

## Arkholme and the Thankful Villages

The Thankful Villages are the 53 villages in England and Wales – including Arkholme – where everyone who served in the First World War returned alive.

For nearly a century these villages maintained a dignified silence, as the villages all around were in mourning – but with the approach of the centenary of the Great War, their stories began to be told.

Arkholme is 'the most thankful' of the Thankful Villages, in that 59 served – all over the world – and 59 returned.

### THESE THANKFUL FIELDS by Avril Newey (2013)

The death list never came.  
Through years of mornings  
women clutched to prayers  
huddled at crossroads,  
wept in curtained dark,  
black-leading ranges  
scrubbing hand-me-downs  
and picking wild flowers  
for that green-glass vase  
their keen-eyed husbands  
won at Kirkby fair.



*This poem by Avril Newey is now read at 11am every Remembrance Sunday by the centenary memorial stone, installed in 2014. All 53 Thankful Villages have the centenary slate plaque.*

As aproned girls kept watch  
it was the smallest boys  
who caught the rabbit  
and the dark-brown hare,  
using their fathers' skills  
with shot and wire  
to pinion dusk  
blood soak the grass,  
whilst those who taught them  
sank in bloated mud  
setting their traps for  
a more deadly prey.

So, on that day the men  
dragged down this road  
their bodies buttoned tight  
in yellow clay,  
breaking from trees  
they paused at Locka Lane  
with its first aching glimpse  
of chimney smoke, green Yarlside  
doors flew wide open,  
feet raced up the hill,  
stone church and chapel  
burst with joyous sound:

'Now thank we all our God  
With hearts and hands and voices  
Who wondrous things hath done...'

Only then did hearth-fires flame,  
the lonely horse lift up his head,  
the winter aconites unfold their flowers,  
the robin fly to the remembered spade.

Only then ... until that day  
when so much happiness  
ripped open scars,  
cupped out their guilt  
and, wrapped in khaki,  
stood on flag-draped squares  
before the faces carved  
on countless stones.

Now they lie still  
the Arkholme fifty-nine  
who, young as catkins,  
ploughed the glebes of Hell,  
became a sentence  
in their nation's pride  
then coming silent home,  
picked up their grandsires' tools  
and, seeding poppies  
in these thankful fields,  
grew for themselves  
perhaps sufficient peace?

Remember them.

## Parish Church of Saint John the Baptist Arkholme

# Visitors Guide



## Welcome

**The Parish Church of Saint John the Baptist,** Arkholme, is an active parish church in a benefice of four parish churches working together – Hornby, Whittington, Arkholme, Gressingham.

**For more than 500 years** this site has been a holy place for worship and prayer, and we encourage you to offer a prayer while you are here – for world peace, for the unity the church, for your own needs and for the needs of others, giving thanks for many blessings and for all who have gone before.

**Saint John the Baptist** prepares the way for the ministry of Jesus, calling people to a new beginning, marked by baptism in the river Jordan. Jesus himself was baptised by John, then went out into the wilderness to pray for forty days before beginning his own public ministry. The feast day of Saint John the Baptist is traditionally mid-summer's day – 24 June.



## Sunday Services

There is a full service of Holy Communion at 9.30am every Sunday, alternating between here and Whittington

Check the weekly bulletin for dates  
on the notice board or online at  
[www.these4parishes.co.uk](http://www.these4parishes.co.uk)

Arkholme's Patronal Festival service is  
on the last Sunday in June every year

Harvest Festival is on the first Sunday in October

Remembrance Sunday is the second Sunday in  
November, when the service begins at 10.30am,  
to include the 11am silence, and Avril Newey's  
poem for Arkholme, *These Thankful Fields*

The Crib Service is on Christmas Eve at 4pm

Check the weekly bulletin for additional services  
and for the Lent and Easter programmes  
on the notice board or at [www.these4parishes.co.uk](http://www.these4parishes.co.uk)

## The United Benefice

Whittington, Arkholme, Gressingham and Hornby  
are four parishes working together, sharing youthwork  
and a wide range of other activities throughout the year.

