

**1. Parish: Wenhaston (otherwise Wenhaston with Mells)**

**Meaning:** Wynheaths homestead/village

**2. Hundred: Blything**

**Deanery:** Dunwich (–1868), Dunwich (South)(1868–1914), S. Dunwich (1914–1972), Halesworth (1972–)

**Union:** Blything

**RDC/UDC:** (E. Suffolk) Blything RD (1894–1934), Blyth RD (1934–1974), Suffolk Coastal DC (1974–)

Other administrative details:

Blything Petty Sessional Division  
Halesworth County Court District

**3. Area:** 2,401 acres (1912)

**4. Soils:**

- Mixed:**
- a. Slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged fine loam over clay soils.
  - b. Deep well drained sandy and coarse loam soils, some with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging. Risk of wind erosion.

**5. Types of farming:**

1086		Domesday vill of Mells: wood for 100 pigs, 5 acres meadow, formerly 1 mill, 2 cobs, 7 cattle, 30 pigs, 16 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:	Wide variations of crop and management techniques including summer fallow in preparation for corn and rotation of turnip, barley, clover, wheat on lighter lands.
1937	Main crops:	Wheat, barley, roots.
1969	Trist:	More intensive cereal growing and sugar beat.

**6. Enclosure:**

7. **Settlement:**  
1975/82 River Blyth forms natural boundary to north. Large well-spaced development. Church centrally situated. Mells hamlet situated close to northern boundary in western sector. Scattered farms.

**Inhabited houses:** 1674 – 51, 1801 – 80, 1851 – 235, 1871 – 226, 1901 – 200, 1951 – 246, 1981 – 305

8. **Communications:**

Road: To Walpole, Halesworth, Holton, Blythburgh, Thorington and Bramfield.  
Rail: 1891 Rail station: Southwold–Halesworth line, opened 1879, closed 1919.  
Water: River Blyth: navigable to Halesworth 1761, silted up.

9. **Population:**

1086 – 6 recorded  
1327 – 25 taxpayers paid £1 14s. 1d. (including Thorington)  
33 taxpayers paid £3 5s. 8d. (Mells included with Bramfield and Peasenhall)  
1524 – 28 taxpayers in Wenhaston and 12 taxpayers in Mells paid £4 15s. 8d.  
1603 – 167 adults  
1674 – 80 households  
1676 – Not recorded  
1801 – 578 inhabitants  
1831 – 1,070 inhabitants  
1851 – 1,004 inhabitants  
1871 – 914 inhabitants  
1901 – 792 inhabitants  
1931 – 744 inhabitants  
1951 – 728 inhabitants  
1971 – 734 inhabitants  
1981 – 769 inhabitants

10. **Benefice: Vicarage (with Mells)**

1254 Valued £5 6s. 8d.  
Mells valued 5s.  
1291 Valued £5 6s. 8d.  
Portion of St Bartholomew of Smithfield in Mells and Wenhaston £2 16s. 8d. £8 3s. 4d.  
pre 1465 Tithes of Mells paid to Mettingham College  
1535 Valued £6 0s. 10d.  
1603 Valued £6 10s.  
1650 Valued £20. Vicarage sequestered.  
1831 Curate, stipend £50. Glebe house unfit for occupation.  
Gross income £110 pa

1891 Rectorial tithes commuted for £378 2s. 3d. and the vicarial tithes for £142 pa (1839)  
1912 Good residence near church  
Nett value £106. 3 acres glebe and residence. Incumbent also holds Thorington.

Patrons: Prior of Blythburgh (1309), Arthur Hopton (1603), daughters of Lady Brooke (1650), the Crown (1831), Lord Chancellor (1891–)

## 11. Church

### St Peter

(Chancel, nave, N. aisle, S. porch, W. tower)

Saxon Fragments found at restoration of chancel 1892  
Norman 2 windows in nave  
13<sup>th</sup> cent. Chancel rebuilt  
c.1400 Tower and nave arcade  
15<sup>th</sup> cent. Porch  
c.1530 N. aisle  
c.1892 Restoration, at which time the 'Doom' picture was discovered above chancel arch (believed to be one of the best preserved 15<sup>th</sup> cent. works of its kind). Restored c.1970.

