

Churches and Chapels in Heslington

by Peter Mott, 19th October 2019

There is no mention of any Church in Heslington in the Domesday Book of 1086. That does not necessarily mean there was no Church, as only large ones were mentioned, but it is unlikely. Anglo-Saxon Church strategy was to build semi-monastic minsters in the main towns, with clergy going out to preach in the surrounding villages. Some Lords of the Manor built a smaller Church for their own use (such as St. Olave's Church in Marygate built in the early 11th Century by Earl Siward, where he was buried). Heslington is an Anglo-Saxon name "Settlement by the hazel trees", which means it dates back before "Great Heathen Army" of Vikings occupied York in 866. The village is mentioned in the Domesday Book, which lists two Norse Lords of the Manor in Heslington "in the year King Edward lived and died" (1066) - Folcar, and Orm son of Gamal. Both were major landowners in Northumbria, who lived elsewhere and would be unlikely to have built a Church in such a small part of their estates. It is possible that there was a graveyard here, but we have no evidence of one.

After the "harrying of the North" by William the Conqueror most Norse lords were dispossessed, and their lands given to Norman supporters of the King. Count Alan of Brittany (William's nephew, and lieutenant at the Battle of Hastings) became the 4th largest landowner in England, including the estates of Earl Siward's successor, Earl Edwin, which included 5 carucates in Heslington (a carucate was the area that could be cultivated in a year by one team of 8 oxen - about 120 acres). William appointed Thomas of Bayeux as Archbishop of York in 1070, after the death of Archbishop Aeldred. He rebuilt and re-organised York Minster, but objected when Count Alan established a Benedictine monastery (St. Mary's) in the grounds of St. Olave's Church, of which both men claimed to be patron. The King decided in favour of Count Alan, but to compensate gave Archbishop Thomas properties in Fishergate, Clifton and 4 carucates in Heslington. Hugh fitz Baldric had supported King William in harrying the North, and was then appointed Sheriff of Yorkshire; he was awarded 3 carucates in Heslington, along with 407 elsewhere; his base was at Cottingham, near the River Hull, where he held 14 carucates. Again, none of these lived in Heslington, and it is unlikely any of them would have built a Church in such a small village.

In addition to building a new Minster, Archbishop Thomas also re-organised the canons (cathedral clergy), giving each their own land (prebendary) to support them. His successors continued this practice, and about 1150 the then archbishop awarded his Heslington manor to the new Prebendary of Ampleforth. It is likely that the Prebend (Canon) built Heslington Church about 1150.



Reconstruction by Harry Telfer of original Church in Heslington c. 1150

This reconstruction of the original Church shows narrow windows (only rich Churches could afford glass) with semi-circular (Norman) arches. After about 1200 the style changed to Gothic, with pointed arches.

According to the 1377 Poll Tax, 73 households in Heslington had to pay (suggesting a population of about 365). In 1388, 2 bells were installed in Heslington Church, cast by John Porter of York. They were refurbished and re-hung in 1989.



