

## Death's Lane and Presland's Barn.

Walter Death. 1785-1843.

Walter Death, occupation, miller and Ann his wife, arrived in the village about 1810. Ann seems to have retained her maiden name, being known as Ann Smith Death. Their first child, also Ann was born here in 1812.

Millers, usually being self-employed, were amongst the better off in rural communities. The cynically minded often attributed their comparative financial security to a tendency to adulterate their flour with other substances, or to give short measure. Walter's later reputation makes such accusations very unlikely.

Walter and Ann had 10 children several of whom did not live to reach adulthood. At least two daughters remained unmarried and became either housekeepers or governesses. These occupations required the ability to read, write and calculate and it was often women like these who offered a basic education in their homes which were known as 'dames schools'.

Walter flourished: by 1819 he was included in the membership of The Lackford Hundred Association founded to discourage felonies and to prosecute felons. The local aristocracy was notably represented. (Destitute soldiers returning from the Napoleonic Wars and increasing food prices together with the beginnings of mechanisation often led to desperate acts).

**LACKFORD HUNDRED ASSOCIATION,**  
*For prosecuting all Persons guilty of Felonies, &c. within the said Hundred.*

**A**T the General Annual Meeting of the Members to the above Association, held at the White Hart Inn, Mildenhall, it was, amongst other things, Resolved, That the names of the several Members should be advertised in the Bury Paper two weeks.

**MEMBERS' NAMES.**

Sir Thos. Chas. Bunbury, Bt.	Mr. Robert Willett
Sir H. E. Bunbury, Knt.	Messrs. W. and W. Isaacson
John Swale, Esq.	Andrews and Gowing
H. S. Waddington, Esq.	Mrs. Susan Murrell
John Brewster, Esq.	Mr. Charles Morley
John Robinson, Esq.	John Aves
Rice James, Esq.	William Young
Rev. Robert Gwilt	Thomas Brook
Mr. Joseph Andrews	Philip Fuller
Stuteville Isaacson	Thomas Wing, sen.
Benjamin Primrose	Thomas Wing, jun.
Isaac Wing	James Gittus
Thomas Steel	Charles Wm. Morley
Joseph Tubbs	Charles Chenery
James Smith	James Williams
William Smith	Walter Death
John Payne	Matthew Waddelow
Thomas Hills	John Tubbs
Arthur Stedman Gedge	Isaac Handlip Godfrey
William Last	Benj. M. Shepperson
John Sparke	George Wilde
Richard Wing	

Dated the 16th May, 1819.  
W. and W. ISAACSON, Solicitors.

*Bury and Norwich Free Post. Wed. May 26 1819*

By now a person of standing, he was appointed school master to the Goward Charity School in 1820 but also found time to farm land he had rented, and was described as a farmer in the Norwich and Bury Press. (April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1823). He was not keen to pay the frequently unpopular Church Rate and appealed against payment in 1823.

[See Time Line 4 at 1823. Butt v Eagle: The Church Rate and Tithe Dispute.](#)

Things must have changed because in 1825 his copyhold tenancy, house, mill and land, was being sold by auction at the Bull Inn Lakenheath:

