

1. Parish: **Lakenheath**

Meaning: The landing place of Laca's people or Lacinga's people at a stream

2. **Hundred:** Lackford

Deanery: Fordwich (–1862), Fordwich (Suffolk) (1862–1884)
Mildenhall (1884–)

Union: Mildenhall

RDC/UDC: Mildenhall RD (–1974), Forest Heath DC (1974–)

Other administrative details:

Lackford Petty Sessional Division
Mildenhall County Court District

3. **Area:** 11,275 acres, 56 acres water (1912)

4. **Soils:**

Mixed:

- a. Deep well drained sandy soils, some very acid under heath/woodland, risk wind erosion
- b. Shallow well drained calcareous sand and coarse loam soils over chalk or chalk rubble, some deep sandy soils
- c. Some deep peat with sand and sometimes gravel

5. **Types of farming:**

1086		½ mill, 5 fisheries, 20½ acres meadow, 2 horses at hall, 29 cattle, 162 sheep, 17 pigs, Medieval rabbit warren
1500–1640	Thirsk:	Sheep-corn region, sheep main fertilising agent, bred for fattening. Barley main cash crop. Fen: little arable, commons for hay and grass plus peat for fuel
1813	Young	5,000 acres of fen, 2,500 acres of warren, 1,000 acres open field arable, 300 acres common
1818	Marshall:	Management varies with condition of sandy soils. Rotation usually turnip, barley, clover, wheat or turnips as preparation for corn and grass. Fenlands: Large areas of pasture with little ploughed or arable land
1937	Main crops:	Wheat, barley oats, rye. Fruit growers, poultry farmer

1969 Trist: Deficiencies in minerals are overcome and these lands are now more suited to arable farming with wide range of produce grown

6. Enclosure:

1820 339 acres enclosed at Undley under Private Acts of Lands 1818

1837 1,067 acres enclosed under Private Acts of Lands 1833

7. Settlement:

1958 Lakenheath Lode crosses parish NW–S. Barton Mills Turnpike crossed SE of settlement SW–NE. Lakenheath airfield situated to E of settlement. Small town development restricted by fen to the W and airfield to the east.

Secondary settlement at Undley
Some isolated farms.

Inhabited houses: 1674 – 85, 1801 – 156, 1851 – 389, 1871 – 400, 1901 – 379, 1951 – 535, 1981 – 1,557

8. Communications:

Roads: To Eriswell and Hockwold
1844 Carriers to Kings Lynn Saturdays
to Bury St Edmunds Wednesday
and Saturday
1891 Carriers to Bury St Edmunds Wednesday
to Thetford Saturday
1912 Carrier to Bury St Edmunds Wednesday
and Saturday

Rail: 1891 Rail station: Birmingham–Norwich line,
opened 1845, closed for goods 1966,
unmanned halt 1967

Water: 1811: Water transport via Lakenheath Lode
1891 3 miles Little Ouse navigation. Made
navigable by Acts designed to improve
navigation 1760 although there is some
evidence to suggest the river was used for
trade purposes earlier than this. Decline
due to rail transport and general silting of
river c.1850's

Air: Lakenheath air base established as satellite
station to RAF Mildenhall 1941, became
independent station 1943, developed as heavy
bomber base 1944, active as USAF base 1948,
still operational

9. Population:

1086 – 37 recorded
1327 – 30 taxpayers paid £5 16s. 7½d.
1524 – 42 taxpayers paid £5 5s. 8d. (incomplete)
1603 – 273 adults
1674 – 129 households
1676 – 360 adults
1801 – 745 inhabitants
1831 – 1,209 inhabitants
1851 – 1,864 inhabitants
1871 – 1,880 inhabitants
1901 – 1,637 inhabitants
1931 – 1,656 inhabitants
1951 – 3,473 inhabitants
1971 – 3,653 inhabitants
1981 – 5,213 inhabitants

10. Benefice: Vicarage (Curacy of Undley annexed)

1254 Valued £6 13s. 4d.
Portion to Priory's Almoner £5
to manor of the same £20 £31 13s. 4d.
1291 Valued £14 13s. 4d.
1535 Valued £4 18s. 9½d.
1740 Vicarage house burned down
1831 1 curate, stipend £80 p.a. No glebe house. Gross
income £136 p.a.
Incumbent also holds Rectory of Southery, Norfolk
1835 Valued £136
1844 Vicarage is discharged from payment of first fruits and
tenths (no dates)
1853 Tithes commuted, rectorial £495 p.a., vicarial £30 p.a.
1860 Vicarage house built on new site. 20 acres glebe

Patrons: Dean and Chapter of Ely (1603–1831)

