

Johnston Jonas Foster and family



As the above pew plaque says it was for Jonas Foster of Cliffe Hill who had a pew in the old St. Matthew's Church in 1867. Six years later he would provide the funds to build a new church in Lightcliffe. The 'new' St. Matthew's Church is pictured below with its 2025 150th Anniversary banner. Major Foster died five years later, in 1880, in Cannes, France. But then his body was brought back to Lightcliffe for burial in the Foster vault. His crest and motto – see later – appear above a memorial tablet in the Foster Chapel which is in the southeast corner of this parish church.



Jonas Foster was born on 1st January 1827, to parents John Foster and his wife Ruth née Briggs. John and Ruth had married in Halifax on 16th May 1820. When their eldest son William was baptised at the Bradford Chapelry Church at Thornton in 1821, his father was recorded as being a 'Farmer' in Clayton. But by the time Jonas and three siblings were 'batch' baptised at Thornton on 18th March 1829 their father, John Forster, was described as a 'Worsted Manufacturer'. John Foster made the move from the traditional home loom production of woollen cloth to a mechanical form of production. The company that he founded became John Foster & Sons. By 1835 they had a factory in Queensbury – then known as Queenshead – near Halifax and were producing woollen, worsted, alpaca and mohair products.

Clayton was still where the family lived when the 1841 and then the 1851 censuses were taken. By then six more Foster children had been born and the older boys were joining their father in the family business at the Black Dyke Mills in Queensbury. Eldest son, William, was obviously the first to join his father, being recorded as a 'Merchant' in 1841. He married early in 1848, and his son William Henry Foster was born later that year.

William would eventually take over from his father as head of the firm. Three of his surviving brothers, Jonas, Abraham Briggs and John Foster, also had major roles in the organisation becoming partners. Another brother, Samuel Briggs Foster, may well have been involved too but he died, aged just 28 years old, on 11th June 1853 at Prospect House, Queensbury. This was the Fosters' main residence which John Foster had built in 1827. The youngest brother, Alfred Foster, born in 1842, was originally destined for the church and went to St. Peter's College, Cambridge where he obtained his M.A. However, he did not take Holy Orders but joined his brothers in the family business.



John Foster senior was a keen French horn player who played in a local band. As the band was associated with the Fosters' mills it became the Black Dyke Band in 1854. This band continues to this day, winning competitions nationally and internationally.



Cliffe Hill mansion in Lightcliffe became available to rent sometime after its owner / occupier Evan Charles Sutherland Walker married in February 1859, and the newlyweds moved into the Crow Nest mansion. He was the only surviving son of George Mackay Sutherland and Elizabeth Walker. On the death of his aunt, Ann Walker, in 1854, he inherited the rest of the Crow Nest estate having already received his mother's half.

For the Foster family, perhaps Cliffe Hill's position standing just off the Halifax to Wakefield turnpike and its closeness to Lightcliffe railway station was the attraction. Whatever, Cliffe Hill was where some of the Foster family were for the 1861 census. Ruth Foster and two daughters were visitors in Lancashire. Eldest son, William and his family were in Harrowin's House, Queensbury where his first wife died, aged just 37 years, in 1863. William remarried but remained at Harrowin's House for the next two censuses. Youngest son, Alfred, an 18-year-old undergraduate of Cambridge University, was at a school in Liverpool on 7th April 1861.

1861 census

John Foster	Head	63	Merchant
Jonas Foster	Son	34	ditto
Abraham Briggs Foster	Son	32	ditto
Martha Ann Hirst	Dau	30	Widow
[should be Mary Ann]			
John Foster	Son	28	Merchant
Jane Foster	Dau	22	
2 French born Visitors both Merchants			
6 servants			
Address Cliffe Hill, Lightcliffe			

There were two Foster weddings in 1862. Old St. Matthew's Church was the setting for the second marriage of the widow Mary Ann Hurst née Foster on 23rd April. Her brother Abraham Briggs Foster married on 28th October 1862. Then he and his wife took up residence in a property in Northowram. It was extensively refurbished and then renamed Northowram Hall. This was where Abraham Briggs Foster and his family were for the 1871 census.

A few months later on 7th January 1863 Jonas Foster married 20-year-old Hannah Jane Stansfeld in Sowerby Church.

1863. Marriage solemnized in <u>Sowerby Church</u> in the Parish of <u>Heddon</u> in the County of <u>York</u>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
25	January 7 th	Jonas Foster Hannah Jane Stansfeld	20	Bachelor Spinster	Gentleman	Cliffe Hill Heddon Field House	John Foster Robert Stansfeld	Gentleman Gentleman
Married in the <u>Church of Sowerby</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the <u>Church of England</u> by Licence by me, <u>John Stansfeld</u>								
This Marriage was solemnized between us, <u>Jonas Foster</u> <u>H. Jane Stansfeld</u>				in the Presence of us, <u>George Stansfeld, Father</u> <u>John Stansfeld, 2nd Son</u> <u>Robert Stansfeld</u>				

She was born on 26th March 1842, the daughter of Lieutenant (later Colonel) Robert Stansfeld and his wife Hannah Laetitia Stansfeld née Johnston. The Stansfelds lived in Field House, Sowerby which was a substantial mansion on the outskirts of Sowerby Bridge. The Stansfeld family had a strong association with St Peter's Church, Sowerby.

