

The Pilgrim Rabbit

Around and about St Mary's Church

Keeping you in touch

December 2018



St Mary's Church is an incredibly busy, vibrant place with lots going on. The Pilgrim Rabbit newsletter was set up on behalf of the St Mary's Development Project with several aims: to keep you informed about the progress of the restoration work; to excite you about the heritage of this amazing building; to let you know about the vast range of events and voluntary activities with which you may want to get involved; and to ask for your help in many areas.

Inside this issue:

In addition to information on several of the groups we have:

- ✓ 1520: The year the church fell down (by Barbara English)
- ✓ St Mary's Development Project.
- ✓ Events.
- ✓ How to contact us.

The Friends of St Mary's

The Friends of St Mary's were established in 2000, not as a faith-based group but with the aim of raising money to help with maintaining the fabric of the building. If you are interested in the church building, either its heritage, or simply because you think it is a beautiful building and would be sad to see it deteriorate, then you should consider joining the Friends.

At its peak there were about 180 members in 2002, but over the years there has been a decline in numbers down to about 114 people currently. There has been a slight resurgence recently as people have become aware of the current problems with maintaining the church but more members are urgently needed.

Project funding is largely through subscriptions, with occasional donations. Since 2005 projects funded by the Friends include the wheelchair lift, refurbishment of the west gate, the pew cushions, the external notice boards, £1,000 towards the new bells, and £9,000 towards the toilets. The scale of recent projects means that remaining funds are now depleted and the Friends are starting to consider additional methods of fundraising.

Social occasions are also run by the Friends, such as to the bell foundry, Lincoln Cathedral and Southwell Minster. They are always open to suggestions for future trips or socials.

In addition to joining the Friends they would welcome any ideas for fundraising activities or events. One suggestion is to offer tours of the Priests' Room to groups of about 10 people on request, at the bargain price of £1.50 per head. If you would like to arrange a tour, contact Margaret Hairsine using the details below.

The Friends are particularly keen to revitalise their membership, both by adding to their numbers, but also by encouraging an increase in younger membership. If you are interested in finding out more about the Friends, joining the group, contributing ideas, or booking a tour of the Priests' Room contact Margaret using the following:

Margaret Hairsine (Chairman):
07734 690721 or email
margaret@fliffus.karoo.co.uk

Soup and Natter

Lavinia runs a 'Soup and Natter' session every third Thursday at 11.45am after the communion service. Although there is no session in December these will start again in January. After the clocks go forward in March the session changes to afternoon tea.

Decorating the church

Lavinia would also appreciate help with decorating the church for Christmas. This will be on Wednesday December 19th so that the church is ready for Nine Lessons and Carols on Thursday.

Hospitality team

Beverley Lawrence is looking for people to help with hospitality at events, serving refreshments etc. If you are willing to go on a list of people who can be contacted if needed please speak to Beverley on 01482 864466 or beverley.lawrence@beverleylawrence.karoo.co.uk

Baptism team

A team of people is also needed to support the vicar with baptisms: getting everything ready, giving out service sheets, taking the collection, clearing up afterwards etc. If you are interested please contact Judith Fleming on 01482 869631 or Judith@mjbflaming.karoo.co.uk

1520: the year the church fell down

Barbara English

An April Sunday in 1520 – 29 April, the 3rd Sunday after Easter – St Mary's church fell, killing 55 people at the service. A horrendous event, the church in ruins, and the need for a huge effort of restoration.

There are various accounts of the fall. A 16th-century inscription (carved in oak) describing the disaster was reused as part of a church pew. The pew was later demolished, and some wooden fragments from it are now in the Priests' Rooms, although the whole inscription is now only known through 19th-century transcriptions, and as the Neaves say (in their splendid inventory of the contents of the Priests' Rooms) the surviving pew fragments don't seem exactly to match the transcriptions. Another 16th-century record of the fall was written down by Ralph Rokeby, whose family were much involved with St Mary's.



The surviving pew fragment in the Priests' Rooms

Putting the information in the two records together and modernising them, we get:

Pray God have mercy of all the souls of the men, women and children whose bodies was slain at this falling of the church [which were 55]. The fall was 29 April in the year of our Lord 1520. And [pray] for all the souls of them that have been [or yet] shall be good benefactors and helpers of this church up again; and for all Christian souls, the which God would have prayed for; and for the souls of Sir Richard Rokeby knight and Dame Joan his wife, who gave £200 to the building of this church; and for the souls of William Hall cooper and his wife.