*The largest weekly service in the benefice is the Hornby  
Parish Communion at 10.45am every Sunday – a full  
sung service with choir and young people's activities,  
and an average congregation of about seventy people.*

## Quarter Days

On the last Sundays of June, September and December,  
the four parishes gather to celebrate the Patronal  
Festivals of Saint John the Baptist Arkholme, Saint  
Michael the Archangel Whittington, and Saint John the  
Evangelist Gressingham, respectively – which fall on  
three of the four traditional Quarter Days.

## Supporting Arkholme Parish Church

You can support the parish church of Saint John the  
Baptist, Arkholme, with offers of assistance in  
maintaining the churchyard, or by joining the church  
cleaning or flower arranging programmes, or with a  
one-off or regular donation by online, mobile or  
telephone banking to the Arkholme PCC account  
01-01-60 94800464. For more information, or to boost  
the value of your donation by Gift Aid,  
use the contact details overleaf.

## Some key dates and main features



Saint John the Baptist, Arkholme stands on the site of an  
**eleventh-century** motte-and-bailey castle – one of  
several major defensive earthworks along the Lune  
valley. The motte is the great earthwork in the  
churchyard at the north-east corner of the church.



The base of an ancient stone cross  
stands in the churchyard – the site of  
the castle bailey – on the south side of  
the church. The stone cross would  
have stood in the square hole in this  
octagonal base.



The church itself dates from around  
**1450**. There are carvings dating back  
to the original building on one of the  
pillars in the south  
aisle, and above the  
choir stalls.

The hunting horn may refer to the  
foresters of Cawood.



The **early seventeenth century** Wainscot  
chair was restored in **2017** using original  
methods and materials. The intricate carving  
depicts the scourging of Jesus by Roman  
soldiers on Good Friday.



A major renovation in **1788** included a new door in the  
west wall, the bellcote above, and the small font which  
is still in place by what was the west door.

The bell itself is **thirteenth or fourteenth century** –  
perhaps made for the church around 1450, or possibly  
up to a century older. It carries the inscription  
*IHS NAZARENUS REX JUDEORUM FILI DEI*  
which recalls both the inscription placed by Pontius  
Pilate on the cross (Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews)  
and the words of the centurion at the cross: *'Surely this  
was the Son of God'*. It is said to be one of the oldest  
inscribed bells in England, and it is housed – and  
well-preserved – in the unusual enclosed 1788 bellcote.

Until **1866** Arkholme was a chapelry of the parish of  
Melling (see map overleaf), and all weddings and  
funerals took place in Melling parish church. Coffins  
were taken across the river by boat or cart. In 1866,  
Arkholme became a parish in its own right, with the  
church of Saint John the Baptist as its parish church.

There was another major restoration in **1897**, by the  
Lancaster architects Paley and Austin. The door in the  
west wall was replaced by the present window, new  
pews and a new larger font  
were installed, the vestry  
was enlarged, the porch was  
reconstructed, and the  
windows and the earlier  
three-tier pulpit were  
replaced.



The organ dates from **1906**  
and is still in regular use.

The only stained-glass window in  
the church is **twentieth-century**,  
and depicts Saint Bede and  
Saint Hilda. Saint Bede (AD672-735)  
was an English monk in Sunderland  
and is celebrated as the father of  
English history for his AD731  
*History of the English Church and  
People*, recounting the first  
centuries of Christian faith in these  
islands. Saint Hilda (AD614-680)  
was the founding Abbess of the  
monastery at Whitby, and an important figure in the  
conversion of Anglo-Saxon England to Christianity.



The 1897 font has an oak cover dated **1959**  
commemorating Arkholme's traditional local craft of  
basket weaving for the Morecambe Bay fisheries.



The pebble mosaic by the church  
porch is one of a set of three  
commissioned to mark **the  
year 2000**. The others are at the  
entrances to the churches in  
Whittington and Gressingham.

The Arkholme charities listed on various plaques around  
the church continue to make small educational grants to  
local students, and to support the village school.