

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF**  
**ALL SAINTS' CHURCH,**  
**BRANTINGHAM**



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## THE VILLAGE AND PARISH

Brantingham (originally 'Bretinha') lies on the western edge of the southern Yorkshire Wolds, in a sheltered spot where natural springs provide a supply of fresh, clean water. It is an obvious place for a village to grow up, though the Anglo-Saxon suffix '-ingham' suggests that it was settled only during the Saxon colonisation of England after the departure of the Romans, who left evidence of their habitation nearby. The neighbouring community of Brantingham Thorpe would have been settled later, during the period of Scandinavian colonisation, the word 'thorpe' deriving from the Danish 'trup' ('village'), which was often used to identify a new settlement related to an existing one: the form 'Thorpe [of] Brantingham', found in some older sources, illustrates this well.

Brantingham is therefore one of a string of Saxon settlements established round the edge of the Wolds, extending from Welton and Elloughton (which also had a 'thorpe' associated with it) in the south, to Sancton (where there was a Saxon cemetery) and Market Weighton, and northwards.

### The Durham connection

There is no record of the coming of Christianity to Brantingham, but the Domesday survey of 1086 recorded the bishop of Durham as having land under cultivation in the parish (Hall, 194). And so began an unusual association between this typical Yorkshire village and the County Palatine which continues to the present day.

In the reign of King Henry II (1133-89), the parish of Brantingham was deemed to fall within 'the patrimony of St Cuthbert', i.e. it was one of several parishes in the Howden area located geographically in the Diocese of York but owing ecclesiastical allegiance to the cathedral church in Durham. In 1458, an arrangement was struck between the two dioceses by which just over half the annual income from Brantingham parish (£26) would contribute to the support of eight fellows (Benedictine monks) and eight scholars at Durham College, Oxford. The remaining £20 would support the vicar of Brantingham, over whom the prior and convent of Durham would have the right of presentation. In return, Durham cathedral would take responsibility for the repair of the chancel of All Saints', and for the church's annual payments to the crown and to Beverley Minster. It would also pay an additional yearly sum to York Minster, and make a dole to the poor of Brantingham each Lady Day (Hutchinson, 582-3; Hall, 197-8).

Under King Henry VIII, the monastic cathedral at Durham, like all English monasteries, was dissolved. Brantingham's status as a monastic asset meant that it too had now been 'nationalised', and could therefore be subsequently 'privatised' and sold to the highest bidder. So it was that in 1550 a Walter Jobson of 'Kingston super Hull' was granted by King Edward VI the rectory, the church, the chapels of Ellerker and Blacktoft, and the right to appoint the rector. Walter also acquired all the financial

obligations, including the annual payments to Durham College which in 1555 was re-founded as Trinity College (Page, 68-70).

The monastic foundation of St Cuthbert's at Durham was of course re-founded as the dean and chapter of Durham Cathedral. Although in the intervening years the nature of ecclesiastical funding has changed beyond recognition (parishes no longer produce income from lands and tithes), it is interesting to note that, to this day, just as in ancient times, the dean and chapter of Durham retain the rights of presentation to the benefice of which Brantingham is part.

## **BRANTINGHAM AND HER NEIGHBOURS**

As is evident from the terms of the grant made to Walter Jobson, the parish traditionally included Ellerker and Blacktoft as chapelries-of-ease. It meant that Brantingham—lying several miles inland at an elevation of some 200 feet above sea level—for many centuries had the River Humber as its southern boundary. As we shall see, this led to some sombre entries being made in the parish registers.

In 1968, the Diocese of York detached Ellerker from Brantingham and united it with the parish of South Cave, while Brantingham itself formed a united benefice with the parish of Elloughton and Brough with Brantingham. Since then, the three churches of the united benefice have shared a vicar, assisted at times by a curate.

