, and any surplus grain.



## South Trail



## South Trail Points of Interest

Map point 10  
High Street



As time moves on, the needs of the community change. What was once an essential requirement can suddenly become obsolete. In the past, the village had as many as thirteen public houses. In medieval times beer was likely to be the safest drink for young and old alike as water quality was not guaranteed. Before the motor car, the blacksmith and the wheelwright would have been kept busy with yards and premises just off the high street.

Map points 11  
to 12  
High Street

Elegant Premises



Former establishments included:  
Henry Flatts bicycle shop-Mill Road  
Grimmer Watt's Bakery-next to 42 High St  
Arthur Barkers Saddlers-75 High St  
the 'Electric Cinema' 64/66 High St (closed 1930)

Today we rely upon the supermarket for much of our goods, whereas less than 50 years ago the high street was dotted with small businesses essential to village life.

One business that didn't need premises was that of a Mr Gathercole - one of the last local Eel Catchers. He carried his eels around the village in a sack and sold them for one shilling (5p) for Half a bowlfull.



The south trail is very different to the north trail and will take you out from the centre of the village and up on to the 'Warren'. Here many centuries ago an ancient river called 'the Bytham' dropped sand and gravel deposits in this area until it was destroyed by advancing ice sheets 450,000 years ago.



The well drained sandy soil was easy to burrow in to and perfect for rearing rabbits and from as early as 1300 an area of over 900 hectares was maintained as a Warren in this area with banks built along the boundaries to keep the rabbits in.

The rabbit was introduced from southern Europe by the Normans and is not native like the Brown Hare. At first it struggled in the harsher winters in East Anglia and would not have been seen outside of a Warren, until the 1700's when feral populations started to spread.

The Abbots at Ely owned the Warren and in 1384 the income from rabbits was double the income from the sale of wool for the Abbey. Wool became the backbone and driving force of the medieval English economy between the late thirteenth century and late fifteenth century, yet on the poor sandy soils of the brecklands the rabbit was able to compete successfully for several centuries.



Mr Challis the last Shepherd  
of Lakenheath



The Bell Hotel 1908

The Bell Hotel (76 High St) - was one of the oldest hostleries in the village and the most prestigious. Here 'well-to-do' travellers stayed, farmers met, auctions and meetings were held and announcements were made by the Town Crier. Later it became the Cromwell Inn and then the 'Vintage Hotel' before being converted to dwellings in 2009.



Goward House 2019



Goward House 1965

Goward House (124 High St) dates back to 1665 and like several of the grand houses in the village it has seen many changes. It has a distinct Regency front and was the residence of George Goward who set up a charity in 1741 that gave 10 shillings per month in bread to the poor of Lakenheath. John Pells, Deputy Grand Falconer of England, was born in Lowestoft. In 1860 he demonstrated the skills of Falconry at Sandringham before the Prince of Wales.

On his retirement in 1865 he moved to Goward House where he died in 1883. Part of the house became a Victorian shop front (bow windows) and was the village chemist until the 1970s when the building was established as the Lakenheath Hotel. The hotel was closed in 2016 and converted into private residences.



# South Trail - points of interest

Sand and Defence

Map points 13  
to 14

Broom Road



Stone Sifters 1900's

**Broom Road** was one of the main routes for transporting sand and gravel down to the quayside on the west side of the village. In 1863 much of the land to the east of the village was purchased by Prince Duleep Singh who had escaped persecution in India. He employed over 50 men in the pits at the top of the hill who were known as 'Stone Sifters'. They were paid based on how big their heaps of stone were at the end of a back-breaking day. When you reach the end of the track continuing on from Broom Road you will find many areas where the stones used to be dug out by hand.



Underground monitoring post



Orlit post (the building behind the metal fence) was used to identify enemy aircraft. The underground monitoring post is hidden behind this.

**The Royal Observer Corps** were responsible for the manning of underground monitoring posts during the Cold War (1955-1991). One such structure sits close to the Triangulation Point and replaced a timber WW2 Observation Post. There were over 1,500 located in the UK and were constructed to protect the three occupants from nuclear radiation. Most are now derelict or sold into private ownership.

Much of the area to the east of the village was used for a variety of temporary military purposes prior to 1914, such as bombing and artillery practice, ammunition dumps and tank training. In 1941 the War Office purchased 1,800 acres and created an airfield. It was enlarged in 1944 which led to the closure of the old Lakenheath to Brandon Road. After closing in 1944 it reopened 1948 when it became a United States Air Force Europe base.



## The Warren

Map point 15  
to 16

Maisdcross Hill

The **Nature Reserve** has dry sandy soil that has layers of chalk appearing in places near the surface. This type of landscape extends for many miles to Brandon and beyond. It forms part of a unique area known as the 'Brecks' and much of the land you see here (including the airbase) was historically used to farm rabbits. In medieval times rabbit meat from Maisdcross warren would have been sent to the Abbey at Ely.

