1. Parish: Lavenham

Meaning: Lafa's valley and enclosure

2. Hundred: Babergh

Deanery: Sudbury (–1864), Sudbury (Western) (1864–1914), Lavenham (1914–)

Union: Cosford

RDC/UDC: (W. Suffolk) Cosford RD (–1974), Babergh DC (1974–)

Other administrative details:

- Melford Petty Sessional Division
- Sudbury County Court District

3. Area: 2,898 acres (1912)

4. Soils: Some slowly permeable calcareous/non-calcareous clay soils, some fine loam over clay with slowly permeable subsoils with slight risk of seasonal waterlogging or water erosion

5. Types of farming:

1086 Wood for 100 pigs, 3 horses at hall, 1 mill, 37 cattle, 69 pigs, 302 sheep, 80 goats, 6 beehives, 1 arpent (1¼ acres) vines

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 Main crops: Wheat, beans, barley, beef, turnips

1969 Trist: More intensive cereal growing and sugar beet, better loams attract orchard and soft fruit growers

6. Enclosure:


8. Communications:

Road: To Brent Eleigh, Gt. Waldingfield, Acton, and Cockfield
1844 Carriers to Ipswich on Monday and Thursday
to Clare on Wednesday
to Bury St. Edmunds on Wednesday and Saturday
1891 Pony and trap.
Carriers to Bury St. Edmunds on Wednesday and Saturday.
to Sudbury on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday
1912 Carriers to Bury St. Edmunds on Wednesday and Saturday
to Ipswich on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday
to Long Melford on Tuesday and Friday
to Sudbury on Monday and Thursday


Water: River Brett


9. Population:

1086 – 67 recorded
1327 – 44 taxpayers paid £5 3s. 2d.
1524 – 196 taxpayers paid £179 13s. 10d.
1603 – 711 adults
1674 – 266 households
1676 – approx. 915 adults
1801 – 1,776 inhabitants
1831 – 2,107 inhabitants
1851 – 1,811 inhabitants
1871 – 1,886 inhabitants
1901 – 2018 inhabitants
1931 – 1,451 inhabitants
1951 – 1,489 inhabitants
1971 – 1,480 inhabitants
1981 – 1,696 inhabitants

10. Benefice: Rectory

1254  Portion of Rector £16 13s. 4d.
      Portion of monks of Colum (Earls Colne) £4
      £ 20 13s. 4d.

1291  Valued £18 13s. 4d.
      Portion of Colum £5
      £23 13s. 4d.

1535  Valued £20 2s. 11d.

      £709 p.a. Valued £658 1835
      Good residence, 144 acres glebe. Tithe commuted for
      £850 p.a. 1842

1912  Nett value £504. 144 acres glebe and residence

Patrons: Thomas Skynner (1603), Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge (1831–)

11. Church: St. Peter and St. Paul
(Chancel, N. & S. chapels, nave of 6 bays, lofty
clerestory, S. porch, W. tower (141’))

Erected between 1480 and 1530 by John de Vere, Earl of
Oxford and a family of Lavenham clothiers called Spring.
Including the tower, the church measures 200’ x 68’

1530  Chapels erected by Simon Branch (the northern) and
      Thomas Spring the younger (the southern)
1486–95  Lower part of tower. Upper section 1520–25
16th cent.  N. and S. chancel aisles
1861–1867  Restoration

Seats: 400 appropriated, 400 free (1873)

12. Nonconformity etc.:

1606  1 papist, 3 persons not receiving communion for 7 years
1611  1 popish recusant
1676  2 papists, approx. 13 non conformists, I professed and
      1 suspected recusant
      Independent chapel 1697
1708–1838  11 houses set aside for worship
      Independent chapel built 1827
      Congregational chapel endowed with good house for
      minister 1908
      Wesleyan chapel, Primitive Methodist chapel and
Salvation Army Hall

13. Manorial:

1066 Manor of 6 carucates held by Wulfin, a thane of King Edwards
1086 Manor of 6 carucates belonging to Aubrey de Vere
1066 Manor of 2 carucates held by Alwy under St. Edmunds
1086 Manor of 2 carucates belonging to Frodo the Abbots brother

Lavenham Manor

1086 Held by the de Vere family
1604 Sir Thomas Skinner owns
1611 Paul D’Ewes owns (linked to Milden, Long Melford, Brent Eleigh and Stowlangtoft)
1731 John Moore owns (linked to Cavendish, Long Melford, Glemsford and Cockfield)
Custom of Borough English prevails