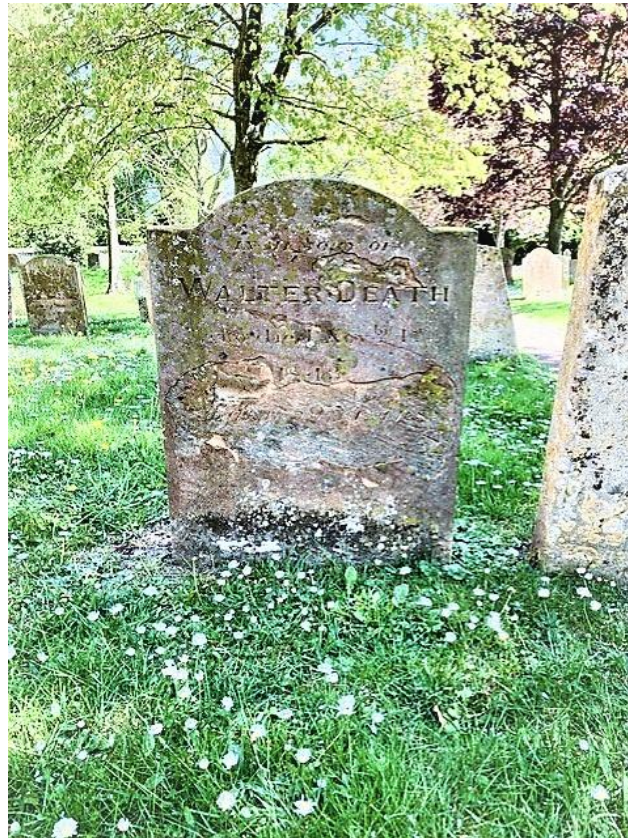
“a substantial sash-fronted dwelling house in centre of Town of Lakenheath, also a tower windmill a short distance from the dwelling house. Lot 2. Substantial parcels of land. Held in copyhold from the Manor of Lakenheath now held by Mr. Walter Death”.

**TO MILLERS AND OTHERS.**  
**TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,**  
By ROBERT OSWALD,  
the Bull Inn, Lakenheath, Suffolk, on Monday the 4th day of July, 1825, at Four o'clock in the Afternoon, subject to such Conditions as will be then produced, (unless sooner disposed of by Private Contract, of which due notice will be given)  
**The following VALUABLE PROPERTY:**  
1. A **LL** that substantial **SASH-FRONTED DWELLING-HOUSE**, situate in the centre of Town of Lakenheath, fit for the residence of a respectable Family; consisting of 2 parlours, kitchen, back kitchen, sitting-house, dairy, and pantry, on the ground floor; 4 good sleeping-rooms, with attics over the same; excellent garden, yard with a pump of good water, Stable for 5 Horses, one Stable, Gig-house, Cart-lodge, Pig-styes, and every other convenience.  
And also an excellent **TOWER WINDMILL**, a short distance from the Dwelling-house, in thorough repair, on the possible elevation; length of sail 10 yards, and driving a pair of French stones (one pair of which are nearly new) in going gears complete. There are 3 floors in the Mill, upper floor of which has bins capable of holding 8 score corn.  
Lot 2.—A very excellent Piece of Meadow Land, containing about 8 Acres, more or less, situate in the Turf Fen, Lakenheath, on the North side and West end of which is a driving belt of Ash, Elm, Poplar, and Alder Trees.—Six Acres and a Half, part of this Lot, pays a Drainage-tax of per Acre, and an Eau Brink Tax of 2s. per Acre.  
Lot 3.—Another Piece of very rich Meadow Land, containing about 8 Acres, more or less, situate in the Smeath, in Lakenheath.—Exempt from Drainage and Eau Brink Taxes.  
*Lot 4 has been disposed of.*  
The whole of the Property is Copyhold of the Manor of Lakenheath, and is now in the occupation of Mr. Walter Death; and Possession may be had at Michaelmas next, or sooner, if required.  
Lakenheath is a good situation for the Milling Business, the navigable river from Lynn running up to the town, and being distant only 15 miles from the market towns of Bury St. Edmund's and Newmarket, 12 from Thetford, and 5 from Brandon, to each of which places the roads are excellent.  
Further particulars may be obtained of Messrs. Archer and Chad, Solicitors, Mildenhall, Suffolk; of the Auctioneer, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk; or of Mr. Death, Lakenheath, who will show the property.

*Bury and Norwich Post Wed. June 15 1825*

Tragedy struck the family between 1815 and 1832. Sarah aged 2, Francis aged 6, James aged 3 and another child, Michael died in 1826, probably before his baptism, and first son Walter died in 1831 aged 17. Mother Ann also died in 1831.

Their graves are in St. Mary's Graveyard, together with Walter's.



It was probably at this time that Walter began acting as an agent, described as a 'point of contact' in property sales. He was still the schoolmaster, receiving an annual salary of £40 pa plus £10 pa for private tutoring. He was probably well off enough to have invested money in the purchase of the land which was to become Death's Lane. An alternative explanation for the name perhaps is that being very well known in the village his name became connected with the place where he lived.