## **THE BUILDING**

Unusually, Brantingham's church lies not in the centre of the village but a little way up the steeply-sided and wooded dale, affording it one of the most picturesque settings of any church in the Yorkshire Wolds. We do not know when the first church at Brantingham was built. Saxon burials discovered during recent restoration work near the altar suggests that the site already had a religious purpose. The earliest stonework of the present building has characteristics that are clearly Norman, and can be dated to the 12th century. The tower and the windows of the nave are from a little later in the medieval period. The transept windows appear to be comparatively modern attempts to produce something harmonising with the nave windows and they contrast with the much older arches from the nave to the transepts. Major re-building took place in 1839, when the porch was added and the transepts remodelled, and again in 1872, when the building was almost completely reconstructed from the chancel arch eastwards.

The building was Grade II\* listed in 1968, and appears in Pevsner's *The Buildings of England*. The following features may be particularly noted.

## **12th and early 13th centuries**

The main south door is round-headed and has columns with incipient stiff-leaf capitals. (The porch was added in the restoration of 1839.)

The Font. It is tub-shaped, rather than octagonal as became common later, and probably dates from the early 13th century. Note the nailhead decoration on the supporting columns.

The window opposite the main door, in the north side of the nave.

The arches from the nave to the transepts. (Not typically Norman, and may be later: English Heritage suggests late 12th century, Pevsner puts them as late as the 15th.)

The doorway in the south side of the chancel. This is probably the only original part of the chancel to have remained in situ after the 1872 re-building.

The stone frame (outside) of the vestry window. (Obviously re-used in 1872.)

## **13th to 15th centuries**

The tower and tower arch. The tower is notable for its elegant ogee-headed lancet, and, above the gargoyles, a crenellated parapet with crocketed corner finials.

The two main windows of the nave, with tracery in the Perpendicular style. (The carved heads, or 'face stops', at the sides of these windows and the main tower window, outside, are well worth a look.)

The tower has three bells, two of which date from before the Reformation and carry inscriptions which link with the dedication of the church to All Saints. The inscriptions on the bells (according to Hall, 196) are:

- i. Soli Deo Gloria, 1634.
- ii. Ora. Pro. Nobis Sancti Omnes.
- iii. Ora. Pro. Nobis Sancti Georgi. [*sic*]

## **VICTORIAN**

The stained glass windows are all Victorian or younger: Pevsner describes them as 'an instructive array', but singles out the examples in the south chancel by Kempe (1899) and C.W. Whall (1906) as the best. Most of them carry easily read dedications. The mural tablets are also mostly modern but there is one notable exception, the mural brass, on the east wall of the south transept, to Anthony Smethley, a Lord of the Manor, who died in 1578.

Now that the organ has been moved from the west end of the church to occupy the whole of the north transept, the window there is no longer visible from inside the church. Hall, however, provides this description of it from 1892 (p. 196):

The window of the north transept is by Taylor, of London, and has the inscription, 'D.D.D., and in loving memory of Anne Westmorland, died Mar. 29th 1875'.

('D.D.D.', or 'Dono dedit dedicavit', is usually translated as 'Given and dedicated as a gift'. Anne Westmorland was the wife of the then vicar of Brantingham, Thomas. She is buried in the churchyard with her husband and three daughters. See *Monumental Inscriptions* p. 11.)

Some description of the church in the 1850s was given by Sheahan and Whellan, who state that at that time the nave and chancel were separated by an ancient screen of carved oak and that there was a gallery at the west end of the church. They state that the church had been 'thoroughly repaired' in 1839 (p. 530). However, within thirty years, further improvements were to be made.

In 1867, plans were drawn up for the beautification of All Saints' by G.E. Street, the most celebrated ecclesiastical architect of his age whose most famous work is the fairy-tale Gothic Royal Courts of Justice in London. The sponsor of these plans was Christopher Sykes MP, the lord of the manor and friend of the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII. The work went ahead in 1872, but the architect who received payment was George Dever, the improver of Sykes's country seat, Brantinghamthorpe Hall. Did Dever realise Street's plans or follow his own? Whatever the truth of the case, the works certainly cost Christopher far less than his more famous brother Sir Tatton Sykes II typically spent on the improvement of Wolds churches. In his defence, it should be said that his means were slenderer, and that what he had he spent on impressing the Prince, a habit which would eventually be his financial ruin. One legacy of his deference can be seen in the very prominent fleur-de-lys finials at the ends of the choir stalls, which dominate the congregation's sight-lines forward. Doubtless, Christopher meant the Prince to see these when he worshipped at All Saints', as they recalled the Prince's gift of a pair of similarly-decorated vases from the Tuileries gardens in Paris (Lincoln, 91).

