

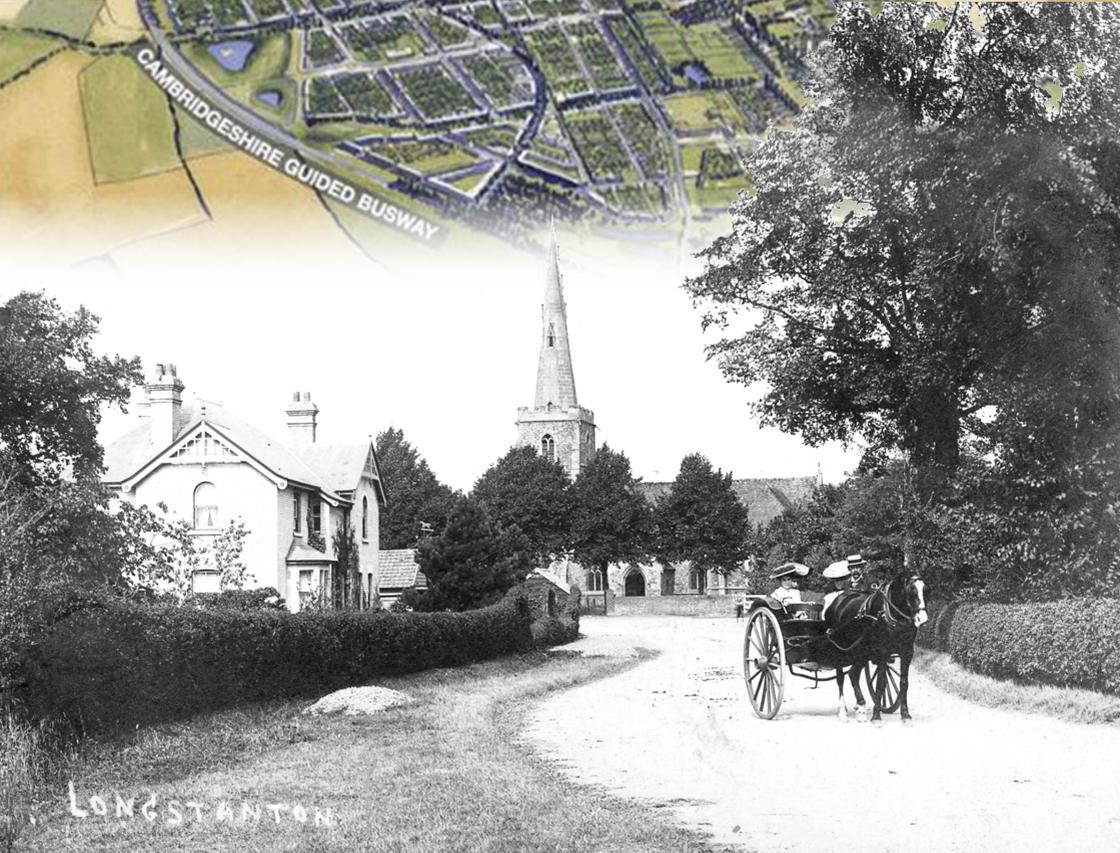
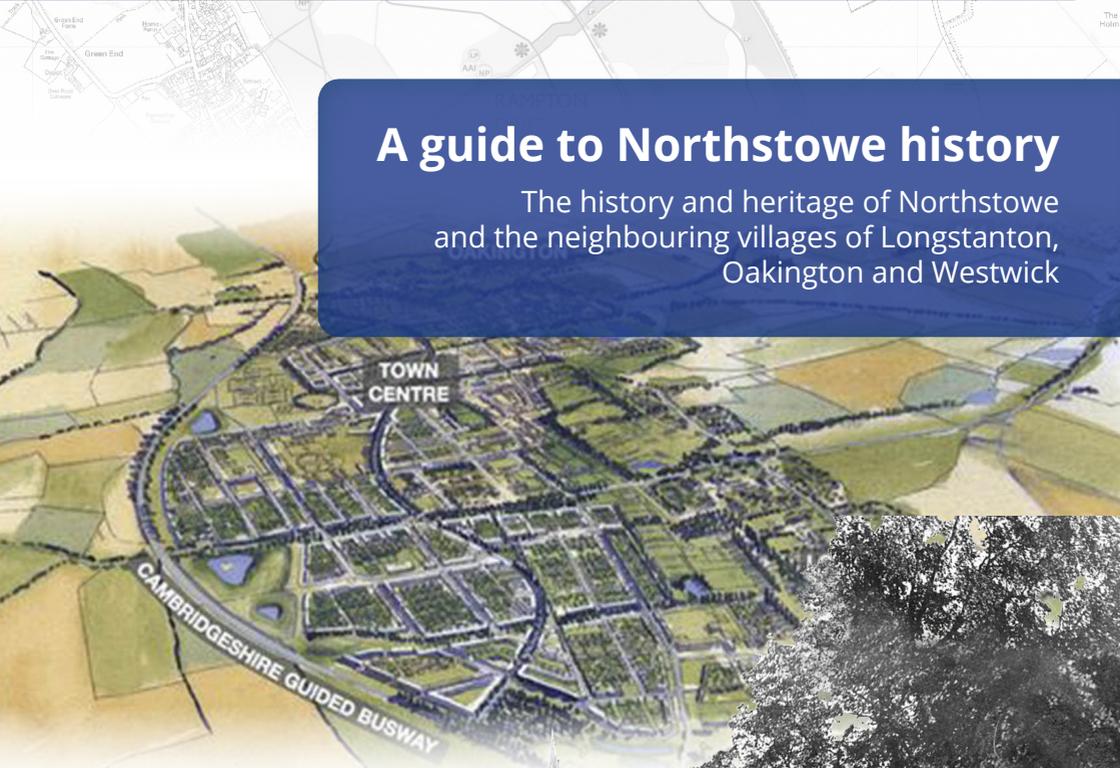
The Longstanton &
District Heritage Society

