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**
   Thirsk: 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:


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 – 745 inhabitants
1674 – 129 households
1676 – 360 adults
1801 – 1,209 inhabitants
1874 – 1,880 inhabitants
1901 – 1,864 inhabitants
1931 – 3,473 inhabitants
1951 – 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
     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)  
1912 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**

11/12th 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 yeomen, 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)
1 Wesleyan Methodist Sunday school (127 attend)
1844 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.
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1876 School Board established. Schools built for 300 children.
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:**


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’.


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).
