

WALTHAM PARISH CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS



CARRIAGE CAFE - END VIEW OF CAFE IN WINDMILL COMPLEX

Waltham and Brigsley

Mary and Brian Walsham take a look at a tale of two villages

Words: Mary Walsham Pictures: Brian Walsham

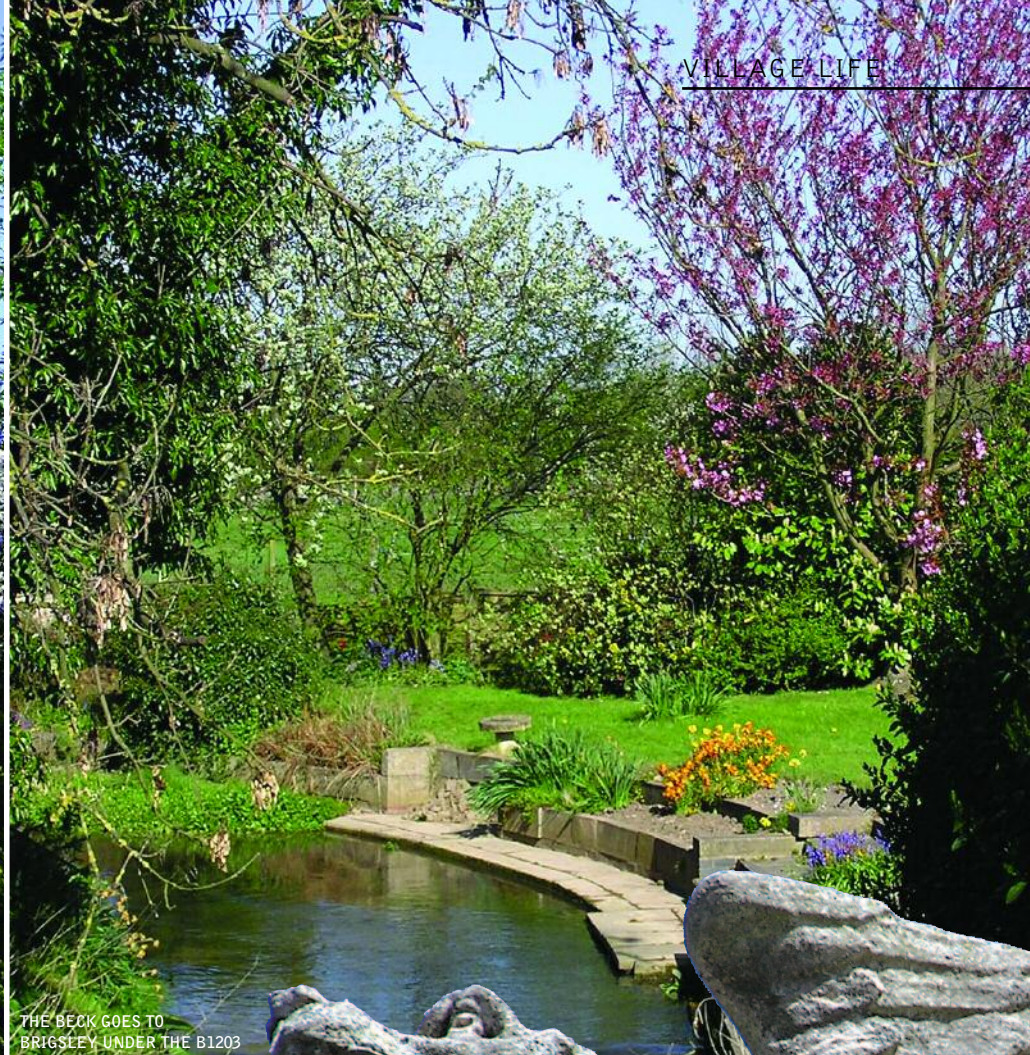
In the period between the Wars, a "Flying Circus" zoomed into Waltham in North Lincolnshire. No! It wasn't "Monty Python's" but it was Sir Alan Cobham's. He had come to what became Waltham Aerodrome, and had brought with him his 'wing walkers' and his parachutists and the spectators enjoyed a wonderful day.