14. Market/Fairs

Charter for market and fair 1248/49
Charter for fair granted to Robert de Vere 1289/90 held on Whit Sunday
Good market held on Tuesday 1686, obsolete by 1844
1732–1734 Fair held on October 10th for butter and cheese (obsolete by 1891)
Fair held on Shrove Tuesday and October 10th 1792
Fair held on Shrove Tuesday for horses 1885
Sale for cattle 1st Monday every month 1891
Sunday market began trading from airfield 1977

15. Real property:

1844 £3,755 rental value
1891 £5,804 rateable value
1912 £5,720 rateable value

16. Land ownership:

1844/1912 Land sub-divided

17. Resident gentry:

1674 Lady Vere
1680 2 gents recorded
1686 Child MD
1844 T.B. Branwhite and W. Peck
1912

18. Occupations:

1446–1485  1 Barker (tanner/one who strips bark from trees), 1 weaver, 1 smith, 1 fuller, 1 shoemaker.

1500–1549  1 yeoman, 1 cordwainer, 1 clothier, 1 priest, 1 butcher, 35 clothmakers, 3 dyers, 1 servant, 15 weavers, 1 husbandman, 3 fullers, 1 baker, 2 shearmen (one who cuts woollen cloth) (additional information for this group from ‘The Springs of Lavenham’ by B. McClenaghan).

1550–1599  2 carpenters, 2 tailors, 1 blacksmith, 5 yeoman, 5 clothiers, 1 priest, 1 mason, 2 butchers, 1 clothmaker, 1 miller, 1 haberdasher, 1 weaver, 1 draper, 2 husbandmen, 1 beer brewer, 1 fuller, 1 tiler, 1 parson, 3 shearmen, 1 tanner, 1 chandler.

1600–1649  1 ploughwright, 2 carpenters, 2 tailors, 1 blacksmith, 15 yeomen, 1 cordwainer, 1 wool comber, 3 clothiers, 3 butchers, 1 miller, 1 weaver, 2 drapers, 1 physician, 1 labourer, 1 felt maker, 1 joiner, 1 mercer, 1 husbandman, 1 bay maker, 1 maltster, 1 shoemaker, 1 baker, 1 shearmen, 2 inn holders, 1 bricklayer, 1 clothworker.

1650–1699  2 carpenters, 1 gardener, 4 tailors, 1 blacksmith, 10 yeomen, 3 cordwainers, 1 linen draper, 3 wool combers, 15 clothiers, 5 butchers, 3 millers, 3 grocers, 1 Glover, 1 barber, 6 say makers, 2 fellmongers (dealers in skins/hides especially sheepskin), 2 weavers, 1 physician, 2 labourers, 1 feltmaker, 1 plumber, 1 glazier, 2 husbandmen, 1 hosier, 2 collarmakers, 3 maltsters, 2 clerks, 1 chapman (a buyer), 3 inn holders, 6 spinsters, 1 clothworker, 1 comber, 1 doctor of medicine, 3 say weavers, 1 comb maker.
Once famous for manufacture of blue cloth. When this declined parish continued manufacture of serge, shalloon, says, stuffs, calimancoes, hempen cloth and fine worsted yarns.

1831  135 in agriculture, 155 in retail trade, 14 in manufacturing, 14 professionals, 13 in labouring, 38 in domestic service, 65 others.

1844  2 woolstaplers, silk mill, many employed in spinning fine worsted yarn and in making straw plait as a domestic industry.
Surgeon, straw plait and hat manufacturer, organist, vet, miller, overseer, silk throwster, chemist/druggist, coach-maker, cabinet maker, brazier/tinner, watchmaker, 9 publicans, 7 teachers, 5 bakers, 3 blacksmiths, 7 boot/shoe makers, 2 bricklayers/plasterers, 3 butchers, 2 cooperers, 13 farmers, 2 glass/china dealers, 3 grocer/drapers, 2 hairdressers, 1 ironmonger/wood shovel manufacturer, 3 joiners, 3 maltsters, 2 milliners, 3
painters/plumbers/glaziers, 3 saddlers, 6 tailors, 1 wheelwright, 3 worsted and poplin yarn manufacturers
Sugar Beet factory built 1868 (1st in England), closed 1871
Horse hair seating manufacturers 1891
Malting and steam corn mills established 1865
Straw plaiting for bonnets employed 300 women 1851 but by 1861 industry was in decline with only 100 workers employed
Manufacture of horsehair seating and coconut fibre matting established 1861

