

**Some Notes on the History  
of  
Thirlby (Thirsk), North Yorkshire,  
England**



Compiled by Franklin P. Mason

## Thirlby (Thirsk), North Yorkshire, England

Thirlby was originally the farm or hamlet in the Danelaw by the name of Thrylli.

The following is from: *Anglo-Saxon England*, F. M. Stenton, F.B.A., Oxford at the Clarendon Press. 1943, p. 250. (Edition in the series: The Oxford History of England, Edited by G. N. Clark)<sup>1</sup>

The terms imposed on Ceolwulf of Mercia in 874 show that the leaders of the army were already planning a settlement on English soil, and in 876 Halfdan carried out the first of the three great partitions of territory which established Danish armies in more than a third of eastern England. The later history of the north shows that the region in which he planted his men corresponded generally with the modern county of York. *The numerous Danish place names of this country, and in particular, those which contain personal names not otherwise found in England*<sup>1</sup> give some idea of the intensity of the settlement.

<sup>1</sup>Such as Belgr, Blandr, Feitr, Flatr, Hiarne, MgrSr, Nagli, Kausi, Slengr, Skyti, Sprok, Thrylli, which occur in the place names Bellerby, Blansby, Faceby, Flasby, Harmby, Marderby, Nawton, Cowesby, Slingsby, Skidly, Sproxton, Thirlby. Each of these place names is mentioned in Domesday Book. There are innumerable Yorkshire placenames which contain personal names recorded in later English sources. Many of these place names may well have arisen in the ninth century, but they are not, in themselves, evidence of early settlement. See F. M. Stenton, Trans. R. Hist. Soc., 4th series, xxiv. 16-24.

Today (2024), Thirlby is a small rural village and community of about 130 inhabitants and approximately 56 properties. Thirlby is situated 5 miles to the east of the market town of Thirsk. It is at an elevation of about 100 m, and it nestles in a sheltered hollow 200 m below the Hambleton escarpment and straddles the western boundary of the North York Moors National Park.

The heart of Thirlby is a cluster of dwellings about 100 to 400 years of age close to the ford where Gurtof Beck and Mire Beck meet to form Thirlby Beck.<sup>2</sup>

**General Reference:** <https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/YKS/NRY/Felixkirk>

### Maps:

**1853<sup>3</sup>**

<https://maps.nls.uk/view/102344464>

### 1833 and 1888 Side by Side:

*Side by side georeferenced maps viewer with layer swipe - Map images - National Library of Scotland (nls.uk)*

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<sup>1</sup> *Anglo-saxon England (archive.org)* (emphasis added)

<sup>2</sup> Refer to: <https://thirlbyvillage.com/the-history-of-thirlby/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.oldmapsonline.org/map/nls/102344464>

## **Some additional mentions of Thirlby over the years:**

### **1858<sup>4</sup>**

THIRLBY, a township, in the parish of Felix-Kirk, union of Thirsk, wapentake of Birdforth, N. riding of York, 5 miles (E. N. E.) from Thirsk; containing 127 inhabitants. It comprises about 506 acres of land, and its scattered village lies in a secluded valley, about a mile south-east of Felix-Kirk.

### **1868<sup>5</sup>**

"THIRLBY, a township in the parish of Felixkirk, wapentake of Birdforth, North Riding County York, 5½ miles N.E. of Thirsk, and 6½ from the Thirsk railway station. The village is situated on a branch of the river Swale and is wholly agricultural."

### **1870-72<sup>6</sup>**

THIRLBY, a township in Felixkirk parish, [North Riding of] Yorkshire; 4½ miles ENE of Thirsk. Acres: 575. Real property: £868. Population: 102. Houses: 26.

### **1894-5<sup>7</sup>**

Thirlby, a township in Feliskirk parish, N.R. Yorkshire, 4½ miles ENE of Thirsk station on the N.E.R. Post town, Feliskirk; money order and telegraph office, Thirsk. Acreage, 777; population, 124.

### **1913<sup>8</sup>**

THIRLBY is a township and small village in the parish of Felixkirk, 5 miles east-by-north from Thirsk. Here is a Wesleyan chapel. A. J. Walker, Esq. who is lord of the manor, and Sir M. B. Smith Dodsworth, Baronet are the principal landowners. The population in 1911 was 110; the acreage is 778; rateable value, £932.

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<sup>4</sup> *A Topographical Dictionary of England*, Samuel Lewis, Seventh Edition, published 1858. (Thirlby)

<sup>5</sup> *The National Gazetteer of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1868

<sup>6</sup> *John Marius Wilson's Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales of 1870-72* is provided by the website: <https://www.visionofbritain.org/place/14334> (University of Portsmouth Department of Geography).

<sup>7</sup> *The Comprehensive Gazetteer of England & Wales, 1894-5*

<sup>8</sup> *Kelly's Directory of the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire*

## 1999<sup>9</sup>

Five miles from Thirsk off the A170 road, nestling under the Whitestone Cliffe lies Thirlby village, half in, half outside the North Yorkshire Moors National Park.

The oldest house possibly dates back to the 12th or 13th century and has a preservation order on it, and there is at least one house which is a cruck house and was originally thatched. When one of the new houses was being built a kiln from the 13th century was discovered complete with pottery. The kiln and contents can still be seen at the Ryedale Folk Museum.

Thirlby also had its own brickworks, the bricks being two inch in size. The house which was called 'Brickyard House' is still used, although with a different name, as a holiday cottage, and the brick ponds can be seen in the field close by.

Gomire Lake, which lies behind the village, is one of only three natural lakes in Yorkshire. It is renowned for its interest to the botanist for its flora, and by lovers of the countryside for its quiet beauty.

At one time the village had a shop and a public house. The public house had no name but this rhyme:

What sign this is  
No man can tell,  
Yet 'tis a sign there's ale to sell.

This was closed by the local landowner of the time.

The village had eight farms. Now there are four working farms varying in size from 16 to 200 acres within Thirlby's boundaries. Other than the farmers there is a woodcraftsman and blacksmith-engineer working within the village.

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<sup>9</sup> *North Yorkshire Village Book*, North Yorkshire Federation of Women's Institutes, Countryside Books, 1999