Northstowe

A town with an ancient past

A guide to Northstowe history

The history and heritage of Northstowe
and the neighbouring villages of Longstanton,
Oakington and Westwick



Introduction

Situated between the world-renowned university city of Cambridge, the pretty market town of St Ives and the RSPB reserve at Fen Drayton Lakes, the new development of Northstowe has provided a unique opportunity to create a modern and vibrant town with unparalleled access to the countryside and the heritage that surrounds it.

We hope this brief guide will introduce you to the fascinating heritage that is shared between Northstowe and the two villages on whose parish lands the new town has been built.



An Ancient Past Worth Preserving

Built on the parish lands of Longstanton, Oakington and Westwick, the new town has become part of a rich history that goes back thousands of years. Archaeological excavations carried out over the last 20 years or so have shown that the land occupied by these parishes has been inhabited since the Iron Age and possibly earlier.

The archaeological evidence demonstrates that Northstowe merely represents the latest chapter in the area's rich historical vein of human activity. Many fascinating artefacts have been discovered during excavations for Northstowe and it is hoped that one day these artefacts, along with the LDHS archives, will be on permanent display in a local museum.



Northstowe: a unique 21st-century town

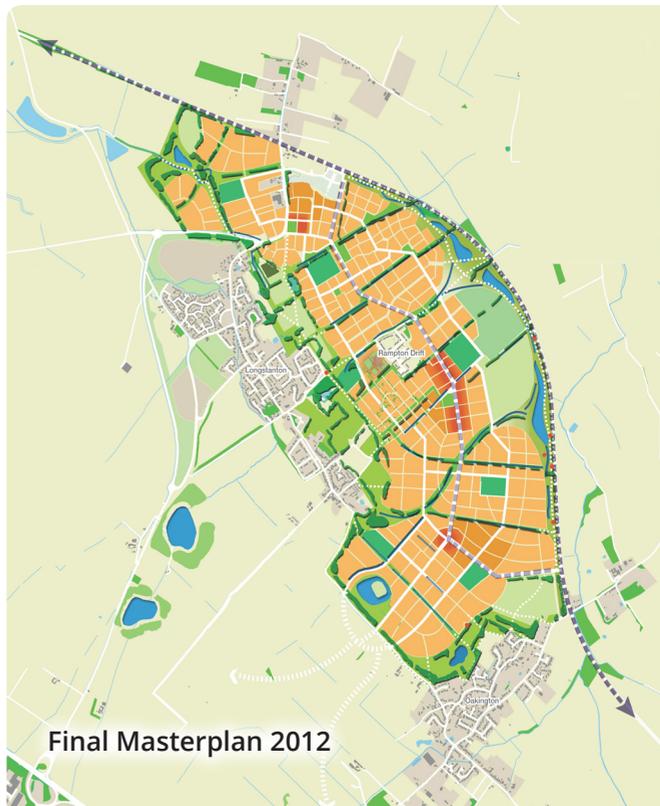