The 1841 Census shows Walter Death living in Death's Lane but no address is shown.

<i>Walter Death</i>		<i>55</i>	<i>School Master</i>
<i>Ann</i>	<i>" daughter</i>	<i>25</i>	
<i>Sarah</i>	<i>" daughter</i>	<i>15</i>	

In 1851 Ann Smith Death (daughter), Sarah and Susanna were living at 34 High St. (The High St was renumbered in 1933). Their occupations were listed as schoolmistresses.

John Death. 1818-1896. Mayor of Cambridge.

John was Walter and Ann's fifth child. At an unknown date he left Lakenheath for Cambridge and married there in 1841 aged 23. He was widowed in 1893. The couple were childless.

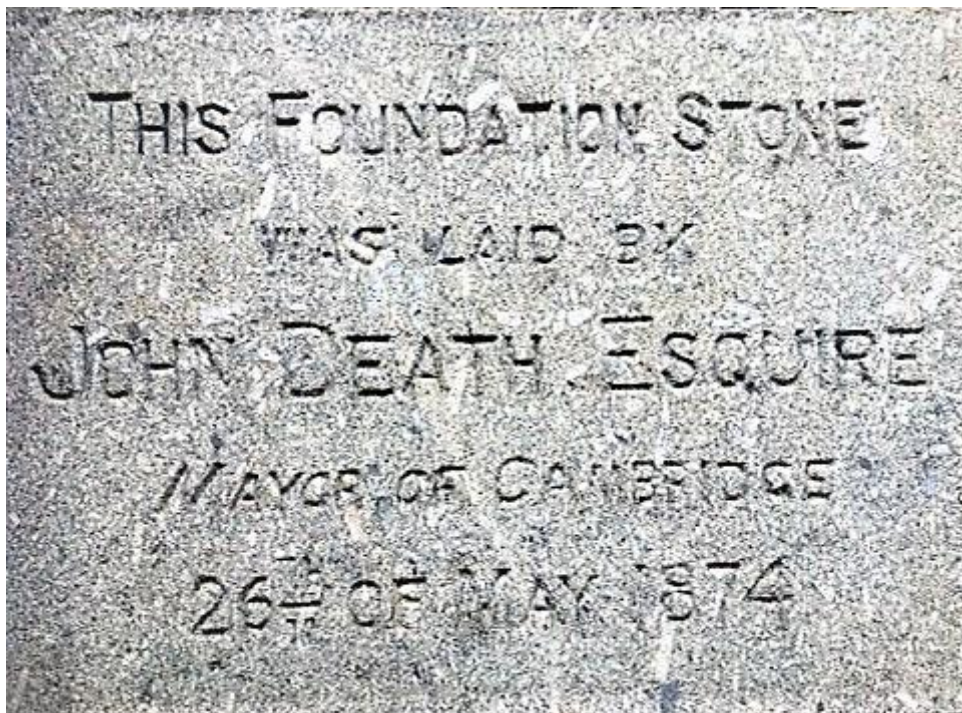


By 1861 he was employing seven men and owned a livery stable and a farm of 150 acres. He was also a Parish Councillor. In 1873-75 he was Mayor of Cambridge (two terms) and again from 1880-82. In all he served four terms.

During his second term as Mayor the well-known Cambridge Corn Exchange was built and he laid the foundation stone.

*The Cambridge Family History Society Archive Survey.*

Note: The pronunciation and spelling of the family surname have been questioned. Since no evidence has been found, either in documents, census returns, sales adverts, or, indeed, gravestones, apart from the spelling given by Margaret Morley, I have concluded that the name was pronounced as spelt.



*Photograph: Sophie Nuin Jones.*

## Endfield House.

This house occupies land which was originally part of the manor of Clare long before it was built. (See Presland's Barn).

