

# 1. Parish: Brandon

- Meaning:** Broom hill
- 2. Hundred:** Part Forehoe (Norfolk), part Lackford (–1895), Lackford (1895–)
- Deanery:** Fordwich (–1862), Fordwich (Suffolk)(1862–1884), Mildenhall (1884–1962)
- Union:** Thetford
- RDC/UDC:** (W Suffolk) Brandon RD (part)(1894–95), Brandon RD (entirely) (1895–1934), Mildenhall (1935–1974), Forest Heath DC (1974–)

## Other administrative details:

Abolished ecclesiastically to create Brandon Ferry and Wangford 1962  
Lackford Petty Sessional Division  
Thetford County Court District

- 3. Area:** 6,747 acres land, 36 acres water (1912)

## 4. Soils:

### Mixed:

- a. Well drained chalk and fine loam over chalk rubble, some deep non-chalk loamy in places.  
Slight risk water erosion
- b. Well drained calcareous sandy soils
- c. Deep well drained sandy soils, in places very acid, risk wind erosion
- d. Deep permeable sand and peat soils affected by ground water near Little Ouse River

## 5. Types of farming:

- |                        |             |  |
|------------------------|-------------|--|
| 1086                   |             | 6 acres meadow, 2 fisheries, 2 asses, 11 cattle, 200 sheep, 20 pigs  |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> cent. |             | Rabbit warrens   |
| 1500–1640              | Thirsk:     | Sheep-corn region, sheep main fertilizing agent, bred for fattening. Barley main cash crop<br>Fen: little or no arable land, commons: hay, grass for animals, peat for fuel                                  |
| 1818                   | Marshall:   | Management varies with condition of sandy soils. Rotation usually turnip, barley, clover, wheat or turnips as preparation for corn and grass<br>Fenland: large areas pasture, little ploughed or arable land |
| 1937                   | Main crops: | 2 poultry farmers, 2 dairymen  |
| 1969                   | Trist:      | Barley and sugar beet are the main crops with some rye grown on poorer lands and a little wheat, herbage seeds and carrots   |

Fenland: Deficiencies in minerals are overcome  
And these lands are now more suited to arable  
Farming with wide range of produce grown

**6. Enclosure:**

1810 Enclosures said to date from early 17<sup>th</sup> cent.  
4,534 acres enclosed under Enclosure by Private Acts of Lands  
1807

**7. Settlement:**

1958 Small town development based on two centres  
a. the town street and  
b. the High Street (formerly Ferry Street; business sector  
and river crossing)  
Church is equidistant between centres  
River Lark forms natural boundary to the north. Plantations to  
south of settlement. Fen to the west all create restrictions to  
development.  
Some scattered farms  
Inhabited houses: 1674 – 85, 1801 – 201, 1851 – 473,  
1871 – 573 (in Suffolk), 6 (in Norfolk), 1901 – 514, 1951 – 869,  
1981 – 2,549

**8. Communications:**

**Roads:** To Weeting, Elveden, Barton Mills and Thetford  
Turnpike road occupied highway now known as London Road  
1844 Coaches to London daily  
to Wells Monday, Wednesday, Friday  
to Holt and Dereham Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday  
to Kings Lynn Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday  
to Bury St Edmunds Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday  
Carriers to London daily  
to Kings Lynn Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday  
to Bury St Edmunds Wednesday and Saturday  
to Newmarket (mail cart) daily  
1891 Carriers to Watton Monday, Wednesday and Saturday  
1912 Carrier to Northwold Monday, Wednesday and Friday  
**Rail:** 1891 Rail station: Ely–Norwich line, opened 1845, closed for  
Goods 1966, station made unmanned halt 1967  
**Water:** Town situated on south bank of Little Ouse River, navigable for  
barges, crossed by bridge. Made navigable by Acts designed to  
improve navigation 1670 although there is some evidence to  
Suggest the river was used for trade purposes earlier than this.  
Declined due to rail transport and general silting of the river  
c.1850s  
1844 Vessels to Kings Lynn twice weekly

**9. Population:**

1086 – 25 recorded

1327 – 39 taxpayers paid £4 13s. 10d.  
 1524 – Not recorded  
 1603 – 291 adults  
 1674 – 128 households  
 1676 – 400 adults  
 1801 – 1,148 inhabitants  
 1831 – 2,065 inhabitants  
 1851 – 2,215 inhabitants  
 1871 – 2,248 inhabitants (includes 36 in Norfolk)  
 1901 – 2,327 inhabitants  
 1931 – 2,427 inhabitants  
 1951 – 2,815 inhabitants  
 1971 – 4,572 inhabitants