11. Church St Mary
(Chancel, nave, aisles, N. & S. porches, W. tower)

1086 Church plus 60 acres, church without land
11th cent. Chancel and arch
13th cent. Chancel, lower stages of tower (upper portion 14th cent.)
14th cent. Nave, N. aisle
15th cent. Porches
c.17th cent. Schoolroom built from materials from St. Peters, Eriswell
1864/1904 Restorations

Seats: 300

Undley Church: site unknown

12. Nonconformity etc:

1627	1 person not attending church
1676	2 nonconformists
1756–1815	4 houses set aside for worship
c.1756	John Evans built chapel (probably first Methodist chapel in Suffolk)
1757	Parish visited by John Wesley
1845	Chapel built
1882	Wesleyan chapel, Primitive Methodist chapel (not listed 1883)
	Independent chapel, Baptist chapel
1912	Congregational, Wesleyan and Baptist chapels

13. Manorial:

1066/1086	Manor of 3 carucates belonging to St Ethelreda
1541	Granted to Dean and Chapter of Ely
1909	Vested in Ecclesiastical Commissioners

Sub-Manors

Undley Hall

11/12 th cent.	Gilbert de Clare of Sudbury owns (linked to Milden, Chilton, Cavendish, Sudbury, Cavenham and Herringswell)
1311	Liberty of 'infangenethef'
1327	Licence to amortice manor to Prior and convent of Ely 15 messuages, 220 acres land, 2 acres meadow, 2½d rent and fishery in Wyndelee Mere
1540	Edward North owns (linked to Benacre)
1542	Simon Steward owns (linked to Barton Mills)
1796	Vested in Thomas Brome Evans
1818	Rev. Joseph Turner owns
1836	Hall farm of 916 acres let at £800

Radmere/Radmere al Rodmere

–1553	Fotheringhay College, Northants, owns
1553	Sir Richard Lee owns
1640	Henry Warner owns

14. Markets/Fairs

1201	Grant of market. Abbots bailiffs plus 600 armed men stopped market (see Munday pamphlets). Abbot of St. Edmunds held Inquisition to ascertain if market wasn't detrimental to that held in Bury St. Edmunds.
1201/02	Grant of market
1309	Grant of market and fair to Prior and Convent of Ely

1844 Few farmers/corn buyers meet Mondays at Bell Inn
Fair for cattle on Thursday after midsummer day

15. Real property:

1844 £4,343 rental value
1891 £9,319 rateable value
1912 £8,419 rateable value

16. Land ownership:

1844–1912 Land sub-divided

17. Resident gentry:

1891 William Eagle and Thomas Waddelow
1912 R. Bilsland JP (Chairman of Quarter Sessions)

18. Occupations:

1086 5 fisheries
1487 18 fisheries listed in manorial accounts (Munday)
1550–1549 1 yeoman, 1 labourer, 1 waterman, 1 boatwright
1550–1599 10 husbandmen, 2 yeomen, 6 labourers, 2 watermen, 1
miller, 1 vicar
1600–1649 19 husbandmen, 5 yeoman, 7 labourers, 2 carpenters, 1
tailor, 2 blacksmiths, 1 miller, 1 weaver, 3 shepherds, 1
thatcher
1650–1699 20 husbandmen, 23 yeomen, 1 labourer, 3 tailors, 1
blacksmith, 1 butcher, 1 miller, 1 shepherd, 1 inn-holder,
1 spinster, 1 joiner, 1 cordwinder
1831 165 in agriculture, 60 in retail trade, 2 professionals, 5
labourers, 38 in domestic service, 25 others
1844 Thatcher, hairdresser, cabinet maker, schoolmaster,
warrener, saddler, ironmonger, farriers, 6 publicans, 6
beerhouse keepers, 2 bakers, 4 blacksmiths, 5 boot/shoe
makers. 2 bricklayers, 2 butchers, 2 corn millers, 27
farmers, 3 grocer/drapers, 2 tailors, 4 wheelwrights
1891 Gravel workings employ 40/50 men (gravel sent by
lighters into the fens)
1912 Sub-postmaster, police officer, school teachers, station
master, 6 publicans, 9 shopkeepers, bill poster/town crier,
harness maker, fish dealer, land steward, bank, 22
farmers, 3 shoemakers, fruit grower, 3 grocer/drapers, 3
beer retailers, miller, 3 wheelwrights, cycle agent,
insurance agent, hairdresser, flour dealer, tinsmith,
school attendance officer, 2 bakers, horse slaughter, 2
solicitors, fishmonger, newsagent, 2 butchers, 2
blacksmiths, 2 pig dealers, builders, vet, cattle dealers,
surgeon, highways surveyor, land surveyor, naturalist,
hotel owner, gardener, plumber, apartment house owner

