

## **Elsenham Parish Boundary**

One of the delightful complications for local historians is the fact that the recognised boundary of the Parish of Elsenham has changed over the years.

Thus when seeking to produce a comprehensive copy of the available census records for the areas of Elsenham as we know them today, interpretation is necessary of the records for the Parishes of Elsenham, Henham and Stansted Mountfitchet.

For example, areas of today's Elsenham, North of the High Street, including the Crown Inn, and land East of Station Road, were in the Parish of Henham. Areas west of Station Road including New Road down to the station were in the Parish of Stansted Mountfitchet. Indeed it was said that regarding Elsenham Railway Station, the Cambridge platform was in Stansted and the London platform was in Henham! See Figure 1. As the Village War Memorial was also within the Parish of Henham until after World War II this caused some difficulties for the team researching casualties from the conflicts in preparation for the History Society's book "For the Duration".

Our Vice Chairman, David Verlander has carried out research with the aim of resolving this issue. The four figures in this document show the boundary alignments for the years up to 1946, the approved boundary for 1946, the boundary for 1953 and the boundary as we know it today.

As stated on figure 2 for there is still work to do on the boundary around the area of Stansted Road Elsenham. It is hoped to resolve this in due course.

The boundary lines for the four examples are shown overlaid on a modern layout plan of the area.

David Verlander has written the following narrative on the subject; following this are the extracts from Parish Council meetings and finally the maps of the boundary, over the years, which he has prepared'

### **THE PARISH BOUNDARIES OF ELSENHAM**

#### **Introduction.**

The parish boundaries of Elsenham have undergone several changes since World War two, but prior to that the boundary had remained unchanged for many centuries, as far as we know. What follows is a brief account of the historical boundary and the long drawn out process of persuading the powers that be of the anomalies that existed in the boundary and the desirability of making sensible changes.

The origins of Civil Parish Boundaries are ecclesiastical. The Church was at the heart of the parish, spiritually and usually in its location. Tithes were levied on the parish land and property and this provided the parish Priest with part of his income. It is important to understand what is meant by 'Tithe', it is one tenth of something paid as a contribution to a religious organisation or as a compulsory tax to government. In practice this was a levy on the produce of the parish land. The Tithe act of 1936 was intended to end this anomalous situation and to bring about the redemption of all tithes over a sixty year period and this duly occurred. Tithes are no longer paid. The History Society has in its possession a copy of the tithe map for Elsenham of 1840 and this corresponds closely with the parish boundary that subsequently defined Elsenham following the local government reforms of the late nineteenth century.

The village of Elsenham in times past was very different to the Elsenham we know today. Two or three hundred years ago Stansted Road did not exist, the road to Stansted went down what is now Rush Lane and roughly followed Stansted Brook into Stansted. The Railway Station moved to its present location from Fullers End in 1847, this resulted in the northbound platform being in Stansted parish and the southbound being in Henham parish and this curious situation prevailed until after the second world war. New Road did not exist until the end of the nineteenth century. The area to the south of the parish was very rural and some of it was built over by the construction of Stansted Airport during the Second World War. Part of the main runway lies in our parish to this day!

In times past the majority of the dwellings in Elsenham lay close to the Church, the Crown pub and Fullers end. Tye Green was then as now a small hamlet on the southern edge of the parish. Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth a gradual but significant change took place with areas in the north of the parish, closer to the station being developed for housing. This development created the anomalous situation whereby much of the developed areas of the village lay in the neighbouring parishes of Henham and Stansted Mountfitchet, and this situation prevailed throughout both world wars.

In the 1930s the difficulties that were caused by a village that lay in three separate parishes began to be questioned by the Parish Council (PC) of the day. It must be pointed out that the only record available to us is the PC minutes of the time which are preserved in the Essex County Council (ECC) record office in Chelmsford. No actual letters or other documents seem to have survived.