**10. Benefice: Rectory (with Wangford)**

1254 Valued £10  
 1291 Valued £21 6s. 8d.  
 Church valued £216 8s. Rectory has 26 acres glebe (at 2d. an acre). (This could be a mistake and could read 120 acres glebe)  
 Value of whole approx £10 1340  
 1535 Valued £20 18s. 1½d.  
 1831 Curate, stipend £91 p.a. Glebe house. Gross income £584 p.a.  
 1844 Good residence. £560 p.a. in lieu of tithes  
 141 acres glebe. Tithes commuted for £560 p.a. 1887

**Patrons:** The King (1603), G St Vincent Wilson (1831), T E Cartwright (1844)  
 Representatives of the late Mrs Crocker (1918)

**11. Church: St Peter**

(Chancel, S chapel, nave, S aisle, N porch, W tower)

1086 Church + 30 acres  
 Saxon Original church (nave only)  
 13<sup>th</sup> cent. Pier arcade to S aisle  
 14<sup>th</sup> cent. Rebuilt. Piers of nave arches, chancel, W tower  
 15<sup>th</sup> cent. Chancel, arch, aisles, S chapel  
 16<sup>th</sup> cent. N porch + pillar stoup  
 1873 Restoration

**Seats:** 330 (1831)

**12. Nonconformity etc:**

1603 1 female recusant  
 1606 1 person not attending church  
 1611 1 recusant papist  
 1627 4 papists, 6 nonconformists  
 1708/1792 2 houses set aside for worship  
 1822 3 houses set aside for worship  
 Wesleyan Methodist chapel built 1812  
 Primitive Methodist chapel built 1838  
 1844 Friends Meeting House (demolished by 1891)

1912 Baptist chapel built 1854 seats 350  
Primitive Methodist chapel, George Street  
Wesleyan chapel  
Primitive Methodist chapel, Town Street  
Baptist chapel

**13. Manorial:**

**Brandon Manor**

1066/1086 Manor of 5 carucates belonging to St Etheldreda (Copinger says this should read St Edmunds, being granted to Bishop of Ely 1250/51)  
1562 Crown property  
1605 Charles, Duke of York owns  
1616 George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham owns (linked to Aldringham)  
1727 Holt-Wilson family owns (linked to Wangford)  
1828 Edward Bliss owns

**14. Market/Fair:**

Grant for market/fair to Bishop of Ely 1271  
Market and fair recorded 1319  
Market: formerly held on Fridays, held on Thursdays from c.1834, attended by farmers and corn buyers (held at Great Eastern Hotel 1891)  
Fairs: held on February 14<sup>th</sup>, June 11<sup>th</sup> and November 11<sup>th</sup> for cattle and toys.  
1 fair held at Broomhill (Norfolk) on July 7<sup>th</sup> for cattle  
All abolished 1872

Note: The market is recorded as no longer in existence 1679

**15. Real Property:**

1844 – £4,523 rental value  
1891 – £8,015 rateable value  
1912 – £10,051 rateable value

**16. Land ownership:**

1844–1912 Land sub-divided

**17. Resident gentry:**

Edward Bliss, High Sheriff of Suffolk (1836)  
1844 E. Bliss, Rev R. Ward and Mr Rogers  
1912 Lt Col B.C.P. Hamilton, JP

**18. Occupations:**

Brandon has long history of flint knapping which can be traced back to the Stone Age. Gunflint industry dates from 1790s

