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:

   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

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.
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


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

1086 Church + 40 acres, 1 plough and 1 acre meadow
14th cent. E end of aisles, lower part of tower and chancel
15th cent. Main structure
1856, 1879 Restorations
1883, 1886, 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
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 Bourchier (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 spinster, 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 16th 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 cooper,
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/draper, wheelwright,
surgeon, house decorator, general dealer, tailor, corn
chandler, blacksmith, tailor, farm bailiff, painter, maltster,
Threshing machine proprietor, watchmaker, asst overseer

19. Education:

Richard Bishop, schoolmaster in the parish c.1686–1716

1818
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1776</td>
<td>£329 0s. 6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>£222 15s. 2d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1818</td>
<td>£765 10s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>£802 6s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832</td>
<td>£752 8s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>£437 8s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

Personal Property:

- 1840: £27 appropriated to buy fuel for poor

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 15th 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 17th cent.

Large house called ‘The Bridewell’ (used as workhouse 1829) was sold and Demolished c.1864. Proceeds aided the building of clock tower.


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.


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


Case of incendiariism due to agrarian unrest 1843,

Case of disorder aroused by Swing Riots 1830s.