After his marriage Jonas appears to have added his wife's mother's maiden name to his own, becoming Johnston Jonas Foster. The legal change was not made until 1878 and so some documents refer to him as Jonas Foster whereas newspaper articles frequently used the three names. As well as playing a prominent part with his father and brothers in the family business Johnston Jonas Foster was also involved for many years in the volunteer military. In 1864 he was appointed Captain of the 2nd West Yorkshire Yeomanry Cavalry. As befits a cavalry officer he appears to have had an interest in breeding and training horses as well as dogs, winning prizes with them at local shows.

In 1865 Jonas and his brothers, Abraham Briggs and John, bought a large sporting estate at Egton near Whitby, Yorkshire. And then, in 1867, when Evan Charles Sutherland Walker put the entire Crow Nest estate up for sale, Jonas was able to buy Cliffe Hill mansion as the sitting tenant. He paid £15,600 for the mansion and some attached land. Pew number 48 in the old St. Matthew's Church would have been part of the transaction too. Jonas put his initials JJF and the date 1867 on gate posts when he established a new driveway from the house directly to the railway station. You can still see them if you walk down the Coach Road. Also still there, above the portico entrance on the south façade of Cliffe Hill mansion, is the Foster crest and motto *Justum perficito nihil timeto* – *Act justly and fear nothing*. [The motto today of the Black Dyke Mills Band.]

Whilst living at Cliffe Hill, Jonas and Hannah Jane Foster had three daughters Katharine Laetitia, Ethel Jane and Gertrude Stansfeld probably all born there. Katharine was born on 11th October 1865 and then Ethel arrived on 16th December 1867 followed by Gertude on 21st July 1870. Katharine was baptised back at St. Peter's, Sowerby on 8th November 1865 but both Ethel and Gertrude were baptised in the old St. Matthew's Church in Lightcliffe on 11th February 1868 and 10th September 1870 respectively. Each time their abode was Cliffe Hill, and their father was recorded again as being a 'Gentleman'.

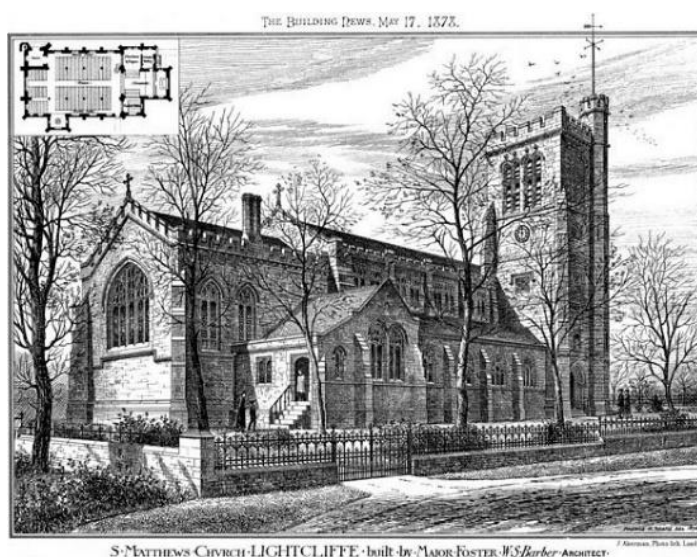
The Jonas Foster household at Cliffe Hill looked like this on 2nd April 1871.

1871 census

Jonas Foster	Head	44	Landowner, Manufacturer & County Magistrate
Hannah Jane Foster	Wife	29	
Katharine Laetitia Foster	Dau	5	
Ethel Jane Foster	Dau	3	
Gertrude S Foster	Dau	9/12	
6 servants			
Address Cliffe Hill, Lightcliffe			

His parents were visitors on the south coast at Hastings. Brothers William and Abraham Briggs Foster have already been accounted for on the 1871 census. John Foster junior, by then married, was with his family at Holyroyd House, Priestley Green, Hipperholme. In May 1870 his younger brother Alfred Foster had also married. The couple lived at Spring Head, Northowram, another local Foster residence, which was where they were on census night 1871. It was there where the thirty-year-old contracted rheumatic fever and died suddenly on 10th July 1873. A window in Holy Trinity, Queensbury, was dedicated to Alfred as one had been for his brother Samuel Briggs Foster and also his brother William's first wife. One of his sisters, Jane, the wife of Sidney Perfect Norris, had a window dedicated to him in All Saints' Church, Dudwell Lane, Salterhebble. This would become a Foster trend with many of 'their' churches having stained-glass windows installed in memory of family members.

When Jonas Foster bought Cliffe Hill mansion at the 1867 Crow Nest auction, he also purchased Green House and the adjoining plot for £1270. The plots lay between Cliffe Hill and Wakefield Road and are 300m from the churchyard. The house and outbuildings were to be demolished, and plans were drawn up to build a new church on the site. As well as the new St Matthew's Church the terrace called Greenhouses was built.



Major Johnston Jonas Foster – he was promoted in 1873 – was willing to provide funds for every aspect of the church but was persuaded by the vicar and churchwardens that others would wish to contribute. He willingly acceded to this suggestion. His contribution was around £15,000. The architect was W Swinden Barber (1832-1908), a Brighouse man.