- 1500–1549 1 smith, 1 mercer
- 1550–1599 1 shoemaker, 7 husbandmen, 1 carpenter, 2 yeomen,  
1 blacksmith, 1 tallow chandler, 1 draper, 2 beer brewers,  
1 weaver, 2 shepherds, 2 labourers, 1 mercer, 1 ploughwright,  
1 woollen draper
- 1600–1649 1 shoemaker, 1 baker, 1 inn holder, 7 husbandmen, 1 carpenter,  
5 yeomen, 2 blacksmiths, 1 weaver, 1 clerk, 1 parish clerk,  
1 shepherd, 1 labourer, 1 baker, 1 joiner, 1 bricklayer,  
1 boatwright
- 1650–1699 2 labourers, 4 yeomen, 1 clerk, 1 carpenter. 1 cordwainer,  
2 millers, 1 weaver, 1 clerk, 1 shepherd, 3 labourers,  
1 woolcomber, 2 bakers, 1 warrener, 1 knacker
- 1831 54 in agriculture, 154 in retail trade, 60 in manufacturing,  
24 professionals, 126 labourers, 28 in domestic service,  
6 others
- 1844 2 gun flint manufacturers. Furriers (dressing of rabbit skins)  
employs approx 200 females (400 by 1891)  
Large steam saw mill employs approx 100 (1891)  
3 whiting mills and a large brewery  
Coachman, bookseller/stationery, music teacher, brewer/  
maltster, game dealer, gamekeeper, coach proprietor,  
2 book-keepers, solicitor, poulterer, 3 lightermen, leather cutter,  
2 surgeons, conveyancer, auctioneer, mason/bricklayer, old  
clothes dealer, travelling tea dealer, postman, china/glass  
dealer, timber merchant, excise officer, 6 fire and life officers,  
10 publicans, 5 teachers, 6 bakers, 2 basket makers,  
6 beerhouses, 5 blacksmiths, 9 boot/shoemakers, 2 butchers,  
2 cabinet makers, 2 chemists, 3 coopers, 4 corn/coal merchants,  
1 corn miller, 6 farmers, 1 brick kiln owner, 5 lime kiln owners,  
7 furriers, 3 gardeners, 4 grocer/drapers, 2 hairdressers,  
4 joiners/builders, 4 milliners, 2 painters/plumbers, 2 saddlers,  
4 shopkeepers, 2 straw hat makers, 5 tailors, 2 watchmakers,  
2 wheelwrights
- 1912 Dressing of hare and rabbit skins (used for felt and hat making,  
Size and glue manufacture)  
Trade in malt and timber  
Flint (ornamental purposes) + gun flint  
Whiting mills, extensive steam saw mill  
Sub-postmaster, public offices, station master, bootmaker,  
3 fishmongers, 2 banks, professor of music, painter,  
2 photographers, 8 publicans, scoutmaster, 3 coal merchants,  
town crier, 2 hairdressers, millwright, 7 grocers, pork butcher,  
organist, draper, 3 bakers, 3 apartment house owners, 4 hotel  
owners, 3 insurance agents, confectioner, fancy repository,  
2 farmers, 2 watchmakers, 2 harness makers, chimney sweep,  
Gamekeeper, 5 boot/shoemakers, 2 hatter/furrier/skin merchants,  
tailor, 6 beer retailers, tobacconist, 2 builders, 3 butchers, game  
dealer, 2 laundresses, printer, monumental mason, drill instructor,  
motor car depot, corn merchant, chemist, 2 shopkeepers,  
outfitter, 3 gardeners, 2 nurserymen, cycle agent, police officer,  
wine merchant, whiting manufacturer, dairyman, plumber/painter,  
dressmaker, steam threshing machine owner, carpenter/undertaker,  
newsagent, gun flint maker, milliner, Gas & Oil Engine Co,

wheelwright, timber merchant, solicitor, ironmonger, greengrocer, Industrial Estates built 1960s/1970s bringing business and employment

**19. Education:**

- 1646 Free Grammar School endowed by Robert Wright of Downham Hall for boys from Brandon, Downham, Weeting and Wangford. 20 attend 1818, 40 poor and 40 day and boarders attend 1833, transferred to School Board for administration and demolished 1877.
- 1818 Sunday and Wednesday school on Madras system (45 attend)  
3 English schools  
1 Wesleyan Methodist Sunday school
- 1833 6 daily schools (169 attend)  
1 established church Sunday school (211 attend), 1 Wesleyan Methodist Sunday school (70 attend), 1 Ranters Sunday school (50 attend)  
Workhouse converted into National school 1843, let to School Board 1873
- 1844 1 music teacher listed and 4 Academies  
School Board formed 1873  
Victoria School built 1843, average attendance 1912 141  
Schools built 1878 to hold 300, average attendance 1912 338
- 1891 2 Ladies day schools  
New primary school built c.1976, 250 attend

**20. Poor relief:**

- 1776 £175 9s. 9d.  
1803 £421 19s. 8d.  
1818 £1,272 16s.  
1830 £1,492 8s.  
1832 £936 8s.  
1834 £1,147 5s.

**21. Charities:**

**Grammar School**

- 1646 by will of Robert Wright: Free school for 40 scholars

**Poor Estate:**

- 1840 Almshouse in Ferry Street occupied by 7 widows  
32 acres 6R land let at £62 1s. p.a.

**Ashwell's Dole:**

- 1624 by will of Stephen Ashwell: Rents from messuage called Maids Head Close distributed with Poor Estate

### **Curtis' Charity:**

1675 by Deed of Ann Curtis: Cottage in Town Street occupied by 5 poor persons rent free

### **Baker's Charity:**

1643 by will of Thomas Baker: 1 coomb barley meal – discontinued 1840

### **Wilder's Gift:**

1773 by will of Mrs Ann Wilder: 3s. distributed to poor widows on St Thomas' Day

### **Poor's Allotment:**

1840 116 acres. Rents distributed in coals (approx £50)

### **Almeare's Charity:**

1579 by will of Edmund Almeare: 14 acres 3R 22P let at £21 p.a. Rents applied to clothing materials for distribution among poor