The town of Northstowe had been in the planning stages for over 20 years before the first new homes started to be built in 2016. Its development was supported by various governments, all of which recognised the need for rapid house building to alleviate an acute shortage of new homes across the country. With its world-famous university and a rapidly growing hub of science and technology, Cambridge was considered a prime location for the UK's first planned new town for generations.

The first outline planning applications for Northstowe were submitted in July 2005 and December 2007, the second being just months before the severe global financial crisis of 2008.



As the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s took hold, a serious question mark hung over Northstowe's fate. However, thanks to the tenacity of the developers and local government, whose faith in the project remained steadfast, the project survived.

As the UK's economic outlook improved, the Northstowe project began to regain momentum. The original plan for the site was reviewed to take into account the significant economic and legal changes that had occurred since the first application. In 2012 the Masterplan for the whole of Northstowe was approved and the new town was now destined to become a reality.



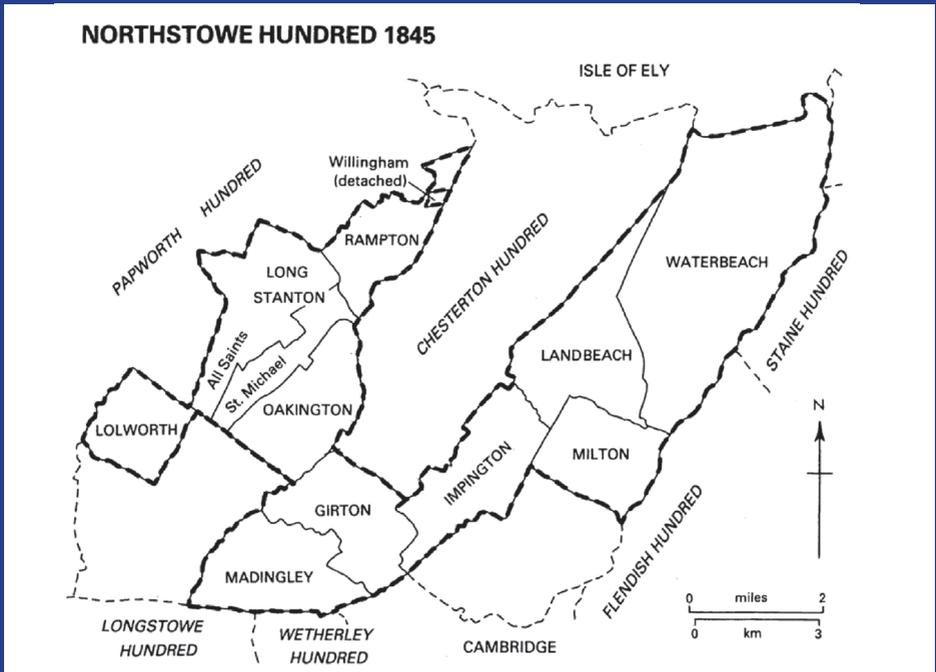
In summer 2016, Northstowe's first primary school was completed, and with Bloor Homes beginning work on the first new homes that autumn, the long-planned new town was fast becoming a reality. With the first new homes ready for sale in 2017 this moment marks a momentous milestone in the history of Longstanton, Oakington and Westwick, the rural nature of which will be transformed for ever.