Of course, the upkeep of an ancient building requires continuous repair and improvement, sometimes relatively minor, sometimes not. In 1980, for instance, some £12,000 had to be found from the parishioners and other benefactors for the extensive renewal of the stonework.

In 2008 a local benefactor donated £120k to finance the building of a new extension to the north east corner, comprising two toilets, and a storage area, rewiring of the building, a new heating system, catering facilities and a mains water supply.

Prior to this date it relied on rainwater for cleaning and the water for the coal fired heating system had to be transported bucket by bucket into the roof space.

Waste disposal was achieved by a new and innovative biodegradable trench arch system.

During construction the buried remains of two archaeological dated Saxons were exposed adjacent to the north wall of the sanctuary confirming the church's possible religious use during this period.

Around 1960 the green roof tiles were replaced with the current red tiles.

In 2010 the church underwent a quinquennial inspection which highlighted costly repairs to an estimated £120k.

In 2012 the major works commenced and included the replacement of eroded stone work and finials, repointing throughout, valley gutters and reroofing of the tower. During this work the church resembled the launch site at of Cape Canaveral!

All of this work moved the church fabric from the 20 century into the 21st century in all aspects, including modern technology and internet service.

## **THE PEOPLE**

Although the church building, in its lovely setting, is a vital and visible part of the history of the church in Brantingham, a church consists not of stones but of people. Of their histories, we can get only snapshots, joyful or tragic, from the terse entries recording baptisms, marriages, and funerals in the parish registers. Those for Brantingham date from 1653 and contain mainly routine entries (though even these are not without interest to the statistician); but occasionally there are fuller entries and comments that flesh out the bare record and give us an insight into the personalities involved. For instance, one can only guess at the family tensions which lay behind the following entry:

1773. Feby 16. Buried Ellen Searby, commonly called Eleanor Clarke, as having been the real or reputed wife of Samuel Clarke late of Ellerker. Wm Preston the son-in-law of the above person says she ought to be thus set down in the Register, at whose dictation I do it. [Weddall, 34.]

Less imagination is needed to grasp the awkwardness as well as the tragedy of the following occasion:

[Burials in 1800.] July 9. Thomas Jobson of Hull a Sailor who was drowned in the Humber near Brough in November 1799 and was wash'd up upon Ellerker Sands 8 July 1800 aged 52 years. NB: Jobson's widow was married again before he was found and attended the funeral with her second husband. [Weddall, 83.]

The burial of bodies washed up by the Humber on to Ellerker Sands was a solemn duty which fell to Brantingham parish as a consequence of its then boundaries. Often there was no way of identifying the bodies, especially of foreign sailors, and they had to be interred at the parish's own expense:

[Burials in 1793.] Decr 20. A Person unknown was wash'd up by the Tide and found dead upon Ellerker Sands and was buried at Brantingham after the Coroner and his jury had taken an Inquest upon the Body. N.B. He was buried as a pauper. [Weddall, 82.]

[Burials in 1803.] April 11. A Person unknown was wash'd up upon Ellerker Sands & buried at Brantingham. He seem'd to be about 18 years of age. [Weddall, 84.]

The conflict of the tides and currents made and makes the behaviour of the estuary unpredictable. We saw that poor Thomas Jobson's body took seven months to be carried the short distance upstream from 'near Brough' to Ellerker Sands, while much longer posthumous journeys could take far less, as the following entry shows:

[Burials in 1795.] July 31. Edward Fish who was found wash'd up upon Ellerker Sands having slip'd over Board in Wintringham Haven on 15th July. [Weddall, 82.]