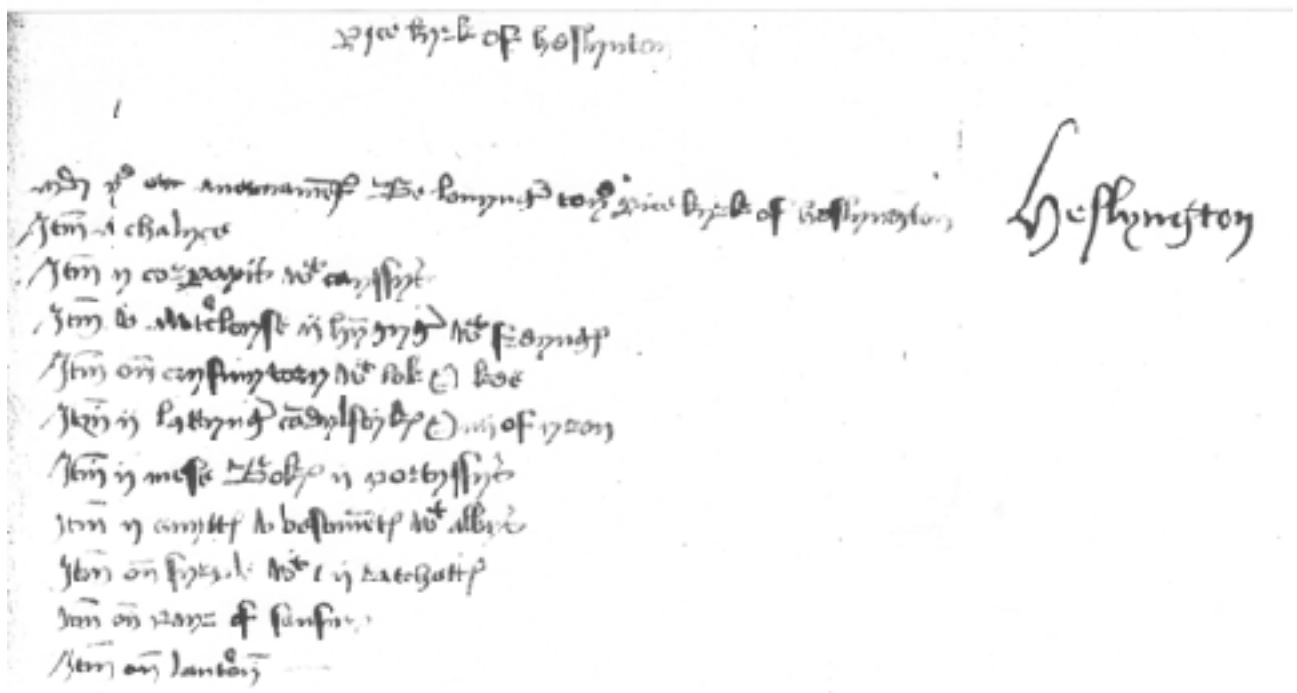
Snowdrops in Heslington churchyard

These are native to SW England, but were widely planted round churches and monasteries during the Middle Ages, because of their association with the Virgin Mary (whose symbol was a white lily for purity). They flower at Candlemas - the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary on February 2nd.



Medieval Bells in Heslington

Originally there was no bell-tower - they would have been hung in a double arch over the West end of the Church, or just in a hole knocked in the West wall. These are all that remain of the Medieval Church - except possibly the snowdrops!



Transcription by Dr. Peter Rycraft

Parch Kirk of Heslyngton

Md ye ??? and ornamts Belongyng to the paric kirk of heslyngton

Item i chalyse - chalice (cup used for the wine in the Mass)

Item ij corpaycles wt ccysse - corporals with cases (the white linen cloth that goes under the cup)

Item v autercloys ij wt fraynge - 5 altar cloths, 2 with fringes

Item i firmtory with wt ke lede - 1 font with key & lid (the holy water might be stolen for magic or charms)

