

THE PURITAN CHAPEL BRAMHOPE - 1649 -



WELCOME

Welcome to our historic chapel which was one of few places of religious worship built during the mid 17th Century – a period of great tumultuous religious and political change in our country.

This leaflet provides some background notes to the building and the political turmoil of the period, plus information on the chapel's restoration over the years and its present day upkeep.

We hope you enjoy our lovely building and please also tell your friends to come.

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1. INTRODUCTION – OUR STORY BEGINS

Our story begins in the year 1649, when the building of the Puritan Chapel probably started, however this year is remembered for a much more significant event as it was the year in which King Charles I was executed.

To understand how we arrived at such an important event in our country's history and to learn of the rise of the 'Puritans' who would eventually build their Chapel here in Bramhope we need to go back a little further in English (and Scottish) history; in fact almost 100 years to when England was ruled by Queen Elizabeth I and Scotland was ruled by her cousin Mary, Queen of Scots. This was a turbulent and violent period when religious beliefs were very strong, with Elizabeth espousing the Protestant faith and Mary being a devout Roman Catholic.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1558 – Elizabeth I

Elizabeth became Queen of England in November 1558 after the death of her sister Mary. Mary was the first child of Henry VIII and his first wife Catherine of Aragon. Elizabeth was the second child of Henry VIII and his second wife Anne Boleyn.

Mary's persecution of the Protestants had done much damage to the standing of Catholicism in England and the number of Protestants in the country was steadily increasing, and when Elizabeth came to the throne, she started to reverse the stance that Mary had taken.

Although Elizabeth had adhered to the Catholic faith during her sister's reign, she had been raised a Protestant and was committed to that faith.

The rise of the Puritans

Elizabeth I re-established Protestantism as England's official religion but some Protestants thought that the church was still too much like the Roman Catholic Church and these people became known as 'Puritans'. The Puritans disliked a number of things with church services, such as, ministers wearing surplices; people kneeling whilst taking Communion; ornaments, paintings and stained glass windows; organ music and the celebration of Saints' days. The Puritans also disliked the power and influence that the Bishops exercised over the Church and they felt that the people who attended the church services should have a say in the appointment of church ministers.

Elizabeth I resisted these changes as she saw the Puritans as a threat to the Monarchy, fearing that Puritans who complained about the wealth and influence of Bishops would one day say the same about the Sovereign.

Back in Scotland

In Scotland, Elizabeth's cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots had a son in 1566 who was named James. His father was Lord Darnley, and records suggest that he may also have had a relationship with Queen Elizabeth! James was born in Edinburgh Castle and a year later, when Mary was forced to leave Scotland, James became King. He was James VI of Scotland. As he was so young, a number of men called 'Regents' made decisions on his behalf and this lasted until 1576 when James was allowed to rule by himself, yet still only 10 years old at that time, he was influenced heavily by the people around him and it was not until 1581 that he could rule as a king would.

Elizabeth I Dies

In 1603, Elizabeth I of England died and as she had never married and had no children, the nearest in line to the English throne was James and so he became James I of England and James VI of Scotland. At this time the Puritans were happy, thinking that under his rule many of the reforms that they favoured which he had

introduced in Scotland would now be introduced in England. However, it soon became clear that James intended to continue with Elizabeth's religious policies.

James frequently clashed with the English Parliament and his belief in the divine right of kings caused trouble with the English nobles of the time. He treated the Roman Catholics in England very badly leading to the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 when Guy Fawkes and other tried to blow up the Houses of Parliament with James in it and overall the status and standing of the Monarchy declined during his reign.

James I of England (James VI of Scotland)

However, Parliament had one major advantage over James - they had the power to raise money, something James was constantly short of! In 1611, James suspended Parliament and it did not meet for another 10 years and during this period James I used his friends to run the country and he rewarded them with titles and land, which just further infuriated Members of Parliament.

In 1621 James recalled Parliament to discuss the marriage of his son Charles to a Spanish Princess. This further outraged Members of Parliament as any children would be brought up as Catholics and Spain was still seen as a hostile nation it being just some 30 years after the Spanish Armada in 1588.