Seats: 200 (1915)

### St Bartholomews Chapel

Land was owned by the Priory of St Bartholomews, Smithfield (c.12<sup>th</sup> cent.). Small chapel believed to be built on their land but all records have disappeared. PSIA Vol. VIII, p.360.

### Mells Chapel: St Margaret

Norman Building with apsidal chapel. In use until circa 1465, after this date services were only held once a year on eve and day of St Margaret. Probably closed completely 1467. Believed at one time to be held by Sibton Abbey.  
'The Chapel of St Margaret, Mells', by W.R. Gower, PSIA Vol. VIII, p.334.

## 12. Nonconformity etc:

1644 Thomas Ambler, vicar of Wenhaston, ejected by Suffolk Committee for Scandalous Ministers.  
Wesleyan chapel built 1822, enlarged 1835 and 1865.  
Primitive Methodist chapel built 1868.

## 13. Manorial:

### **Wenhaston Manor**

1271	John de Vallibus owns (linked to Parham, Rumburgh, Spexhall, Walpole, Wissett, Shottisham, Bramfield, Wenham Parva and Covehithe).
1312	Sir John de Norwich owns (linked to Thorington and Yoxford)
1375	Manor released for use of Mettingham College
1541	Sir Thomas Denny owns
1563	Nicholas Bacon owns (linked to numerous manors throughout Suffolk)
1620	Richard Lovelace owns

### **Sub-manors**

#### **Wenhaston Grange**

1251	Sibton Abbey owns
16 <sup>th</sup> cent.	Possibly obtained by Thomas, Duke of Norfolk (linked to numerous manors through Suffolk)
1609	Sir Francis Clere owns
1800	John Dresser owns (linked to Thorington and Blythford)
1909	Charles Day owns

#### **Mells Manor**

1066	Manor of 3 carucates held by Manni, a free man
1086	Manor of 3 carucates belonging to Robert of Tosny
c.1285	Peter de Mells owns
c.1316	Sir Walter de Norwich owns (linked to Walpole, Herringswell, Bredfield, Dallinghoo, Mendham, Bramfield and Dalham)
c.1375	Manor released for use of Mettingham College
1541	Sir Anthony Denny owns
1794	Michael Gollinson died seised
1836	Thomas T.M. Nemle owns

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

1891	Fair for hiring of servants held on October 12 <sup>th</sup> (described as former fair)
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#### **15. Real property:**

1844	£2,580 rental value
1891	£3,186 rateable value
1912	£3,258 rateable value

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

1844 Mr Collison, principal owner  
1891/1912 Land sub-divided

**17. Resident gentry:**

1679 Capt. Thomas Leman  
1891 Rev. J.B. Clare MA  
1912 F.M. Remnant JP

**18. Occupations:**

1500–1549 1 yeoman  
1550–1599 3 yeomen, 8 husbandmen, 1 weaver  
1600–1649 7 yeomen, 6 husbandmen, 1 cardwainer, 1 tailor, 1 weaver, 1 butcher, 1 linen weaver  
1650–1699 11 yeomen, 2 husbandmen, 1 brick striker, 1 brick maker, 1 tailor, 1 linen weaver, 1 spinster, 1 farmer, 1 school master  
1831 156 in agriculture, 1 in manufacturing, 59 in retail trade, 2 professionals, 9 in labouring, 20 in domestic service, 13 others  
1844 Tailor, 2 schoolmasters, brewer, hairdresser, corn miller, schoolmistress, millwright, butcher/beerhouse keeper, victualler, tailor, registrar, 3 blacksmiths, 6 boot/shoe makers, 14 farmers, 5 grocers, saddler, 2 joiners, wheerwright/shopkeeper  
1912 Sub-postmaster, school master and mistress, station master, police officer, beer retailer, harness maker, poultry/egg dealer, 6 farmers, insurance agents, 2 grocers/drapers, draper, carpenter/builder, shopkeeper, boot repairer, 2 blacksmiths, market gardener, 2 builders/contractors, baker, shoemaker, cycle maker, plumber, miller/corn/coal merchant, publican, thatcher, pig killer, watch repairer, millwright, wheetwright/carpenter, deputy registrar, grocer.  
Mells: 3 farmers, miller