## **22. Other institutions:**

1776 Workhouse (21 inmates) converted into National School 1843  
Guilds of Holy Trinity, St Mary, St Peter and St George 1471  
Guild of St Cross 1469  
3 almshouses devised by Mrs Ann Curtis 1675, rebuilt 1840  
Halls almshouses in High Street 1698, rebuilt 1877, destroyed by fire 1894

1803 Friendly Society (37 members)  
Gas works erected 1868  
Mission Hall in Town Street (no dates)  
Workmens Hall built 1874

1891 Reading Room  
Police station in London Road, has 2 cells and compliment of 1 inspector and 1 constable  
Petty Sessions held monthly at Court House  
Fire Engine kept in London Road, fire brigade formed 1908  
Water works erected 1904

1912 Paget Hall, seats approx 300  
Conservative Club. Brandon Exhibition Foundation. Church Institute. Brandon Ling Heath Trust. Fire Engine station.  
4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Norfolk Regiment

## **23. Recreation:**

1550–1599 2 beer brewers  
1600–1649 1 inn holder  
1844 10 public houses, 6 beerhouses

1891 7 beerhouses, 11 public houses  
1912 6 beer retailers, 8 public houses, 4 hotels  
Boy Scouts, Cricket Club, Football Club, Brandon Drum & Fife  
Band, River Regatta's

#### **24. Personal:**

Brandon family: (1<sup>st</sup> of which was John de Brandon, rector 1331) took their name from the town.

Charles Gerard: created Baron Gerard of Brandon 1645 and Viscount Brandon/Earl of Macclesfield 1679. Titles extinct 1702

Simon Eyre of Brandon: Lord Mayor of London 1445

Duke of Hamilton: given title Baron Dutton and Duke of Brandon 1711

Edward Bliss planted 8,000,000 trees in parish c.1828

Robert W Basham: attained postmaster status by chipping flint necklace from solid pieces of grey-brown flint (now held in Moyses Hall Museum) 1920s

#### **25. Other information:**

'Masters of Flint' by A.J. Forrest 1983

Brandon Manor Rolls of 1380s transcribed by J.T. Munday 1972

'Report on Knappers Rot' by A. Batty Shaw

'Article on The Gunflint Industry at Brandon' by Karlis Karklins in Arms Collecting Magazine Vol. 22, No. 2 1984, p. 51 extract in RO

'Brandon Notes' by B.A.M. Lingwood 1978

'The Story of the English Gunflint: Some Theories and Queries' by Seymour de Lotbiniers in Journal of The Arms and Armour Society Vol IX No. 1 1977, p.18 (extract in RO)

'Brandon and Santon Downham in Times Past'

'My Childhood in Brandon 70 years ago', by Grace Boughen 1976

Brandon's first real town probably situated on present staunch meadows c. 650–850 AD

Grimes Graves (3 miles Brandon) centre of Neolithic flint mining. Dept of Environment exhibition centre 1980

Brandon Park House: owned by Edward Bliss 1814, bought by Forestry Commission 1927, provided USAF transit accommodation 1956/67, managed by Suffolk County Council as country park, public leisure area and forest walks 1985. Grounds contain ancient ice house.

Fire, fanned by high winds, caused considerable damage within the business sector of Ferry Street 1789

'Brandon 1789: A Village Fire' by John E Basham



Bread riots in High Street 1816

Victoria Avenue planted to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee, stretches  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from town centre to St Peters Church

Brandon Castle: suggested site – Nine Stiles meadow (existence unsubstantiated)

Years of great sandstorms which silted up the river between Brandon and Thetford 1665–1670

When causeways, ferries and bridges were available Brandon was the lowest point at which the fens could be skirted

Flintknapping shops set up in workhouse as result of depression in the industry c.1822. Only 1 active knapper left in Brandon 1984

Silicosis (Knappers rot) suggested as the oldest occupational disease believed to have occurred among Brandon Knappers

Court Rolls show the right of courts leet include right of gallows 1382–83

Parish Council acquire copies of documents dating from 1388 (1968)

Rabbits were introduced to the Breckland 12<sup>th</sup> cent. Warren Lodge, situated between Brandon and Thetford built to safeguard the warren from poachers

Many of the large houses in the High Street built by bricks brought from Ely by water between 1680 and 1700.

River Crossing: anciently of strategic importance. Bridge has stood over river from ancient times, subject to tolls. New bridge opened 1954

Town became recipient of GLC overspill 1950s

List of Gun Flint Company Records in parish folder 1837–1849

Old peoples housing scheme opened 1985

'A Late Bronze Age Sword from Brandon' by E. Martin, PSIA Vol 34, p.281