The marriage never took place but the incident damaged the relationship between Monarchy and Parliament even further. James I died in 1625 and was succeeded by his son Charles I.

Charles I (1625 to 1649)

Charles I was born in 1600 in Fife in Scotland and was the second son of James, his elder brother Henry died in 1612. He had witnessed the strained relationship between Parliament and his father and considered that Parliament was entirely to blame. This did not bode well for the future!

He was also a very religious man and liked Church services to be very grand and full of ritual and colour. This was to lead to a clash with many in England who preferred plain and simple services. From the beginning Charles I argued with Parliament on almost every issue, but money and religion were the most common causes of arguments.

In 1629, Charles refused Parliament to meet, echoing his father's position some 18 years earlier and this eleven-year period of the King's Personal Rule (1629-40) was described by his enemies as the 'Eleven Year Tyranny'.

The Catholic sympathies of the King's ministers were suspected by Puritans and deeply resented, particularly as the Queen practiced her religion openly. In December 1634, Charles became the first English monarch since the Reformation to receive an emissary from the Pope.

In 1633 William Laud was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury and his doctrines fitted perfectly with the King's religious policy, but Puritans believed that he was intent on returning the Church of England to Roman Catholicism.

Also in that year Charles I was crowned King of Scotland.

The finances of the monarchy by this time were becoming rather perilous so Charles introduced a tax called the Ship Money which was a tax paid by coastal towns to pay for the upkeep of the Royal Navy and in a bid to raise more money Charles imposed the tax on inland towns as well. The new Parliament refused to authorise any new taxes until the King agreed to abandon 'ship money'. The King said that he would only abandon ship money if Parliament would grant him enough money to re-open the war with Scotland. Parliament refused and was dismissed after three weeks.

In 1640 Oliver Cromwell was elected to Parliament for the second time. He openly criticised Charles taxes and the level of corruption in the Church of England.

Charles was extremely unpopular and across the country people declared themselves for Parliament and against Popery. Charles removed himself and his family from Whitehall to Hampton Court. Charles sent his wife Henrietta Maria to the Continent to enlist Catholic support for his cause against Parliament.

During 1646 many battles were fought in the country and in January 1647 Charles was handed over to the parliament by the Scots and was imprisoned in Holdenby House in Northamptonshire. In November he escaped and fled to the Isle of Wight, but in December 1648 he was recaptured and sent to Windsor Castle.

King Charles was tried for treason by a High Court of Justice specially set up for the trial. The court found Charles guilty and sentenced him to death and on 30th January 1649 King Charles I was executed by beheading, outside Whitehall Palace, London. He was buried in St George's Chapel, Windsor.

Oliver Cromwell

Oliver Cromwell remains one of our most famous characters in history. From 1649 to 1653, Parliament ran England but from Cromwell's point of view, it was not a system that worked effectively and England, as a nation was suffering. As a result, Cromwell sent home MP's and he became the effective leader of England from 1653 to 1658.

He was the man who really pushed for the execution of Charles I as he believed that Charles would never change his ways and that he would continue to be a source of trouble until he died. Cromwell's signature is one of the easiest to make out on the death warrant of Charles; it is third on the list of signatures.

Cromwell was a Puritan and he was a highly religious man who believed that everybody should lead their lives according to what was written in the Bible. The word 'Puritan' means that followers had a pure soul and lived a good life. Cromwell believed that everybody else in England should follow his example.

One of the main beliefs of the Puritans was that if you worked hard, you would get to Heaven. Pointless enjoyment was frowned upon and Cromwell shut many inns and the theatres were all closed down. Most sports were banned. Boys caught playing football on a Sunday could be whipped as a punishment and swearing was punished by a fine, though those who kept swearing could be sent to prison.

Sunday became a very special day under the Puritans. Most forms of work were banned. Women caught doing unnecessary work on the Holy Day could be put in the stocks. Simply going for a Sunday walk (unless it was to church) could lead to a hefty fine.

To keep the population's mind on religion, instead of having feast days to celebrate the saints (as had been common in Medieval England), one day in every month was a fast day - you did not eat all day.

