

What's in a name?

All towns and villages have pieces of land, roads and streets with names, some are official and others unofficial. Fakenham is no different.

Downstream of the mill is Fakenham Common, then like many other parishes there is Little London. There are two parcels of land with a connection to an ancient mill 'Mill Common' and 'Malt common'. There's a finger of Pudding Norton on the north bank of the river in Fakenham parish that may have given access to the mill, if it did then this involved crossing the river! Before Pensthorpe there is Heath Common, below Fakenham Heath.

Fakenham's roads all radiate from the Market Place. Bull Street became Bridge Street after the bridge was built in 1833. In 1819 an Independent (Congregational) chapel was built in Chapel Street which became Cattle Market Street. The building of the Corn Hall in 1855 created Exchange Street which became Lower Market in time. A Quaker Meeting House was in Quaker Lane while the Duke Of York public house was in York Street which became Cross Quaker Lane. The Tuns gave its name to the street which runs to Mill Lane which needs no explanation. Hall's Staithe was near the Old River not far from Hall's Meadow. The land of the Manor House lead to this area but the assumption of any connection has not been proven. For much of the 19th century this area was known as Brewery Lane , once the brewery had gone then the modern name of Hall Staithe came into use.

The south end of Oak Street was once known as Broad Street, here was the cage which was accommodation for drunks overnight and also the Market Cross which was pulled down in the early 19th century. Then Oak Street proper starts at either the Oaks Public House or the fine 18th century house nearby called The Oaks. Oak Street runs into Wells Road but before then we find Hay Lane which ran to Hay Meadow. The Lord Nelson gave its name to the first half on this street and the remainder was given a rogue 'E' (circa 1860) and continued as Hayes Lane. The origins of the name Butchers Lane is uncertain. Field Lane was the way to Fakenham's ancient fields including the Glebe Land which was sold off after the First World War. Sculthorpe Road needs no explanation. Wells Road carried on to Toll Bar where Norfolk's last Toll Gate led to way to Wells. Sandy Lane going over Sandy Hill must not be overlooked.

Going in the other direction was Claypit Lane leading to the clay-pit created by the excavations which may have been made by the brickworks nearby. After Campbell had built his mansion called 'Highfield' in Sandpit/Pound Close, part of Claypit Lane became Highfield Road. The remnants of High Terrace can still be seen at the end of the road which took its name. Constructed on a triangle of land near the Fakenham and Wells railway cutting the terrace was called 'Birmingham Terrace' and was built with only front doors and windows with no rear access to it! Further along, Greenway Lane remained so until the 20th century. Before Greenway Lane merges with Holt Road there is Thorpeland Road which led to Thorpeland while Rudham Stile Lane went nowhere near Rudham although one could presume that it had a stile somewhere.

Back into the town where Norwich Street divided into Holt Road and Station Road (Norwich Road) the way to Norwich after the way via Old Lane/Oxborough Lane fell into disuse. South of Norwich Road there is Ratcliffe Road, named after solicitor Ratcliffe Pope. He did not live there but may have owned the land and built some of the houses there. Further up we find The Drift which was a green lane linking Holt Road with Norwich Road near the Great Eastern station. The Victoria Public House in Victoria Lane was built for those who were working on the extension of the Lynn & Fakenham railway. Victoria Lane leading into Barber's Lane named after a long-time smallholding which once stood there. Mission Lane had an iron mission hut built by the father of Miller the printer who lived in the former Poor House near by. The road to Snoring had a big house occupied by a Mrs Baldwin who was a farmer and so the lane took her name, in time the house was occupied by the Smith family hence the name Smith's Lane.

Back into town we find that a beer-house with the sign of a white horse was in White Horse street, later to become Whitehorse Street. In the 18th and 19th centuries the layout of buildings and roads here was a bit complex and White Horse street may have been considered as an extension of Rampant Horse Street, the latter became Cemetery Road when the cemetery was opened on the 'mount' in the mid-19th century. Eventually Queen's Road went over the entire hill. A number of Midland names are evident here on buildings and roads as a result of the builder coming from that part of the country.

Fakenham does not have a Church Street. Instead, a system of pedestrian lanes runs between Queen's Road and Oak street, collectively known as Church Lanes.

One part near the old malting was known as Malthouse Lane and another near the old National School was known as School Lane, later renamed Constitution Hill.

Over the last 50-60 years there has been a lot of building in the town which has seen a number of new road names appear but some of the old unofficial names linger on, at the corner of Norwich Street and Norwich Road stood a shop run by the Allison family this became Allison's Corner and when the Leach family took over it became Leach's Corner. A local GP lived and worked in a large house on the corner of Wells Road and Sculthorpe Road this became known as Dr Chapell's Corner while at the other end of the town 'White Post' was created when white signposts appeared. Another legend is that there was a post mill (with a white post?) in that area. In fact an old photograph of the Drift shows what appears to be a windmill in the background. The part of Wells Road, where there were some wooden shops converted from WW1 buildings became known as Low Town, while further down on the corner of Oak Street and Nelson Road stood Tuck's Bakery and this became Tuck's Corner.

Workhouse Yard is a mystery, it ran behind the buildings at the South of Norwich Street. There is no record of a workhouse there in fact when the name was in use the Fakenham Poorhouse on the Heath had closed and the residents transferred to Thursford Castle (Walsingham Union). Could it be that there was some sort of non residential house of correction there?