In other cases, the circumstances of a person's demise were so tragic that the registrar (usually the incumbent himself) felt bound to record them:

AD. 1777. November 21st. Buried in one grave Hannah wife of Alexr Douglas of Ellerker and her son Edward Harrison (by a former husband). The Son was crushed to death by a Waggon running over him: which melancholy event being too hastily told the mother, she was immediately seized with a fit which presently put an end to her life. [Weddall, 35.]

[Burials in 1810.] Novr 27. Christopher Coates, Brantingham, aged 17 years. He died in consequence of a strike from a horse. [Weddall, 85.]

[Burials in 1811.] Jany 18. Mary Chapman aged 19 years. She received the contents of a loaded gun (discharged at pigeons) in her forehead & was killed on the spot. [Weddall, 86.]

While these bare entries convey the sense of waste and loss, in others the hand of divine providence—and timely warnings to the living—might be discerned. 'SSM' (presumably the Revd Samuel Mayelston, vicar from 1833) saw such an opportunity in his comment upon an older entry:

[Burials in 1795.] March 17. Callow Archbald of Ellerker was found dead betwixt South Cave & Ellerker on Monday morning March 16th aged 70 years. [Weddall, 82.]

[Marginal note:] Callow Archbold was drinking at the Fox and Coney, South Cave on the night of 15th March. It was a very stormy night and they tried to persuade him to stay all night but he said he would go home if the Devil stood in the gap's head. Next morning he was found dead in the Gap's head—now a stile between the Cave Stonepits and Stone Pit Close—SSM.

As well as local tragedies, the Brantingham registers of funerals also record national trends. The entries for 1665-67 reveal the devastating effects of the Great Plague, and of course the incidence of perinatal deaths of both mothers and children is high throughout the period 1653-1812. At times, national economic policies leave their mark in these pages. Between 1666 and 1680, in an attempt to deter the import of cheap textiles from abroad, various Acts for Burying in Woollen Only were passed. Witnesses were required to swear that a corpse had been clothed in a shroud of English wool, and for the word 'affidavit' to be entered in the parish register alongside the record of burial. Plague victims and paupers were alone exempted from this requirement, and here in place of affidavit the word 'naked' was entered. The act remained on the statute books until 1863, but was generally ignored after 1770, and at Brantingham rather before that: indeed, William Richardson, the incumbent in the 1720s, had to admit that he had not always collected the required affidavits (Weddall, 26).

The alternation of 'affidavits' and 'naked' in the parish registers shows how, in this agricultural community, rich and poor lived and died in close proximity. One notable example of testamentary provision for the poor can be found in All Saints' to this day. Tucked away from view in the vestry is an early Victorian painted board with the following inscription:

Miss Maria Simpson, Brantingham Grange, by her last will and testament, dated January 17th, 1840, gave the sum of £200 upon trust that her Trustee or Trustees do and shall pay the dividend, interest, and annual income thereof to the Vicar and churchwardens, for the time being, of the Parish of Brantingham, to be by them annually expended in the purchase of blankets and other needful or useful clothing, to be distributed amongst such poor persons of or residing in the same Parish, in seasons of scarcity, as the said Vicar and Churchwardens shall think fit or determine. [Hall, 197.]

After the Act of Uniformity in 1662, the baptismal entries record the denominational adherence of the parents bringing their children for baptism in the parish church, if they were not Anglican. In the entries for 1699, parents are described as 'scismaticque', probably meaning Presbyterian (Weddall, 41). From 1713 there is the strange entry 'Anne Rospin Anabaptist bapt. Apr. 3' (Weddall, 43): an 'Anabaptist' (a pejorative term for a Baptist) would not seek to have their infant baptized. Was Anne an adult, now seeking baptism for the first time? From 1719 we read of a 'Thomas Craythorne of Thorp Brantingham a Quaker proselyte bapt. 10br [December] 20' (Weddall, 44). There were no communities of non-conformists in Brantingham itself (Ellerker was a different matter), though there was a Quaker meeting at Elloughton, and the Cave villages were from time to time associated with non-conformity (Calamy, 958).