On 12th September 1873 the foundation stone was due to be laid by Major Foster's wife, Hannah. Hundreds of people had gathered to watch. The stone was being lifted by a crane so that the men could spread the mortar beneath it, when it began to swing and fall. Many newspapers reported that "the clerk of the works, Mr William Ridgway was just observing, "Where is it going to?" when the long guy from the crane came down with a crash upon the assembly below. Instantly there was a panic and screams of terror and of pain arose on all sides. The long timber guy fell upon several people, and before they could be released it had to be lifted up again.'

The many newspaper reports continued as follows:-

'Considering the number of people present, the list of casualties is very small; the people saw the guy falling and ran out of the way. After a considerable delay, during which the injured were attended to and removed in the carriages of the gentlemen present, the ceremony of laying the stone was completed in the quietest possible manner.'

Although at first it was feared that some of the injuries would prove to be fatal or life changing everyone recovered.

Two years later, on Tuesday 21st September 1875 the church was consecrated by the Bishop of Ripon. Major Foster with a large number of his family, along with members of other prominent local families as well as forty clergyman and a large congregation attended the service and subsequent events.

There were many gifts to the new church from members of the Foster family. William Foster gave the west window and his wife the reredos. The brass eagle lectern was from Abraham Briggs Foster and the octagonal font from John Foster junior. Sister Jane Norris and her husband gave the silver mace and Alfred Foster's widow gave a beautiful alms dish. Neighbours also donated. Sir Titus Salt of nearby Crow Nest mansion gave the Caen stone pulpit. The organ by Mr. Kirkland of Wakefield, was the gift of Evan Charles Sutherland Walker who still owned land in the area. Another neighbour Sir Henry William Ripley of Holme House gave the clock which was made by Messrs Gillett and Bland of Croydon. A member of the congregation, Miss Sarah Walton, gave the communion table and a Stansfeld sister the cushions. The donors of the new church bells, cast by Mears & Stainbeck of London, included Alderman Mark Dawson, Mrs Evan Charles Sutherland Walker, the Rev. George Bagot and members of the Ripley family. They were rung for the first time by a team of bellringers from Sowerby.

After the ceremony Major and Mrs Foster hosted a luncheon in the schoolroom when speeches and toasts were given. The dignitaries present included Bishop Ryan, Archdeacon Hey, Rev. G. Bagot, Rev. P. Yorke Saville, Colonel Aykroyd, Colonel Stansfeld, Captain Stansfeld, Alderman Mark Dawson, Edward Ripley, Mr. T. G. Teale, Mr S Tetley and Mr. W. H. Rawson as well as members of the Foster family.

The St. Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe that Major Johnson Jonas Foster had built is now Graded II by Historic England, as are the gate piers.

In 1874 Jonas Foster bought the very large estate, Moor Park, at Richard's Castle close to Ludlow in Shropshire intending for the family to leave Lightcliffe. The estate, comprising over 2,000 acres is on the Shropshire and Herefordshire boundary. The original Moor Park house was built during the period 1715 - 22 in the Queen Anne style for the local Salwey family. It was modified and enlarged in a sympathetic style and is now Grade II listed. The weathervane above a bell tower has the initials JJF inscribed on it just as they appear on the gate pillars on the Coach Road at Lightcliffe.



Moor Park House now a school

The inside of the house retains today the grandeur that the Fosters would have lived in. There is a superb staircase with windows displaying the family arms, a ballroom, lounge and library. If you were visiting a National Trust property you would not be disappointed. In fact, the then Prince of Wales visited it in 1861 when looking for a country estate; he bought Sandringham instead. The lodge at the entrance to the park has a Foster heraldic device carved into the chimney stack. It matches the one above the south doorway of St Matthew's.

A mystery is why someone from Lightcliffe would buy a large estate in Shropshire. Not because it is not a nice place, it is but why so distant? His brother, Abraham Briggs Foster did the same thing buying near Lichfield, Staffordshire. Interestingly Sir Henry William Ripley of Holme House, from a Bradford dyers family, who was a neighbour of the Fosters at Cliffe Hill made a similar move. In 1879 the Ripleys bought a 2,000-acre property in Bedstone, Shropshire which is about 5 miles from Moor Park. Sadly, neither Johnston nor Sir Henry lived long enough to really enjoy their new homes.



