

## Humshaugh Churchyard Story

**Name(s):** Rev. Edward Brice B.A.

**Grave(s):** To East of church below East Window

**Text on Grave(s):**

IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE OF REV EDWARD BRICE CHAPLAIN R.N. AND 36 YEARS INCUMBENT OF THIS PARISH DIED 1 JULY 1873 AGED 89 YEARS

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### **Story**

The Reverend Edward Brice is the archetypal former naval chaplain for whom the 'Seward' churches, including St Peter's, were built by the Greenwich Hospital. He served in the Navy as a chaplain between 1807 and 1829, was Rector of Thorneyburn (another Greenwich Hospital church) between 1829 and 1832 and Perpetual Curate of Humshaugh for 36 years between 1832 and 1868, when he retired. He died in Tynemouth in 1873 and is buried outside the church beneath the East Window which was installed by his son Revd. George Edward Brice in memory of his father and mother.

Edward Brice was born in January 1784 at Poole, Dorset, son of Revd George Tito Brice (1760-1826) and Frances Brice (1761-1833). He was baptised, also in Poole, on 29th September 1784. He had one brother, Nathaniel Brice R.N (1787-1864) and three sisters, Frances (1786 - 1860), Elizabeth Durrell (1789-1884) and Harriet Durrell (1793 - 1883). Nathaniel and Elizabeth were born in Muscliff, Hampshire and Harriet in Wareham, Dorset.

Edward followed his father in being educated at Oxford. Edward attended Wadham College, matriculated on 14th March 1803 and took his B.A. in 1806.

Edward entered naval service as a Chaplain on 26th November 1807.

His ships were

HMS York (26/11/1807 - 29/10/1809)

HMS Medway (29/10/1813 - 2/4/1816)

HMS Hydra (30/7/1816 - 1/2/1817)

HMS Antelope (2/2/1817 - 25/2/1817)

HMS Salisbury (26/2/1817 - 1/5/1818)

HMS Hyperion (25/12/1818 - 2/4/1819)

HMS Windsor Castle (17/4/1819 - 7/11/1823)

HMS Ocean (8/11/1823 - 14/7/1824)

HMS Britannia (15/7/1824 - 29/4/1827)

HMS Victory (1/5/1827 - 8/6/1829) (HMS Victory at this time was the Port Admiral's flagship in Portsmouth Harbour)

He received the Martinique medal for the action on 24th February 1809 when he was chaplain aboard HMS York. (The medal could be applied for from 1847 and was sent to him in Bristol on 20th March 1849). An obituary notes that the medal was for the

'reduction of Martinique and the Saintes, and the capture of the Haupout,74'. The same obituary also notes that after the York he served at the Cape of Good Hope, at Jamaica, at Leith, at Plymouth and at Portsmouth. It also describes him as 'the senior chaplain in the Royal Navy'

On 27th August 1823 Edward married Mary George, second daughter of Rev. William George, Vicar of North Petherton in Somerset - the Rev William George officiated at his daughter's marriage. Edward was at that time serving as chaplain on HMS Windsor Castle, and his father Rev George Tito Brice was rector of Canford, Dorset. Edward was also recorded on the marriage certificate as being a bachelor and a clerk in the parish of Stoke Damerel - part of Devonport (Plymouth Dock had been renamed 'Devonport' in 1823, then as one of the 'three towns' merged in 1914 to form what would become in 1928 the City of Plymouth.)

At the end of his naval service Edward was presented on 11th July 1829 by the commissioners and governors of Greenwich Hospital to the rectory of Thorneyburn, as part of a chain move where the previous incumbent Edward Elliott moved to the Rectory of Simonburn following the death of the previous rector there, Rev David Evans MA (whose widow subsequently established the Evans Trust in Humshaugh).

Whilst at Thorneyburn their son George Edward Brice was born in 1830: George Edward later served as a curate at Humshaugh.

Edward appears in the 1832 Electoral Register for Thorneyburn Township, qualifying through the property of the Rectory of Thorneyburn, where he is recorded as the tenant.

Edward continued at Thorneyburn until he resigned in 1832 to take up his position at Humshaugh. Curiously the value of the Living at Humshaugh was lower than that at Thorneyburn: according to the Navy List of 1852 showing 'Livings belonging to the Estates of Greenwich Hospital in the Patronage of the admiralty and held by Chaplains of the Royal Navy' Thorneyburn was valued at £230 whilst Humshaugh was only £135.