Item ij lating candylstiks hij of yron - latten is a brass-like copper alloy

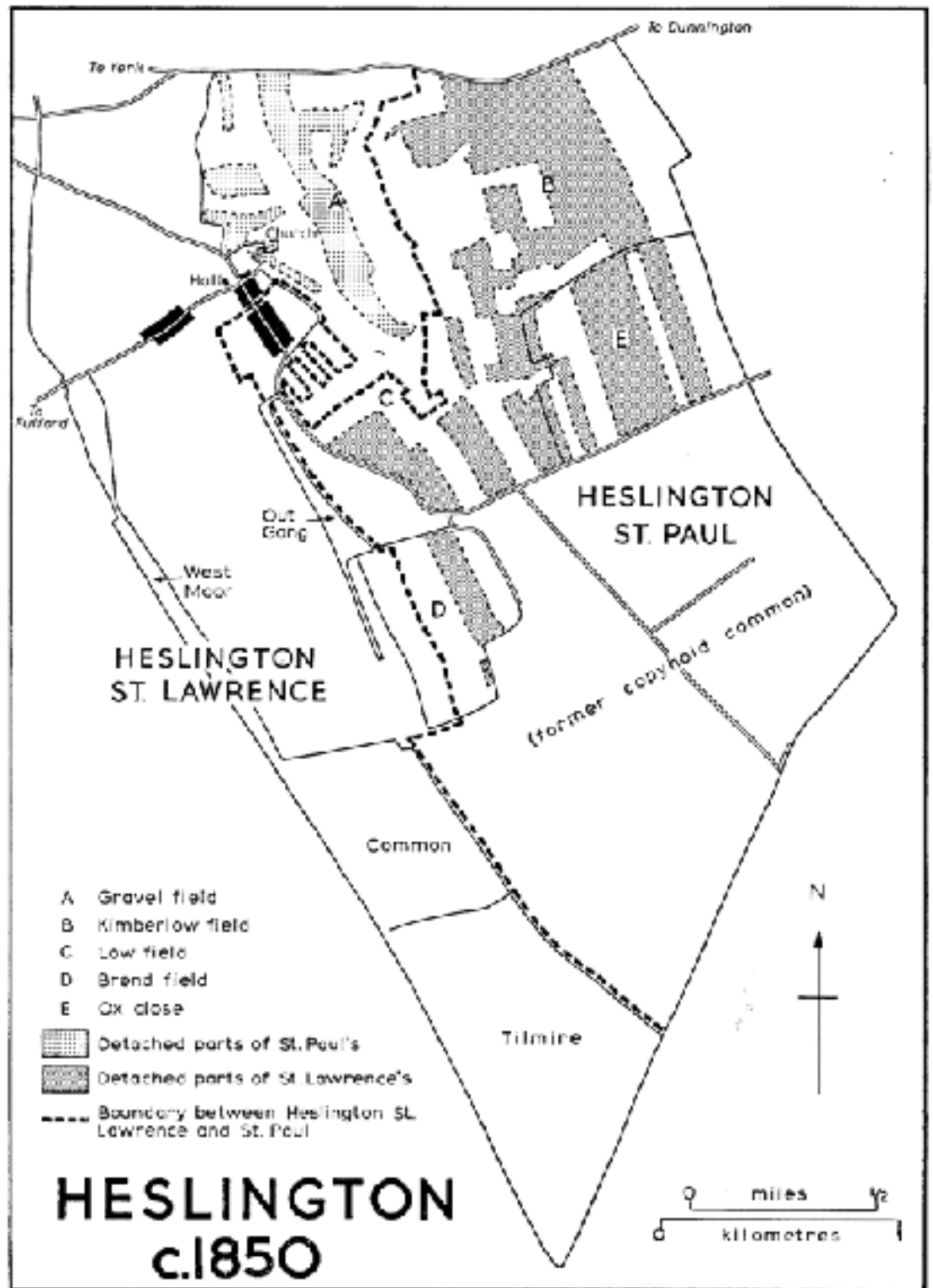
Item ij mese (mass) boke ij portoffers - portiforia were breviaries (prayer books)

Item ij solitt decyestimuts wt albrs ????

The earliest inventory of Heslington Church is dated 1500 .

The items listed are mostly about celebrating the Mass, but no Bible. Other local Churches had many more items, so Heslington was a very poor Church.

During the Middle Ages, land in Heslington held from the King (*Kingshold*) changed hands several times. By the time of Elizabeth I there was effectively one Lord of the Manor, holding most of the land that did not belong to York Minster (St. Peter's, hence it was known as *Peterhold*), allocated to the Prebendary of Ampleforth. The Kingshold land was in the Parish of St. Lawrence (Hull Road); St. Paul's parish consisted of only the Peterhold



Map showing the division of Heslington between the Parishes of St. Paul & St. Lawrence

In 1568 Heslington Hall was built by Thomas Eynns, Secretary to the Council in the North. In 1601 Thomas Hesketh purchased the Hall. He was also a member of the Council in the North. In 1605 he founded a "hospital" on Heslington Road, completed by his widow in 1608. It provided accommodation for "8 poor men and 1 poor woman over 50 years and of good name", one of whom, designated the Master, had to be able to read - presumably to lead prayers in the chapel there. He received £6-13-4d, and the others £5 per year. It was rebuilt (with chapel) on its present site on Main Street West by Henry Yarburgh in 1795.