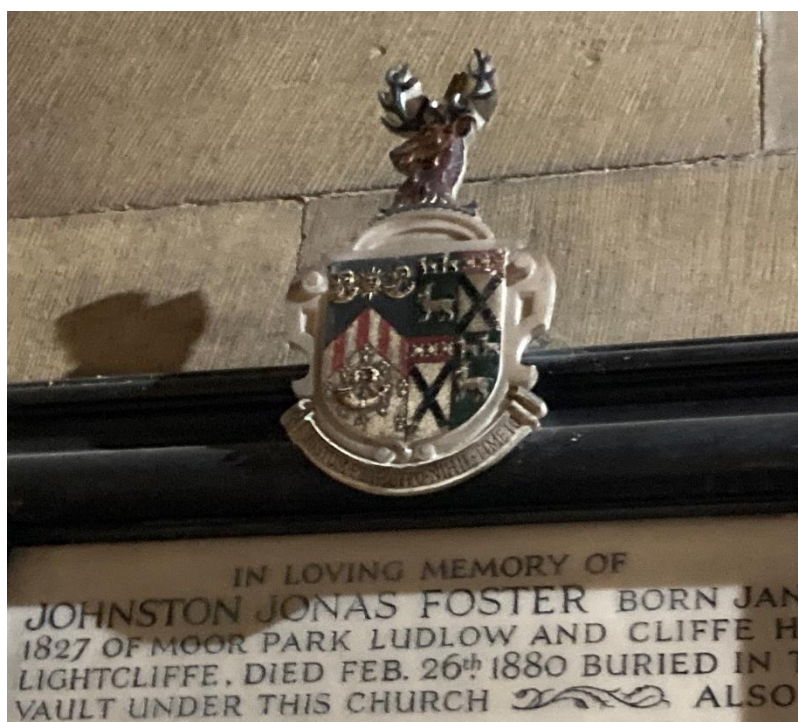
But this does not answer the above question! We do not know why Shropshire was chosen. Perhaps it was just that this estate and others bought by the family simply became available.

Moor Park was converted into a school in 1939 which may be the year in which the Foster family sold the property. It is now called Moor Park School and has four houses Foster, Inchiquin, O'Brien and Salwey – you will understand why later!

More details about the Foster and Ripley family estates in Shropshire can be found in

Shropshire Connection

As already implied Johnston Jonas Foster had little time to enjoy life in Shropshire although he did manage to become a Shropshire magistrate possibly after he retired from the family firm in 1876. Early in 1880 he went to Cannes for health reasons. On 26th February 1880, having seemed well just a few hours before, he suddenly died. The news was said to have been received with surprise and deep regret. He was, after all, only 53. His funeral at St. Matthew's was unostentatious but very well attended. The church was packed and many villagers gathered in the roadside outside demonstrating the need to pay due respect to a well-liked man. The service was conducted by Rev. George Bagot, the Lightcliffe vicar, and Rev. J. C. Hyatt, vicar of Queensbury. The chief mourners were Mrs Foster and the three daughters accompanied by his brother, Abraham Briggs Foster. Many members of the Foster and Stansfeld families were in attendance. Sir Henry Edwards was there, hosting Mr Salwey from Richard's Castle. The Ripley family who, apart from being neighbours, had as already mentioned, just bought an estate near Moor Park in Shropshire also attended. Old employees and servants from the Black Dyke Mill were present as were non-commissioned officers and men of his regiment. The organist was Mr Cooke, the headmaster of the local school. The coffin was laid in the Foster vault and, after the service, mourners were allowed to pass through the vault. The undertaker was Mr Duncan of Halifax. This memorial tablet, which has all his details on it, was later placed in the Foster chapel in St. Matthew's Church.



Major Foster's Will was dated 30th May 1879. It appointed his widow Hannah and his brothers, Abraham Briggs and John, as executors. The value of the estate was around £700,000. There were bequests of £250 to Bradford Infirmary, the Bradford Eye and Ear hospital, Bradford Fever Hospital and the Halifax Infirmary. Hannah had a lump sum and an annuity of £3,500. In the absence of a son, the remainder of the estate in Shropshire went first to Katharine and then to Ethel. The rest of his property, including Cliffe Hill and his share of the Egton estate would be divided between the daughters. As it happened, John bought the other two brothers' shares in the Egton estate about the time of Jonas's death.



Major Johnston Jonas Foster

Next to Johnston Jonas Foster's memorial tablet in the Foster chapel there is a stained-glass window. At the foot of the window there is this inscription.



Hannah Jane Foster née Stansfeld and daughters

After her husband's death, his widow Hannah Jane Foster née Stansfeld rented Cliffe Hill out and continued to live at Moor Park. This is where she and the two younger daughters were on 3rd April 1881.

1881 census

Hannah J. Foster	Head 39 Widow Annuitant
Ethel J. Foster	Dau 13 Scholar
Gertrude Foster	Dau 10 Scholar
Marie C. Hopp	Servant 31 Private Governess born in Prussia
6 servants	
Address Moor Park, Richard's Castle, Shropshire	

Fifteen-year-old **Katharine Laetitia Foster** was at a boarding establishment in Kensington, London. She died on 31st October 1883 at Moor Park aged 18 and was buried in the churchyard at St Bartholomew's Church, Richard's Castle just a short distance from their home. Her death certificate indicated that she died of 'fever with gastric irritation, exhaustion and effusions on the brain'. The informant was Katharine's uncle, Abraham Briggs Foster who had moved from Northowram Hall to Canwell Hall, near Tamworth in 1872.



Katharine Laetitia Foster portrait from an Ancestry family tree

Hannah Jane Foster of Moor Park was extremely well off, wealthy enough to buy a Stradvari violin, dated 1711, for Ethel in 1889. There are also many newspaper reports of Mrs Johnston Foster and her daughters attending high society events and doing 'The Season' in London whilst residing at properties in Allington House and Eaton Square.

In 1890 it was decided that she and her daughters would fund a replacement church to the medieval church of St. Bartholomew's in memory of her husband and eldest daughter.

