

# Exploring Finghall - A Walk Through Time

**Grade** Relatively easy walking on roads and field paths, one descent and ascent. Not suitable for wheelchair users. Dogs on a lead.

**Distance** 2 miles (3.2 km)

**Start** Finghall Village (considerate roadside parking).



## How to find us



Produced by the Finghall Local History Group

Grateful thanks to North Yorkshire County Council, who helped with funding this project, and to all those who have provided photographs.

Dedicated to the memory of Eddie Hemsley who was a founder member of Finghall History Society and who contributed so much to the village.

The walk route was correct at the time of printing. No responsibility can be accepted for any unforeseen circumstances encountered whilst following this guide.

front cover

- Harvesting oats in 1957 at West Moor Lane Farm, Finghall, using an early Claas Combine Harvester.
- Champion Ian Smith winning the Finghall Barrel Push Competition in 2013.
- Villagers celebrating the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. It rained in Finghall on the actual day, Tuesday 2nd June 1953, so this photo was taken the following day.

Finghall is a small community of around 180 people occupying a hilltop location in Lower Wensleydale, North Yorkshire. For centuries the main street of the village has taken a traditional form of two rows of buildings, facing each other. An early map dated 1627 shows the layout of the village as being very similar to the present day. Some properties are over 300 years old and form part of a Conservation Area.

The first known mention of Finghall occurs in AD 788, when a Synod, or Church Council, was held at the settlement.



The walk commences from the Queens Head pub 1

There has been an Inn at Finghall since 1789, when Dorothy Wilson was innkeeper. Parts of the Queens Head, once called the Board Inn, date back to 1700.

The bar area immediately behind the front curved bay window was once part of the landlord's

private living quarters. The single-storey extension next to the bay window was, for several years, the village sweet shop.

With your back to the pub, turn left and walk a few metres to a seat by a bus stop 2.

On the left is Blew House Farm. The single-storey building was, until recently, the village forge. It is believed the forge was built in the mid 1600s and had been in continual use by successive Finghall blacksmiths until 2018, when the building was sold.

Continue down the road with Rose Cottage and Hargill House 3 on your left.

Between 1984 and 2017 the village post office was run from Hargill House. The owners converted their hallway into a post office, which closed when the postmistress retired. There had been a postal service in Finghall since the 1880s when postmaster Issac Newton rode on horseback to collect mail from Constable Burton – note, not the Isaac Newton!

At the road junction, turn left and walk downhill to Finghall Lane Railway Station on the Wensleydale Railway line 4.

This station opened in 1856 on a line which eventually ran west from Northallerton to Garsdale. The line closed to passengers in 1954, but a section of it, which included Finghall Lane, continued to be used for freight. Passenger services recommenced in 2003 when the heritage line was developed.



The small signal box, shown in this 1967 photograph on the left, was later removed and reassembled on the Emsay to Bolton Abbey Steam Railway. The two houses alongside the platform were built for railway workers. You are able to visit the platform, where there is seating. The station was also used as a setting for scenes from the 1980s TV series All Creatures Great and Small and was renamed 'Rainby Halt'.

Continue downhill. As the road bends there is a seat on your right 5. In spring this verge is carpeted with daffodils. Look to your left over the valley towards Wild Wood.

Local legend suggests that, in the early 1900s, author Kenneth Graham visited the area and regularly walked to St Andrew's Church in the valley bottom. Apparently, Wild Wood helped to inspire him to write the children's classic, Wind in the Willows, first published in 1908.

Continue to the bottom of the hill and turn right before the bridge along a broad track. A white plaque points the way to 'St Andrew's Church'. Walk forward for some 300 metres and enter the Church grounds 6.