The first sign of PC action is to be found in 1931 in a minute dated 15 April when it was recorded that a letter was sent to ECC pointing out that 'some parts of Elsenham including the post office, cemetery, two shops and the Crown public house are in Henham and another part of the village is in Stansted.' Unfortunately we do not have the reply received from ECC but we know from the minutes that it was reported in a minute of 16 June 1931 that

'clerk was instructed to write to the Rural District Council (RDC) the following proposal, viz. That Elsenham be extended to the station, the Stansted Road as far as the entrance to Stansted House, the north side of the High Road to include Park Road as far as the Henham signpost. The right side of Robin Hood Road.' On 22 September it seems that no reply had been received from the RDC and the 'clerk was instructed to write asking for a written answer and also request the return of all papers.' Nothing further seems to have happened in 1931. At the PC meeting of 19 January 1932 the papers were reported to have been returned by the RDC together with a letter. The clerk was instructed to reply 'The council are not satisfied with the position. They should be glad to hear if you are prepared to include in your observations to the County Council their proposals for the alteration of the boundaries of this parish.' A further letter was received in 1932 but the whole boundary issue appears to have been put to one side for the next five years.

The boundary question reappears in 1937 when a meeting was convened in Elsenham village hall on 13<sup>th</sup> September to discuss the application of the PC to alter the boundaries. There were present the chairmen of Stansted and Henham PCs and seven members of the RDC. Maps were studied but no decisions were taken and the chairmen of Stansted and Henham PCs stated they were 'unable to move without their councils'. They intimated that 'their councils would lodge objections'. It seems that the PCs of Henham and Stansted were concerned more about their loss of revenue than any sensible adjustment to Elsenham's boundaries. It was further stated that the matter of boundaries would in due course go to public enquiry and the ECC.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1937 Mr. Anderson of the RDC interviewed Mr Hendry the rates collector of Stansted and Henham and clerks to various PCs and received from him a schedule of the property values and population concerned in the proposed transfer. The chairman of Stansted PC was also present, he intimated that 'his council would oppose any transfer of property whatever'.

In February 1938 the PC minutes state that 'several of the residents of Stansted and Henham should be invited to sign a petition stating that ' their proposed incorporation into Elsenham parish will be to the benefit of all concerned'. In March 1939 a letter was received from ECC stating that the alterations contemplated in the PC boundaries would not be effective until 1<sup>st</sup> April 1940 or perhaps 1941.

*There was no further progress towards a boundary change throughout the Second World War.*

Following the end of the war the PC wasted no time in reviving the pre-war aspirations in respect of the boundary of the parish. The relevant authorities were petitioned and the boundary changes as proposed prior to the war came into force in 1946. The whole of the area in the North of the parish was now in Elsenham with the parish of Ugley coming right up to Elsenham at the junction of Bedwell Road with New Road. Henham parish came close to

Elsenham just north of the railway station and for the first time the whole of the station lay within our parish!

But while the position of the boundary in the North of the parish had been resolved fairly satisfactorily there remained a curious anomaly in the Stansted Road. For reasons that to this day are not clear many properties, mainly on the North West side of the road remained in the Parish of Stansted Mountfitchet. The reasons for this are almost certainly financial, with the parish of Stansted being unwilling to lose the rates that these properties yielded. It was several years later and after much protestation and petitioning that this anomaly was rectified and all the properties in Stansted Road were included in the Parish of Elsenham in 1953. But while we know from the Electoral roll that this was so we have yet to establish the exact position of the boundary in that area, research continues into this.

No further changes to the boundary were made until the second half of the 1980s when the residents of Henham Road then in the parish of Henham and Bedwell Road in Ugley were asked if they wished to come within Elsenham parish or to remain where they were. Henham Road opted to come into Elsenham and Bedwell Road said they wished to remain in Ugley. So the latest changes to the boundary were made with a sensible change in the west side of the parish with the boundary following the centre of the M11 all the way from the boundary with Stansted Mountfitchet parish all the way north until it reaches Ugley when it deviates east to enable Bedwell Road to remain within that parish.

There were no further changes to the Parish boundary for many years, all the extensive development in the village took place within the existing boundaries, but the situation changed in the 2020's. For many years developers had been seeking permission to build on the agricultural land between Elsenham and Henham and this was finally granted. As a result a modest change to the boundary took place in 2022 which ensured the first phase of the development was wholly within Elsenham. It remains to be seen whether future development on this land results in further boundary changes with the Eastern limits of Elsenham moving closer to Henham.

