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


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
12th cent. Rabbit warrens
1500–1640 Thirsk: Sheep-corn region, sheep main fertilizing agent, bred for fattening. Barley main cash crop
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
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:

Enclosures said to date from early 17th cent.
1810 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

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.
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)
13th cent.  Pier arcade to S aisle
14th cent.  Rebuilt. Piers of nave arches, chancel, W tower
15th cent.  Chancel, arch, aisles, S chapel
16th 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)
Baptist chapel built 1854 seats 350
1912 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 14th, June 11th and November 11th for cattle and toys.
1 fair held at Broomhill (Norfolk) on July 7th 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
4th 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: (1st 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 Dutten 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 ¾ 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 12th 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