Earmarked as a 'healthy new town' with strong environmental credentials, Northstowe is helping to develop planning principles that will shape 21st-century development not just here but across the country.

What's In A Name?

The name Northstowe is taken from the historical name of the Hundred in which the new town will be situated. Historically, a Hundred was a subdivision of a county, with each having its own court. The Hundred of Northstow (with no 'e') is mentioned in William the Conqueror's Domesday Book of 1086, and continued to exist for many centuries. It consisted of the parishes of Girton, Impington, Landbeach, Lolworth, Longstanton, Madingley, Milton, Oakington, Rampton and Waterbeach.



Longstanton

The land on which Longstanton parish sits has been inhabited for millennia, but the village in its earliest form dates back a thousand years. The Domesday Book of 1086 shows that 'Stantune' was one of the most populated villages in the local area, with sheep the predominant livestock. The Domesday record gives no details of the village, so it is possible that there were in fact two separate villages with two churches, each built by a noble for his own people. Records show that by the 13th century two separate villages did indeed stand here.

The free-draining gravel ridge which runs through the two settlements would have made the area an attractive place to live, with the community able to obtain fish, fowl and reeds from the nearby fen. Arable farming would have been at the forefront of villagers' lives and evidence of medieval cultivation can still be seen in the paddocks that lie near both churches.



Following the Norman conquest of 1066, Long Stanton was divided into three principal Manors. However, repeated ownership of multiple Manors by individual families blurred the boundaries between the two parishes. The last Lord of the Manor, Sir Thomas Dingley Hatton, died in 1812, and the Hatton Estate was broken up into smaller farms which were sold off in 1874. This sale laid the foundations for rural life in the two villages which continued until the outbreak of World War Two changed everything.

In 1923, the Church of England decided to place the churches of All Saints' and St. Michael's under the responsibility of one incumbent but it was not until 1953 that the two villages were formally united under the modern name Longstanton.

Longstanton churches

Longstanton is one of a small number of local villages to have two churches. There was an older church on the site of All Saints' Church which burnt down in 1349 and fragments of that old building remain today. The existing church is Grade I Listed and is a fine example of 14th-century Perpendicular Gothic architecture. All Saints' Church became the spiritual home for both the RAF and the army during their time in the village. As a result it contains the Memorial Window and Roll of Honour for 7 Squadron. The churchyard also contains a number of RAF graves.

Inside All Saints' stands the fine tomb of Sir Thomas Hatton who died in 1658. The tomb is also dedicated to his wife Mary. Surrounding the tomb are statues depicting their six children, three sons and three daughters, who were alive at the time of Sir Thomas' death.



St Michael's Church

A Grade II Listed church which dates back to the 13th century, making it the oldest surviving building in Longstanton. One of only two thatched churches in Cambridgeshire (the other being nearby in Rampton) it is a fine example of a simple Old English design. No longer used for religious services, the building is now in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust.



The Hatton Family

After becoming Lords of the Manor in the early 17th century, the Hatton family would remain Longstanton's largest single landowner for the next 250 years. Traces of their Mansion House kitchen garden wall can still be seen in the grounds of Hatton Park Primary School.