David Verlander,  
Elsenham Village History Society. July 2022

The Subject of alignment of the Parish boundary was the subject of much debate at Elsenham Parish Council and between Elsenham and adjoining Parishes over the years as shown by the following Elsenham Parish Council minutes:-

**ELSENHAM PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES RELATING TO BOUNDARIES  
APRIL 15 1931-1 NOV 1952.**

**April 15 1931.** Letter to Essex CC re. revising the boundaries of the Essex parishes. Some parts of Elsenham including the Post Office, cemetery, two shops and the Crown PH are in Henham and another part of the village is in Stansted.

**June 16 1931.** Reply letter from Essex CC re. Boundaries. Clerk was instructed to write to the Rural District Council the following proposal re. boundaries of Elsenham parish, viz. That Elsenham be extended to the station, the Stansted Road as far as the entrance to Stansted House, the North side of the High Road to include Park Road as far as the Henham signpost. The right side of Robin Hood Road.

**22 September 1931.** No reply having been received from the clerk to the RDC, clerk was instructed to write asking for a written answer and also request the return of all papers.

**19 January 1932.** The papers returned by the RDC were produced. A letter received from him was read. Clerk was instructed to reply – the Council are not satisfied with the position. They should be glad to hear if you are prepared to include in your observations to the County Council their proposals for the alteration of the boundaries of this parish.

**15 March 1932.** Letter received from the clerk to the RDC was read.

**13 September 1932.** Letter to Henham PC asking for action on pump in THEIR Parish.

**18 October 1932.** Further letter from Henham PC- not willing to repair.

**15 November 1932.** Sir Walter Gilbey asked to hand pump over to the RDC. Very long minute.

**5 October 1937.** The chairman read the correspondence which had taken place between the County Council and himself regarding the boundaries of the parish.

The clerk to the RDC convened a meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> September in the Village Hall to discuss the application of the Elsenham Parish Council. There were present, the chairmen of Stansted, Henham and Elsenham Parish

Councils and seven members of the RDC. Mr. Anderson stated his case and defined the areas proposed to be taken over with the aid of 6" OS maps which had been marked accordingly. The meeting made little comment but the chairmen of Stansted and Henham PCs were understood to say that they were unable to move without their Councils. They intimated that their Councils would lodge objections. Mr. Anderson was instructed to forward a schedule of the property proposed to be taken over together with its rateable value with maps of same to the clerks of the parishes concerned and in receipt of these a meeting would be convened at which all members concerned of the councils would be present. A similar statement and maps would be required by the RDC The chairman stated that eventually the case would go to public enquiry and the County Council. The public enquiry would be convened by an inspector of the Ministry of Health.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1937 Mr Anderson interviewed Mr Hendry, rate collector of Stansted and Henham and clerk to various PCs and received from him a schedule of the property values and population concerned in the proposed transfer. The chairman of Stansted PC was also present, he intimated that his Council would oppose any transfer of property whatever.

**22 February 1938.** It having been mentioned that several of the residents of Stansted and Henham had asked that a petition for their incorporation in Elsenham be invited. It was resolved that they should be supplied with a form for signature headed as follows :- we the undersigned of Elsenham village being of opinion that our proposed incorporation in Elsenham parish will be to the benefit of all concerned request the Elsenham Parish Council to forward our petition to that effect to the County Council local government committee.

**14 March 1939.** Letter received from Essex CC stating that the alterations contemplated in the Parish Council boundaries would not be effective until 1.4.1940 or perhaps 1941.

NO ACTION THROUGHOUT THE WAR.

**11 May 1945.** The Chairman read a pre-statement of the PC case for the revision of the boundaries, based upon the statement made before the Boundary Commission in 1937 and on the work of the whole area as one community during the war. The meeting was of the opinion that the County should be petitioned to receive its award and grant the whole of the area originally asked for. After further discussion it was agreed that Mr. Rowlands should first make certain enquiries to ascertain what if any delay might be caused if this action were taken.

**11 June 1945.** This question was further discussed and the decision to apply for the whole area originally asked for was confirmed. The statement to Essex CC

drafted by the Chairman was approved after emphasising the refusal of Henham and Stansted PCs to contribute to equipment costs during the war.

**22 February 1946.** Discussion on the boundary question and the position up to the present time was explained by Mr. Rowland.

**11 March 1946.** Parish Meeting. The chairman explained the position of the boundaries as awarded in 1938 and confirmed in 1946 by the Ministry of Health and also the efforts made recently to get these extended still further.

**30 May 1951.** It was agreed to submit a recommendation to Essex CC that the Parish boundaries be extended to include both the old and the new council houses on the Stansted Road. Purchase of maps approved.