Yarburgh "Hospital" on Main Street West, Heslington

Heslington remained a poor Church, and benefitted from Queen Anne's Bounty. This was money from "first fruits" (the first year's income for a cleric appointed to a crown living) and "tenths" (tithes of subsequent years' income). Originally the money had gone to the Pope, and after the Reformation to the Crown. In 1704 Queen Anne allocated it to augment livings (income for the priest) worth under £10 per year; in 1747 it was extended to livings up to £20, when Heslington was included for the first time, and again in 1772, 1787 and 1795; in each case there was a grant of £200 for investment in land, or banked with QAB to provide interest. The priest would also receive the Easter offering, and fees for Weddings, Baptisms and Funerals, but there were only 35 weddings in the 40 years 1759-99.

The churchwardens' accounts (separate from the priest's income) date from 1712. Some of the churchwardens were not the pillars of society we expect them to be these days, as the following extract from a book of 1647 shows: "At York Castle, John Garthwayte, clerk, depose that one Herbert Cook, being churchwarden of Heslington, detaineth the register book belonging to the sayd towne, insomuch as this that the minister cannot therein record the names of such persons as are baptized and buried within that parish. And the sayd Herbert Cook sayd that he would burn the sayd register before he would deliver it unto him. The said Herbert Cook is an ordinary frequenter of alehouses upon the Sabbath and Fasting Dayes, and he hath been seen drunk several times on those dayes. He is by common fame a babler and quarreller. He is such a contentious spirit that his neighbours stand in awe of him in respect of suites at law, and he hath now a dozen suites on foot. The parson actually saw him one daye bunching an old man, and he hath often seen him distempered with drink."

The 18th century parish accounts show that each year the two largest items in the churchwardens' books were "spent in ale at the lection of churchwardins" and "pade for the churchwardings dinner at visitation" (by the Archdeacon to inspect the parish).

A tower was added to the Church in 1770 to house the bells. This was paid from the Church Rate. At some point before 1776 additional Gothic-style pointed windows (with glass) were added to the original narrow Norman windows.



Heslington Church painted by Thomas Beckwith 1776 (image - York Art Gallery)

In 1812 a faculty (Church planning permission) authorised the addition of a North Aisle to the Church, the removal of the South Door and its replacement by a window and a new entrance through the West Tower, (as shown below in the pencil sketch of 1848 drawn by Revd. Ebenezer Brown Allen, courtesy of City of York Archives); it was also refurnishing with new flagged flooring, pews, pulpit, reading desk, communion table and gallery. An 1892 history and directory of East Yorkshire states "The old Church was a Norman building remarkable for nothing except its antiquity and its dilapidated state. The pulpit was an old three-decker, reaching nearly to the roof, and large enough for York Minster. The high-backed box pews so completely concealed their occupants that they were unfrequently (*sic*) used as sleeping apartments." (*History, Topography and Directory of East Yorkshire, T. Bulmer & Co. 1892*) In other words it would have been like a small version of Holy Trinity, Goodramgate.



At Archbishop Thomas Herring's visitation of 1743, the curate, Joseph Shepherd, recorded Heslington Parish (only half the village of Heslington) as having 23 families and no dissenters, no meeting house (for non-conformists), school or hospital. The public service (Evening Prayer) was read once a month in the afternoon, and the sacrament (Holy Communion) administered 3 times a year. There were 50 communicants in the parish (i.e. confirmed by the Archbishop in their teens), of which about 15 regularly received, and 20 at Easter. He was also Vicar of St. Lawrence, Hull Road (including the other half of Heslington). It had 59 families "one of which are Papists, and two called by ye name of Quakers, no meeting house or school, but one hospital (the Yarburgh hospital in Heslington). I do not know or hear of any abuse or fraud committed in management of it." The public service was read once a fortnight in the afternoon, and the sacrament was administered four times a year; there were 80 communicants: 40 received regularly and 50 at Easter.