1942 Chivers fruit farm (seasonal work for fruit pickers)

19. Education:

1818 Parochial school (40 attend), 1 Dames school (70 attend)
1833 Day and Sunday school supported from bequest of G. Goward (30 boys attend), 4 daily schools (113 attend, 7 assisted places)
1844 1 Wesleyan Methodist Sunday school (127 attend)
2 Free school endowments (30 and 11 boys attend), amalgamated by 1912, 1 school master listed
1876 School Board established. Schools built for 300 children. Average attendance 1912 210 mixed, 81 infants
1899 School built at Sedge Fen, average attendance 1912 29.
c.1960 First American High School to be built in England at USAF base, 450 attend

20. Poor relief:

1776 £110 17s. 7d.
1803 £313 13s. 8½d.
1818 £1,357 15s.
1830 £1,125 15s.
1832 £1,222 16s.
1834 £1,226 15s.

21. Charities:

Poor's Estate:

1840 25 acres 1R 10P let at £40. 16s. p.a. Rents distributed twice yearly to poor.

Last's Dole:

1840 12s. p.a. applied with Poor's Estate

Poor's Turf-Land:

1663 Under Bedford Level Act: 154 acres of fen-ground to poor for fuel

Hanslips Dole:

1762 by Deed of John Hanslip: 2s. p.a. each to 60 poor and ancient families of Lakenheath

Goward's Charities:

1744 by Indenture of George Goward: Lands let at £47 10s. p.a. distributed in bread and to schooling for 30 boys

Barnes Charity:

1798 by Deed of Rev. John Barnes: 12 acres let at approx. £6 p.a. distributed in bread

Evan's Charity:

1756 by Indenture of John Evans and Robert Kitchener: 13 acres let at £10 p.a. for education of 14 poor children

Langham's Charity:

1582 by will of Thomas Langham: £4 p.a. to church and poor (not paid for previous 60 years 1840)

22. Other institutions:

1488 Cross at Town's End (PSIA, Vol. XXIII, p.64)
1891 Police officer listed
1912 Bank

23. Recreation:

1650–1699 1 inn holder listed
1844 6 public houses, 6 beerhouses
1891 6 public houses, 7 beerhouses
1912 7 public houses, 1 hotel, 3 beer retailers
1904 Cricket team
1907 Football team
1920 Sedge Fen Girls Social Club
1930's Boy Scouts (Scout Hall opened 1981)
1934 Womens Institute
1936 Playing Fields opened by Lord Elveden
1964 British Legion Club
1984 Netball team, Indoor Bowels Club and Amateur Dramatic Society

24. Personal:

John Pells: 19th cent. Professional falconer and Deputy Grand Falconer of England. Displayed at Sandringham for Prince of Wales. Died Lakenheath 1883

25. Other information:

Pilgrim Walk: remains of ancient track near top of Maids Cross Hill.

Maids Cross mound: once topped with stone cross.

Gibbet was situated at Undley. Stocks said to have stood by village pond (present site of war memorial).

Thomas Briggs murdered 1791.

Great flood 1947.

Lakenheath pamphlets: transcriptions by J.T. Munday.

'Certain mancret ... in which is a certain small courthouse ... valued 10s' (13th cent.) said to be situated at Earls Hall Close (Munday).

'The Historical Ecology of Lakenheath Warren: A Case Study'.

'History of Lakenheath Warren', by Mrs G. Crompton 1972. Historical study for ecologists.

WWII tanks destined for Libya were inspected by Churchill on Lakenheath Warren.

Extensive gravel extraction around Maids Cross Hill 19th cent.

Lakenheath Fen Investigation by Agricultural Land Commission 1952.

Peace Memorial Hall built 1922.

Airbase: target for peace protestors particularly after use of aircraft from this station used to bomb Libya 1986.

New bridge opened 1981.

Hoard of coins 1st cent. AD found on 'Roman Field' 1959. Declared Treasure Trove.

Lakenheath Hall gutted by fire 1962.

Replica of Statue of Liberty (miniature being 4' high) unveiled at USAF base 1981.

150 bed hospital built at USAF base 1965, 408 new three-bedroom houses built at USAF base.

American Armed Forces Day air show held at USAF base (later moved to Mildenhall Base – annual event) 1960s.

History of Lakenheath air base in parish folder (RO).

Town devastated by fire which also destroyed parish registers pre 1713 (1744).

'A Portuguese jar from Lakenheath', by D.H. Kennett. PSIA, Vol. 33, p.90.

'Earthwork enclosures on Lakenheath Warren', PSIA, Vol. 32, p.113.

'Anglo Saxon Finds from Lakenheath and their place in the Lark Valley Context', by T. Briscoe. PSIA, Vol. 34, p.161.