**21 August 1951.** Mr Jones reported that he had submitted the Council's recommendation to Essex CC. and had received a reply asking why houses on NW side of Stansted Road were not included in the application. A reply had been sent to this informing the ECC that on the revision of the boundary in 1937 these houses had been included in the application but this was not allowed. It was pointed out that the present application was concerned with the Council Houses and it was thought best not to confuse the issue. The occupiers of the houses in question in many cases consider they should be in Elsenham parish and it was understood were prepared to submit a petition for the inclusion of the properties in Elsenham. The County Council were asked to include them if they thought it possible.

**14 September 1951.** Boundaries. Nothing to report.

**5 March 1952.** Letter from Essex County Council received informing the Council that the application for the revision of the boundary had been approved and now awaited approval from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. The new boundary would include the whole of the Council Houses (new ones) and the premises on the NW side of Stansted Road.

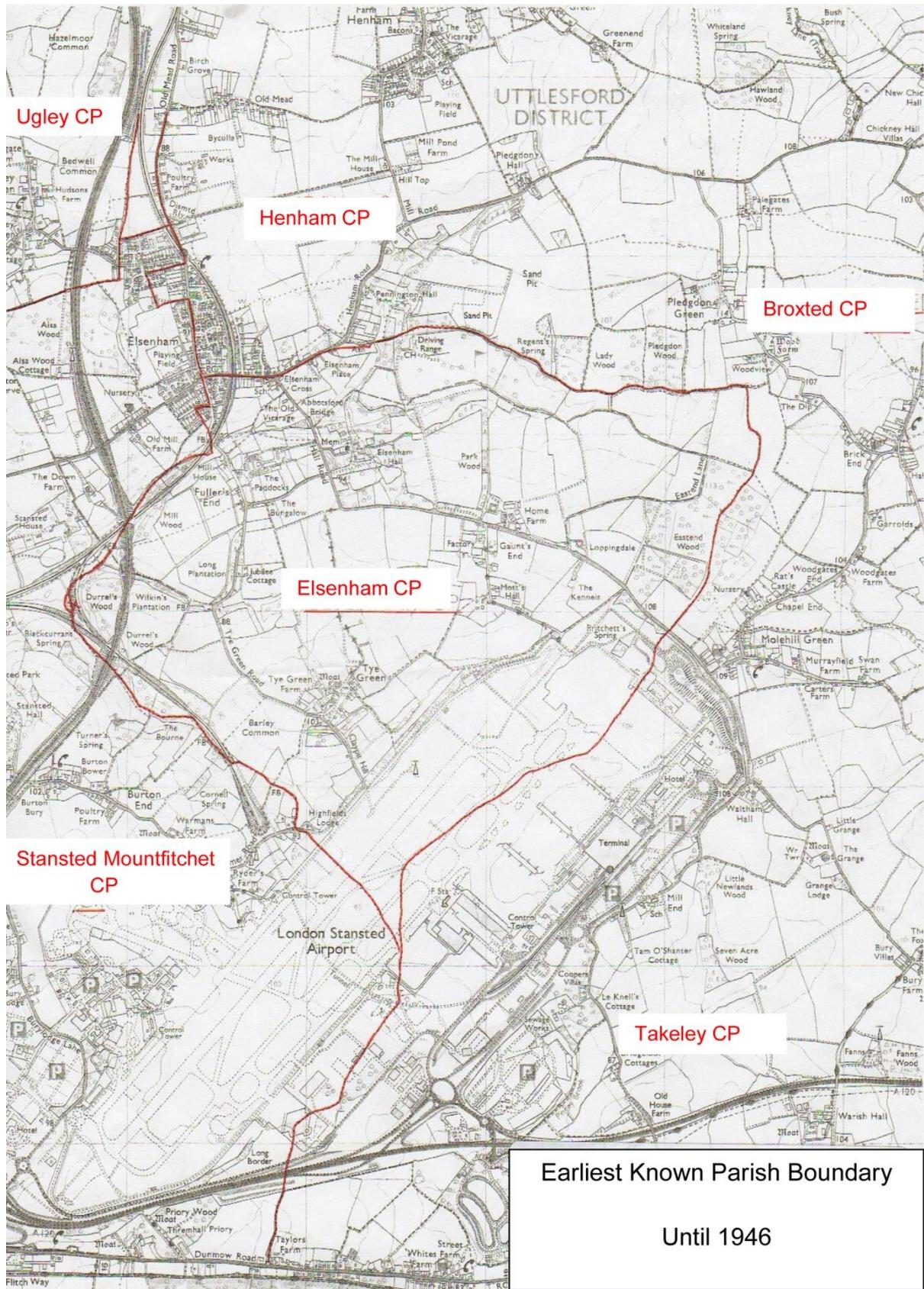
**4 June 1952.** Parish Boundaries. Nothing to report.

