

1. Parish: Great Ashfield

Meaning: Field with Ash trees

2. **Hundred:** Blackbourn

Deanery: Blackburn (–1884), Thedwastre (1884–1972),
Lavenham (1972–)

Union: Stow

RDC/UDC: (W Suffolk) Thedwastre RD (–1974), Mid Suffolk DC (1974–)

Other administrative details:

Blackbourn Petty Sessional Division
Bury St Edmunds County Court District

3. **Area:** 1,548 acres (1912)

4. **Soils:**

Mixed:

- a. Fine loam over clay soils, slowly permeable subsoils, slight seasonal waterlogging. Some calcareous/non calcareous slowly permeable clay soils.
- b. Slight risk water erosion.
- c. Slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged fine loam over clay.

5. **Types of farming:**

1086 39 acres meadow, wood for 112 pigs, 4 cobs, 2 cattle, 38 pigs, 110 sheep, 10 beehives, 12 goats

1283 372 quarters to crop (2,976 bushels), 43 head of horses, 166 cattle, 102 pigs, 383 sheep*

1500–1640 Thirsk: Wood-pasture region, mainly pasture, meadow engaged in rearing and dairying with some pig-keeping, horse-breeding and poultry. Crops mainly barley with some wheat, rye, oats, peas vetches, hops and occasionally hemp

1818 Marshall: Course of crops varies usually including summer fallow as preparation for corn products

1937 Four course system of crop rotation

1969 Trist: More intensive cereal growing and sugar beet.

*'A Suffolk Hundred in 1283' by E Powell (1910). Concentrates on Blackbourne Hundred. Gives land usage, livestock and the taxes paid.

6. **Enclosure:**

1814 113 acres enclosed under Private Act of Lands 1811

7. Settlement:

1958/1978 Small well spaced development along Elmswell-Badwell Ash road and along road to secondary settlement at Daisy Green. Church centrally situated in main settlement area. Disused airfield intrudes into SE corner of parish boundary influencing development in that area.

Scattered farms

Inhabited houses: 1674 – 35, 1801 – 44, 1851 – 87, 1871 – 95
1901 – 80, 1951 – 105, 1981 – 107

8. Communications:

Roads: Roads to Badwell Ash, Elmswell, Hunston, Norton and Wetherden.
1891 Carrier to Bury St Edmunds on Wednesday.

Rail: 1891 2 miles Elmswell Station: Bury St Edmunds–Cambridge line, opened 1846, closed for goods 1964, became unmanned halt 1967.

Air: Gt Ashfield airfield built 1942 as Class 'A' airfield, USAF station.
Reverted to RAF 1945, sold 1959/60 and returned to agriculture.

9. Population:

1086 – 67 recorded

1327 – 18 taxpayers paid £1. 17s. 1¹/₄d.

1524 – 24 taxpayers paid £2. 9s. 2d.

1603 – 127 adults

1662 – 34 householders paid £4. 16s. and 5 poor persons paid 6s.*

1674 – 51 households

1676 – 79 adults

1801 – 270 inhabitants

1831 – 408 inhabitants

1851 – 455 inhabitants

1871 – 459 inhabitants

1901 – 375 inhabitants

1931 – 302 inhabitants

1951 – 342 inhabitants

1971 – 308 inhabitants

1981 – 305 inhabitants

*The Hearth Tax Return for the Hundred of Blackbourn 1662' transcribed by S. Colman. PSIA Vol XXXII part 2, p.168.

10. Benefice: Perpetual Curacy (1831), Vicarage (1873)

1254 Valued £10.

1291 Valued £10.

1341 Valued £8. 15s.

1535 Not recorded.

1620 £300 laid out in land by Nicholas Fyrmage to be applied to preaching minister for a Sunday sermon

1831 Glebe house unfit for occupation. Gross income £65 p.a.
Rent charge of £150 paid to impropiator. 3 acres glebe. Gross income £64 1887

1891 Endowed lectureship resulting from the Fyremage bequest valued £32 p.a. 1912

Patrons:

Lord Thurlow 1831–

11. Church: All Saints
(Chancel, nave, N aisle, vestry, S porch, W tower & small spire)

1086 Church + 12 acres free land
Church + 9 acres
13th cent. Chancel, S doorway
14th/15th cent. N aisles, nave, tower, aisle arcade
16th cent. N porch
1870 Restoration
1939–45 N aisle chapel dedicated to memory of those men of the 8th Air Force US Army who died
1945 & 1969 Major restorations

Seats: majority appropriated, 80 free 1873

12. Nonconformity etc:

1593 3 persons accused of non-attendance at church
1676 5 nonconformists
1813–1848 7 houses set aside for worship
New chapel recorded 1848
1844 Baptist chapel listed (no dates)
1891 Wesleyan chapel listed, built 1881

13. Manorial:

1066 Manor of 3 carucates held by Aki
1086 Manor of 3 carucates belonging to Robert Blunt
1066 Manor of 1 carucate held by Ketel a free man
1086 Manor of 1 carucate belonging to Robert Blunt