The position at Humshaugh was as a Perpetual Curate. A perpetual curate is one who, once licensed, could not be removed by their patron but only by their diocesan bishop through the ecclesiastical courts. They were often supported by assistant curates. This was a position in common use in the first half of the 19th century. Perpetual curates were supported by a cash stipend and had no ancient right to income from tithe or glebe, although in fact when the Great Parish of Simonburn was divided up the income from tithes was also divided.

The decision to divide the Great Parish had been taken in 1811 and the new Seward churches, opening in 1818, were provided with parsonage houses which would have facilitated use of the role of Perpetual Curate.

The appointment of a Perpetual Curate would often be used when former chapelries were elevated to become parishes. This is what happened at Humshaugh in 1832 as a last part of the reorganisation of the Great Parish, at the same time as Edward moved there. Previously St Peter's had been described as a Chapel of Ease.

The uncertain social standing and slim financial means of perpetual curates were notable, and for example appeared in novels such as *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, by Trollope, or *Lark Rise to Candleford*.

Edward appears in the Electoral Register of 1834 in Humshaugh Township, with the qualification of 'House and Glebe Land' although it is not stated in what capacity (eg tenant, owner, occupier). In the 1837, 1838 and 1840 registers his qualification is 'Freehold house and land'.

In the 1851 Census however Edward appears in Clifton, near Bristol, living in Meridian Cottage with his wife Mary (their ages are given as 65 and 57 respectively) and one servant. Edward's occupation is given as Perpetual Curate of Humshaugh.

Looking at the Burial Register for Humshaugh in that period Edward is recorded as officiating at burials from 4th February 1833 onwards, described as the Incumbent. However from summer 1839 until the beginning of 1841 funerals are taken variously by one of two curates. From 1841 until 1845 there is a mixture of Edward and various curates taking burials, although Edward officiated throughout all of 1844. Then from 27th September 1845 until 20th June 1854 all burials are taken by B Young, curate, which is consistent with Edward living in Clifton in 1851. 1854 sees a combination of Edward and various curates officiating, in 1855 and 1856 it is only Edward, and then in 1857 he is supported by his son George Edward Brice (who was ordained in 1855) as curate, and in fact George Edward takes the majority of but not all burials until 1865 and then George Edward takes all burials in 1866 -1868 until his father retires and is succeeded by Henry Parminter. (George Edward reappears once taking a burial in 1871)

In the 1861 Census living at Humshaugh Parsonage are Edward (aged 76 and described as Perpetual Curate, Humshaugh), his wife Mary (66) and their son George E (30, Curate of Humshaugh) and a servant, Sarah Graham. Again this is consistent with the burial register for that year with a combination of Edward and George Edward officiating. Given their respective ages it is not surprising that George Edward took the more active role.

Edward retired in 1868 aged 84. His wife Mary died in Clifton on 16th January 1869 aged 79. In 1871 Edward, described as a widower, was living as a lodger at 1 Allendale Place, Tynemouth. He died on 1st July 1873 aged 89 and was buried on July 5th at Humshaugh, with Revd Henry Parminter officiating. There is a note in the burial register that he was 'formerly incumbent of this parish'.

The East Window was installed in memory of Edward and Mary by their son George Edward, as recorded by a brass plaque by the pulpit inside the church. Edward's grave is immediately below the East Window outside the church.

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**Further links:**

**Further sources and references:**

**Photographs:**



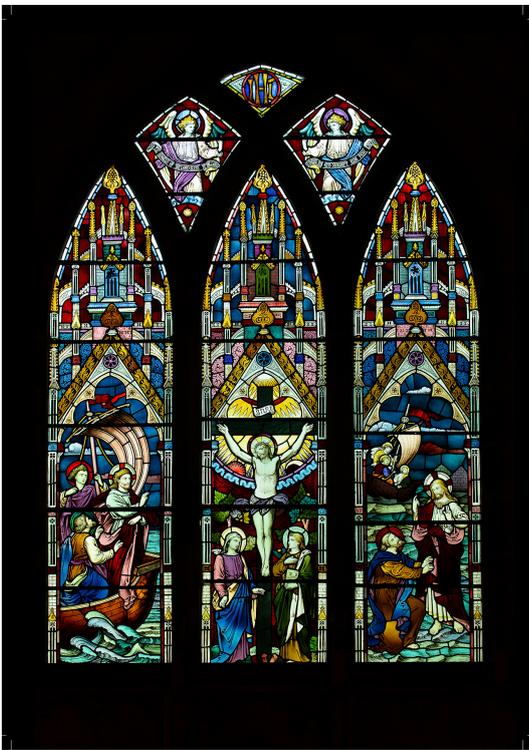
Edward's gravestone



Arms of the Greenwich Hospital in the church



The Martinique Medal



The East Window



Memorial plaque to Edward and Mary