Waltham is situated very near to Grimsby and its proximity to the port was certainly the idea behind plans for an airport. In the 1920s and 1930s Civil Aviation was thought to be the lifeblood of the country. So, in 1933, the Lincolnshire Aero Club was founded in Wellowgate in Grimsby. Sixty acres of land between

Cheapside in Waltham and Louth Road in Grimsby were found to be ideal and free from fog and in 1932/33 hedges and trees were removed and a Club House was built. The annual subscription to the Aero Club in 1939 was £1 1s (105p). What a bargain that would be today! The charm of the era is evoked by the fact that the Club telephone number was No.1, Waltham. In 1940, the airport was enlarged to accommodate Wellington and Lancaster bombers and the RAF was here until 1945. One of my relatives remembers going to talk to the aircrews when he was a small boy. Another charming tale is told of how a lady with the appropriate name of Sally Lancaster, who was confined to a

wheelchair, used to make good luck dolls for the aircrews as they set off on their missions. A local legend has it that the villagers always knew when the squadron was due to fly on a raid, as the local dogs disappeared. It was rumoured that the aircrews took dogs with them so that in the event of a forced landing on foreign soil, they could walk off with a dog and be mistaken for locals. The dogs always seemed to return however. The remains of the Control Tower, a hangar and bits of runway can still be found, as a reminder of life more than sixty years ago.

Waltham began to develop as a residential rural retreat at the beginning of the twentieth century and in the period between the two



THE BECK GOES TO BRIGSLEY UNDER THE B1203

wars, but it had long been established as a village in its own right. The first part of its name "Walt" has evolved over the years from the word "weald" meaning "woodland" or "high forest land". If you look at a map of England you will notice that places called Waltham are always situated near woods or forests - notably Waltham Forest in Essex. The Lincolnshire Waltham, according to the Domesday Book, was the headquarters of a large and dispersed estate. The order of precedence in Lincolnshire in 1086 was 1. King's land; 2. Tenants-in-chief; 3. Churchmen and 4. Lay landholders. The highest ranking layman in Lincolnshire was the Earl of Brittany and Richmond.

Visiting Waltham today is an enjoyable experience because though it has all the amenities and shops that you would hope for in a modern village it also has a lot of features of historical interest for the visitor to enjoy.

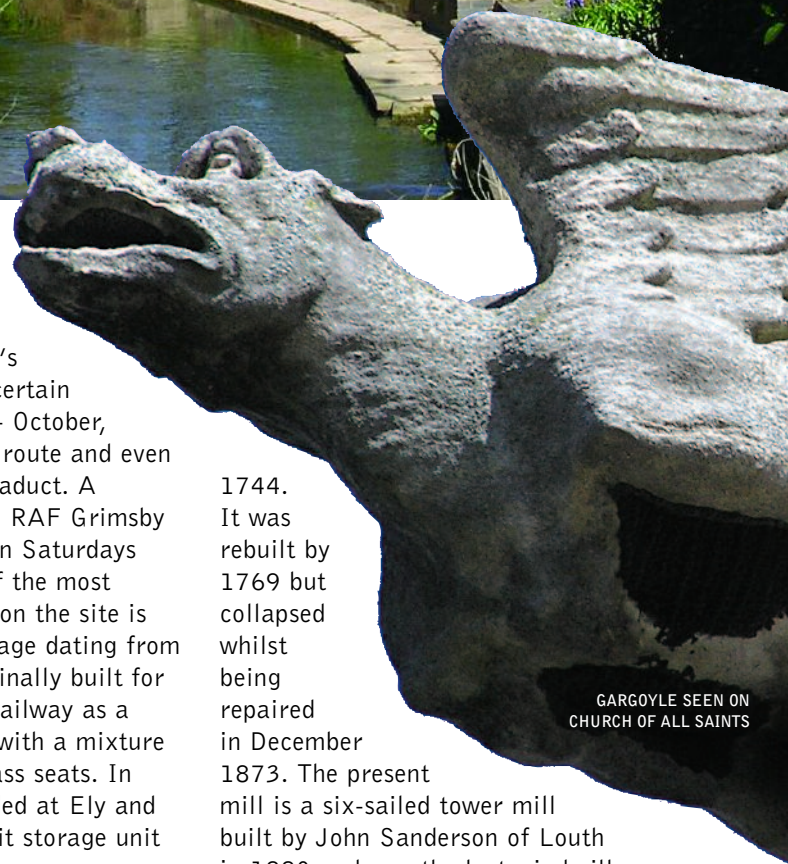
There is the windmill area, where you can see the working windmill, visit the various shops and also

have a ride on the Grimsby and Cleethorpes Model Engineering Society's train. This runs on certain days between April - October, following a circular route and even going over a mini viaduct. A museum housing the RAF Grimsby Exhibition is open on Saturdays and Sundays. One of the most interesting features on the site is an old railway carriage dating from 1886. This was originally built for the Great Eastern Railway as a composite carriage with a mixture of first and third class seats. In 1924, it was grounded at Ely and converted into a fruit storage unit until 1926 when it became a dwelling. It was moved to Waltham in 1984 and is now beautifully preserved and used as an unusual tearoom.