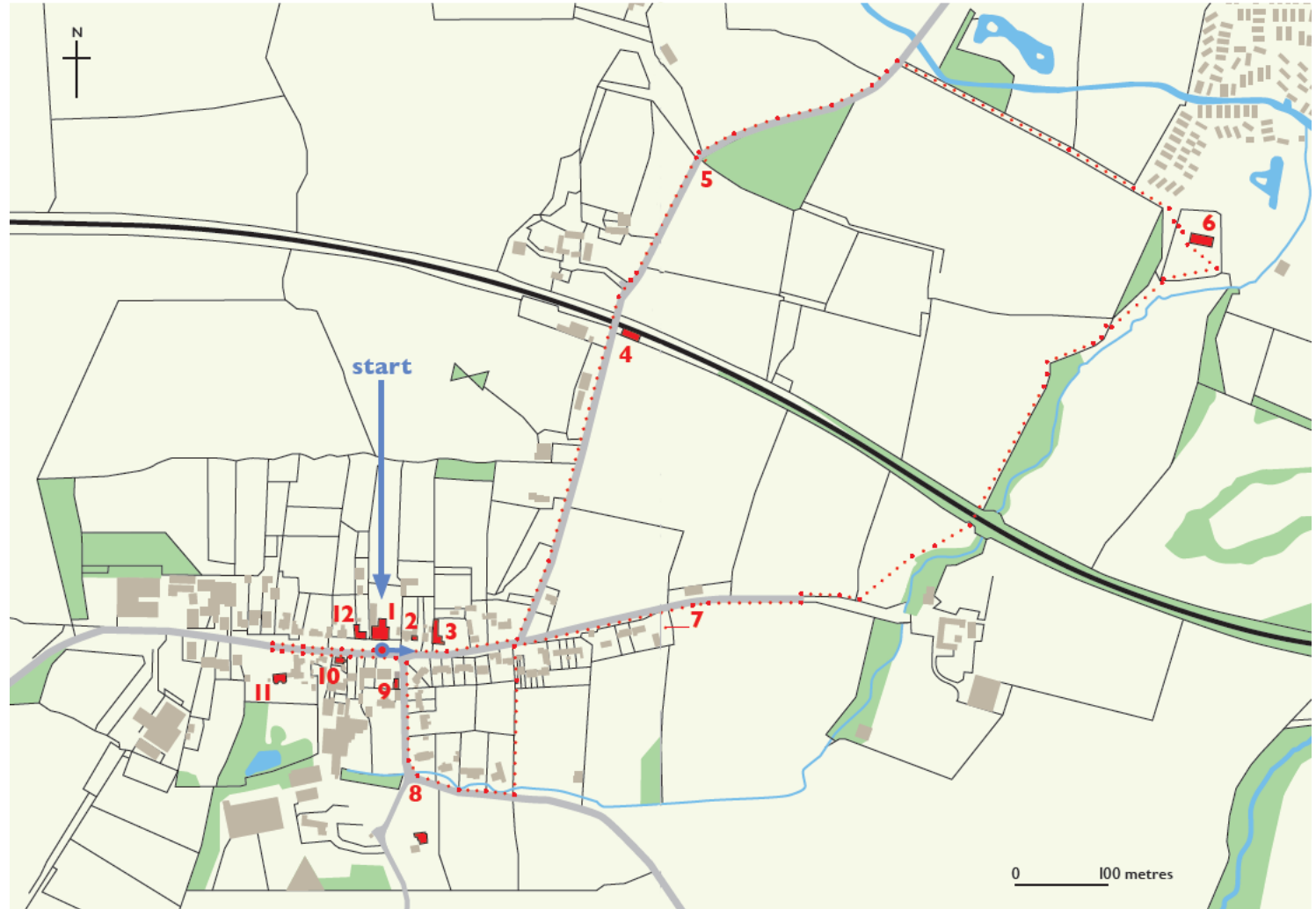


For over a thousand years Christian worship has taken place at this small church. The church is believed to be originally part of a medieval village that was deserted when affected by one of the 16th-century plagues. Believing the plague to be a water-borne infection, the villagers moved to higher ground and established the present-day village of Finghall.



In the centre of the church roof is a rare cot (shelter) for two bells. Whilst one bell is undated, the other is inscribed 'God Save His Church 1620'.

One of the gravestones in the church grounds belongs to a brave young man born in South Africa, Nathaniel J M Barry, who was a 'Battle of Britain' pilot. In October 1940 Nathaniel's RAF Hurricane aircraft was shot down over Kent. Although he was able to parachute from his aircraft, he did not survive. His Commonwealth War Grave can be located close to a stile in the boundary wall.



Now walk round to the other (south) side of the church.

On the south wall of the church, between grey painted railings and some steps, you will see a blocked doorway. Experts believe this dates to around 1140, and some of the stone work dates back to earlier Anglo-Saxon times.



