

# 1. Parish: Acton

**Meaning:** Village by the oaks

2. **Hundred:** Babergh

**Deanery:** Sudbury (–1864), Sudbury (Western)(1864–1884), Lavenham (1884–1914), Sudbury (1914–)

**Union:** Sudbury

**RDC/UDC:** (W Suffolk) Melford RD (–1974), Babergh DC (1974–)

## Other administrative details:

Melford Petty Sessional Division  
Sudbury County Court District

3. **Area:** 2,885 acres (1912)

4. **Soils:**

### Mixed:

- a. Deep well drained fine loam over clay, coarse loam over clay and fine loam, some calcareous clay subsoils.
- b. Some slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging.
- c. Some non calcareous clay soils with slight risk water erosion.

5. **Types of Farming:**

1086 50 acres, wood for 40 pigs, 1 mill, 11 horses at hall, 31 cattle, 160 pigs, 423 sheep, 7 beehives.

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, barley, oats, clover, turnips.

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

6. **Enclosure:**

7. **Settlement:**

1953 Small compact development. Separate small area of habitation around Newmans Green. Church slightly apart from main settlement. Railway crosses parish N-W

clipping NW corner. Disused airfield occupies position south of main development. Both factors could have influenced development.

Scattered farms.

**Inhabited houses:** 1674 – 42, 1801 – 59, 1851 – 110, 1871 – 120, 1901 – 125, 1951 – 200, 1981 – 754

## 8. Communications:

**Road:** To Long Melford, Great Waldingfield and Lavenham.  
1891 Carrier to Sudbury Thursday and Saturday  
1891 Carrier to Lavenham on Wednesday  
1912 Carrier to Sudbury daily

**Rail:** 1891 2½ miles long Melford station: Bury St Edmunds – Long Melford line, opened 1865, closed for passengers 1961, closed for goods 1965.  
Line to Sudbury closed 1967

**Air:** Sudbury airfield: Class 'A' heavy bomber base (3 intersecting runways) opened 1944. 486<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group USAF. Subsequently used for government storage. Sold 1962–64. Hangers occupied by Ashdown Rawlinson Ltd.

## 9. Population:

1086 – 83 recorded  
1327 – 21 taxpayers paid £2. 4s. 2d.  
1524 – 45 taxpayers paid £4. 14s.  
1603 – 180 adults  
1674 – 52 households  
1676 – 104 adults  
1801 – 461 inhabitants  
1831 – 565 inhabitants  
1851 – 539 inhabitants  
1871 – 548 inhabitants  
1901 – 593 inhabitants  
1931 – 496 inhabitants  
1951 – 673 inhabitants  
1981 – 1,926 inhabitants

## 10. Benefice: Vicarage

1254	Portion of the parson £12.	
	Portion of Prior of Hatfield £12	£24. 0s. 0d.
1291	Valued £14. 13s. 4d.	
	To vicar of the same £9. 6s. 8d.	£24. 0s. 0d.
1535	Valued £9. 6s. 8d.	
	Said to have anciently held Chantry valued at £67. 2s. 8d. p.a.	
	1844	
1831	Glebe house. 7 acres glebe. Gross income £255 p.a.	
	Tithes commuted for £750 p.a. 1838	
1912	Nett value £230. 7 acres glebe and residence.	

**Patrons:**

Frances Danyell 1603, Earl Howe 1831–

**11. Church:**

**All Saints**

(Chancel, nave of 3 bays, aisles, mortuary chapel, transept, S porch, tower)

1086	1 church + 30 acres free land
1300	Base of tower
14 <sup>th</sup> century	N doorway and N chapel. Main structure.
1885–86	Thorough restoration. Tower partly demolished.
1923	Tower rebuilt.

Note: Church chiefly remarkable for its brasses dating from 14<sup>th</sup> century.

**Seats:** 120 approximately, 280 free 1873

**12. Nonconformity etc:**

1597	Alice Rogers excommunicated
1603	14 recusants
1606	18 recusants
1627	19 recusants papists
1676	4 papists

**13. Manorial:**

1066	Manor of 12 carucates held by Siward of Malden a thane
1086	Manor of 12 carucates belonging to Ranulf Peverel

**Acton Manor**

1301	Extent exists in Inquis p.m. of de Hodeboville family
1360	Disputed
1905	Ear Howe owns (linked to Newton and Cavendish)

**Sub-Manors:**

**Clerbeck**

1210	Sir Henry de Clerebec held by Honor of Peverel (Religious house at Hatfield given 3 acres by Robert de Clerebec in frankalmoin)
1296	Extent exists in Inquis p.m.
c.1385	1 messuage, 100 acres land, 5 acres meadow, 1 acre pasture, 10 acres wood
c.1530	Thomas Daniel owns (absorbed by Rokewodes)

**Rokewodes**

14 <sup>th</sup> cent.	Rokewodes family held as Honor of Peverel (linked to Stoke by Nayland and Preston)
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- 15<sup>th</sup> cent. Sir Richard Waldegrave owns (linked to Boxford, Assington, Stoke by Nayland, Preston, Monks Eleigh, Edwardstone and Bures)
- 1530 Thomas Daniel owns (absorbs Clerbeck)
- 19/20<sup>th</sup> cent. Earl Howe owns (absorbed by main manor)