Brantingham remained a largely conformist, Anglican community. As late as 1865, when completing his episcopal visitation returns, the vicar Thomas Westmorland reported that '[t]here is no Dissenting place of worship in Brantingham. Not more than two families would wish to be considered "Dissenters"'. In contrast to conformist Brantingham, his charge at Ellerker proved more problematic. 'The "Ranters" or Primitive Methodists have long been an influential body here', he replied to the archbishop's queries. 'During the last year they have been making great efforts. ... In Ellerker Dissent badly impedes me, and is often very trying. A little more of the "Lay element" in the church system would be a great help in a Village like this' (Boyle & Larsen, pp. 69-70). Westmorland's comment may well have been a reference to stipendiary lay readers, a new or rather revived ministry which the Church of England would institute in the following year.

Thomas Westmorland was one of many vicars of Brantingham who served their flock faithfully to their life's end and laid their bones in the quiet churchyard in the dale. Over the page can be found a record of all the incumbents, but the reader is warned that it is incomplete, especially for the tumultuous seventeenth century.

### **RECTORS OF BRANTINGHAM**

1236 Henry de Melsamby	1348 Richard de Tuell
1237 Odo de Kilkenny	1348 Thomas de Nevill
1279 Thomas de Birland	13-- Laurence Allerthorp
---- Edward de Hawkesgarth	1406 Thomas Sutton
1344 Walter de Wetewang	1421 Robert de la Haye
1347 Richard de Tanfeld	1444 Robert Beaumont

### **VICARS OF BRANTINGHAM**

(Vicarage ordained 4th August 1458)

1459 William Benson	1742 Matthew Whittaker
1479 Hugh Wren	1755 Thomas Bowman
1486 John Curwen	1768 James Forster
1496 Geoffrey Wren	1792 George Davison
1496 Robert Claxton	1793 Thomas Davison
1521 John West	1794 Robert Fenwick, M.A.
1523 Thomas Jennyson	1808 Joshua Stopford, M.A.
1542 Phillip Preston	1818 John Carr, M.A.

1557 William Gibson	1833 Samuel Mayelston, M.A.
1558 Richard Bollarde	1842 George Tyler Townsend, M.A.
1561 Edward Richardson	1857 Thomas Westmorland, M.A.
1575 Robert David or Daud or Dunde	1892 Beverley Smelt Wilson, M.A
1622 George Hall	1906 James Blyth Oldroyd, M.A.
1625-32 Ramus Gibson	1924 Arthur Stephen Gurney Griffin, M.A.
1660 Samuel Brearcliff	1926 Charles Wesley Hutchinson, B.A.
1700 William Richardson	1948 Charles Kendrick Hughes

**(also holding the living of Elloughton-cum-Brough)**

1956 George Henry Pattinson	1966 Rex A. Whitta, Dip. Th.
1961 Michael David Barnby Long	

**VICARS OF ELLOUGHTON AND BROUGH WITH BRANTINGHAM**

1966 Rex A. Whitta, Dip. Th.	1993 William E.J. Mash
1974 Malcolm Anker, B.A.	2002 Paul Cubitt
1985 M.P. Pickering	2008 Richard Walker
1989 Barry Heritage	2014 Mick Fryer

**THE PARISH TODAY**

**Worship/Services and Events**

The church today continues to thrive as a worshipping community. There is a weekly Holy Communion Sunday Service at 9.15am, with a service of Common Prayer every second Sunday in the month. Our committed congregation regularly welcomes visitors of all ages. Refreshments are served at the end of each service to encourage friendship and fellowship.

The church in its setting is particularly popular for weddings. Baptisms and funerals are also a part of church life.

The PCC runs a weekly chair exercise class with fellowship club for older members of our community in Brantingham village hall.

The PCC is proactive in looking at other opportunities and events to engage with the people in its parish. The PCC organises a yearly May Garden Fair and Christmas Fair and Christmas Carols Round the Pond to encourage and promote a Christian/Community partnership.

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