

# 1. Parish: Bildeston otherwise Bilston

**Meaning:** Bild's homestead

2. **Hundred:** Cosford

**Deanery:** Sudbury (–1864), Sudbury (Eastern)(1864–1884),  
Hadleigh (1884–)

**Union:** Cosford

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

## Other administrative details:

Civil boundary change 1883, 1935. Helps create Nedging with Naughton civil parish  
Hadleigh Petty Sessional Division and County Court District

3. **Area:** 1,171 acres (1912)

4. **Soils:**

### Mixed:

- a. Slowly permeable calcareous/non calcareous clay soils. Slight risk of water erosion.
- b. Deep well drained fine loam, coarse loam and sandy soils. Locally flinty and in places over gravel. Slight risk water erosion.

5. **Types of farming:**

1086		20 acres meadow, wood for 10 pigs, 3 cobs, 10 cattle, 40 pigs, 80 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 in preparation for corn products
1937	Main crops:	Wheat, barley, beans, oats, turnips, land principally used for arable farming
1969	Trist:	More intensive cereal growing and sugar beet

6. **Enclosure:**

7. **Settlement:**

1958/1978 Large compact development. Church situated separately to west of main development. Line of Roman road crosses parish W–E. Scattered farms

**Inhabited houses:** 1674 – 87, 1801 – 115, 1851 – 195,  
1871 – 192, 1901 – 172, 1951 – 203,  
1981 – 294

**8. Communications:**

**Roads:** To Hitcham, Chelsworth, Wattisham, Naughton/Nedging  
1844 Coach to Colchester to meet London trains daily (except  
Sunday)  
Carriers to Ipswich daily  
to Lavenham on Wednesday and Saturday  
1891 Carriers to Hadleigh daily  
to Ipswich on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday  
to Bury St Edmunds on Wednesday and Saturday  
1891 Carriers to Lavenham on Monday, Wednesday and Friday  
1912 Carriers to Bury St Edmunds on Wednesday and Saturday  
to Hadleigh, Ipswich and Stowmarket daily  
to Lavenham on Monday, Wednesday and Friday  
to Sudbury on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday  
**Rail:** 1891 5 miles Hadleigh station: Bentley–Hadleigh line opened  
1847, closed for passengers 1932, closed for goods 1965  
and track taken up.

**9. Population:**

1086 – 29 recorded  
1327 – 23 taxpayers paid £2 1s. 8½d.  
1524 – 88 taxpayers paid £12 12s.  
1603 – 300 adults  
1674 – 155 households  
1676 – not recorded  
1801 – 744 inhabitants  
1831 – 836 inhabitants  
1851 – 818 inhabitants  
1871 – 808 inhabitants  
1901 – 788 inhabitants  
1931 – 656 inhabitants  
1951 – 653 inhabitants  
1971 – 866 inhabitants

**10. Benefice: Rectory**

1254 Portion of the parson £5 6s. 8d.  
Portion of the Prioress of Wik  
(Nunnery of Wix, Essex) £1 6s. 8d. £6 13s. 4d.  
1291 Valued £8  
Portion of Prioress of Wykes £1 6s. 8d. £9 6s. 8d.  
1535 Valued £12 6s. 10½d.  
1831 Glebe house. Gross income £372 p.a.  
Good residence, 51 acres glebe. Modus of £435 in lieu of  
tithes 1840  
Rectory house built of Woolpit brick in Italian style and  
standing in part of 38 acres 1850

1891 53 acres glebe  
1912 Nett value £223 p.a.  
Incumbent threatened to resign 1917 due to inconvenient and dilapidated condition of parsonage house  
Note: Rectory described as 'a great house and 50 acres of ground on Wattisham Road' 1603  
New rectory built 1978

**Patrons:** Flambard of St Edmunds (1304), Thomas de Loveyn (1329), The King (1348–54), Sir William Bouchier (1400–08), Ann, Countess of Stafford (1434), John, Earl of Oxford (1490), Earl of Essex (1522), The Queen (1553), Ann, Countess of Essex (1562), Walter, Viscount Hereford (1570), Robert Jermyn (1590), Mr Anton (1603), John Revett (1616), George Aston (1637), William Revett (1639–69), Bartholomew Beale (1723), William Alston (1733), William Beale Brand (1758), Charles Johnson (1831), Rev J Gedge (1873), Rev J Beck (1891). Bishop of London (1912)

**11. Church: St Mary**  
(Chancel, clerestoried nave, aisles, S porch, W tower)

1086 Church + 40 acres, 1 plough and 1 acre meadow  
14<sup>th</sup> cent. E end of aisles, lower part of tower and chancel  
15<sup>th</sup> cent. Main structure  
1856, 1879  
1883, 1886, Restorations  
1899  
Tower collapsed 1975 in process of rebuilding 1987  
Note: Watching gallery remains in aisle over S door  
St Catherine's chapel used as choir vestry