The Hatton family crest, featuring a Golden Hind, can be seen in various locations in All Saints' Church, while the Golden Hind also serves as the centrepiece of Longstanton's village sign. It is reputed that Sir Christopher Hatton (Chancellor to Elizabeth I and relative of the Longstanton Hatton family) provided financial support to Sir Francis Drake when he was preparing to make his voyage around the world. In recognition of that support it is said that Sir Francis Drake renamed one of his ships 'The Golden Hind' to honour his benefactor.



Oakington Airfield

In 1909, two Oakington residents Messrs Grose and Feary built a monoplane in an attempt to win the Daily Mail's £1,000 prize for the first Briton to fly a circular mile. Many years later aviation would continue to have a place in the history of the village with the arrival of RAF Oakington in 1939.

While the airfield itself was close to Oakington, the main buildings and most of the activity were based on the Longstanton side. Intended for use by RAF Bomber Command, Oakington was provided with good quality permanent buildings but no runway. In October 1940, as the Second World War intensified, the first Short Stirling four-engined heavy bomber arrived at Oakington, followed shortly afterwards by 7 Squadron. With no paved runway on the site however, major problems soon arose, leaving aircraft unable to take off or land once the ground was wet. As a result, aircraft were moved to Bourn airfield until paved runways were constructed in the summer of 1941. Later in the war RAF Oakington and 7 Squadron became part of the Pathfinder Force whose role was to guide the bombers on night-time raids over Europe.

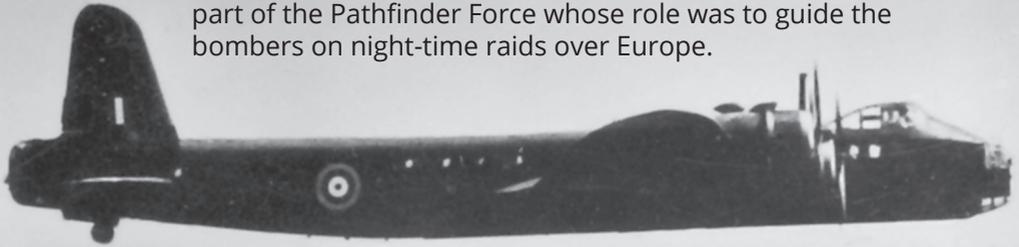


Photo: Stirling Bomber with the old railway line in the distance.

After the war

Transport Command inherited the airfield. From July 1945 to April 1946, Liberator bombers made many flights to India to repatriate Allied troops. Oakington then became the home of several squadrons of Dakota aircraft, which were employed on medium-distance transport tasks, notably the Berlin Airlift of 1948. From the 1950s until 1974, the airfield was used as a base for flight training.



Above: A Pillbox that is being retained as part of the local heritage

Oakington Barracks

Following the withdrawal of the RAF, Oakington Airfield became an army barracks. In 1979, 657 Squadron moved in to operate Lynx and Gazelle helicopters.



A number of army regiments, came to Longstanton between postings to Germany and Northern Ireland - this included the Royal Anglian Regiment (illustrated in the postcard above).

In 1991, the last helicopters left and subsequently the site's official military use came to an end in 1999.

After standing empty for several years, the site became the home of Oakington Immigration Reception Centre, a Home Office immigration detention centre located in Longstanton within the complex of buildings which originally formed part of RAF Oakington. During its lifetime, the centre received repeated criticism from the Prisons Inspector and others regarding safety of both children and adults detained there. The site was acquired in March 2006 by English Partnership (a government quango which was to be later restructured to form the Homes and Communities Agency) for a new town called Northstowe.

The Immigration Centre eventually closed in November 2010.



Oakington and Westwick

Like Longstanton, Oakington is a village of ancient origin. Roman pottery found in modern-day gardens indicates that the area was settled from the 2nd to the 4th century AD. An early Saxon cemetery was discovered in 1938, while further excavations on the site since 1993 have revealed many burials, including the notable discovery in 2012 of a woman who was buried with a cow. It is believed that this site could be one of the most important Saxon sites to be discovered in the whole of the UK, and possibly Europe.