1891 census

Hannah J Foster	Head 49	Widow Living on own Means
Ether J Foster	Dau 23	Living on own Means
Gertrude S Foster	Dau 20	Living on own Means
8 servants		
Address Moor Park, Richard's Castle, Shropshire		

All Saints' Church at Richard's Castle was consecrated on All Saints' Day, 1st November 1892. The consecration service, led by the Bishop of Hereford, and then the luncheon, in a marquee afterwards, followed a similar format to that witnessed in Lightcliffe seventeen years previously.

Ethel Jane Foster married Lucius William O'Brien on 14th January 1896 at All Saints' Church. Her sister, Gertrude, was one of the bridesmaids as were two of her husband's sisters, the Hon. Clare and Moira O'Brien. Witnesses included two Foster uncles, Abraham Briggs and John, John Stansfeld and members of the O'Brien family. Afterwards Ethel's mother, Hannah Jane Foster entertained the bridal party at Moor Park.



Lucius William O'Brien, 15th Baron Inchiquin was the England-born holder of a hereditary peerage in the Peerage of Ireland, as well as Chief of the Name of O'Brien and Prince of Thomond in the Gaelic Irish nobility. He was born on 21st June 1864 at Belmore near Bishop's Waltham, Hampshire, the second of four children, and oldest son, to Edward O'Brien, 14th Baron Inchiquin and his first wife Emily A'Court. Lucius was educated at Eton College. After a commission in the Royal Irish Rifles obtained in 1885, he transferred in 1886 to the English Rifle Brigade regiment in which he served until 1893. He was later an Honorary Colonel of the Clare Royal Field Artillery Reserve Volunteers.

He was president of the Ennis branch of the British Legion and took an active interest in the welfare of ex-soldiers and their dependents. Politically a Conservative, Lucius O'Brien unsuccessfully stood for the British House of Commons by contesting the Eastern Division of County Clare in 1885. He was Deputy Lieutenant and Justice of the Peace for County Clare. In 1895 he was State Steward to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and then in 1898 he became High Sheriff of County Clare.

On the death of his father on 9th April 1900, Lucius became the 15th Baron Inchiquin. Succeeding to his father's peerage he served as an Irish Representative Peer in the House of Lords. This meant that Lightcliffe born and baptised, Ethel Jane, was then styled as the Baroness of Inchiquin. They also became owners of the family home of Dromoland Castle, Newmarket on Fergus, County Clare, Ireland – pictured below.



1901 census

Hannah J Foster Head 59 Widow

Gertrude S Foster Dau 30

17 servants

Address 13 St. George Hanover Square, Knightsbridge, London

1901 census

Lucius William O'Brien Head 36 Representative Peer for Ireland Reserve of officers

Ethel Jane O'Brien Wife 33

Donough Edward Foster O'Brien Son 4

Katharine Beryl O'Brien Dau 2

Phaedrig Lucius O'Brien Son 1

12 servants

Address Moor Park, Richard's Castle, Ludlow, Shropshire

Lord Inchiquin and his wife were keen horticulturalists. Some of his other interests included fishing and shooting. All of these pursuits they could follow at Dromoland Castle and Moor Park. At both residences they were involved with the local community. He was president of Ludlow Rifle Club and a Justice of the Peace in Shropshire. At some point Ethel Jane bought eighty acres of glebe land for £7,296 to provide income for the rector of All Saints', Richard's Castle and for the pension of his predecessor. As an accomplished musician she also played the organ and helped train the choir at All Saints'.

Gertrude Stansfeld Foster married Reverend Canon, Dr Constantine Charles Henry Phipps, the Marquess of Normanby on 30th December 1903. At the wedding at St Peter's Church, Eaton Square, London, Gertrude was escorted up the aisle by her uncle, John Foster, before being given away by her mother. Her sister and brother-in-law, the Inchiquins, were witnesses. The groom signed the register as simply 'Normanby'.

News of their engagement came as a surprise, as Marquess had appeared to be a confirmed bachelor for many years dedicated to his clerical and scholastic duties. One report of the marriage noted that Lord Normanby, "though not far from sixty, bears his years lightly and is a fine-looking man with all the traditional good looks of the family."

Constantine Charles Henry Phipps, 3rd Marquess of Normanby was born on 29th August 1846, the son of George Phipps, 2nd Marquess and Laura Russell. The 2nd Marquess had been the Governor of Queensland, Governor of Nova Scotia and then of Melbourne. Constantine succeeded to the Marquessate on the death of his father in April 1880. A Marquess is second in rank to a Duke and above an Earl in the English aristocracy. The Mulgrave estate (still in family ownership) is near Lythe to the west of Whitby. There are ruins of the Norman castle (destroyed by Parliament in 1647) and a country house dating back to 1700 and much changed over time.

He was awarded an M.A. from Durham, did a year's course at Wells Theological College before being ordained in 1870. His first appointment as curate was at St Oswald's Church, Lythe, near his family home. He then became the vicar of St Mary's Church (also known as Ellenbrook Chapel) Worsley, Lancashire from 1872 to 1880 where his title was Rev. the Earl of Mulgrave.