The record does not say the tower fell, and that is what the great architectural historian John Billson convincingly deduced from the existing structure: nor does it say the time of the service. More information about the event comes from a 16th-century book about Sir Thomas More, and also from the Rokeby family history mentioned above:

I have heard that a bear baiting and a Mass being both at once, there was near 1000 people at two bear baitings; and but only 55 at Mass, who were all slain. And ever since they say there [Beverley], 'It is better to be at the baiting of a bear than at the saying of a Mass.'
Ralph Rokeby's family history c.1565.

There are no burial registers as early as 1520, so we do not know the names of those who were killed, nor if the priest was killed, although the priest is not heard of again. Billson demonstrated that it was the tower that collapsed, weakened by holes pierced through its structural supports, and that it fell westwards, demolishing the nave aisles, aisle pillars, and the clerestory (the glass windows above the nave aisles) and all the roof of the nave and aisles; but the west wall and the outer walls of the nave survived. The transept crossing and the western end of the chancel aisles with their roofs also seem to have been damaged. A chalice was broken, and the font (replaced 1530/1) may have been damaged too.

The first inscription (above) names some people who were very important in the restoration of the church. Sir Richard Rokeby was a very senior officer (comptroller) in the household of Cardinal Wolsey, who as archbishop of York was lord of Beverley. Rokeby, originally from Kirk Sandal near Doncaster, was Wolsey's Beverley steward, bailiff, receiver of rents, coroner and clerk of the markets. He also raised troops in Beverley, equipped them, and took them towards Scotland for the perennial Scottish wars. He and his wife were, as far as we know, the major donors to St Mary's, providing in total £200, some in his lifetime and some by his will. I guess that Wolsey said to Rokeby, 'fix up my church' and Wolsey may even have provided some of the money.

The first task would have been to clear the corpses and the rubble and see how much building material could be reused. The Beverley council (the Keepers) held a meeting with the stonemason in 1522 which might have marked the second stage of the campaign. The vicar of St Mary's, admitted in 1521/2, was Nicholas Rokeby, surely a relation of Sir Richard and appointed at this crucial time – Nicholas resigned when the restoration was complete in 1524/5. That money was borrowed from the council is deduced from the churchwardens later repaying £70 to it. The council paid for the restoration of a chalice, and provided oak timber from Westwood. Two other men gave lesser amounts, and no doubt other fund-raising records have been lost (Rokeby refers to church books where his gifts had been noted).

A more permanent record of benefactors is carved into the church fabric itself. Come into St Mary's by the west door, and look up and to the left. There is a carved head and shoulders of a man in Tudor gown and hat labelled XLAY, shorthand for his name, Crossley. Next is his wife, and this husband and wife, as the writing says, 'made' [paid for] two and a half pillars. On the north side of this aisle, you learn (in Latin)

that he was called John, she was Johanna, and we are asked to pray for their souls.

There follow two pillars given by the Good Wives of Beverley, and then the famous Minstrels' pillar, from the Guild of Minstrels of northern England, whose HQ was Beverley.

Elsewhere in the nave and aisles there are other carved heads, but without labels it is difficult to be sure who they were. There are two carvings of 'the Mercers' Maiden', the sign of the guild of Mercers or merchants. A pope, a cardinal, a bishop, jesters, officials: once everyone probably recognised them, but not any more. It is helpful that the first and last south side pillars of the nave say '1524' surely marking the end of the rebuild (and yes, it is an archaic '4', I know it looks weird). The church was rebuilt in four years, remarkable, and perhaps the date is a boast of how extremely clever this was. Sir Richard Rokeby had died in 1523, but his wife Jane was still alive to see the church complete.

There is one more inscription relating to the restoration, in the north chancel aisle, between the vestry and the bell-ringers' stair. Across a number of small roof bosses, hard to read from the ground, is written:

W hal car p en ter m ad th ys ro w fe

Surely he must be the William Hall cooper and his wife who are named in the first quotation above, which records the fall. A cooper was technically a barrel maker, but as both carpenter and cooper worked in wood, and were at some time in a joint Beverley guild, I guess it is the

same man. Whoever devised the inscription must have thought Hall's help and skill exceptional, to name him along with the famous, powerful and rich Rokebys.

After Hall's inscription, the next three roof bosses show the set square, carpenter's axe and

compasses, tools used for centuries, and (square and compasses) for stone as well. We don't know the names of any of the St Mary's workmen except Hall: he might have been working at the Minster, where the misericords were new, one being dated 1520. St Mary's has all these wonderful roof bosses. Maybe



Above: Carving commemorating "1524" and (below): interpreting early manuscript numbers

EARLY MANUSCRIPT FORMS											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	
a	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	Twelfth century
b	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1197 A.D.
c	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1275 A.D.
d	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	c. 1294 A.D.
e	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	c. 1303 A.D.
f	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	c. 1360 A.D.
g	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	c. 1442 A.D.