**Seats:** 295 appropriated, 155 free (1873)

### Chapel

### St Leonards

In existence 1446 but believed built prior to 1435  
Possible connections with Great Bricett Priory  
Fell into disuse early c.1640  
Re-opened as place of worship because of distance of church from the town 1680  
Held Edrington's chantry  
Last mentioned in glebe terrier of 1723

**12. Nonconformity etc:**

Rev John Whitgift accused of non-observance of prescribed ceremonies 1570  
Rector John Weld, ejected 1643  
1713–1849 12 houses set aside for worship  
Baptist congregation believed to date from 1737 although the date of original Chapel built 1731 disputes this. Chapel rebuilt 1844  
'A Baptist Family of Bildeston: An Account of George and Susanna Pearson', by M.W.S. Hitchcock. Suffolk Review, Vol. 4, p.287

### 13. Manorial:

1066	Manor of 6 carucates held by Queen Edith
1086	Manor of 6 carucates belonging to Walter the Deacon (ancestor Of the Hastings family)
c.1200	Godfrey de Loveyn/Lovaine owns
c.1359	Passes by inheritance to Sir William Bouchier (linked to Layham, Shelland and Hopton)
c.1576	Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex owns (linked to Drinkstone and Shelland)
c.1599	John Rivett owns (linked to Brettenham)
c.1700	Bartholomew Beale owns
c.1749	William Alston owns half the manor and Jacob Brand the other
1909	Edward Buckley Cooke owns

### 14. Market/Fair:

Grant of market and fair 1264, fair to be held once a year at Michaelmas  
Market in use c.1348  
Fair held on Ash Wednesday c.1618 and on Ascension Day (June)  
Described as little market town having ordinary market on Wednesday 1679  
Fair held yearly on St Georges Day (April 23) c.1730  
Market held on Wednesday 1792  
Fairs held on Holy Wednesday and Thursday for wearing apparel and toys 1759  
Listed as market town 1844, area called the Market Place in existence 1912  
2 annual fairs for toys, wearing apparel etc, on Ash Wednesday and Holy Thursday 1844, fairs abolished c.1872

### 15. Real Property:

1844 – £1,840 rental value  
1891 – £2,479 rateable value  
1912 – £3,183 rateable value

### 16. Land ownership:

1844–1912 Land sub–divided

### 17. Resident gentry:

1679	John Blomfield and William Revet
1844	Daniel Brooks, Mr William Baldwin, William Death, Mr William Cooper and Rev. Walter Young, MA
1891	Rev. J. Beck, MA JP, Rev. W.F. Leith, MA

### 18. Occupations:

1500–1549	1 butcher, 3 yeomen, 1 baker, 2 mercers, 1 tailor, 1 clothmaker, 1 fuller, 1 parson, 2 drapers, 1 cooper
1550–1599	1 dye house, 4 husbandmen, 1 butcher, 4 yeomen, 1 clothier, 7 weavers, 2 tanners, 1 glover, 2 tailors, 3 labourers, 1 clothworker, 1 clothmaker, 1 surgeon,

1600–1649	1 cordwainer, 1 carpenter, 2 shearmen*, 1 woollen draper 1 husbandman, 5 yeomen, 3 clothiers, 3 weavers, 1 tailor, 1 maltster, 2 clothworkers, 1 dornick weaver, 1 clerk, 2 carpenters, 1 inn holder, 1 vintner, 2 spinsters, 1 grocer, 1 cutler
1650–1699	2 husbandmen, 9 yeomen, 3 clothiers, 1 tanner, 1 mercer, 2 tailors, 2 woollen weavers, 3 clerks, 2 carpenters, 1 inn holder, 1 spinstress, 1 spinster, 1 linen draper, 1 wool comber, 1 linen weaver
	Note: *shearmen: one who cuts woollen cloth Darnick/Dornick weaver: fabric used for hangings, carpets and vestments
1831	67 in agriculture, 104 in retail trade, 11 professionals, 10 in labouring, 37 in domestic service, 9 others
1844	Chief trade: clothing mainly Suffolk blues and blankets – declined (and 16 <sup>th</sup> cent.). Women either spin carded wool for clothiers or white-work for the Packer 1679, 2 watchmakers, toy dealer, currier and leather cutter, wine agent, excise officer, surgeon, basket maker, straw hat maker, cattle dealer, hairdresser, wine/spirit/porter and hop merchant, letter carrier, 3 innkeepers, 3 academies, 3 bakers, 2 blacksmiths, 6 boot and shoe makers, 3 bricklayers, beerhousekeeper, 4 butchers, 2 coopers, 2 corn millers, 9 farmers, 2 glovers, 4 grocer/drapers, 4 joiner/cabinet makers, 2 maltsters, 2 plumbers/glaziers, 3 saddlers, 4 tailors, 1 wheelwright
1891	Small cocoa fibre mat and matting manufacturer
1912	Fire brigade (compliment of capt and 6 men), sub postmaster, schoolmaster, blacksmith, bankers, private school owner, 2 boot/shoemaker, harness maker, 3 carriers, fishmonger, 3 grocers, 3 builders, 2 bakers, 3 butchers, newsagent, 2 publicans, hairdresser, 5 farmers, cycle dealer, grocer/drapper, wheelwright, surgeon, house decorator, general dealer, tailor, corn chandler, blacksmith, tailor, farm bailiff, painter, maltster, Threshing machine proprietor, watchmaker, asst overseer