On succeeding to the Marquessate newspaper articles suggest that the estate's finances needed strengthening which he managed to do fairly quickly. His grateful tenants made him a presentation to celebrate his 50th birthday. At the same time, he with his sister Lady Laura Hampton established and superintended a large preparatory school at Mulgrave Castle for boys hoping to go on to Eton College. By then he had given up his parochial responsibilities and was chaplain to All Saints' Church in San Remo from 1884 to 1893 and chaplain to the Archbishop of York from 1891 for 6 years. Along with these positions he was also Canon of St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle from 1891 to 1907. In April 1890, when he took his seat in the House of Lords, the *Kerry Reporter* noted that he was the first sacerdotal Marquess. [It is a bit surprising that this paper was interested but not surprising that he was the first priest at this level of the aristocracy.] Apart from his clerical positions he held the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in the North Riding Volunteer Regiment.

After they married, the Normanbys lived at 90, Eaton Square where two of the Phipps children were born. Their father baptised them at St. Peter's Church, Pimlico. But then they moved to his ancestral home of Mulgrave Castle, near Whitby in the North Riding of Yorkshire. The Egton Estate, mentioned earlier in this article, is very close-by.

In October 1909, over in Ireland at Dromoland Castle, Lord Inchiquin was reported to be seriously ill and a Dublin specialist had been sent for. However, the announcement of his death by a local Herefordshire paper, was a little premature as he recovered. He spent several weeks convalescing in Torquay before returning to Ireland. Meanwhile his mother-in-law, Hannah Jane Foster, had returned to Moor Park and so two households looked like this on 2nd April 1911 with the Inchiquins presumably being in Ireland.

1911 census

Hannah Jane Foster Head 69 Widow Private Means
6 servants
Address Moor Park, Richard's Castle, Ludlow

1911 census

Constance Charles Henry Phipps Marquess Normanby Head 64
Clergyman & Peer of the Realm
Gertrude Stanfield Normanby Wife 40
Katharine Mary Phipps Dau 6
Gertrude Elizabeth Phipps Dau 2
20 servants
Address Mulgrave Castle, Lythe, Whitby

Both the Inchiquins and the Normanbys became very involved, when the Great War started, in supporting the cause and helping as best they could.

In 1915, the Inchiquins were associated with sending a fully equipped ambulance to the front. This family photograph featured in *The Tatler* when the ambulance was handed over. It shows the Hon. Griselda, the Hon. Fionn, the Hon. Finola and the Hon. Katharine with their parents.



Lady Inchiquin was the president of County Clare branch of the Women's National Health Association which started Red Cross classes. She worked for Queen Mary's 'Work for Women Fund' which the Queen launched in 1914 to provide support for women who lost jobs due to the conflict, particularly in the textile industry with which she could have easily related to. After the war, in 1920, she was awarded the Medaille de Queen Elisabeth de Belgium. This was an award created in 1916 to recognise work of individuals to ease the suffering of the victims of war. One reading of the criteria implies that it was for work with Belgium victims, another is more general.

Meanwhile back in the North Riding of Yorkshire, the Normanbys had donated their home, Mulgrave Castle, for use as a Red Cross auxiliary hospital. From December 1914 to May 1919 484 soldiers were treated and none died. The well-equipped hospital was fully funded by the Normanbys. Lord Normanby acted as Quartermaster and his wife was Commandant. For her work Gertrude was awarded an OBE in March 1920.



The picture above shows the staff, some soldiers, the Commandant and her husband. On 19th May 1922 the Lightcliffe born and baptised lady was made a Dame of Grace in the Grand Priory of The Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem of which His Majesty the King was Sovereign Head and Patron. Without more detailed research, this must have been further recognition for Gertrude's work during the war with this hospital.

As well as the soldiers and staff the Normanbys had another guest at Mulgrave Castle, Gertrude's mother, Hannah Jane Foster née Stansfeld. Perhaps the lady, by then in her seventies, was there throughout the Great War.

Hannah Jane Foster née Stansfeld died on 14th September 1918 at Mulgrave Castle, Whitby. Her funeral took place at St Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe on Saturday, 7th September. The service was conducted by the vicar, Rev. H. L. Taylor and her son-in-law, Rev. the Marquess of Normanby. Her body was laid to rest with her late husband in the family vault beside the church. The family mourners included Lord and Lady Inchiquin, the Marquess and Marchioness of Normanby, Hon. Beryl O'Brien and Hon. Phaedrig O'Brien, Lady Katharine Phipps, Captain Stansfeld, Lieut-Colonel and Mrs Herbert Foster, Captain and Mrs G. R. Stansfeld, Mr Philip Foster and Mr & Mrs Lionel Foster. There were many others in attendance.



Hannah Jane Foster née Stansfeld portrait
from Ancestry family tree

In her will she left her fortune of £63,500 to her daughters with £1,000 to her sons-in-law.

The family homes, Moor Park near Ludlow and Cliffe Hill in Lightcliffe, would remain in the family for many years. Ethel inheriting Moor Park and so presumably Gertrude inherited Cliffe Hill.