William Hall designed them? Or carved them? In which case it is good that he carved his name too, so that we can remember him with gratitude, as we contemplate the need for more restoration to St Mary's.

Men Meet (Steve Parkin)

"Providing the opportunity for men to experience & explore spiritual awareness and enjoy the fellowship of belonging and support through a variety of activities"

Men Meet is a fellowship of men who meet regularly to grow, learn, encourage, empower and inspire each other in their ministries and

their journey with God. We aim to build lasting relationships with each other in friendship, support and discipleship and to understand how spiritual principles can be applied to enrich our lives. It is a gathering where men new in faith can feel at home and be nurtured.

We try to meet once a month. We start at 7.30pm in the Parish Hall if we have a speaker or talk. We finish at 9.00pm and then usually retire to Wetherspoons. Men can attend either or both, as they wish. Notice of arrangements is given on the St Mary's weekly sheet.

We have developed a broad range of activities, some more Christian than others, but we try to mix and match every time. We have social activities such as going for a walk, bowling or a quiz. We go for a Chinese at Christmas or on special occasions. We have had discussions on topics such as personality types, influencing skills, death, stages of faith, problems facing the church and finding our spiritual path. Members have shared their life stories. We have had outside speakers talk on icons, Alcoholics Anonymous, the work of a local magistrate and spirituality of ageing. We have played DVDs and had holiday travel logs. We have helped with church activities such as the open day and have led Father's Day services. Two of us went on a weekend about men's spirituality to Wales, where it was interesting to meet other men from around the country. We are planning on doing a day for our group. We are active in networking with men's groups at Beverley Minster and other churches.

We currently have about 12 regular participants some of whom are from the Methodist and Roman Catholic churches. The Roman catholic church has no men's fellowship groups.

January 31st: Talk "An introduction to Christian meditation" by John Fielding. 7.30pm, Parish Hall.

Please see the weekly notice sheet for future events and activities.

Bell Ringers (Chris Munday)

Bell ringing is an English heritage skill which was started over 300 years ago, and at St Marys we have an active band of ringers of all ages. Bell ringing is part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

This year has been a momentous one for us, in February we visited Taylor's Bell Foundry at Loughborough to see two of our three new bells being cast and in June they were installed in the tower. The additional bells have provided us with a light octave, and this makes it much easier for teaching learners.



Sunday service ringing is at 9.00am and 5.30pm, and we meet on a Wednesday evening at 7.15pm and practice until 9.00pm.

If anyone is interested in learning to ring, or simply wants to see the bells, come to the church at 7.15pm on Wednesday when you can be sure of a warm welcome.

From the Development Office

Seasons greetings from the Development Office and huge thanks to the countless people at St Mary's who have helped us in many ways to get the office up and running. It has been a joy to see the office set out on its mission to see the church restored in full! The journey ahead will last up to a decade, but it is pleasing to have made a solid start in developing the 'Bosses Project'.

We have applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant to deliver that project, and in the New Year we will also be inviting a number of other grant-making organisations to support it. If we are successful with the fundraising, the project will be delivered during 2019; starting in the spring.

During the weeks ahead, we will also be planning the next major fundraising project (for 2020 and beyond). For example, it might be to restore the south nave clerestory: in November, the stonemason and the architect closely inspected the stonework on that elevation (using a cherry picker) and found it to be in a dreadful condition.

Thank you so much for the warm welcome to St Mary's. We are greatly looking forward to launching the restoration campaign in 2019 and to sharing news of the array of events and activities which will be part of it.

Forthcoming events

Saturday 15 December: Beverley Chamber Choir carol concert, starting at 7.30pm. Tickets £12 (reserved seat), £10 (unreserved) available from Tourist Information in the Treasure House.

Thursday 19 December: Nine Lessons and Carols, starting at 7.30pm.

Saturday 22 December: Join the choir for Mince Pies and Carols. Drop in any time from 11am to 1pm.



1866 sketch by Caroline Brereton of the "Arch in South Transept at the entrance of the South Aisle". From the East Riding Museums collection.

We want to hear from you

If you are involved with one of the many groups in and around the church please let us know about the group, when you meet, who is the main contact, any interesting facts, and any forthcoming events for which you need publicity.

It will be an ongoing challenge to fill these pages so we need your help!

How to contact us

This newsletter is by you and for you. Please contact us using the email:

stmarysbevnews@gmail.com

The current aim is to publish this newsletter approximately every two months. The deadline for items to be included will be two weeks before the date of the edition. However, there will be a small "Stop Press" item for pieces that arise at the last minute. **The deadline for the next issue is February 1st.**

If you prefer to provide your information in written format please give these to Fiona Jenkinson in the church choir at the 9.45am or 6.30pm services, or to any of the other choir members who will pass them on.

