

Swavesey Information History Notes.

Swavesey is a village lying on the [Prime Meridian](#) in Cambridgeshire, England. The village is situated 9 miles to the north west of [Cambridge](#) and 3 miles south east of [St Ives](#).

Listed as *Suauesye* in the [Domesday Book](#), the name Swavesey means "landing place (or island) of a man named Swaef".^[3]

Swavesey, lies on a narrow clay ridge rising to 18 metres above sea level at one time surrounded by fenland. The village was of importance during the early Middle Ages as the centre of a large 11th-century estate. A castle was built here in the late 11th or early 12th century, though is believed to have been derelict by 1200. Swavesey served as a port and subsequent market town and was provided with defensive works against attacks at the end of the 12th century.^[4]

Church

There was already a church in Swavesey at the time of the Norman Conquest, possibly a [minster](#). The Abbey founded an [alien priory](#) there by 1086, but [Swavesey Priory](#) was awarded to [Alan la Zouche](#), lord of Swavesey manor, by the start of the 14th century.^[4]

The present parish church in Swavesey, dedicated to [St Andrew](#) since the 11th century,^[6] has a double [aisle](#) aspect to its [nave](#). The east window in the Lady Chapel contains a 1967 [Tree of Jesse](#) by [Francis Skeat](#).^[7] The present building has parts dating from the 11th century, but was substantially improved over the following four centuries.

A Unitarian chapel was built in 1831 on the corner of School Lane and High Street, and the congregation moved to a new Baptist chapel in 1869. The original Unitarian chapel was bought by a group of [Methodists](#) and served as their place of worship until it was converted into a bungalow in 1934.^[4]

Today, there are three places of worship in Swavesey: St Andrew's parish church in Station Road, the Strict and Particular Baptist Church in Middle Watch, and the Bethel Baptist Church, also in Middle Watch.

Transport

The railway line from [Cambridge](#) to [St Ives](#), which passed through Swavesey, was opened in 1847 and closed in 1970, but has reopened as the [Cambridgeshire Guided Busway](#).^[4] The parish's north border is formed by the [River Great Ouse](#), formerly an important transport link. The parish's south west border runs along the [Via Devana](#), the old Roman road, that now forms the [A14](#).

Village life[[edit](#)]

Farming is the main industry in and around Swavesey, although most residents commute to work.^[*citation needed*] A sail-less [windmill](#) stands in fields near the village and is the location of Shop on the Pond.

There were three pubs listed in the village in 1765, and eight by the early 19th century. By the late 19th century, this number had risen to 16, but had fallen back to eight by 1912, and only three by 1960. Since then the only [public house](#) in the village centre has been the White Horse Inn, open since at least 1765, and adjacent to the village post office and shop.

Notable former pubs include the Rose and Crown, on the corner of Boxworth End and Rose and Crown Road, which was open by 1765 but closed in the 1880s. The Black Horse on the corner of High Street and Black Horse Lane served from around 1777 until 1910. The Swan, (later the Swan with Two Necks), on Station Road was open from around 1777 to 1917. The Blue Bell was active from the late 18th century until around the Second World War, and the George and Dragon also opened in the late 18th century and closed in the first years of the 20th century.

The village's post office opened in the 1850s.

Education

The village contains one primary school, Swavesey Primary School, which claims to be the only school in the United Kingdom to lie on the [meridian](#).^[8] [Swavesey Village College](#) is a [secondary school](#), which opened in 1958.^[4]

High Street floods Swavesey.

A picture taken from the edge of the flood water in the High Street looking south towards Middle Watch. The floods extended to Canham's grocers shop in the High Street. In the foreground is Mrs Doris Dawson with her daughter Jennifer. Doris' parents were living at 35 High Street in 1947. The lorry was at the deepest place in the flood water. The floods lasted for the whole month of March 1947.



This photograph below of the High Street was taken in the 1890s. It is the earliest photo of this part of the High Street that is known to exist. It was taken a few years after the house on the left, with the barn at one end and the Post Office at the other end was built by John Rogers the postmaster. The house was named Aylesford House after the village in Kent where Mrs Rogers was born. The next cottage with the board over the door was the home of shoemaker, George Thixton and his family. It was later turned into a shoe shop by his son Everitt.

Mr Alfred Day and his family lived in the house behind the railings on the opposite side of the road, until 1894. He then moved to Mill Farm in Middle Watch. None of the people in the picture are known. A newspaper report, made about the time this photo was taken, described the High Street as being very narrow with obstructions in the shape of flagstones projecting out into the road. It said that in some places the middle of the road was considerably lower than the sides and during wet weather it was a running brook.