From the 18th Century into the mid-19th Century, the Evangelical Revival spread across the land, resulting in many non-conformist chapels being built, especially latterly by the Methodists. It was focussed in the towns and cities, with the Parish Churches remaining dominant in the villages. In a Church census of 1837 in the city of York (not then including Heslington), Sunday attendance in the Church of England totalled 5,863, the Methodists 5,240, other non-conformists 3,405, and Roman Catholics 960, in all representing 55% of the population. In the 1851 national Church census it had gone up to 61%, some of whom may have attended both morning and evening. At the height of Victorian churchgoing, when "everyone went to Church", only half did on an average Sunday.

Censuses of Church attendance in York

	<i>1837</i>	<i>1851</i>
Church of England	5,863	10,712
Methodists	5,240	6,471
Congregationalists	2,695	2,114
Unitarians	180	157
Society of Friends	530	443
Roman Catholics	<u>960</u>	<u>2,071</u>
Total	<u>15,468</u>	<u>22,210</u>
% of population	55	61

*from “Non-Conformity in 19th-Century York”
by Edward Royle, Borthwick Paper No. 68*

Methodism is said to have been introduced into Heslington in 1812, and various houses were licensed for dissenting worship beginning in 1807. A chapel was opened by the Wesleyan Association in the 1830s and was still in use in 1851, but no more is known of it. In the 1840s two more chapels were built, by the Wesleyan Methodists in 1844 on the west side of Main Street costing £120,



Wesleyan Chapel

and by the Independents in 1847 on the east side. The Wesleyans had fourteen members in 1884. The Independent chapel was acquired by the Primitive Methodists and registered by them in 1887. The Wesleyan chapel closed in 1949, and became the Village Meeting Room in 1954.



Aerial view of Independent (later Primitive Methodist) Chapel 1946



According to the 1841 census, the total population of Heslington (St. Paul's & Heslington township of St. Lawrence) was 531, in 117 households (ave. 4.5 people per house). 212 had an occupation (the others were wives and children) - 37 farmers, 40 agricultural labourers, 43 female servants and 34 male servants, others were mostly linked to agriculture, and 7 to linen bleaching and spinning, with 21 of "independent means".

According to the 1851 Census of Church Attendance on 30th March, St. Paul's Church had 20 free sittings, and 180 "others" (for which pew rents had to be paid). The adult attendance, alternating mornings and afternoons, was 100, and Sunday School 48, signed by the incumbent Revd. Joseph Crosby, who was also Vicar of St. Crux, Pavement in York. The Wesleyan Meth Association Chapel had 34 free sittings and 34 other; evening congregation 14. Wesleyan Methodist Chapel: 50, other 52; evening attendance 50, signed by Trustee George Penty. The Independent Chapel: 60 free S, other 60; evening attendance 27, signed by Trustee James Calvert.

Church Attendance Census 30th March 1851

	<i>Free/Other sittings</i>	<i>Adult attendance</i>	<i>Sunday School</i>
St. Paul's Church	20/180	100	48
		alt. morning/afternoon	
Wes'n Meth Assoc'n	34/34	14 (evening)	
Wes'n Meth Chapel	50/52	50 (evening)	
Independent Chapel	60/60	27 (evening)	

*Yorkshire returns of the 1851 Census of Religious Worship, Ed. John Wolffe, Vol. 1
Borthwick Texts and Calendars, 2000*