There have been windmills of various types at Waltham for hundreds of years - post mills, smock mills and tower mills. The original post mill in Waltham worked for more than a century before being wrecked in a gale in

1744. It was rebuilt by 1769 but collapsed whilst being repaired in December 1873. The present mill is a six-sailed tower mill built by John Sanderson of Louth in 1880 and was the last windmill to be commissioned in Lincolnshire. In 1966, the Waltham Windmill Preservation Society was formed to restore the mill to its former glory. The Windmill Trust was established in 1981 and they have all done a great job - old cottages can still be seen as can a well.

You can drive from the Mill down the hill towards the church but it is also an easy walk, which takes you



GARGOYLE SEEN ON CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS

past shops and inns and gives you the opportunity to view the old anvil which once belonged to Harry Jackson, the village blacksmith.

The outside of All Saints Church, Waltham, shows its antiquity with some frightening gargoyles that would scare off any evil spirits that might be around. The interior is stunning and very wide. There are stained glass windows, showing Moses, St. George and Solomon and the Nativity. There are windows showing St. Ursula and St. Cuthbert. One of them commemorates Sir George Doughty who lived at Waltham Hall. Doughty Road in Grimsby is named after him. In the St. Nicholas Chapel, the three panels above the altar show Noah and his family, the Ark and the Animals. This was done for the Millennium and was obviously a real community project as the panels were taken to The Leas school in Waltham where every child embroidered a stitch as their contribution to posterity.

All Saints tower contains a peal of bells and these are still rung but the church would be delighted if anyone would care to join their bell-ringing team as enthusiasts are

still needed! There is a Kilburn "mouse" on the oak screen just behind the font. Possibly, the most interesting features of All Saints, particularly to a historian, are the brasses on the window ledges. One, which dates from as long ago as 1400 commemorates John of Waltham, Bishop of Salisbury in 1388 and Lord High Treasurer of England until his death in 1395. The other one is to Joanna Waltham, her son and her daughter, which dates from 1420. These brasses were found hidden under the floorboards in the mid nineteenth century.

Waltham had a church and a priest as far back as the eleventh century. Until 1680, Waltham church had a spire attached to the tower, but this was removed to make the church safe as the steeple was cracked from top to bottom. It is not often that the name of a possible murderer appears in a church but Waltham is different! Richard Banes, the Rector from 1588-1610 is thought to have been involved in the murder of the famous Elizabethan/Jacobean playwright, Christopher Marlowe. Nowadays, Waltham All Saints

Church has a modern extension and is very much part of the twenty-first century community.

Near the church is the aptly named Kirkgate. Other street names give you an indication of activities and life in old Waltham. A former resident of Fairway tells me that it was previously called Trail Poke Lane; my husband tells me that Ashby Hill which leads from Waltham towards Barton Street and Ravendale was nicknamed "Ashby Drag" (especially by cyclists, I suspect!). Cheapside, near the centre of the village was obviously where some sort of market took place – 'cīap' being old English for a market and 'side' indicating a road past it. Visitors to Waltham will notice how very straight the roads are through the village. This stems from the Enclosure Act of 1769-71, when, due to enclosures of the land six new roads had to be built. Each one had to be sixty feet wide to take the increase in traffic. In the original plans you can see how the Surveyor used his ruler to good effect! The lines of the road design are absolutely straight. Before the enclosures, Waltham had been



divided into four sections; Westfield, Eastfield, The Ings and The North Furze. In Waltham today you can still find, Ings Lane and Westfield Road. Tollbars, to pay for the roads were erected at the end of Weelsby Road, Grimsby and at Brigsley. The Waltham Toll Bar was on the Grimsby to Louth road, (now the A16) and in 1834, collected £151 in tolls. Toll Bar Business and Enterprise College now stands very near the site of the old Tollgate.

A walk down the hill from the church will take you past a bakery, the library, a pharmacy, a Post Office and newsagents and there are also two public houses – the quaintly named “The Tilted Barrel” and “The King’s Head” - if you are in need of some refreshment. In the past, Waltham had various village entertainments, including a silent picture show. A Mr. Nowell, who was connected with the chapel, used to erect a screen at the back of a van and the locals would gather to watch. No doubt when the contents of a very grand house, “The Grove” were sold in September 1900, the villagers gathered to see what the great house contained. Wonderful oak

furniture, one hundred dozen choice wines from the cellar, five hundred books from the library and the contents of the greenhouses.

Currently, Waltham has Girl Guides, Brownies and Rainbows, Classic Car Rallies and a Jubilee Flower Club among other things to interest its residents. In 2006 it had the distinction of coming Second in the Best Kept Village Competition organised by the C.P.R.E. Waltham is hoping to bloom even more this year.