1921 census

Lucius William O'Brien	Baron Inchiquin	Head	56	Peer
Ethel Jane	Baroness Inchiquin	Wife	53	Peeress
Gerald Ethelreda Clodagh O'Brien		Dau	14	
Finola Helga Laetitia Monica O'Brien		Dau	10	
5 servants				
Address 90 Eaton Square, SW 1				

1921 census

Constantine Charles Henry Phipps				
Marquess of Normanby	Head	74		Clerk In Holy Orders
Gertrude Stansfeld Normanby	Wife	50		
Elizabeth Phipps	Dau	13		
Oswald Constantine John Phipps				
Earl of Mulgrave	Son	8		
A governess				
15 servants				
Address Mulgrave Castle, Lythe, Whitby				

Lord Inchiquin was appointed to the Senate of Southern Ireland which was abolished in December 1922 by the formation of the Irish Free State. Although he had not been in robust health for a number of years his sudden death at his residence, Dromoland Castle, on 9th December 1929 was unexpected. Its cause was chronic myocarditis resulting in cardiac failure. He was buried, after a brief service conducted by the Bishop and Archdeacon, near to the vault of the O'Brien family at Kilnasoolagh Cemetery. Newmarket on Fergus, County Clare. A memorial service was held at All Saints' Church, Richard's Castle on Friday 20th December 1929.



He was succeeded by his eldest son, Donough Edward Foster O'Brien who became the 16th Baron Inchiquin and then another son Phaedrig Lucius Ambrose O'Brien.

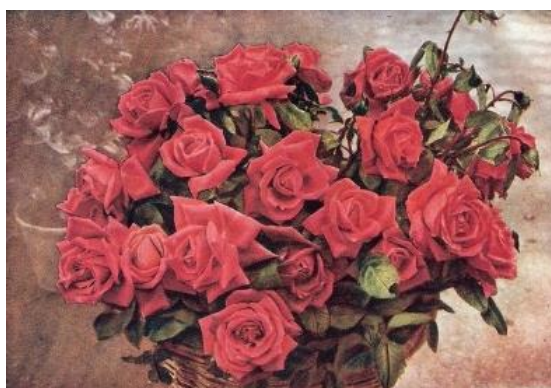
Constantine Charles Henry Phipps, the eighty-five-year-old Marquess of Normanby, died on 25th August 1932. He was buried in the churchyard at St Oswald's Church, Lythe near Whitby. His only son Oswald Constantine John Phipps became the 4th Marquess of Normanby.



By late summer 1932 Johnston Jonas Foster's two daughters were both widows. Both appear to have lived at their main residences in Ireland and Yorkshire, although the Dowager Inchiquin still seems to have made frequent trips to London. She also still owned Moor Park and they both maintained links with All Saints' Church retaining possession of the organ and the reredos until their deaths, when they passed to the Rector and churchwardens.

On the 1939 register Gertrude, the Dowager Marchioness was resident in Mulgrave Castle together with her niece, Griselda O'Brien. Also there, were seventeen evacuee children aged between 6 and 14, a primary school teacher and thirteen servants.

Presumably Ethel was at Dromoland Castle in Ireland where she died on 5th June 1940. She was buried with her husband in the O'Brien family vault at Kilnasoolagh Cemetery. Reporting on her death the *Liverpool Daily Post* wrote that one of the finest women gardeners had been lost. The garden at Dromoland Castle was modernised during the couple's time at the castle and Lord Inchiquin named a rose there in her honour. The "Lady Inchiquin" or "Lady Ethel", a pink climbing rose is still grown in the castle's walled garden over 100 years later and is commercially available today.