So where did the money come from to build 3 chapels in about 15 years? They were probably built as mission stations by larger chapels in the city. Of the 18 trustees of the Wesleyan Chapel in 1848, only 3 lived in Heslington: John Harrison (the farmer who gave the land) George and William Penty (all 3 are also recorded as having a pew in the new Parish Church in 1858); the other trustees lived in town. John and Charles Wesley did not aim to separate from the Established Church, but to form a society within the Church of England. After their deaths in 1788 & 1791, the ruling Conference of representatives of the ministers rapidly formed Methodism into an independent Church. The clerical domination of Conference caused resentment among the laity, and various groups seceded, including the Primitive Methodists in 1807 (who complained that the Wesleyans had lost their original fervour), and the Wesleyan Association in 1827 (who split off over the introduction of organs into chapels, and what should be taught in Sunday schools - in some schools girls were not taught to read & write "lest it give them ideas above their station"!) - from the Church Register of 1759-1799 there were 35 marriages, of which 10 grooms and 18 brides could not sign their names. In the 19th Century, after the first school opened in Heslington, they nearly all could. Most Methodist groups re-united in 1932. Generally landowners went to the Parish Church, farmers and tradesmen to the Wesleyans, and labourers to the Primitive Methodists. Domestic servants may have been constrained to attend with their masters, or stay at home to cook Sunday dinner.

According to *Glimpses of early Methodism in York* by John Lyth DD (1885) "Richard Bursall preached here in Mr. Kimber's kitchen in 1812. Soon afterwards a class was formed of which Thomas Fowler, John Midforth and Michael Wilberfoss were successively leaders. Twenty years later the Rev. James Parsons was holding a meeting in Heslington and invited anyone who wished to join his church to give their names and their reasons for doing so. A man handed in a statement that so many years before a person named Dickie Birdsall had preached in the village where he was both awakened and converted; since then, as he has had opportunity he had attended the preaching of the word and often wished that someone would ask him to join the Methodists as he thought that he belonged to them, but as this was the first invitation he had received he gladly accepted it. He afterward gave full proof of his Christian character and was regarded as one of the best men in the village."

In 1858 a new larger Parish Church was built in Heslington in memory of Yarburgh Yarburgh by his sister, Mrs. Alicia Lloyd, and her son George who had inherited the Heslington estate, and now changed his name to Yarburgh. (He inherited the title of Lord Deramore from his older brother in 1890.) The new Church was built in Victorian Gothic (specifically 14th Century Decorated) style, with under-floor heating(!), at a cost of £3,500 (cf. Fulford £4,600). The woodwork was stained dark brown, and the windows were coloured glass, so the inside appeared rather dingy.



Heslington Church interior 1888

The Yarburgh family now started worshipping at St. Paul's, although Heslington Hall remained in St Lawrence's parish until 1869; their graves from after that date may be found in the NE corner of the churchyard. The outside door (behind the curtain) and the pews in the chancel were reserved for the Yarburgh family.

In 1880 the reredos behind the altar, and the encaustic-tiled Chancel floor were remade in beautiful mosaic by the Italian Antonio Salviati. It shows the four Gospel-writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, with symbolic floral mosaics imbetween. The central design is a Maltese Cross, in recognition that our patron Saint Paul was shipwrecked on the Island of Malta. The stained glass windows showing the Nativity and Resurrection of Christ are in memory of Mary Elizabeth Bateson de Yarburgh, who died in 1884.



*Centre panels of reredos
(photos by Roger Walton photography)*



In 1836, Parliament created the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to even out the great disparities between the wealth of bishoprics, cathedrals and parishes. As offices fell vacant, their land was taken over by the Commissioners who would give their successors a fixed stipend (salary). Archbishop William Howley of Canterbury who received £20,000 per year, lamented that his successor would only get half that, and so would not be able to live in the style to which an archbishop was entitled! This readjustment also applied to cathedral posts, so when the Prebendary of Ampleforth fell vacant in 1841, the Commissioners took all its lands and allocated a fixed stipend for the next Canon. It is remarkable that the divisions of the open fields established by Domesday lasted until then.

