

Some key dates and main features

Ninth century

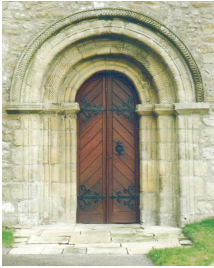
Two fragments of a ninth-century Saxon Cross were unearthed in the churchyard just over a century ago, confirming that this has been a site for Christian worship and prayer for over a thousand years.



Twelfth century

The south doorway is an outstanding example of classic twelfth century architecture, with its multiple layers of decorated surround and its high semi-circular 'Romanesque' arch.

This doorway is amongst the oldest surviving features of any church building in England.



Thirteenth to seventeenth centuries



The slightly-pointed 'Gothic' arches of the north aisle arcade indicate a date later than the round arch of the south doorway – after 1200, but still

earlier than 1600. Two wooden chairs in the church are probably fifteenth century. The bishop's chair is early seventeenth century.



Local baron Roger de Montbegon (1165-1226) may well have commissioned the twelfth-century work on the building. He lived at Castle Stede, still visible as earthworks on the far side of Loyn Bridge (see map). He was baron of Hornby, and one of the twenty-five guarantors of the rights enshrined in Magna Carta in 1215. There is a display with more information about Magna Carta in Hornby church, including a facsimile on parchment of one of the surviving 1215 originals. Roger placed Gressingham church under the patronage of the Priory of Lancaster, which was in turn under the patronage of the Monastery of Saint Martin of Séz in Normandy, where there is reference to the transaction in records dating back to Roger's time. Lancaster Priory still exercises patronage rights in the appointment of clergy to Gressingham parish.

Parish Church of Saint John the Evangelist
Gressingham

Visitors Guide



Welcome

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

For more than 1000 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 Evangelist

('gospel writer') was Jesus's closest companion amongst the disciples. His writings are a call to love God by loving Jesus and one another above all else. His gospel is distinct from those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, for being full of poetry and dialogue. The bible concludes with John's vision of heaven in the book of Revelation. John's feast day is celebrated on 27 December.



More key dates and features

Sunday Services

There are three Sunday services a month here at Saint John's, Gressingham, including Holy Communion at both 8am and 9.30am. *Check the weekly bulletin in church or online for dates and details: 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.

Annual Festival and Remembrance services

Gressingham's Patronal Festival is on first Sunday after Christmas each year, which is usually the last Sunday in December, but is occasionally New Year's Day. The 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. *Check the weekly bulletin for other service times and for Christmas, Lent and Easter programmes, on the notice board or online at www.these4parishes.co.uk*

Supporting Gressingham Parish Church

You can support the parish church of Saint John the Evangelist, Gressingham, 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 Gressingham PCC account 01-01-60 75562375. For more information, or to boost the value of your donation by Gift Aid, use the contact details overleaf.

Eighteenth century

The pulpit bears the date 1714, and parish records indicate a major restoration – '*repaired, new roofed and the tower built*' – in 1734.

The single bell in the tower is inscribed '*Gloria in Excelsis Deo, 1740*'.

A silver paten, still in use, is inscribed '*Given for the use of the Chapels of Arkholme and Gressingham, 1743*'.

A board on the south wall shows the arms of George III (1760-1820).



Nineteenth century

Gressingham largely escaped the major Victorian works applied to so many ancient parish churches – but it may have acquired at least some of its box pews from another church which was having them removed as part of a Victorian restoration. The centre set appears to be newer than those along the north and south walls.

In 1857 the Church was formally dedicated to Saint John, having been known previously as All Saints.

The current windows, with their pointed 'neo-Gothic' arches, date from the early 1860s.



Twentieth century

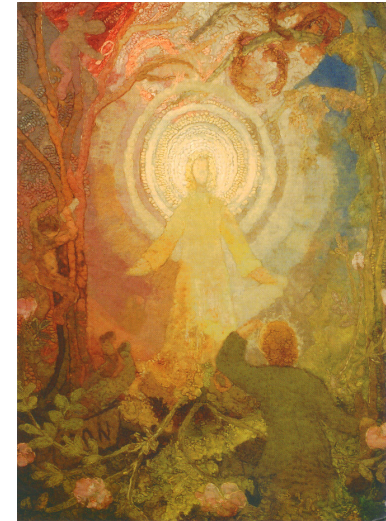
The organ was rebuilt by Wilkinson and Sons, of Kendal, in 1944, and further overhauled in 1987.



In the early 1960s the choir stalls were removed, and the chancel was re-ordered, with new tiling, and a new oak reading desk and vicar's stall.

Each carries the **hand-carved mouse** signature of 'mouseman' Robert Thompson, of Kilburn, North Yorkshire.

The **fleece embroidery hanging** on the south wall of the chancel is the work of Elizabeth Cottam (1975). Its title celebrates the opening of the Gospel according to Saint John: '*The Word was made flesh*'. The kneelers and pew runners are also made from fleece handspun and naturally dyed using plants from the area. The altar kneeler – also by Elizabeth Cottam – depicts events and parables from the Old and New Testaments.



Twenty-first century



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 Arkholme and Whittington.

We are pleased to be able to offer a twenty-first century edition of Saint John's most important piece of writing – his account of the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth – translated directly from the original Greek into contemporary English. All four gospels are available, at just £1 each. Why not take both Saint John's, and one of the others to compare.