**19. Education:**

1562/63 Bequest of William Pepyn and Reginald Lessey for education.  
1660 Schoolmaster recorded  
1722 Schoolmaster and school chamber in existence  
1818 21 attend endowed school  
1833 34 boys attend endowed school, 20 free  
1844 Property in existence called the Schoolhouse, rethatching and repairs carried out circa 1838  
1833 3 infant schools (40 attend), 1 daily school (32 attend), 1 established church Sunday school (184 attend), 1 Wesleyan Methodist Sunday school (74 attend)

1844	2 schoolmasters and 1 school mistress educate 17 poor children.
1832	School house in need of rebuilding
1876	School Board established
1882	School built
1912	average attendance 168

Note: Churchwardens let the Church Sunday school room as a day school 1832 until new schools were built.

## 20. Poor relief:

1776	£77 1s. 11d.
1803	£163 10s. 6 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> d.
1818	£356 7s.
1830	£642 14s.
1832	£603 5s.
1834	£646 13s.

## 21. Charities:

### Town Estate

1840	4 tenements (formerly Guildhall), 20 acres land, let at £41 pa applied to church repairs and expenses in lieu of church rate.
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### The School

1562	by will of William Pepyn: 1 pightle call Dose Mere Pightle for maintenance of free school.
1563	by will of Reginald Lessey: 3 acres land called School Meadow for same.

### Collen's Charity

1680	by will of Mary Collen: rent-charge of £3 pa on 45 acres to relief of 6 poor widows.
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### Leman's Gift

1826	by will of Rev Thomas Leman: £100 for poor relief.
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## 22. Other institutions:

1674	15 persons housed in almshouse
1686	Church house occupied by poor
1726	Guildhall in existence
1844	4 tenements, formerly call the Guildhall, in existence
1844	Petty Sessions held every 3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday
	15 persons housed in almshouse
1888	Reading room opened
1912	Police officer recorded

## 23. Recreation:

1844/1891 1 beerhouse and The Compasses public house  
1912 1 beer retailer and The Compasses public house  
1923 The Compasses public house  
Former public houses: Carpenters Arms (cottage 1923), The Star,  
David and the Harp (private house called Beeches 1923)

**24. Personal:**

**25. Other information:**

Wenhaston Grange: 16<sup>th</sup> cent. frontage, 18<sup>th</sup> cent. brick. Shows Tudor chimneys. Probably belonged to Sibton Abbey 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> cent.

Parish contains ancient but decayed parish of Mells in south bank of river Blythe.

Painting on wood of a 'Doom' or Great Day of Judgement is considered to be well preserved relic of 15<sup>th</sup> cent. art.

'On a Panel Painting of the Doom discovered in 1892 in Wenhaston Church, Suffolk', by C.E. Keyser, *Archaeologia* Vol. 54, Part 1, p.119.

'Wenhaston Doom', *PSIA*, Vol. XIX, p.80.

'Notes on the Church and Village of Wenhaston', by M.J. Becker 1923. At one time leg-irons and handcuffs from the village stocks hung in the church.

Destroyed by 1923.

'Wenhaston and Bulcamp', by Rev. J.B. Clare. Includes photographs of curiosities found in the parish. These include dial type ancient watch c.17<sup>th</sup> cent., tonsorial pincers, bronze venus and a horn box.

'Wenhaston', *Raven Pamphlets* Vol. 2.

Mells Water mill was moved to its current position in 1758, formerly it was situated a mile up river.

Stocks and whipping post in existence (1705–1814). There is also an entry for 8d. paid for a ducking stool in 1717.