There is internal evidence in the house of 17<sup>th</sup> century clay block walls with the later chalk blocks (clunch) so evident in many local buildings and the core of the 17<sup>th</sup> century building is said to be relatively intact. There is a bread oven and cooking area which leads to a tall chimney. Surviving roof carpentry shows the conversion from thatch to a tiled roof.

Farm buildings show evidence of a barn or cow byre which probably dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

*House details and other information from Nigel Clarke.*

The building itself may have remained a small holding until circa 1920's/ early 30's

The map on the interpretive panel shows Endfield House at the head of Death's Lane which probably was the original track leading to the small farm which was located there with land stretching down

to the Lakenheath Lode. The building is clearly shown on the 1854 Tithe and Apportionment map. (Suffolk Archives SA/B: T96A/) and also the 1882 Ordnance Survey 25" Suffolk XII.5 map.

It is very likely that Walter Death and his remaining family lived in this house prior to his death.

The building itself may have remained a small holding until circa 1920's/ early 30's

1936. My last Christmas Down Dumpling Bridge Lane.

Margaret (Meg) Morley. Times Remembered.

'.....We ran out of milk, so Mother told me to take the little milk can and "go out the \*back into Death's Lane to Aunt Fan's. The name of the lane came from a man named De'ath who had either lived down the lane there or owned it." AND

"Anyway, Aunt Fan was born with a club foot and walked with one crutch. She and Uncle Vic had a herd of cows. In those days we received milk straight from the cow and I carried the milk back home in an enamel can....."

*Margaret (Meg) Morley in Times Remembered.*

\*The houses in Dumpling Bridge Lane had back doors which led on to Death's Lane. Hence, "go out the back".

Aunt Fan was Frances Rolph and Uncle Vic was Victor Rolph. They had three sons, William, Lionel and Albert. At the time of the National Registration in 1939 Victor Rolph was classified as a farm labourer and they were the only family remaining in Death's Lane and Margaret's family had moved to the new council houses in Eriswell Road. Were they living in what became Endfield House or was it unoccupied at the time?

There is good evidence to suggest that Aunt Fan and Uncle Vic lived at Endfield Farm.

[Times Remembered.](#)

Presland's, later Diver's Barn.

From the early 19<sup>th</sup> century until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century a visitor coming into Lakenheath from Hockwold could not help but notice the large roof of a building on the right-hand side of the road. This was Presland's barn, later Diver's barn.



*Diver's Barn,*

\*The barn stood on ground which in the 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> century was part of a manor which belonged to the earl of Gloucester whose main residence was at Clare. By comparison with Lakenheath Manor the manor of Clare was very small and of small value. It's probably because of this that it was gifted to the Manor of Lakenheath (The Prior and Abbey of Ely) by Elizabeth de Burgh, lady Clare in 1331. Clare manor did, however own the stalls in the market place in Anchor Lane which were supervised and maintained by the manor bailiff or steward. Rev John Munday says that the manor bailiff's cottage was in ground later known as Death's Lane.

*\*John Munday M.A. former vicar of Eriswell and well-known historian in 'How We Lived in Lakenheath 600 Years Ago'*

George Presland.

*'In 1885 in Fulham George Presland married Sarah Jane Frost. George's father John Presland was a wheelwright. In 1901 George Presland, like his father was a wheelwright and builder. He and his wife Sarah were living in a cottage, later known as Presland Cottage on the corner of High Street and Dumpling Bridge Lane. They had three children, James, aged 15 and daughters Rosella 14, and Florence 11.*

*George's workshop was in a large barn just around the corner past Dumpling Lane which is now the site of Presland Court. His son, James Presland, traded from the barn until the late 1930's when Reg Diver, a builder and undertaker took over the barn in about 1946. Mrs Diver, neé Prewer, ran the shop next door to the Brewers Tap where they lived for a number of years.*

*Rosella Presland was a school teacher in Chatteris until she retired and then moved back to Presland Cottage where she lived until she died in 1968. In effect the same family had lived in the cottage for over 100 years. Children of the village were welcome at the Presland cottage, sometimes helping in the garden'.*

*Ken Turner: Names and dates from the 1901 Census.*

The barn was demolished in the 1980's to make way for the Presland Court development.