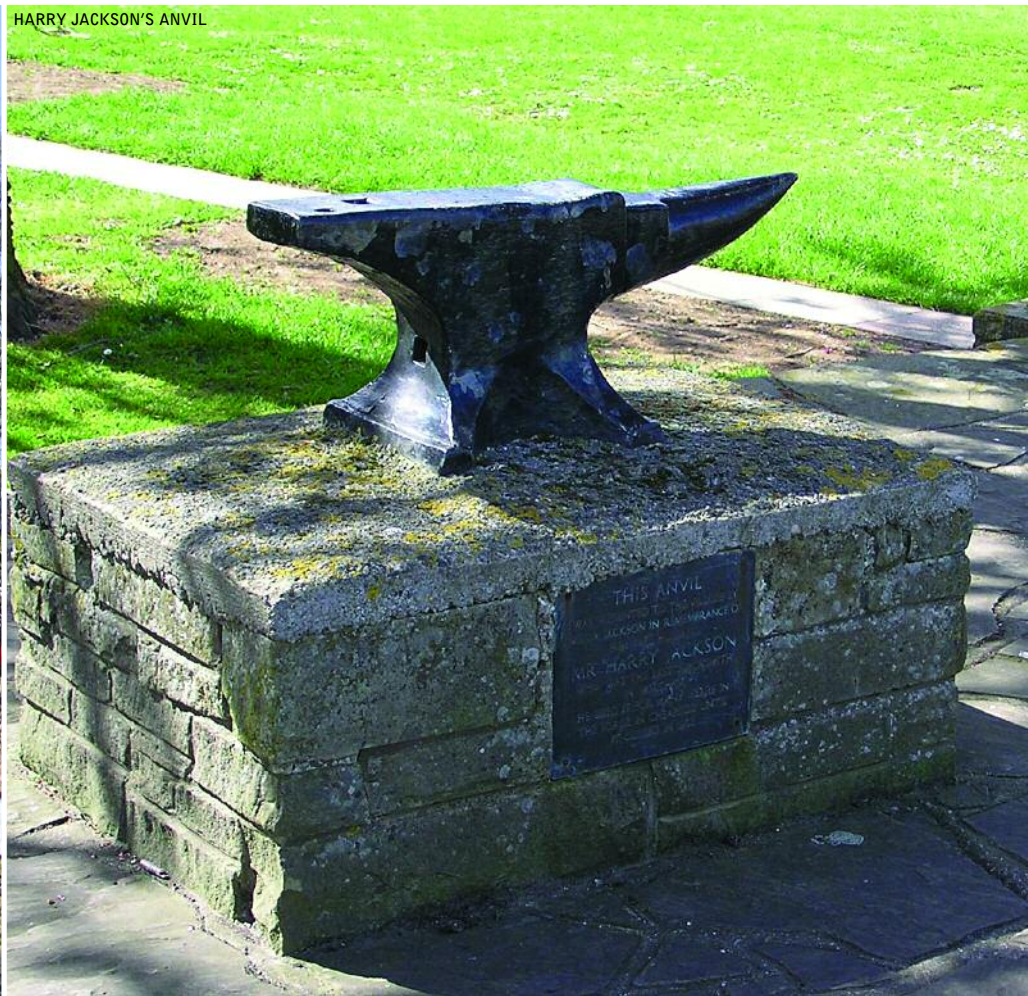
If, when you have been to the windmill, photographed the quaint old streets and the church and seen some of the old airfield, you still have the urge to explore, it is well worth going on to Brigsley, Waltham’s neighbouring village. It is a lot smaller, but extremely attractive, with thatched cottages and streams, and, compared to Waltham, it is quite hilly, especially down past St. Helen’s church. Though tiny, it has certainly had plenty of colourful characters associated with its name. The Lincolnshire equivalent of Dick Turpin, a highwayman called Tomlinson used to lie in wait there to hold up the coaches on the

Turnpike road. Twelve Brigsley men rebelled against the government of Charles I, and an eighteenth century vicar walked from Waltham to Brigsley crossing the stream on a pair of stilts! Coming to more modern times, Roy Reynolds, the artist, a direct descendant of Sir Joshua Reynolds, got married in the Methodist Church. This church is now a most attractive house. Surprisingly, for such a small village it boasts the Brigsley Ladies Barber’s Shop Choir that draws its members from various parts of the surrounding district. Last, but not least, it boasts a famous ice-cream shop on the stream, which has been a mecca for Lincolnshire people for decades. I am sure that many readers will remember cycling out from Grimsby to buy an ice cream and, having eaten it, cycling back refreshed!

So, here in North East Lincolnshire we have two contrasting villages. One, whose population swelled from 526 in 1821 to 6,161 in 1991 - the other tiny and rural. Both have charm and interest in this little known part of our county and are well worth visiting.



THE 'ICE CREAM' SHOP



HARRY JACKSON'S ANVIL