

Lenham's High Street¹

by Henny Shotter



When asked where Lenham is, most people say something like: 'Between Maidstone and Ashford'. It is therefore easy to think that the most important street in Lenham village is on the axis going West to East. The most important street where there are most shops in a town or village is normally called 'The High Street'.

However, the 'High Street' of Lenham runs on a South-North axis through Lenham Square.

'Why?', you might wonder. The explanation is simple. If you had asked someone in the 17th century where Lenham is, you would have had an answer similar to this: 'It is in the County of Kent, near Chilston House, just off the London-to-Hythe Road, on the road going towards the important port of Faversham.'²



Bradford, the Milner was in the High Street

Today the local stretch of the 'London-to-Hythe Road' is known as 'Lenham Heath Road'. It was the most important long distance coaching route in the vicinity of Lenham. (There is still a 'Coach Road' near Boughton Malherbe)

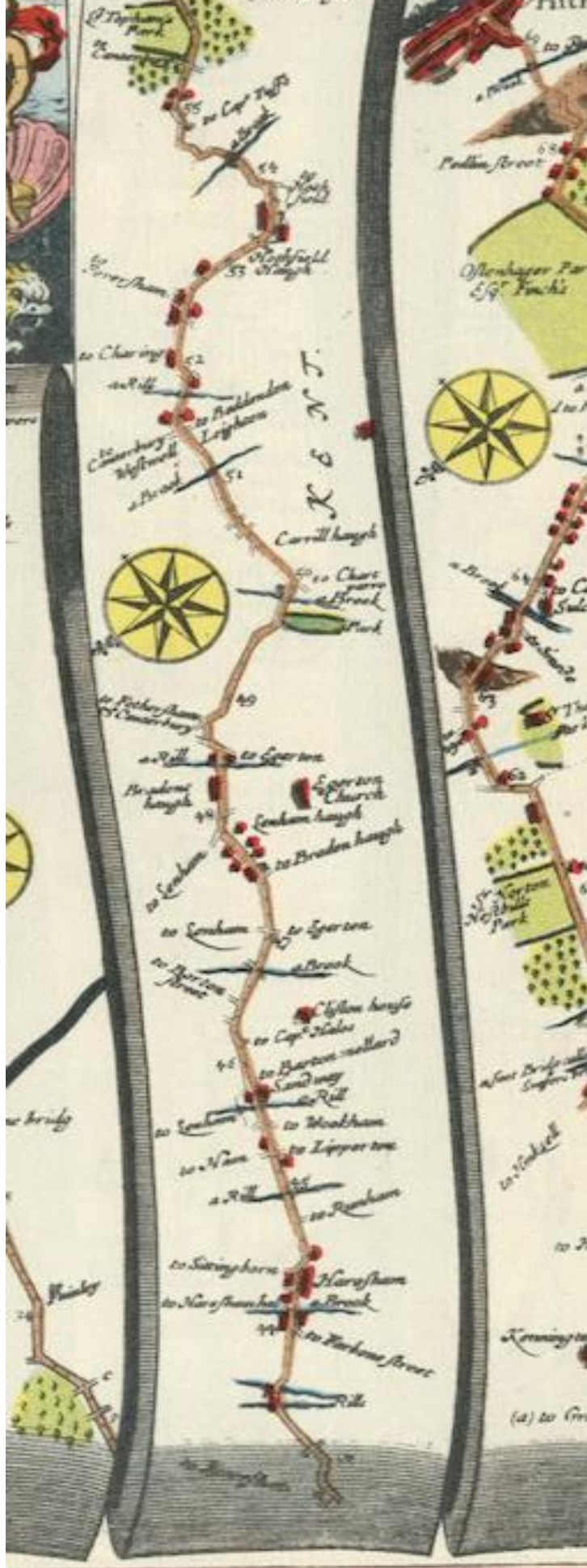
There was a road from Lenham to Charing, but the A20 didn't exist and the Pilgrims' Way maybe didn't lend itself to travel by coach and led anyhow to Canterbury and not to another town with a harbour.

The road was mapped by John Ogilby in his 'Britannia' in 1675³. (see next page)

¹ Thank you to David Carder for his very informative talk about maps which helped to solve the conundrum of Lenham's High Street

² The importance of Faversham as a harbour town is the subject of an article by Paul Wilkinson, PhD, MIFA, FRSA see www.kafs.cp.uk/pdf/port.pdf

³ See: <http://www.fulltable.com/vts/m/map/ogilby/c/SH969.jpg>



When looking closely at the map of 1675, you will find a turn to 'Ham' which comprised two settlements on Ham Lane, 'Upper Ham' and 'Lower Ham'. The first turn off to Lenham is marked at Sandway Liverton is mapped as 'Lipperton' and Lenham Heath as Lenham Haugh.

A comparison⁴ of this old map with a modern map shows that the mapping in the area of Lenham is very accurate.

⁴ See p. 36 in *Britannia's Roads, An Introduction to John Ogilby's Britannia, 1675* by Gordon Dickinson, Published 2019 by David I. Bower