Enclosure Map 1857

The Commissioners sold most of the land (in this case to George Yarburgh) and re-invested the money elsewhere. Once all the Church lands were in their hands they were able to rationalise the parishes. In 1869 they changed the Heslington parish boundaries: the part of St. Lawrence's parish in Heslington was transferred to St. Paul's, which then became a full

parish, with its own vicar and vicarage (now More House) given by George Yarburgh; in 1809-14 this house had been occupied by socialite Rev. Sydney Smith, Rector of Foston-le-Clay (12 miles up the Malton road) while he built a new Rectory there. He later became a canon of St. Paul's Cathedral. He was a supporter of Catholic emancipation.



More House

The Revd. Frederick Peel was Vicar of Heslington 1880-1914. He was more assiduous in his duties than Rev. Joseph Shepherd in 1743. He celebrated Holy Communion fortnightly at 8am, and weekly Morning Prayer, Litany and sermon at 10.30, Evening Prayer and sermon at 3pm and Evensong with sermon at 6.30pm; there were also mid-week services on Tuesday mornings and Wednesday evenings. He was a keen composer of hymn tunes, anthems and secular music. After the Reformation, the only singing in Church would have been chanting the psalms and canticles at Morning and Evening Prayer, probably intoned unaccompanied by the parish clerk verse by verse and then repeated by the congregation. The first record of musical instruments is in the Churchwardens' Accounts for 1828, with payments for fiddle strings and repairs to instruments (fiddle, bass and clarinet). In 1848 a hymn book was purchased, and in 1870 six new hymns books and psalters cost £1.13s. In 1869 an harmonium (invented in 1840) was hired for £2.15s. In 1876 begin references to an organ: £1.1s for tuning, £2 for blowing and £10 for an organist's salary. It was a small 2-manual instrument. An electric blower was fitted in 1955. When the Church was extended in 1973, a larger organ was obtained from a disused Methodist Chapel, originally built in the 1880s by Forster and Andrews of Hull. Francis Wilman (d. 1904) was for 26 years Master of the village school and Church organist. Plaques in memory of both Peel and Wilman may be seen on the South wall.

The population of Heslington remained remarkably constant from the 1377 Poll Tax (350) until World War II: 416 in the 1801 census, 571 in 1871 and 447 in 1931; then it greatly increased: to 1,223 in 1961 and 7,600 in 2011 - largely as a result of the arrival of York University in 1963. The University is secular, and initially made no provision for chaplaincy

work (this has now changed). York Diocese built a new vicarage, and chaplaincy centre (Bede House) on the corner of School Lane. The old vicarage was sold to the Roman Catholics for a Carmelite community and Catholic chaplaincy centre; there is now a chapel where services are held regularly for the friars and the university Catholic community. The last vicar to live there, Rev. James Mitchelson, retired in 1964 having sold himself half the vicarage garden to build Orchard House to live in. (He then worshipped elsewhere.) He never fathomed the new-fangled roundabout outside Heslington Hall, and just drove straight up Field Lane as he had always done! With the increase in population, the Parish Church needed enlarging, first mooted in 1962, and finally achieved in 1973, at a cost of £96,500.



Chapel in Bede House

Parish Church re-ordered 1973



At that time the Methodist congregation, led by Rev. Peter Morley, agreed to move into St. Paul's, forming one of the first Local Ecumenical Projects authorised under the *Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969*. The old Chapel consisted of one large room with pews for about 50 people, a pulpit and organ. There were no amenities apart from an electric fire in the roof, which was turned on in the winter by Mr. Gray, the Church Steward who lived in Chapel House, at noon for the 6pm service, by which time condensation was running down the walls. By 1973 the congregation consisted mostly of the extended Hopwood family, usually numbering about 10. Holy Communion was celebrated by the Minister once a month; otherwise the service was led by a Local Preacher.