**1 November 1952.** Correspondence from Essex CC was read and it was noted that no objection had been lodged against the proposed revisions.

Minutes read to 2 May 1955.

### **Acknowledgement**

Our thanks go to David Verlander for the work he has done to plot the various boundary alignments on the four figures in this document and for searching through the Council Minutes.



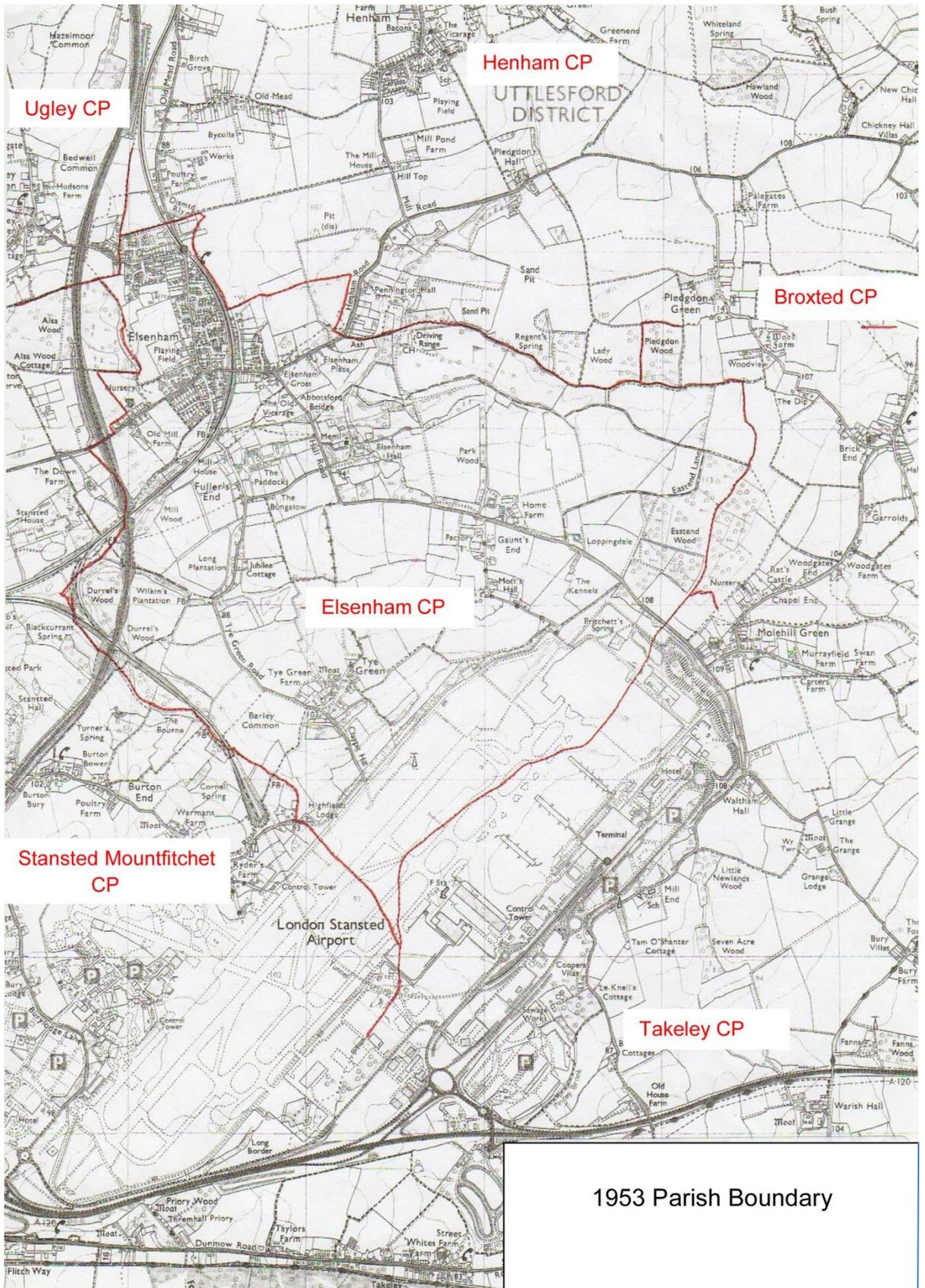
Earliest Known Parish Boundary