The flora that inhabit this desert-like landscape are rare and some species are found nowhere else. For this reason Maisdcross Hill is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and is managed as a nature reserve for its wildlife.



Grape Hyacinth - common in gardens, but there is a rare 'native' form found on the reserve that has a plum-like scent.



The **National Mapping Agency** (OS) started installing 'Trig Points' across the UK in 1935 to help develop an accurate measuring system across the country. Usually placed on a hill or elevated position, when they were first put in you could see two others from each point (triangulation). Today aerial photography and Geographic Information Systems are used for mapping to leave the Trig Points as 'obsolete obelisks'.



**Oak Trees** can look very different on the sandy warren soils, they tend to be short and squat specimens that, none the less, give welcome shade in the Summer months.



The **Celtic Cross** was first installed in 2008 as a community art project, at this time the warren was being grazed effectively by the rabbits. You will notice today there are more trees and shrubs on the landscape because the rabbit population has declined. The cross was refurbished in 2018 following a renewed interest in the poems written by locals remembering their childhood on the Warren.



The **Scots Pine** has been traditionally planted in the area for many years as a wind break to help reduce sand being blown off the fields. When mature, the tree has a distinct mop head and orange tinged bark on the canopy branches.



# South Trail Points of Interest

Education

Map point 17  
Cemetery Raod

## The Village School

400 years ago there were no schools in the village and only a lucky few boys might receive some teaching from the local vicar. It wasn't until 1870 that a formal approach to education was adopted in England. Prior to this education relied upon endowment and church schools but attendance wasn't compulsory.



Lakenheath School 1906

The first 'schools board' school was built in the village in 1877, a substantial Victorian establishment with the capacity for 300 pupils. It originally had an impressive bell turret, but this is thought to have been the victim of a violent storm in 1919.



## Cemetery

Following a parliamentary decision in 1862 that burials could no longer take place in St Marys Churchyard a cemetery was established in the village in 1896 with a small chapel for services.

One of the more famous families buried in the churchyard were the Kitchener's, ancestors to Lord Kitchener of Khartoum Minister of War. The first Kitchener to arrive in Lakenheath was Thomas Kitchener in 1693 (Lord Kitchener's great/great grandfather). Thomas contributed to the casting of a new bell in St Mary's Church that still rings today. There are 13 family headstones in the churchyard.



Emma Rolph

## The Governess

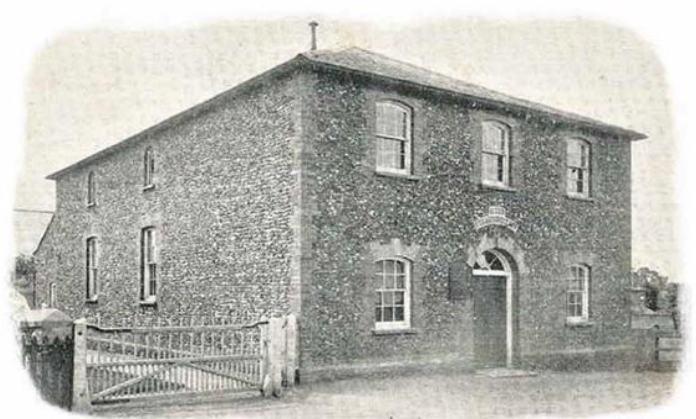
One of the early problems for the schools board was finding suitably qualified teachers. This was initially resolved by appointing older pupils as 'pupil-teachers'. They effectively learnt on the job.

One such pupil was Emma (Lucy) Rolph who went on to be the head of the school and a big influence on the affairs of the village. She was known locally as 'Governess Rolph'.



Lord Kitchener's Ancestors house 1927





The Baptist Chapel circa 1917

The Baptist Chapel has changed little since it was built in 1845, the knapped flint walls with white edging bricks demonstrate the versatility of local materials for building. The Baptist Church is one of the longest standing non-conformist religions and celebrated its 400-year anniversary in 2009.

### Renewable Energy

As we grapple with climate change in the 21st century, it is interesting to consider that more than 200 yrs ago the village was already making use of sustainable energy sources with windmills and windpumps.

Between 1750 and 1850 nine such structures were built in the parish, one of the most prominent on the landscape was a 'Smock' windmill that stood opposite the school (at the end of Mill Road). It was built in 1783 and was demolished in about 1910. Two mills stood south of Broom Road; Claypits Mill stood off Undley Road (next to Old Gravel Way); and standing out on the fens were five wind pumps including Turf Fen Mill, Cross Waters Mill and Great Fen Mill (which was demolished in 1949).



Clay Pits Mill 1934

During the late 1960's youngsters from the village would change behind the mills brick walls to go swimming in the pond nearby.