He divided up England into 11 areas; each one was governed by a major-general who was trusted by Cromwell. Most of these generals had been in Cromwell's New Model Army. The law - essentially Cromwell's law - was enforced by the use of soldiers.

Cromwell believed that women and girls should dress in a proper manner. Make-up was banned. Puritan leaders and soldiers would roam the streets of towns and scrub off any make-up found on unsuspecting women. A Puritan lady would wear a long black dress that covered her almost from neck to toes. She would wear a white apron and her hair would be bunched up behind a white head-dress. Puritan men wore black clothes and had short hair.

Cromwell banned Christmas as people would have known it then. By the 17th Century Christmas had become a holiday of celebration and enjoyment - especially after the problems caused by the civil war. Cromwell wanted it returned to a religious celebration where people thought about the birth of Jesus rather than ate and drank too much. In London, soldiers were ordered to go round the streets and take, by force if necessary, food being cooked for a Christmas

celebration. The smell of a goose being cooked could bring trouble. Traditional Christmas decorations like holly were banned.

By the end of his life, both Cromwell and the 11 major-generals who helped to run the country, had become hated people. The population was tired of having strict rules forced onto them. Cromwell died in September 1658. His coffin was escorted by over 30,000 soldiers as it was taken to Westminster Abbey where he was buried.

Cromwell was buried in Westminster Abbey and his son, Richard, took over leadership of the country. However, Richard was clearly not up to the task and in 1660 he left the job.

In that year, 1660, Charles II was asked to return to become king of England. One of Charles' first orders was that Cromwell's body should be dug up and put on 'trial' as a traitor and regicide. His body was put on trial, found guilty and symbolically hanged from a gallows at Tyburn (near Hyde Park, London). What was left of his body remains a mystery. Some say the body was thrown on to a rubbish tip while others say it was buried beneath the gallows at Tyburn. His head was put on display in London for many years to come

3. THE BUILDING OF OUR CHAPEL

The Chapel is unique in that it was erected specifically for Puritan worship. The Chapel was built by Mr Robert Dyneley at his own cost. Robert Dyneley lived at Bramhope Hall (the site of the present hotel)

Trustees of the Chapel were Sir George Wentworth from Wakefield, Colonel Charles Fairfax of Menston, Mr Henry Arthington, Mr Walter Hawksworth and Sir John Stanhope of Kent.

Until 1927 the chapel had been beautifully maintained, latterly by Mr J Paul of Bramhope Hall but thereafter it fell into disrepair and the pulpit and some pews were loaned to Kirkstall Abbey Museum.

The Chapel's four walls, windows and doorways stand as they were originally built, except that the walls show a later raising to a new roofline, whilst a coating of whitewashed roughcast had been added. The ceiling, now indicated by the joist holes, was an early nineteenth century addition by the Rhodes family, as was the stove which stood to the west of the pulpit.

The altar of plain stone is unusual in that it bears a coat of arms of the Rhodes family. (Add picture) The altar rails were made by a local blacksmith, Watson and were installed by Francis Darwin (born Rhodes), who is buried in the grounds.

The bricked vault entrance is indicated by a slab bearing two ring marks, ten feet west of the altar rail. It measures 7.5 ft x 6 ft and contains the remains of Esther, wife of Christopher Smith, purchaser of the estate from the Dyneleys in 1797.

4. RESTORATION AFTER THE GREAT GALES OF 1962

During the great March gales of 1962 a beech tree destroyed the belfry and crashed through the roof. In 1963 the Chapel and its grounds were conveyed by Deed of Gift to the Wharfedale Rural District Council, by the owner, the late HMG McKay and the restoration then commenced. Not long after this Wharfedale Rural District Council sold the Chapel to Bramhope and Carlton Parish Council for £1.

5. THE PRESENT DAY

Today the Chapel is maintained by Bramhope & Carlton Parish Council. It is open to the public every Sunday from April to October and at other times by arrangement.

The Chapel is available for wedding blessings and occasional church services. Every Christmas it is the setting for a candlelit Parish Carol Service.