



The Parish Of Mendlesham

Neighbourhood Plan

History of the Parish

October 2014



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Mendlesham (Melnessam) First mentioned in Domesday 1086 but was already an established community of some wealth under the Anglo – Saxons and was held as a manor, with the Norman conquest was subsequently held by a steward for the new King.

Signs of earlier settlement can be found in the Northern parts of the parish and seem to be Romano British farmsteads. The main A140 on the Eastern boundary of the parish was certainly a Roman road but may have followed an earlier track used by earlier British tribes, the area being dense woodland but following a higher ridge than the surrounding area.

The early village probably grew up around the Church site and the manor site alongside the Eastern boundary of the Church.

A deer park is thought to have existed stretching from the manor site east towards Brockford and northeast towards Twaite/Wickham road. The main settlement pattern of the village being west of the Church and Manor sites.

The settlement pattern of the main village changed little until the post WW2 period, consisting of Front Street, Back Street and Church Row, with a housing pattern following these roads all of which lie to the west of the church (St Mary's, circa 12th century) and the main manor site which lies immediately to the East of the church with a deep partially drained moat between. Four further smaller manor sites were created later in the 13th century Winchesters and Cordeboefs both in the South of the parish and Busses (Buses) together with Flede Hall Mickfield The main manor site seems to have been empty since at least 1600 when it is recorded as a site.



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The main village centre still contains many sizable houses of the 16/17th century but the spaces between have been largely infilled with later developments probably to house the growing population in the 18/19th centuries.

Up until the early 17th century copyholders could pull down houses presumably to save paying tax although in 1635 the subdivision of houses was forbidden, so its possible that the housing plan of the village centre has been similar for a long time with the exception of the old market place area, with the area between The Fleece public house and today's shop being open space in 1839.

Early agricultural activities and exports from the parish were flax (linen) /dairy products (cheese/butter) and pig keeping, by 1839 we were 2,710 acres of arable and 1,127 acres of meadow and pasture. Considerable amounts of land were required for the horses which worked the land so we can assume that the dairying except for home consumption had largely been replaced by arable production, although dairying made a return in the 20th century up to the 1950's.

The settlement of Mendlesham Green consisted of a scattering of farmhouses which largely follow the boundary of the village green with some later infill. It has seen considerable development from the early 19th century and further considerable infill occurred in the 1970's and later.

Mendlesham Green itself was enclosed after 1785 and stretched from the river Gipping up to the Cedars, the deep ditch which surrounded parts of the Green can still be seen (Cherry Tree Farm).

The population of the Parish of Mendlesham was fairly static for a considerable time during the middle ages. It grew slowly but stabilised from the 16th to the early 18th century, doubling by the end of the 18th century reaching 1,442 persons by the 1851 census thereafter slowly falling probably due to agricultural changes, until the post WW2 period where it began to grow again.



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with the population as follows:

1086	population	52 (Doomsday)
1524	population	52 (Lay subsidy)
1676	population	347 (Compton)
1770 (estimated)	population	700 (Register Bill)
1801	population	1,051
1851	population	1,442
1901	population	961
1931	population	862
1951	population	862
1971	population	967
1981	population	1,080
2001	population	1,328
2011	population	1,405
2014	population	1,450

The decline in population from the mid-nineteenth century high point until the 1940's can probably be explained by, initially, the requirement on the land for workers declining due to mechanisation on farms and, subsequently, by the general drift away from rural areas in the 20th century for better paid employment in the towns.

Mendlesham village was a market town from 1280, the market being held on Tuesdays, but declined during the 18th century. By 1818 it was described as a former market town. In 1874 it is still mentioned that a fair took place 2/3 October and the Marketplace is today only a fraction of its former size, with Horse Fair Close still mentioned in the North West corner.

Mendlesham village obtained a railway connection to the outside world in 1904 but seems to have had little effect on population, probably because it was a very slow railway and was quicker to cycle to Stowmarket than go via Haughley Junction. It was however more useful in the carriage of goods and agricultural produce and carried large amounts of munitions during the second world war. It closed in 1952.



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The map of 1839 shows the village layout probably as it had been since 1600.

The map of 1884 again shows the village little changed.

The map of 1903 no change except for the railway and new school.

The map of 1950 shows the council houses which are opposite the playing field plus the village hall in Chapel road built 1926 but the mills have gone in mill road, The Chapel has gone from Chapel Road demolished as unsafe in 1926 (about where the modern bungalow is built).

Up until the 1960's the village was still roughly the same housing stock as the 1600's.

The map of 1983 shows the village expanded with the council development on the horsefair land down to Ducksen Road plus the health centre and the housing estate from Mayfield Way going behind the old village hall and the industrial developments of the maltings and station yard.

The map of 2002 shows the Ropers Farm development, the infill of the allotment land and building where the old school canteen stood. Further building behind the council houses opposite the playing field, industrial developments of the bus garage having moved from the village and Brian Palmers haulage yard having moved from Wash Lane.

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