Until 1946

Figure 1

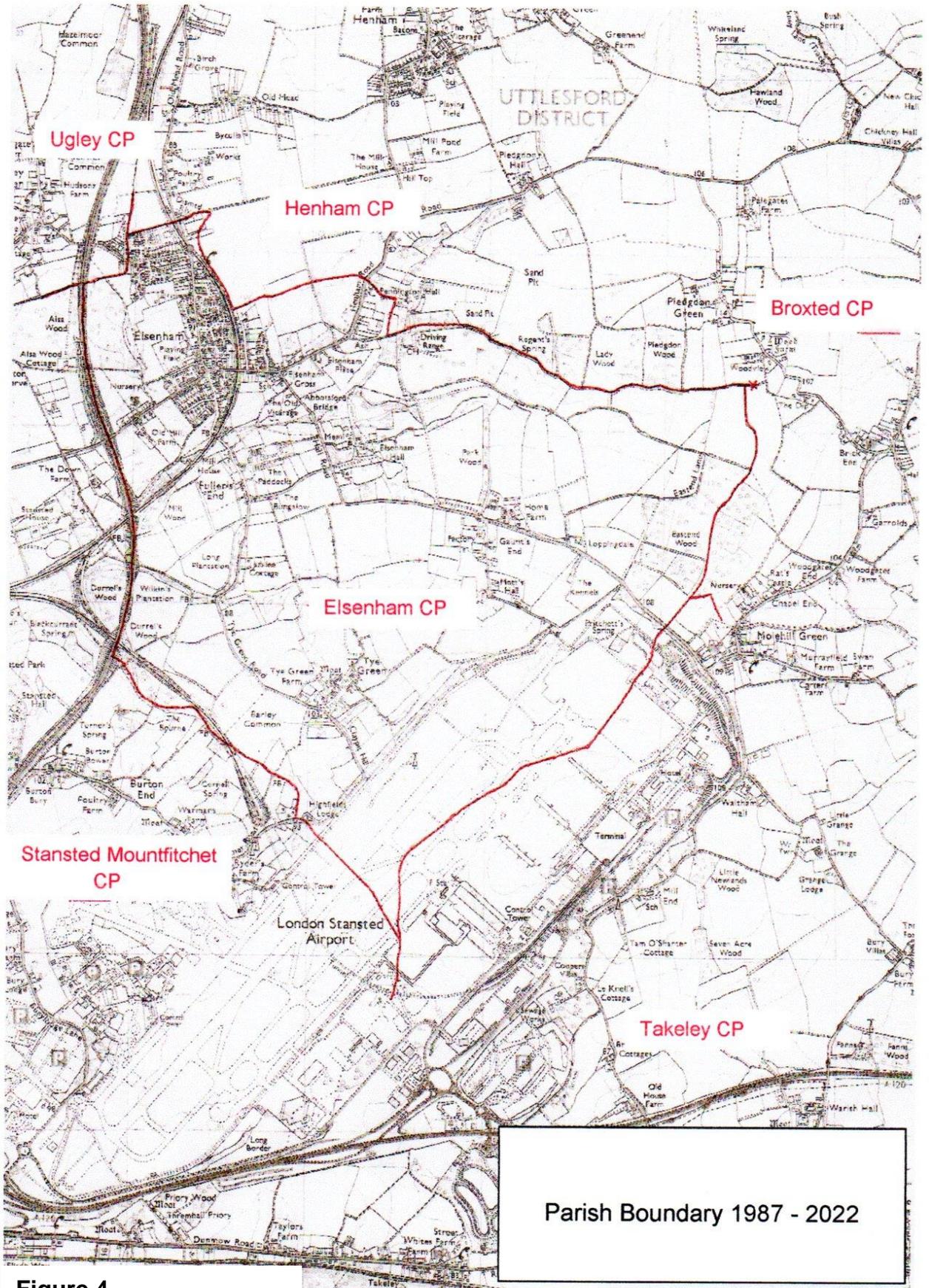


Figure 2



1953 Parish Boundary

Figure 3



Parish Boundary 1987 - 2022

Figure 4

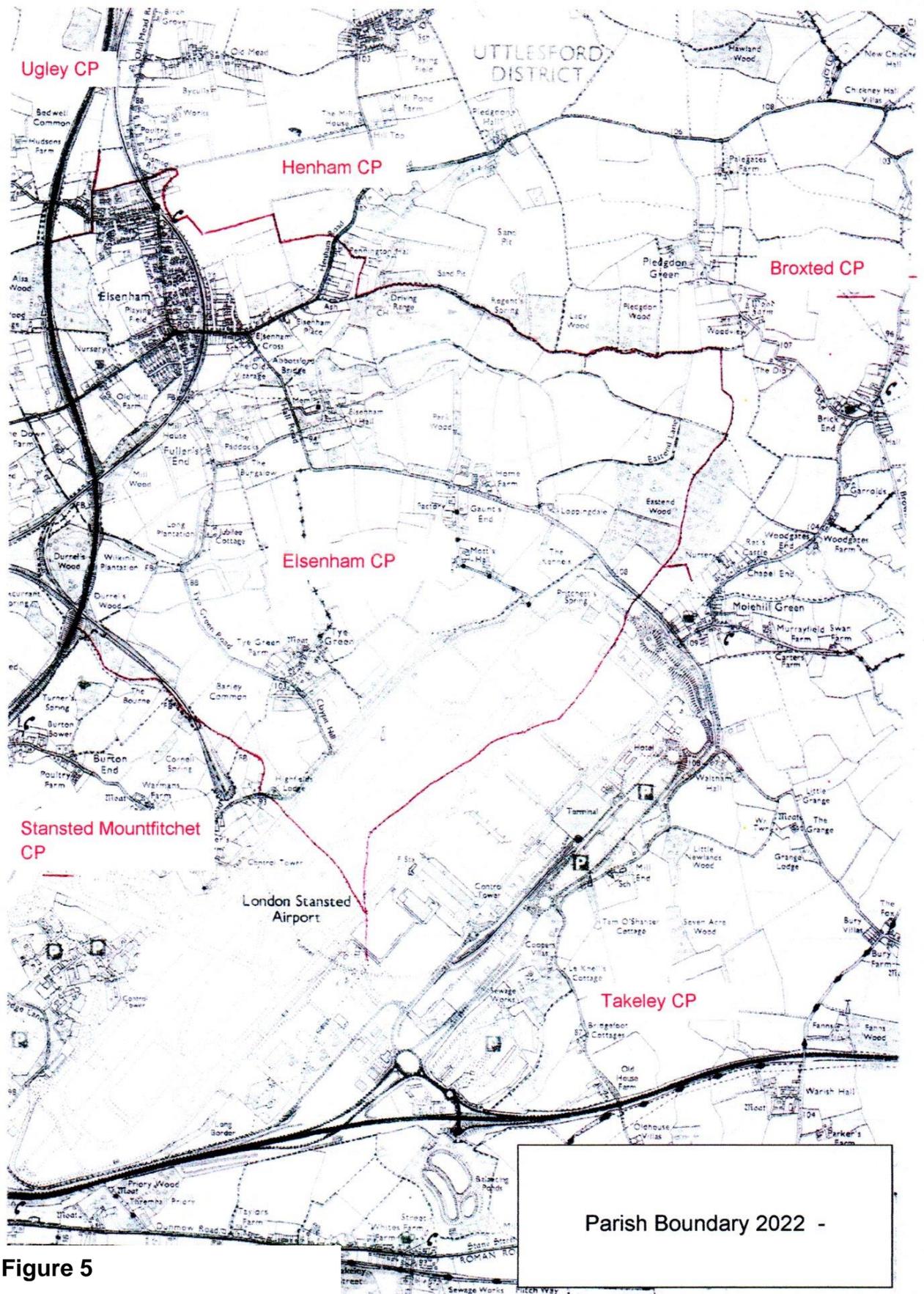


Figure 5

Parish Boundary 2022 -