1912
Postmaster, factory surgeon, parish clerk, police officer, fire brigade, teachers, station master, watchmaker, stationer, 4 farmers, millers, 2 banks, 5 butchers, relieving officer, land agents, chimney sweep, saddler, hairdresser, plumbers, 7 publicans, 2 bootmakers, 2 surgeons, seedsman, hardware dealer, 5 bakers, wheelwright, grocer/draper, egg receiving station, 2 shopkeepers, pork butcher, road surveyor, vet, plumber, fruiterer, tailor, draper, builder, joiner, gas works, coal merchant, chemist, 3 farm bailiffs, seed merchant, second hand clothes dealer, smith, carrier, 2 cycle agents, 4 grocers, 2 horse hair seating manufacturers, tobaconist, beer retailer, commercial traveller, hair cloth manufacturer, coal dealer, dealer in game, tailor, fishmonger, boot repairer, cattle dealer, cabinet maker, solicitor, insurance agent, builder, pig dealer, blacksmith, saddler.
E.R. Holloway Ltd., cosmetics manufacturers moved to Lavenham from Glemsford 1966

19. Education:

1696–1776 8 schoolmaster/tutors recorded
Free Grammar School: of ancient origins, endowed c.1647 by Richard Peacock. Situated in Barn Street, rebuilt 1699 said to be in decline 1818, 20 boarders, 5 boys attending free 1833, closed 1887, sold 1890 for £370 which was invested for educational purposes

1818
2 National schools supported by charity.
4 boys schools (116 attend), 8 girls schools (129 attend). Dissenters Sunday school (80 attend)

1833
2 daily schools supported by Stewards Charity (54 attend)
3 infants schools (46 attend)
2 day and Sunday National schools (150 attend)
1 Independent Sunday school (75 attend) and 1 Methodist Sunday school (73 attend)
Boys and Girls National schools built 1839 (150 attend), enlarged 1857 200 attend

1844
280 Sunday scholars, 4 academies

1891
1 music/day school music teacher
British school established 1852, new building erected 1861 (162 attend), demolished 1964
Public Elementary school built to accommodate 438 1896, average attendance 1912 275 + 126 infants
School Council formed 1903

20. Poor relief:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1776</td>
<td>£728 0s. 11d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>£1,508 6s. 2d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1818</td>
<td>£2,985 16s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>£2,806 10s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832</td>
<td>£2,534 10s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>£1,625 1s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. Charities:

- 1702: 4 tenements with gardens repaired at parish expense. Sold 1915 and money applied to charity
  ‘Inquiries into Charities of Lavenham’ 1829

Grammar School:
- Origins ancient but dates not known
- 1647 by will of Richard Peacock: (earliest known bequest).
  Annuity for teaching of 5 children.

Old Town Lands:
- Part devised 1573 by will of William Lummas.
- Diverse lands and tenements let at £186 p.a. applied to repair and maintenance of cottages or almshouses, purchase of hempen cloth for shirts and in donations to the poor in distress

Bell Rope Land
- 1840 1R 32P rents applied to church rate

Copingers Charity
- 1621 by will of Rev. Henry Copinger: 5 acres 2R 6P let at £25. 10s p.a. divided between 4 poor aged persons.

Corder’s Charity
- 1840 £2 10s. p.a. to the funds for relief of poor lying-in women.
  40s. p.a. for distribution among poor.

Crème’s Charity
- 1655 by will of Isaac Creme: 57 acres 3R 37P let at £61 5s.p.a.
  distribution among 24 poor persons
**Stewards Charity**
1806 by will of Henry Steward: Dividends of £53 17s. 6d p.a. applied to support of two national schools

**Disters Charity/Blowers Charity**
1534 Allen Dister and will of Peter Blower 1654: Moneys left for poor relief (discontinued 1840)

22. Other institutions:

- Guilds of Holy Trinity, St. Peter and Our Lady 1524
- Guild of Corpus Christi acquired its Charter from John de Vere 1529
- Guildhall of Corpus Christi built c.1529
- 1776 Workhouse (80 inmates)
- 1803 4 Friendly Societies (105 members)
- County Bridewell and House of Correction situated within Guildhall 1689
- 1891 Gas works, police officer
- Lloyds Bank opened in Georgian house 1905
- 1912 Police station, Fire Brigade
- Town lock-up built 1833
- Lavenham Preservation Committee formed 1944

