

Ham Lane/ Old Ham Lane

By Henry Shotter

At the suggestion of Reginald Tolhurst, the then owner of Lenham Storage the southern part of Ham Lane, became 'Old Ham Lane'¹ when new estates were built in Lenham. The word 'ham' has nothing to do with the bacon factory which was once where Lenham Storage is today, but goes back to the Anglo Saxon word 'ham' which means 'village'.

There is some conundrum over the name of this lane. Lesley Feakes, founder of Lenham Heritage Society pointed out that the original Ham Lane, the 'village' lane was a mile outside of the old part of Lenham. She suggests that there was a village somewhere at the southern end of Old Ham Lane, nearer to the source of the river Len.

This doesn't seem too far fetched especially as the map of the Domesday Book online (opendomesday.org) shows a very small manor (= taxable landholding in 1066) of 1 household in this area. This manor is called Shelborough² and was situated south of Marley Manor.

In support of her theory Lesley Feakes pointed out a map of the area from 1797-1799 which shows two small settlements in the vicinity of Ham Lane called 'Upper Ham' and Lower Ham'



Doddington, Kent(002OSD00000027AU00428000) digital copyright The British library Board

Whether these two settlements related in any way to the manor of Shelborough and maybe to a larger settlement is currently unclear and ought to be subject of further research.

¹ Lesley Feakes tells us that this happened

² Phillimore, Domesday Book Kent chapter 5, entry 65, see our section on Lenham Manors