Listed as 'Hochinton' in the Domesday Book of 1086, the name 'Oakington' means 'estate of a man called Hocca'. Its population at this time was about 55. The Black Death arrived in Oakington in October 1348, drastically

reducing the population and resulting in the death of half the tenants on Crowland Abbey's Manor. The population recovered, however, steadily growing until the early 19th century when it began to rise rapidly, reaching a peak of 610 inhabitants by 1851. However, poverty and unemployment began to take a toll, and up to a third of the villagers left in the mid-19th century, many of them emigrating to Australia.



Above left: Saxon lady with cow

Above right: CAFG find from Oakington Saxon site 2007

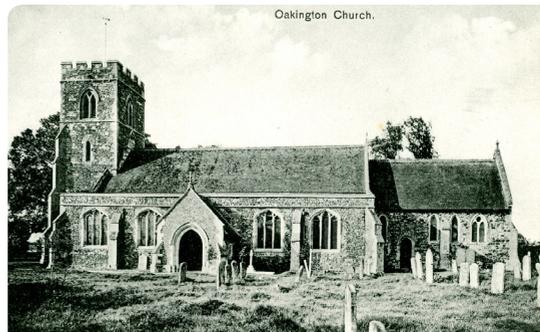
Left: Excavations 2014

Two Villages United

Oakington had been informally paired with Westwick for hundreds of years. The tiny hamlet had relied upon Oakington for a church since the 13th century despite the fact that it was officially part of Cottenham parish. Earthworks on the north side of the road are the remains of Belbouches Manor, which was an important manor belonging to Crowland Abbey. On the other side of the road lies Westwick Hall, built by William Linton in the 19th century to replace the medieval Westwick Manor. In 1985, the two parishes were officially united to form the single civil parish of Oakington and Westwick.



During the 17th century Oakington was described as a 'hot-bed of religious dissent' leading the Bishop to describe it in 1685 as 'the most scandalous and vile parish in his Diocese'. Behind St Andrew's church is a private burial ground containing the graves of the three dissident preachers responsible for that reputation: known as the 'Apostles of Cambridgeshire', Francis Holcroft and Joseph Oddy were 17th-century pioneers of the non conformist movement, and it was by their heroic zeal that various non conformist churches were established in Cambridgeshire. Ejected from their livings, persecuted and imprisoned for propagating their faith during their lives, they became known as the 'Oakington Martyrs' in death. Their graves, along with that of their successor Henry Osland, remain a memorial to non conformist Protestantism.



In 1939, a quiet rural way of life was shattered by the arrival of RAF Oakington. The loss of parish land to build the airfield ensured that Longstanton, Oakington and Westwick now had a shared history. With the development of Northstowe the new town now shares that history too.



Longstanton & District Heritage Society

The work of the Longstanton and District Heritage Society is helping to ensure that the unique history of Longstanton, Oakington, Westwick and Northstowe is recorded and preserved for future generations.

The heritage society was founded by local residents in May 2007 to record the social, rural and military history of the existing villages and RAF Oakington/Oakington Barracks. Faced with the prospect of imminent development, residents decided to create a record of what went before.

LDHS is dedicated to recording our shared history and making it available for public enjoyment and education. The society organises a series of talks throughout the year that are open to both members and non-members. There is a nominal fee for non-members to help cover costs but it is a great way to meet other local residents and learn about our local history. You will find a warm welcome.



Further information :

Longstanton & District Heritage Society: www.ldhs.org

Oakington & Westwick History Society: www.oakingtonhistory.co.uk

Northstowe: www.northstowe.com

British History Online: www.british-history.ac.uk

Acknowledgements :

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LDHS would like to thank those who have helped with the production of this guide book, all our members and everyone who has contributed to our archives. Without this generous support we could not carry out our important work. You can find out more about the society by visiting our website or our Facebook page.

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