The Methodists wanted community rooms (for children, library, kitchen, meetings, office and toilets as well as the vestry). Once they were in use, the Anglicans agreed it was a very good idea. The architect, Ronald Sims, designed the new building with the North wall of the old Nave removed, and the Church extended so that it faced north, with the former Chancel as a side-chapel. The community rooms encircle it to the North. During the alterations the congregation worshipped in Lord Deramore's school, as they had in 1812 when the north aisle was added to the original building, and again in 1857 when that was demolished to create the Victorian building. The War Memorial window was preserved by moving from the North Wall to the South; the other windows in the Nave were replaced with clear glass. All the woodwork is now light oak in colour. In 1986 the Church was given Grade II listed status, as an outstanding example of adapting a Victorian Estate Church for modern worship and community use.

A new wheelchair-accessible entrance was made to the North, opening towards the University; the South door was then only used for weddings and funerals. Some in the village felt this meant the Church was turning its back on them, so in 2017 the South



entrance was re-ordered, with the old oak door hung on the wall and a glass inner door etched with a representation of the 3D altar cross; this is much more welcoming, lets in more light, and forms an attractive feature to those coming up the path at night. The choir stalls were removed, as we no longer have a traditional choir .

Church architecture speaks as loudly as the preacher: it physically embodies the theology of the Church. No Churches could be built until after the Edict of Milan (313 AD) made Christianity legal within the Roman Empire. The first Churches were not modelled on the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, nor the pagan temples of ancient Greece and Rome - these buildings were only for the priests; the people made their offering on the altar outside. But the Christian Church was a priesthood of all believers, so everyone came inside the building, which was therefore based on the Roman basilica - the law courts cum town hall. The wooden roof was built with the same structure as a ship (*navis*) upside-down, hence it was called the Nave. It symbolised that the Church is an ark carrying the faithful to salvation.

In the 5th & 6th Centuries there was a desire to direct the attention upwards, rather than just to the sanctuary at the front. This was done by raising and decorating the roof with frescoes or mosaics with biblical themes, symbols and saints - so the 1880 reredos at



Apse of San Vitale, Ravenna (548 AD)

Heslington was following ancient tradition. The medieval Church may well have had frescoes on the walls for the benefit of a largely illiterate congregation. The basilica style developed into the Gothic and eventually Perpendicular styles e.g. York Minster. The Reformers reverted to the basic basilica - a preaching box. The Victorians, influenced by the Oxford Movement, reverted again to the Gothic style - as in the Victorian parish Church in Heslington. After the Civil War the non-conformists reacted against the elaborate architecture of the Established Church, building modest houses for the people of God, with the Pulpit taking pride of place over the Lord's Table (in some Methodist Churches in turn superseded by the organ!). John Wesley had instructed that Methodist chapels should be as much like a house as possible, so that when no longer needed they could be converted into housing - an instruction largely ignored after his death, but not by Heslington Chapel which is now a house (No. 22 Main Street). As time went on the larger chapels came to ape the Anglicans with grand buildings, such as Central Methodist Church in York.

By the 1960s-70s Church building developed some radical new ideas. Three developments in theology included by Ronald Sims for the 1973 redesign were that:
 (1) Christian worship is not just about communing with God via the minister (hence the trolley-bus arrangement of pews in 1858), but also with each other (symbolised liturgically with the re-introduction of the “kiss of peace”) so Sims design envisages worship on 3 sides of the sanctuary.

(2) Worship is not detached from the rest of the life of the Church, so the community rooms were not just tacked on, but an integral part of the design, with the 3D cross and altar at the centre of the whole building.

(3) The Church is not static, but moving on, like the people of Israel in the wilderness under Moses, so the community rooms symbolise an encampment of tents round the sanctuary. One of the seminal works on re-ordering Churches is called *Repitching the Tent*.



Matchstick model of Heslington Church, showing tent-like design of community rooms

Today, York Elim Church worships in Archbishop Holgate's School on Badger Hill on Sunday mornings, the University Catholic community at Bede House, and York Korean Church here on Sunday afternoons (*see right*).

The ecumenical Parish Church is now the only Church building in Heslington, which architecturally embodies the vision for the worship and life of the Christian community in the village.



Printed Sources: Heslington - a portrait of the Village by Alfred Colley, 1992
 All are Welcome - the story of Heslington Church by Harry Telfer, 2016