Great Fen Mill 1935

In the background you can see the diesel powered pump house that replaced the wind pump.

The wind pumps were there to help with drainage across the fens. With the advent of the steam pump and then diesel powered pumps these iconic structures slowly went in to disrepair. A few have been restored in the region but there are very few 'Mill Wrights' around today that have the range of skills required for restoration.



The public house, as the main stay for refreshment and socialising, has been in decline for over 50 years. Here is a list of the ones that have disappeared from the village and a few photos that may jog the memory of some villagers.

The Anchor, The Bell Hotel, The Chequers, The Green Dragon, The Half Moon, The Harbour Inn, The High Bridge Pub, The Old Bull, The Plough, The Star, The Swan Hotel, The Waggon and Horses.



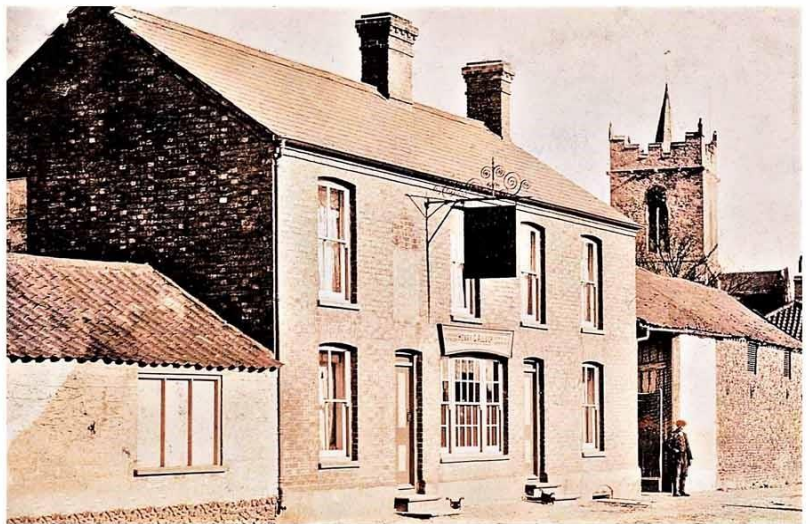
The Star - High St  
Publican Mr Gathercole



The Plough - 1914



The Chequers - in the foreground



The Old Bull - circa 1912  
Publican Mr Henry G Allsop



The Swan Hotel



The Half Moon



## **Lakenheath Village Heritage Trail.**

**In memory of Roy Silverlock (1927-2018), villager and local historian.**

Towards the end of the 1990s, Roy Silverlock, developed a Lakenheath Village Trail which was adopted by Forest Heath District Council and a trail pamphlet was produced. Before he brought his family to Lakenheath, Roy was a Principle Agricultural Officer in the Gold Coast, now Ghana in West Africa, having also served in the West Indies. His first wife, Vida, was the daughter of an African Chief. Later in England he became a teacher of Rural Studies at Brecklands Secondary School and then at King Edward VI School in Bury St Edmunds.

Roy wanted the village heritage to be better known and appreciated but sadly the trail never achieved the recognition it deserved and was quickly forgotten.

The Heritage Group came upon the trail by accident shortly before Roy's death and recognising the wealth of knowledge and information that Roy had gathered over the years decided that such an important piece of local work should be re-established both as a tribute to Roy and for the benefit of all villagers.

Lakenheath Heritage Group 2019

### **Village Amenities**

There are a number of cafes to choose from in the village and pubs in the High Street.

Public Toilets are next to the car park in Wings Road and the Childrens Play Area (opposite Broom Road junction). There is also a Childrens Play Area in Briscoe Way.

#### **Places of Interest (beyond the Village)**

\*Ancient House Museum,  
Thetford

♦**Brandon Country Park**

\*Brandon Heritage Centre

\*Charles Burrell Steam Museum,  
Thetford.

\*Dads Army Museum,  
Thetford

\*Ely Museum

\*Grimes Graves Flint Museum,  
Lynford

\*High Lodge, Brandon

\*Lakenheath Fen RSPB Reserve

♦**Mildenhall and District Museum**

\*Prickwillow Engine Museum



This Trail booklet  
was generously supported by

Chilterns Estate Agents

The logo for Chilterns Estate Agents, featuring the word "Chilterns" in white serif font on a blue rectangular background.

Lakenheath Parish Council

Christian Enterprise  
Foundation

## Acknowledgements

Lakenheath Heritage Group would like to thank the following people  
for their contribution to this trail booklet:

Roy Silverlock and family

Suffolk County Council Records Office

and to all the villagers who, with their local knowledge, helped with  
the detail in this booklet

**THANK YOU  
FOR VISITING**

Remember if you want to find out more about the village, go to the following link -

<http://www.lakenheath.onesuffolk.net/lakenheath-heritage/>