### Leys

- 13<sup>th</sup> cent. Leys family owns
- 15<sup>th</sup> cent. Absorbed by Rokewodes

### Tolemach

- 1213 Hugh Tolemach owns
- 1534 Sir William Drury owns (linked to Gt Waldingfield, Hawstead, Somerton, Lawshall and Cockfield)

## **14. Market/Fairs:**

## **15. Real property:**

- 1844 - £3,035 rental value
- 1891 - £3,144 rateable value
- 1912 - £3,533 rateable value

## **16. Land ownership:**

- 1844 Earl Howe and Sir Hyde Parker, principal owners
- 1891 Earl Howe, Sir William Parker and Mr J K Rodwell, principal owners
- 1912 Earl Howe, Mr M Turner and Sir William Parker, principal owners

## **17. Resident gentry:**

- 1680 2 gentlemen
- 1686 Daniel family
- 1844 Rev. L Ottley MA

## **18. Occupations:**

- 1445 Farrier
- 1500–1549 3 husbandmen, 2 yeomen, 2 labourers, 1 fuller (additional information for this period from 'The Springs of Lavenham' by B. McClenaghan)
- 1550–1599 9 husbandmen, 5 yeomen, 1 blacksmith, 1 labourer, 1 maid, 1 vicar, 1 thatcher
- 1600–1649 4 husbandmen, 10 yeomen, 1 say weaver, 1 spinster, 1 labourer, 1 wheelwright, 1 smith, 1 cook
- 1650–1699 1 husbandman, 10 yeomen, 1 inn holder, 1 spinster, 1 wheelwright, 1 say maker, 1 clerk, 1 tailor
- 1831 102 in agriculture, 18 in retail trade, 2 professionals, 3 labourers, 18 in domestic service, 11 others

1844 Maltster/victualler, wheelwright, 2 carpenters, shopkeeper, 9 farmers, 2 shoemakers, bricklayer, blacksmith  
 1912 Jobbing gardener, 8 farmers, carpenter, timber merchant, carrier, shopkeeper, acetylene gas engineer, market gardener, 3 farm bailiffs, publican, blacksmith, sub-postmaster, teacher  
 1937 Large quarry and tarmacadam manufacturer

**19. Education:**

1818 3 day and evening schools (50 attend), 1 Sunday school (100 attend)  
 1833 3 day schools (80 attend), 1 Sunday school (112 attend)  
 National school built 1839 by Earl Howe (also known as Church of England school), enlarged 1863 and 1899, average attendance 1912 of 108. Demolished 1985/86.

**20. Poor relief:**

1776 £311. 11s. 2d.  
 1803 £ 490. 4s.  
 1818 £1,101. 9s.  
 1830 £963. 10s.  
 1832 £1,115. 5s.  
 1834 £787. 18s.

**21. Charities:**

**Kerrington's Charity:**

1691 by will of Ambrose Kerrington: to six widows  
 Not receiving relief 2d worth of bread every Sunday and 1 pair of shoes annually on 24<sup>th</sup> December.

**22. Other Institutions:**

**23. Recreation:**

1650–1699 1 inn holder recorded  
 1844–1912 The Crown public house  
 20<sup>th</sup> cent. Village hall and playing field. Summer fete. Flower and Vegetable show, Playground/Mother and Toddler Club Brownies/guides/scouts/cubs established 1967.  
 Womens Institute established 1918  
 Football and Cricket Clubs  
 Festival of Acton mounted 1976

**24. Personal:**

'The Great Jennens Case' by Harrison and Willis (History of Jennens family of Acton Place).  
 Charles Drew: walked to Long Melford and shot his father, tried for murder 1740.

Catherine Foster: at age 17 poisoned her husband by putting arsenic in his dumplings. She is believed to be the last woman to hang in Bury St Edmunds 1847.

Arthur Daniel: Roman Catholic, executed at Tyburn on pretext of being a spy 1643.

Michael Munn: Local author of film biographies 1985.

## **25. Other information:**

Acton Place: built by Robert Jennens, left unfinished at his death in 1725.  
Demolished c.1825 apart from one wing which forms nucleus of present building.

There exists in the House of Commons an order to search Acton Place for arms 1641 – refers to earlier building owned by the Daniel family who were staunch Roman Catholics.

Photo of painting of Acton Place 17<sup>th</sup> cent. in RO.

Used as Red Cross Hospital and later as a German war camp 1939–45, closed 1950.

Vault found containing bones of two dogs identified as having belonged to the Jennens family 1952.

Housing estate built on Lime Tree Park 1977 which it was expected would double the village population.

Acorn Industrial estate opened 1982.

1 case of incendiaries due to agrarian unrest 1844.

Village sign erected 1984.

'The Story of All Saints Church, Acton' by R. Lambert 1950.

'Dame Alice de Bryene: Life in a Medieval Household' by J Ridgard.

'The Household Book of Dame Alice de Bryene of Acton Hall' edited by V.B. Redstone.