## 19. Education:

1818	Richard Bishop, schoolmaster in the parish c.1686–1716 1 endowed school (60 boys attend) 2 day schools (107 attend)
1833	7 daily schools (165 attend), 1 Sunday school (established church) (23 attend), 1 Baptist Sunday school (91 attend)
1844	3 academies listed National school built 1835, 125 attend 1891, extended 1896, Average attendance 1912 140 School Board formed 1876
1891	2 day schools, day and boarding school School Council formed 1903
1912	Private school run by Mrs Cecilia Brooks

**20. Poor relief:**

1776	£329 0s. 6d.
1803	£222 15s. 2d.
1818	£765 10s.
1830	£802 6s.
1832	£752 8s.
1834	£437 8s.

**21. Charities:**

**Real Estates:**

1840	2 cottages used as residence for the poor 20 acres land let at £30 p.a. applied to Church repairs Smock Meadow in Chelsworth let at £5 p.a. Applied to purchase of linen for poor widows Profit on sale of stocks – £114 4s. applied to church repairs, repairs to workhouse and poors cottage, surplus to churchwardens account.
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**Personal Property:**

1840	£27 appropriated to buy fuel for poor
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**22. Other institutions:**

	Guild of Ascension and Holy Rood 1524 Book Club/Gentlemens Society 1784 Workhouse disbursements exist 1730–1757, 30 inmates 1776 Reading Room established 1888 Bildeston District Horticultural Association founded 1866, 300 members 1891 Fire Brigade: engine purchased 1844, hose kept at Red Lion Inn Lodge of Oddfellows meets at Crown Inn (82 members) 1891. Balance sheet for 1893 in parish folder Police officer listed 1891
1912	Fire Brigade: compliment of Captain and 6 men with 1 manual engine Barclay & Co Ltd, bankers Health Centre opened 1979 Barclays Bank situated in Kings Head public house 1977 Women's Institute records exist 1949–1967

**23. Recreation:**

1600–1699	2 inn holders recorded
1844	The Bull Inn, The Crown and The Kings Head public houses
1891	The Red Lion, The Kings Head and The Crown public houses
1912	Kings Head and The Lion Inn public houses only listed

Crown Inn 15<sup>th</sup> cent. built originally as wool merchants house,  
still in existence 1975 has gained reputation for hauntings  
Sports Field opened 1982

**24. Personal:**

Edward Rotheram 1753?–1830: Captain of 'Royal Sovereign' at battle of  
Trafalgar 1805, died in parish while staying with friends.

White Ensign and ships bell from HMS Bildeston laid by Captain Rotheram's  
Memorial 1987.

Note: HMS Bildeston (RN minehunter) launched 1952, paid off 1986

William Wade d.1599: inhabitant of parish, High Constable of Cosford Hundred

**25. Other information:**

Clock tower: dated 1864 stands in market place, threatened with demolition after bell  
fell from its mountings during high winds 1986, renovated 1987.

'History of the Parish of Bildeston', by F.S. Growse 1892.

Trade tokens were issued in the parish 17<sup>th</sup> cent.

Large house called 'The Bridewell' (used as workhouse 1829) was sold and

Demolished c.1864. Proceeds aided the building of clock tower.

'Bildeston church and village' 1987.

Original Bildeston Hall and village believed situated next to church

Evidence of DMV at this point found 1974.

One theory is that the inhabitants moved as the market (situated on the  
Stowmarket–Hadleigh road) flourished.

Town said to be in decline c.1553–58.

Field survey 1821–1976.

'Medieval and later finds from near Bildeston church', PSIA, Vol, 33, p,315,

'A Look at Bildeston', by S.P. Andrews, Suffolk Fair Vol 4 (March 1975), p.19. 'A  
Stitch not in Time: describes recent tragedy (fall of church tower) at

Bildeston by S.P. Andrews, Suffolk Fair Vol. 5, (Sept 1975), p.20.

'Bildeston', by E. Rayner, East Anglian Magazine, Vol. 29, p.134.

Case of incendiarism due to agrarian unrest 1843,

Case of disorder aroused by Swing Riots 1830s.