Ashfield Magna

–1264 Manor belongs to the Blund/Blunt family
c.1264 William de Criketot acquired by inheritance (linked to Ixworth, Langham and Walsham-le-Willows)
c.1343 Consisted of 2 messuages, 2 carucates arable land, 20 acres meadow, 40 acres pasture, 200 acres wood
c.1371 Richard de Pakenham owns
1390 John Filyoll died seised
1507 Geore Guildfords owns
1549 Sir Thomas Darcy owns (linked to Stowmarket, Woolpit, Bardwell and Elmswell)
1553 Sir Robert Rochester owns
1561 Sir Nicholas Bacon owns (linked to numerous manors throughout Suffolk)

1587	Jeffrey Lyttell owns
Late 17 th cent.	Smith or Hovel alias Smith family owns, seated at mansion called 'Lee' (Lee Farm) passing by marriage and inheritance to the Thurlow family
1910	George Payne owns

Sub-Manors:

Abriwicks al Allred Wykes

c.13/14 th cent.	Sir William Cricketot owns (annexed to main manor)
1428	John Cokerell died seised
1554	William Smyth owns
17 th cent.	William Masham (linked to Badwell Ash)
18 th cent.	Samuel Clough owns
19 th cent.	Newcome family gain by marriage and inheritance (linked to Badwell Ash)

14. Market/Fair:

15. Real Property:

1844	£1,901 rental value
1891	£2,027 rateable value
1912	£1,578 rateable value

16. Land ownership:

1844/1891	Lord Thurlow principal owner
1912	John George/J C Leatherdale principal owners

17. Resident gentry:

1770's	Edward, Baron Thurlow
1844	Lord Thurlow
1912	Sidney Field JP

18. Occupations:

1500–1549	1 yeoman, 3 husbandmen
1550–1599	3 yeomen, 6 husbandmen, 1 carpenter, 1 sheerman*, 1 thatcher
1600–1649	15 yeomen, 1 tailor, 1 linen weaver, 2 husbandmen, 1 card maker, 2 coopers, 1 butcher
1650–1699	11 yeomen, 1 tailor, 3 linen weavers, 3 husbandmen, 1 carpenter, 1 clerk
1831	73 in agriculture, 13 in retail trade, 2 professionals, 13 in domestic service, 4 others
1844	2 blacksmiths, corn miller, victualler, lecturer, brick-Layer, schoolmistress, 2 carpenters, 2 shopkeepers, Wheelwright, 13 farmers, brickmaker, 3 shoemakers
1912	Sub-postmaster, schoolmistress, 11 farmers, grocer,

3 farm bailiffs, 2 publicans, miller/corn and coal merchant, blacksmiths, shopkeeper, machine owner/contractor

19. Education:

1544 Schoolmistress listed
1891 Church of England school listed
Also School house farm listed
1912 Public elementary school built 1875 by Lord Thurlow for 90 pupils, average attendance 59, closed c.1968, children attend new school at Badwell Ash

20. Poor relief:

1776	£51. 12s. 7d.
1803	£209. 16s. 8d.
1818	£329. 19s.
1830	£299. 18s.
1832	£335. 2s.
1834	£300. 15s.

21. Charities:

Fyrmage's Charity:

1620 by will of Nicholas Fyrmage. Farmhouse, cottage, barn and approx 67 acres 3R 23P let at £98 p.a. Rents applied to 8s. to Sexton, 2s. p.a. for bell ropes, residue to payment for lecturer in church, and distributed to 13 poor households

Clarke's Gift:

1637/38 by deed of William Clarke: 3 acres called Wrang Haunt pays 20s. p.a. to churchwardens general account

Church Lands:

1840 1 acre 3R 16P let at £5. 4s. to churchwardens general account

Cottages:

1840 2 cottages adjoining churchyard occupied rent free by poor persons

22. Other institutions:

Guild of St Margaret 1474

23. Recreation:

1844	The Thurlow Arms public house
1891	The Hovel Arms de-licensed 1963 and The Thurlow Arms public houses, closed by 1983
c.1943	Bowls Club formed
c.1920	Quoits Club

24. Personal:

Lords Thurlow:

Lord Edward Thurlow 1735–1806 native of Great Ashfield, appointed Solicitor-General 1770, Attorney-General 1771, Lord Chancellor 1778, Teller of the Exchequer 1792
Became Baron Thurlow of Ashfield c.1778

John Heigham Steggle:

Curate of parish 19th cent. is portrayed in 'The Suffolk Gypsy' by Richard Cobbold.

25. Other information:

'Great Ashfield News 1968–1969'.

Saxon cross: believed to have stood in churchyard, sometime used as footbridge, re-sited in grounds of Ashfield House. Tradition associates this cross with the removal of King Edmunds body to Bury St Edmunds, i.e. it marks a resting place on that journey (unsubstantiated).

'Great Ashfield Cross', PSIA, Vol 20, p.280.

Lead water pump: formerley situated at Daisy Green

Community Centre: converted from former primary school c.1969.

Motte (no apparent bailey) with wet ditch known as Castle Hill. History not known.

'385th Bombardment Group Reunion Association booklet' 1977. Group were based at Great Ashfield airbase – booklet contains brief history and photos of parish and airfield.

Church lands: these held 1 acre 2R called 'Camping Field' formerly situated near to church – could suggest site of Camping Ground (Camping was a form of medieval ball game)

Tudor Lodge: built c.1840 sometime vicarage. Tradition states Lord Thurlow built it for Rev Cobbold as replica of former house

Whitegates: 15th cent. farmhouse with Tudor and Jacobean additions.

Estates map 1773 reputedly held by Ipswich Record office.

Shearman: one who cuts woollen cloth.

