

# **1. Parish : Santon Downham**

**Meaning:** Enclosure on hill near Santon in Norfolk

**2. Hundred:** Lackford

**Deanery:** Fordwich (–1862), Fordwich (Suffolk) (1862–1884)  
Mildenhall (1884–)

**Union:** Thetford

**RDC/UDC:** (W. Suffolk) Brandon RD (1894–1935), Mildenhall RD  
(1935–1974), Forest Heath DC (1974–)

## **Other administrative details:**

Abolished ecclesiastically to create Santon and Santon  
Downham 1962  
Lackford Petty Sessional Division  
Thetford County Court District

**3. Area:** 3,905 acres of land, 16 acres water (1912)

**4. Soils:**

**Mixed:** a. Deep well drained sandy soils, in places very acid,  
some calcareous sandy soils. Risk wind erosion  
b. Deep permeable sand and peat soils affected by  
ground water near river

**5. Types of farming:**

1086		6 acres meadow, 1 fishery, 1 ox, 21 pigs, 900 sheep. Medieval rabbit warrens
1500–1640	Thirsk:	Sheep-corn region, sheep main fertilising agent, bred for fattening. Barley main cash crop.
1813	Young:	4,000 acres. The whole some years ago was warren now a large quantity is under the plough
1818	Marshall:	Management varies with condition of sandy soils. Rotation usually turnip, barley, clover, wheat or turnips as preparation for corn and grass.
1937		Divisional Forest HQ Thetford Chase. Seeding nursery (9 acres). Land planted with Scots and Corsican pines

**6. Enclosure:**

1844 Parish enclosed except for 700 acres forming open warren and sheep walk

**7. Settlement:**

1958 Little Ouse River forms northern boundary. Parish almost entirely covered by tree plantation. Thetford–Brandon road passes to S. of settlement  
Extremely small settlement situated at river crossing apparently only reached via tracks. Church situated to S. of development.  
Few isolated farms.

**Inhabited houses:** 1674 – 9, 1801 – 8, 1851 – 15, 1871 – 20, 1901 – 26, 1951 – 84, 1981 – 77

**8. Communications:**

**Roads:** Roads to Thetford and Brandon  
**Rail:** 1891 2 miles Brandon station: Birmingham–Norwich line opened 1845 closed for goods 1966, unmanned halt 1967.  
**Water:** Little Ouse River: Made navigable by Acts designed to improve navigation 1670 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 the river c.1850's.

**9. Population:**

1086 – 20 recorded  
1327 – 11 taxpayers paid £1 17s. 9d.  
1524 – 20 taxpayers paid £1 19s. 2d.  
1603 – 70 adults  
1674 – 13 households  
1676 – 44 adults  
1801 – 57 inhabitants  
1831 – 66 inhabitants  
1851 – 70 inhabitants  
1871 – 84 inhabitants  
1901 – 93 inhabitants  
1931 – 353 inhabitants  
1951 – 348 inhabitants  
1971 – 282 inhabitants  
1981 – 237 inhabitants

**10. Benefice: Perpetual Curacy**

1254	Valued £6 13s. 4d. To Sacrist of St. Edmunds Manor £5	<u>£11 13s. 4d.</u>
1291	Valued £12.	
1831	1 curate. Stipend £50 p.a. No glebe house. Gross income £60 p.a. Incumbent also holds Rectory of West Tofts, Norfolk, Perpetual Curacy of Nayland, Suffolk and Rectory of West Bergholt, Essex	
1835	Valued £59	
1846	Dispensation of hold Rectory of Santon with Perpetual Curacy of Santon Downham	
1887	131 acres 2R 33P glebe	
1891	Valued £56	
1918	Valued £90	

**Patrons:** Lord William Powlett (1844), Earl Powlett (1831), W.D. Mackenzie (1918)

**11. Church St. Mary**  
(Chancel, nave, N. porch, W. tower)

1086	Church plus 20 acres land
11 <sup>th</sup> cent.	Doorways
12/13 <sup>th</sup> cent.	Nave walls, chancel
14/15 <sup>th</sup> cent.	Porch, tower
1893	Restoration

Note: Base of churchyard cross remains west of tower

**Seats:** 50

**12. Nonconformity etc:**

**13. Manorial:**

**Downham Manor**

–1538	Ixworth Priory owns
1538	Richard Codrington owns
c.1592	Thomas Wright owns (linked to Wangford)
1778	24 acres 1R 4P plus rights of fishing and 3,134 acres 3R 38P in two farms
c.1778	Charles Sloane owns
1825	Downham Hall estate consists of approx. 6,000 acres
1847	Lord William J.F. Powlett owns passing by marriage and inheritance to Col. E.P. Mackenzie

### **Sub-Manors:**

#### **Downham al Monks Hall**

1066/1086	Manor of 3 carucates belonging to the Abbot of St. Edmund
1539	Vested in Sir Thomas Kytson
c.1596	Thomas Maltward owns
1804	Absorbed by main manor (Charles Sloane)

#### **Marsier al Mercies**

1360	Nicholas Mersey held half a fee of the Earl of Oxford
13 <sup>th</sup> cent.	John de Luvetot owns
1550	Granted to Thomas, Earl of Warwick
1609	Linked to Elveden, Falkenham, Felixstowe, Kirton and Hollesley (Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk)
1804	Absorbed by main manor (Charles Sloane)

#### **14. Markets/Fairs:**

20 <sup>th</sup> cent.	Woodchoppers Fair held annually
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#### **15. Real property:**

1844	£1,185 rental value
1891	£1,016 rateable value
1912	£1,062 rateable value

#### **16. Land ownership:**

1844	Lord William Powlett (Santon Downham Hall)
1891/1912	William D. Mackenzie sole owner

#### **17. Resident gentry:**

1844	Lord William Powlett
1873	Col. E.P. Mackenzie, High Sheriff of Oxford

#### **18. Occupations:**

1550–1549	1 shepherd
1550–1599	3 husbandmen, 3 shepherds, 1 clerk
1600–1649	5 yeomen, 1 linen weaver, 2 husbandmen, 1 weaver, 3 labourers, 2 shepherds, 1 clerk, 1 tailor
1650–1699	2 yeomen, 3 husbandmen, 1 shepherd
1831	13 in agriculture, 1 in retail/handicrafts, 2 professionals, 2 labourers, 5 in domestic service
1844	Gardener, house steward, gamekeeper, farm steward, 2 farmers

1912            Steam mill for grinding corn  
Schoolmistress, gardener, 2 farmers, gamekeeper

**19. Education:**

1818/1833    Has the right to send 5 children to Brandon Grammar  
School  
1871           House converted into school (20 attend)  
1912           Public Elementary School, average attendance 23

**20. Poor relief:**

1776           £39 13s. 11d.  
1803           £65 16s. 5d.  
1818           £112 15s.  
1830           £123 5s.  
1832           £74 19s.  
1834           £96 6s.

**21. Charities:**

**22. Other institutions:**

1423           Guild of St. Trinity

**23. Recreation:**

**24. Personal:**

Thomas Wright: published account of the 'sand flood' 1668 in  
'Philosophical Transactions' No.17, reprinted in Suffolk Traveller, 1764

**25. Other information:**

Hall built c.1800, enlarged 1836, demolished 1925.

District HQ of Forestry Commission employs 80% of male population.

Commission developed area as Forestry centre c.1920.

Council houses built 1930's.

'Brandon and Santon Downham in Times Past' 1976.

'Inundation of sand' buried and destroyed several houses and cottages and  
choked the river so that navigation became difficult, some roads were blocked  
to depth of 8–9 feet, 1668.