23. Recreation:

- 1550–1599 1 beer brewer
- 1600–1649 2 inn holders
- 1650–1699 3 inn holders
  - The Anchor public house in existence 1425 as were the Swan and the White Horse
- 1844 9 public houses
- 1891 2 hotels, 6 public houses, public bakehouse.
  - Oddfellows Lodge established 1842
  - Court of Foresters established 1873
- 1912 7 public houses, 1 beer retailer
  - Salvation Army established 1884
- 20th cent. Royal British Legion, Cub Scouts, Lavenham Weavers Club established 1984 (30 members)
  - Women's Institute formed 1919
  - Over 60’s Club formed 1957, 20 members 1984
  - Flower Festival with craft market 1977

24. Personal:

- Sir T. Skinner: Lord Mayor of London 1608
- John de Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford 1485 led vanguard of Kings army at Battle of Bosworth
- Thomas Spring: 13th cent. rich clothier much involved with the prosperity of Lavenham. ‘The Springs of Lavenham’ by Barbara McClenaghan 1924
Jane Taylor: 1783–1824 author of ‘Original Poems’ and Rhymes for the Nursery’ (Twinkle Twinkle Little Star is one)
John Constable (landscape painter) and Arthur Young (agricultural journalist) were both once pupils at the grammar school 18/19th cent. Notable people of Lavenham (see p.60 of ‘Lavenham’ by F. Lingard Ransom)
Thomas Lavenham: 15th cent. author
Richard de Lanham 14th cent. 50 of his works held in British Museum. Born Lavenham, beheaded during Wat Tylers insurrection 1381.
Mrs. Ann Smythies: 18th cent. reputation for the cure of the ‘Kings evil’ – granted licence by Bishop of Norwich 1743 to practice her art.

25. Other information:

‘Lavenham, 700 years of Textile Making’ by D. Dymond and A. Betterton.

‘Lavenham Past, Present and Future’ by D.W. Insall.


Market Place: formed in 13th cent. At this time it is said large brick culverts were built under main streets (some remain).

Edward III gave special charter 1330 authorising his tenants in Lavenham to pass free of tolls throughout England.

Tradition states Flemish weavers settled in town 14th cent.

Riots provoked by heavy taxation 1524/25.

Weaving of blue cloth had almost ceased 1618.

Town hit by plague and small pox 1699, 27 died. 180 died in 1712, 282 in 1713, over 500 contracted the disease 1778.

The Guildhall of Corpus Christi built c.1529. Used as County Bridewell and House of Correction 1689, closed 1787. Then used as workhouse, wool store, town hall, almshouses and accommodation for evacuees 1939–45.


Whipping post and stocks stood close to Bridewell 1689.

Town government by 6 Burgesses (known as Headboroughs) ceased 1775. Town was never issued with Borough Charter.

Coach known as ‘The Lavenham Machine’ operated from The Swan c.1764.

Bull-baiting took place of market place every 5th November until stopped by Rev. Buck c.1792. Continued however on Washmere Green, finally ending 1842.

Gas Works opened 1863.

Guildhalls of Holy Trinity in Prentice Street and of St. Peters Guild in the High Street were demolished 1879 and 1896.

Electric and water supplies installed 1934/36.

Telephone Exchange opened 1925.

Old fire station, which stood next to Guildhall, demolished 1954. Fire engine (first acquired 1725) displayed in Guildhall.

Swan Hotel: incorporated an adjoining wool hall in its extension 1965. Date of original inn unknown. John Girling was its first landlord in 1667.

Parish contains 220 listed buildings.

The Priory: built 1536, Grade 1 listed building. Open to public.

Residential conversion of mill and maltings in Prentice Street 1986.


Architectural view of proposed by-pass 1973, in parish folder (RO).

Preservation Committee responsible for restoration of the Great House, Toll Cottage, High Hall House and others.

High Hall House endowed as hostel for arts students (The Gayer–Anderson Hostel for Art Students).

Little Hall: built 1450, opened as HQ for Suffolk Preservation Society 1975.

Med. market cross, said to have replaced timber cross 1501.


‘Restorations at Lavenham’, PSIA Vol. XV, p.82.


Lavenham Uncluttered’. East Anglian Life Vol.9 (July 1967).