

# EXTRACT FROM THE GOLDSBOROUGH MEMORIALS

Graham Shaw

## Episode 1

“Here on a gently swelling perch,  
Backed by a straggling strip of wood,  
Half in the village stands the church,  
Half in a sacred solitude.”

Goldsborough Church, dedicated to St Mary, has formed part of a great ecclesiastical system and a picturesque feature of village life for at least 8 centuries. The edifice is of stone in the Early English style with traces of Norman architecture in the arch of the south door. Its parts are a nave with aisles, chancel, north porch and west embattled and pinnacled tower – ‘a square tower with a mellow chime’. The belfry storey is reached by a set of stone stairs in a turret at one of the angles. This turret rises above the roof of the south aisle and has a conical top. The building was last restored in 1859. There was probably an original structure before the building took its present form and the earliest official reference to it is contained in “Torre’s Manuscripts,” now in charge of the Chapter Clerk at York Minster. It reads as follows:

*‘GOLDSBURGH – Church of St Mary, Archdeaconry of Richmond, Pont Burgh [Boroughbridge] Deanery.  
The Church of Goldsborough has anciently belonged to the patronage of the worshipful family of the Goldsboroughs.’  
H.2. (Henry II. 1154 – 1189.)*

*Hugh de Goldesburgh, in the presence of R(oger), Archbishop of York, (1154 – 1181,) by the assent of Robt., Dean, and the whole chapter thereof, determined that controversie a long time continuing between the churches of Goldesburgh and of Burgh (Boroughbridge) touching all parochial right in tythes, seil, in the administration of the parishioners of Flaceby and in all obventions [incidental advantages from fees] especially in the transaction of sepulture [burial] within the prescribed churches; which composition the said Hugh ratyfied and confirmed, as it is contained in the writings of the said Archbishop and Chapter of York.’*

*“The prayers of centuries seem hovering around the place,  
The loves of long ago are lying at your feet,  
Tradition has you in its soft and subduing embrace.”*

## Episode 2

Our ancient church is of special interest to historians and students of family history. Much of this interest lies in the fact that the church in its very stones, its structure, its windows, its bells, and its tombs, has a tale to tell of the men and women of a bygone age, with whom the fortunes of the Goldsborough family that owned the estate were wrapped up. A collection of much of the family history, the history of the church, and the history of the village is contained in a publication printed in 1930 and compiled by Albert Goldsborough M.A. entitled “Memorials of the Goldsborough Family”. The purpose of these extracts is to share some of the fascinating details contained in them.

It is a matter of some difficulty and research to determine the origin of a name dating back to the days of the Saxon or Danish settlements in Britain, and known, perhaps, a full century before the Norman Conquest. The Goldsborough family name may come, in the typical Norman tradition, from the place called Goldsborough. But where did the name Goldsborough come from? The Saxons and the Danes were accustomed to giving their own personal names to the settlements they founded or seized. How and when the name emerged from the twilight of ancient times must remain a subject for conjecture, cloaked as it is in legend and romance.

The romantic element arises from an early use of the name Goldesburgh in a transcript from the writings of John Leland, circa 1550, which contain excerpts from an earlier French chronicle by Thomas Gray, circa 1360, entitled Scala Cronica. The extract runs as follows:

*Some say that in Constantine (d. 926), King of Britain’s time, Ethelbright and Edelsye were small kings under him. The first was King of Northfolk and Southfolk and the other the King of Lindesay. Ethelbright married Orweme, the sister of Edelsye by whom he got a daughter called Argentile in British and Goldesburgh in Saxon. Goldesburgh*

*was later left with her uncle Edelsye on condition that "he that in feats of chivalry might be found most noble should have her as his wife". She was afterwards married to one Havelok who was son to one of the kings of Denmark but had been smuggled to England to avoid the reigning King of Denmark's commandment that he be drowned. One Gryme, a poor fisherman, took pity on him and conveyed him to Lindesay to a place since called Grimsby to live as his own son, that is the son of a poor fisherman. Some time later, and unbeknown to Goldesburgh, Havelok was restored in Denmark as true heir.*

The story is told in the ancient *Romance of Havelok the Dane* and shows something of its nature and the interest it has in the search for an original and early use of the Goldsborough name. It may well be that the village takes its name from a person named Goldesburgh, by which Havelok's queen was known.

*"The king's own daughter 'gan to thrive, and was the fairest woman alive.  
In divers arts was she well versed, that goodly were in price the first.  
The maiden Goldboru was hight, and tears for her shed many a wight.  
But when of her Earl Godrich heard, how amply dowered that maid fared.  
How skilled she was, how chaste, how fair, and that she was the rightful heir  
Of England's realm and all thereby, thereon began Godrich to sigh.  
For Goldboru soon sent he, both fair and gentle eke was she.  
Then her to Lincoln he did bring, and bells for her he caused to sing.  
Great joy he made for her the while, but nathless he was full of guile.  
He said that to her he would give, the fairest man that aye might live.  
She answered and she said anon, by Jesus Christ and by St John.  
That she would no man ever wed, nor no man bring unto her bed,  
Save he were king or king's own heir, though he were never man so fair.  
That night as Goldboru lay, so sad and sorry was she aye.  
Because she weened that by deceit, her lot had fall'n unkind, unmeet.  
She saw a very noble cross, and of an angel heard a voice :-  
Thy sorrow, Goldboru, let be, for Havelock that hath wedded thee.  
King's son is he and king's own heir; Betokens this that cross so fair.  
It more betokens – that he shall have, Denemark and England all.  
He shall be King both strong and stark, of England and Denemark.  
That shalt thou with thine own eyes see, and thou shalt queen and lady be."*

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