

Scrooby Manor House

Scrooby is in the Bassetlaw district of north Nottinghamshire. The county is also well known for the city of Nottingham, Sherwood Forest - the home of Robin Hood (reportedly, around the time of the Crusades, 400-years before). Scrooby, now little noticed, was once the seat of the Archbishops of York.



In 1590, William Brewster senior, Receiver and Bailiff of the Archbishop's estate and Master of the Queen's Postes died, and his son William inherited the position. The Brewster's home is now called Scrooby Manor House.

The younger William Brewster and William Bradford from nearby Austerfield had been attending the Church at Babworth to listen to Richard Clifton preach. Clifton began to preach dissenting religious views and to conduct services using prayers that were not in the officially authorized Book of Prayers.

It is said Brewster "came to enjoy Mr. Richard Clifton's illuminating ministry." These unorthodox views led a group to break away from the Church of England. Called Separatists, they wanted to live a simpler life based on the Bible teachings.

In about 1605 a congregation of Puritans met at Scrooby; Clifton and John Smith, once curate of Gainsborough, were the ministers. Like Clifton (although about 20 years younger), Smith was an ordained minister and graduate of Cambridge University.

Tradition says that they worshipped in one of the outbuildings of Brewster's house, and, as the influence of the little community spread, they were joined by William Bradford and the Rev. John Robinson.

It was the preaching of Clifton and the inspiration he provided to Brewster and Bradford that launched the "Pilgrim adventure." (Pilgrim Hall, Baker)

Brewster developed a strong bias towards Puritanism. But Puritanic principles found little favor with King James I, and the strong arm of the law was invoked to put down the leaders of the movement.

In the view of these reformers, the Church of England needed to simplify its rituals, which still closely resembled Catholic practices, reduce the influence of the clerical hierarchy and bring the church's doctrines into closer alignment with New Testament principles.

There was also a problem, some of them felt, with having the king as the head of both church and state, an unhealthy concentration of temporal and ecclesiastical power.

James I (James VI as King of Scotland) had ascended to the throne in 1603. The Separatists were eyed with suspicion and more. Anything smacking of subversion, whether Catholic or Protestant, provoked the ire of the state.

"No bishop, no king!" thundered the newly crowned king, making it clear that any challenge to church hierarchy was also a challenge to the Crown and, by implication, the entire social order.

"I shall make them conform," James proclaimed against the dissidents, "or I will hurry them out of the land or do worse."

Brewster and his fellow Separatists now knew how dangerous it had become to worship in public; from then on, they would hold only secret services in private houses, such as Brewster's residence, Scrooby Manor.

"Everyone had to go to the Church of England. It was noted if you didn't. So what they were doing here was completely illegal. They were holding their own services."

"They were discussing the Bible, a big no-no. But they had the courage to stand up and be counted." (Sue Allan, Mayflower Maid)

By 1607, however, it had become clear that these clandestine congregations would have to leave the country if they wanted to survive.

The Separatists began planning an escape to the Netherlands, a country that Brewster had known from his younger, more carefree days.



King James I

For his beliefs, William Brewster was summoned to appear before his local ecclesiastical court at the end of that year for being “disobedient in matters of Religion.” He was fined £20, the equivalent of \$5,000 today. Brewster did not appear in court or pay the fine.

They tried to slip out of the country unnoticed.

They had arranged for a ship to meet them at Scotia Creek, where its muddy brown waters spool toward the North Sea, but the captain betrayed them to the authorities, who clapped them in irons.

They were taken back in small open boats. On the way, the local catchpole officers, as the police were known, “rifled and ransacked them, searching to their shirts for money, yea even the women further than became modesty,” William Bradford recalled.

According to Bradford, they were bundled into the town center where they were made into “a spectacle and wonder to the multitude which came flocking on all sides to behold them.” By this time, they had been relieved of almost all their possessions: books, clothes and money.

Bradford described that after “a month's imprisonment”, most of the congregation were released on bail and allowed to return to their homes.

Some families had nowhere to go.

In anticipation of their flight to the Netherlands, they had given up their houses and sold their worldly goods and were now dependent on friends or neighbors for charity. Some rejoined village life.

If Brewster continued his rebellious ways, he faced prison, and possibly torture, as did his fellow Separatists.

So in the spring of 1608, they organized a second attempt to flee the country, this time from Killingholme Creek, about 60 miles up the Lincolnshire coast from the site of the first, failed escape bid.

The women and children traveled separately by boat from Scrooby down the River Trent to the upper estuary of the River Humber. Brewster and the rest of the male members of the congregation traveled overland.

They were to rendezvous at Killingholme Creek, where a Dutch ship, contracted out of Hull, would be waiting.



Pilgrim Fathers Memorial, Immingham Memorial to the Pilgrim Fathers off Church Lane, south of St Andrews Church. An inscription on the base reads: "From this creek the Pilgrim Fathers first left England in 1608 in search of religious liberty. The granite top stone was taken from Plymouth Rock Mass and presented by the Sulgrave Institution of USA. This memorial was erected by the Anglo-American Society of Hull 1924". During the expansion of Immingham docks in May 1970 the memorial was removed from its original site on Immingham Creek and placed here on the green.

Things went wrong, again.

Women and children arrived a day early. The sea had been rough, and when some of them got seasick, they took shelter in a nearby creek. As the tide went out, their boats were seized by the mud.



By the time the Dutch ship arrived the next morning, the women and children were stranded high and dry, while the men, who had arrived on foot, walked anxiously up and down the shore waiting for them.

The Dutch captain sent one of his boats ashore to collect some of the men, who made it safely back to the main vessel.

The boat was dispatched to pick up another load of passengers when, William Bradford recalled, “a great company, both horse and foot, with bills and guns and other weapons,” appeared on the shore, intent on arresting the would-be separatists.

In the confusion that followed, the Dutch captain weighed anchor and set sail with the first batch of Separatists. The trip from England to Amsterdam normally took a couple of days—but more bad luck was in store.

The ship, caught in a hurricane-force storm, was blown almost to Norway. After 14 days, the emigrants finally landed in the Netherlands.

Back at Killingholme Creek, most of the men who had been left behind had managed to escape. The women and children were arrested for questioning, but no constable wanted to throw them in prison. They had committed no crime beyond wanting to be with their husbands and fathers. Most had already given up their homes. The authorities, fearing a backlash of public opinion, quietly let the families go.

Brewster and John Robinson, another leading member of the congregation, who would later become their minister, stayed behind to make sure the families were cared for until they could be reunited in Amsterdam.

Over the next few months, Brewster, Robinson and others escaped across the North Sea in small groups to avoid attracting notice. Settling in Amsterdam, they were befriended by another group of English Separatists called the Ancient Brethren. (All here is from Mayflower400UK-org, NottHistory-org-UK, Smithsonian Magazine and Pilgrim Hall Museum.)



Today, Scrooby Manor House is privately owned and is being restored. Scrooby Manor House was named in the Top 10 Travel & Tourism places announced in *Irreplaceable: A History of England in 100 Places* campaign. (A campaign to bring England's extraordinary history to life and best demonstrate the country's collective identity.)

In an effort to provide a brief, informal background summary of various people, places and events related to the Mayflower, I made this informal compilation from a variety of sources. This is not intended to be a technical reference document, nor an exhaustive review of the subject. Rather, it is an assemblage of information and images from various sources on basic background information. For ease in informal reading, in many cases, specific quotations and citations and attributions are often not included – however, sources are noted in the summary. The images and text are from various sources and are presented for personal, noncommercial and/or educational purposes. Thanks, Peter T. Young