Note the splendid avenue of ten lime trees in this part of the church grounds. The churchyard is kept in good order by volunteer Brian Harker, who was born in Finghall in 1940 and still lives in the village.



Leave the church via the gate in the corner to enter a field. Veer slightly right on a faint path up the hill, with a stream on your left. Climb up to the first of five gates. Pass through, and walk up the field with a fence on your left.

Carefully cross the railway line via gates two and three (the railway sleepers can be slippery when wet). Continue on a faint path to the top right hand corner of the field. Before passing through gate four, turn around to admire the splendid view towards the village of Hunton.

Follow the path next to a hedge and pass through the final gate to emerge onto a road.

For generations agriculture has been at the heart of the community. In addition to crops, several farms in and around Finghall rear sheep, cattle and poultry

National news headlines were made in November 1981 when a Finghall Farmer, Frank Allinson, battled for 10 days against poor weather and fatigue to set a new world record for continuous ploughing - 250 hours- only resting for five minutes per hour! He still lives in the village and helps turn our successful family business producing free-range Wensleydale eggs.



During the Second World War this land was used by the military as a Prisoner of War (POW) Camp. It housed around 25 German and Italian POWs in Nissen huts. The prisoners were transported daily to work on local farms. Many of the POWs formed lasting friendships with farming families. This haymaking picture was painted in 1945 by one of the prisoners on a thin piece of wood, and gifted to the Loadman family at nearby Unthank Farm. Another prisoner from Germany married a young woman from Finghall and they had three children together.



Continue up the lane to the junction with Finghall's main street. Immediately after the telephone box take an enclosed path indicated by a footpath sign. Go through the door to a stile giving access to a field. Walk forward to enter another enclosed path. Pass through a gate and take the steps down (which can be slippery) onto Blew House Lane.

The original village water supply came from Thorny Keld, a spring on Blew House Lane. Later, bore holes were sunk, but a public water supply did not arrive in Finghall until 1957.

Turn right, and walk towards a bend in the road. At this point, look to the left at a red brick house called Southwick Grange 8.

Southwick Grange is one of only two red brick buildings in the village, the other being the Methodist Chapel on the main street. The land for both buildings belonged to the Pickersgill family who owned a shipyard in Southwick, Sunderland. Both are built from red 'Sunderland' brick and the house was named after the shipyard

Continue along the road, which slightly rises towards the Queens Head. After passing Park House on the left, the next property is Chapel Cottage 9, a former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel.



Built in 1845 by the Jaques family, it is hard to imagine that, on two occasions in the early 1860s, a hundred people packed into this tiny chapel to hear a charismatic young speaker called Silvester Whitehead.

A new larger chapel was built in 1909, but Chapel Cottage continued as a Sunday School until 1940 and was used by groups such as the Girl Guides.

Walk to the junction and turn left towards the second red brick building, which until recently was a methodist chapel 10.

At the chapel, look at the base stones engraved with the names or initials of donors who helped pay for the building. The photograph below shows the stone laying ceremony in 1909



Continue along Main Street to reach the gates of Finghall Manor, known earlier as the 'rectory'. 11.

Only the rear of Finghall Manor can be seen from the village street. The front of the property, shown in the above photograph tanking around 1900, once overlooked 17 acres of parkland, which is why other properties in the village make reference to the word park in their name. The house was built in 1702 originally as a residence (rectory) for the incumbent of St Andrew's Church. The House and its extensive grounds were often at the centre of village celebrations.



One rector, Walter Hawksworth Fawkes, ministered at Fink Hall between 1920 and 1943. He was a direct descendant of Guy Fawkes (who planned and failed to blow up the houses of Parliament in London in 1605). During the First World War he served as chaplain to the forces and was awarded the Military Cross for bravery.

To conclude the walk, turn around and walk back towards the Queen's head, passing Rowan Cottage along 12.



Adjacent to the pub, Rowan Cottage is one of the oldest houses in the village and dates from the early to mid 18th century. In the late 1700s it is thought that the House belonged to a farmer, Tommy Robinson, who had a hired boy living with him called Teddy Banks.

Teddy was born locally and worked as a farm labourer in Finghall. Despite humble beginnings, he became one of the most outstanding engineers of his generation. He was knighted in 1822 for building London, Southwark and Waterloo bridges, and is now remembered as Sir Edward Banks (1770—1835)