

## Harkstead Recorder Initial Report - April 2022

Harkstead is a small village located on the northern bank of the River Stour. We are about 7 miles (11 km) south east of Ipswich.

Most of the civil parish south of the road between the nearby villages of Lower Holbrook and Erwarton lies within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The civil parish is surrounded by the neighbouring civil parishes of Holbrook, Chelmondiston and Arwarton. Large areas of the civil parish are classified as Scheduled Monuments due to the presence of ring ditches, post-medieval field boundaries and later prehistoric or Roman field systems.

The parish is a rural parish with limited 'modern' amenities. Having a form of faster Broadband arrive in the village possibly a year before COVID meant a number of individuals were able to work from home rather than having to travel to their normal place of work.

The majority of the houses are to one end of the village. The village has some old buildings, but also some new (c2018/2019). At the beginning of 2022, there are no outstanding planning requests for the village. There is talk that the reason the church is so far from the majority of the current dwellings is due to a previous land owner who moved the village to obtain a better view.

According to the 2011 Census, the majority of residents (276 were born in the UK), with only 11 from either the Republic of Ireland, EU (other), or Other Country. At the end of 2020, there are approximately 300 residents. There is an almost 50/50 split between males and females in the village. 25% of the village are older than 65, and less than 22% are under the age of 17.

The parish has limited facilities. There is no school, shop, and unfortunately, at present no Pub. There is a village green, the Millennium Green, a church, St Marys and a village hall.

A few individuals run businesses from home, however, these are specialist activities (3 are listed on Companies House with the registered address being in Harkstead). Since COVID, the majority of those that travelled out of the village for work have worked from home if they can.

Some individuals in the village are lucky enough to work nearby (Peninsula or Ipswich), such as Structural Architects, Accountants, physiotherapists, boat builders, but there are a group of residents whose work requires travel into either London, or a major towns/cities such as Coventry, Gateshead, Cambridge, Southampton, Gatwick, Weybridge and St Ives on a regular basis. This is due to the activities that they undertake (Financial Compliance, Air Traffic Control, Naval Architecture, Micro Biologist, Editor/Author). Please note that this list is just those that I am aware of and have seen sight of in Parish records.

Following COVID, a lot of people get food deliveries from the major supermarkets. Sainsbury's, Tesco, Morrisons etc, are all approx 7-8 miles away. The nearest on the Peninsula is a Co-op in neighbouring Holbrook and a locally run Hollingsworths in Chelmondiston. Hollingsworths is run by a family who reside in Harkstead and have during the COVID pandemic taken to home deliveries and special orders to help the residents through this tough period. Just under the Orwell Bridge is the Suffolk Food Hall which also allowed online/telephone orders to be placed, with a pick up and collect service available to those that required it.

The Village Hall has many activities being undertaken regularly. There are Yoga classes, mature circuits, boot camp sessions, dance lessons, fencing, carpet bowls, tea and coffee morning, social sew and so's and a farmers market on a regular (weekly/monthly basis). It is hoped that the twice a year Auction restarts with COVID restrictions lifting. The village has not had a WI, nor a Historical Society for a few years. In days gone by, there are stories of Fete's taking place on the Millennium Green and pancake competitions. Sadly, with the pub closing, the Book club, the darts team and a regular weekly quiz night have temporarily stopped, but there is hope that other venues may be able to accommodate to get these up and running again in some form.

## COVID

The village had some COVID infections during the course of the pandemic, but thankfully, most were not serious and didn't require hospitalisation. Some 'bubbles' were formed by some families to ensure support was where it was required and with the additional flexibility provided by Hollingsworths and the Suffolk Food Hall, the village went through a very quiet period with snatched conversations over fences or from opposite sides of roads/foot paths when people crossed paths with each other.