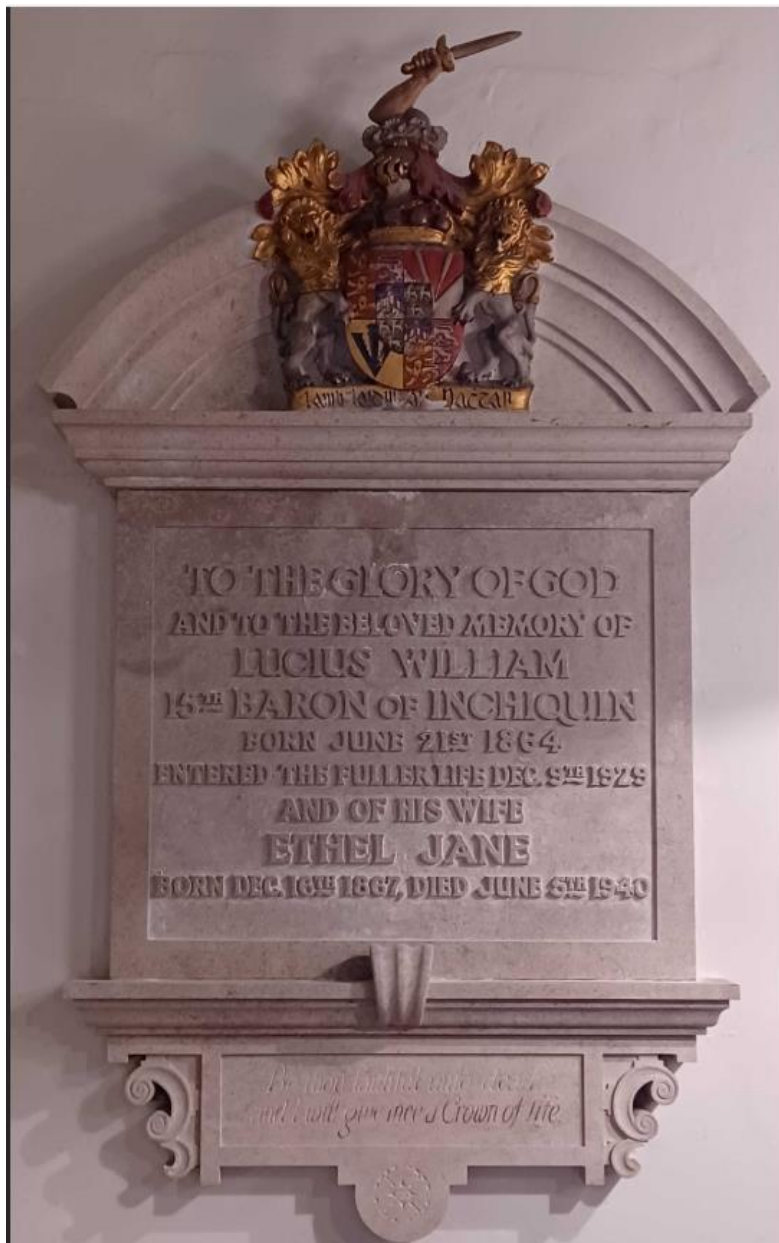


Ethel Jane's estate was worth £63,689 with administration in the hands of her son, Donough Edward Foster Baron Inchiquin, George Reginald Stansfeld, and Ronald Arthur Charteris Foster. Amongst other things she bequeathed a picture, 'Eloquent Silence' (Sigmund Goetz), and an Irish chalice & patten to All Saints' Church at Richard's Castle. Later at a morning service in December 1945 her eldest son, Donough, gave a picture of the 'Last Supper' (Giovanni Grignaschi) to the church in memory of his mother. In 1952 he conveyed the churchyard to the Church Commissioners.

Lady Inchiquin retained the 1711 Stradivari violin that her mother, Mrs Johnston Foster had bought for her in 1889. It passed out of the family when her son Donough put it up for auction in 1948. It is now owned by the North Rhine-Westphalia government. [Several Stradavari of this period have sold recently for sums in excess of £10 million.]



38. Ethel Foster; wife of the Right Honourable 15th Baron Inchiquin



The Inchiquin memorial tablet in the church in Ireland is easier to read than the memorial plaque in All Saints' Church, Richard's Castle near Ludlow, Shropshire.

Dromoland Castle was eventually sold and is now a five-star hotel which has even hosted an American President.

During WW2 the 4th Marquess of Normandy, Oswald Constantine John Phipps, joined the Green Howards. The Second Lieutenant was captured at the retreat from Dunkirk and imprisoned. During captivity he taught some blind PoWs how to use Braille even though he had to learn it himself. He was awarded an OBE for his leadership of the prisoners.

His mother, Dame Gertrude Stansfeld Phipps, OBE, DGStJ, Dowager Marchioness of Nomanby died on 12th March 1948, aged 77 years, at his St. John's Wood, London home. There was a memorial service at St. Paul's Church, Knightsbridge on 19th March but her funeral took place on 18th March at St Oswald's Church, Lythe near Whitby where she was buried with her husband. In the church there is a memorial tablet to the couple which reiterates her link to Cliffe Hill mansion in Lightcliffe where she was born.



A portrait of Dame Gertrude Stansfeld Phipps, OBE, DGStJ,
from an Ancestry family tree



The memorial tablet in St. Oswald's Church, Lythe near Whitby

Oswald Constantine John Phipps, married Hon. Grania Maeve Rosaura Guinness of the Guinness brewing family in 1951 and they had seven children. His wife managed the Mulgrave estate as well as her own Bailiffscourt Estate in Sussex whilst he pursued a political career. For his work with the King's College Hospital, he was promoted to CBE. He was appointed a Knight Companion of the Order of the Garter. He died in 1994 and was buried in the churchyard where his parents were buried.

The family continues to own Mulgrave Castle whose gardens are open to the public by kind permission of the current Lord and Lady Normanby.

The family business of John Foster & Sons in Queensbury, run by generations of the Foster family, was very successful. At its peak it employed up to 1500 people, but business declined after WW2 and it finally went into administration in 2001.

It certainly made members of the Foster family extremely well off. But they put their wealth to many good causes with their philanthropic needs and their church building. The wider Foster family were involved in the building or the substantially refurbishing of at least eight churches, a truly remarkable achievement. For further details, please read

The Foster Churches

As noted in that article and this one, there are many memorial plaques, memorial tablets and memorial stained-glass windows dedicated to members of the Foster family in churches around the United Kingdom and the one in Ireland; St. Matthew's Church in Lightcliffe being one of them. As well as the brass plaques for Johnston Jonas, Hannah Jane and Katharine Laetitia Foster – see the images in the church article – there is this wonderfully informative memorial tablet pictured below in the Foster Chapel.

Ian Philp

Dorothy Barker

February 2026

Acknowledgements and sources.

The websites Ancestry and FindmyPast including various newspapers.

Malcolm Bull's Calderdale Companion

All Saints' Church Richard's Castle *The first hundred years 1892-1992*. Grace Harral.

Some of Hannah Jane's diaries are available amongst the Inchiquin Papers at the National Library of Ireland as is a file on her war work (NLI/MS/45511)

V&A, Lafayette Collection for Court photo.

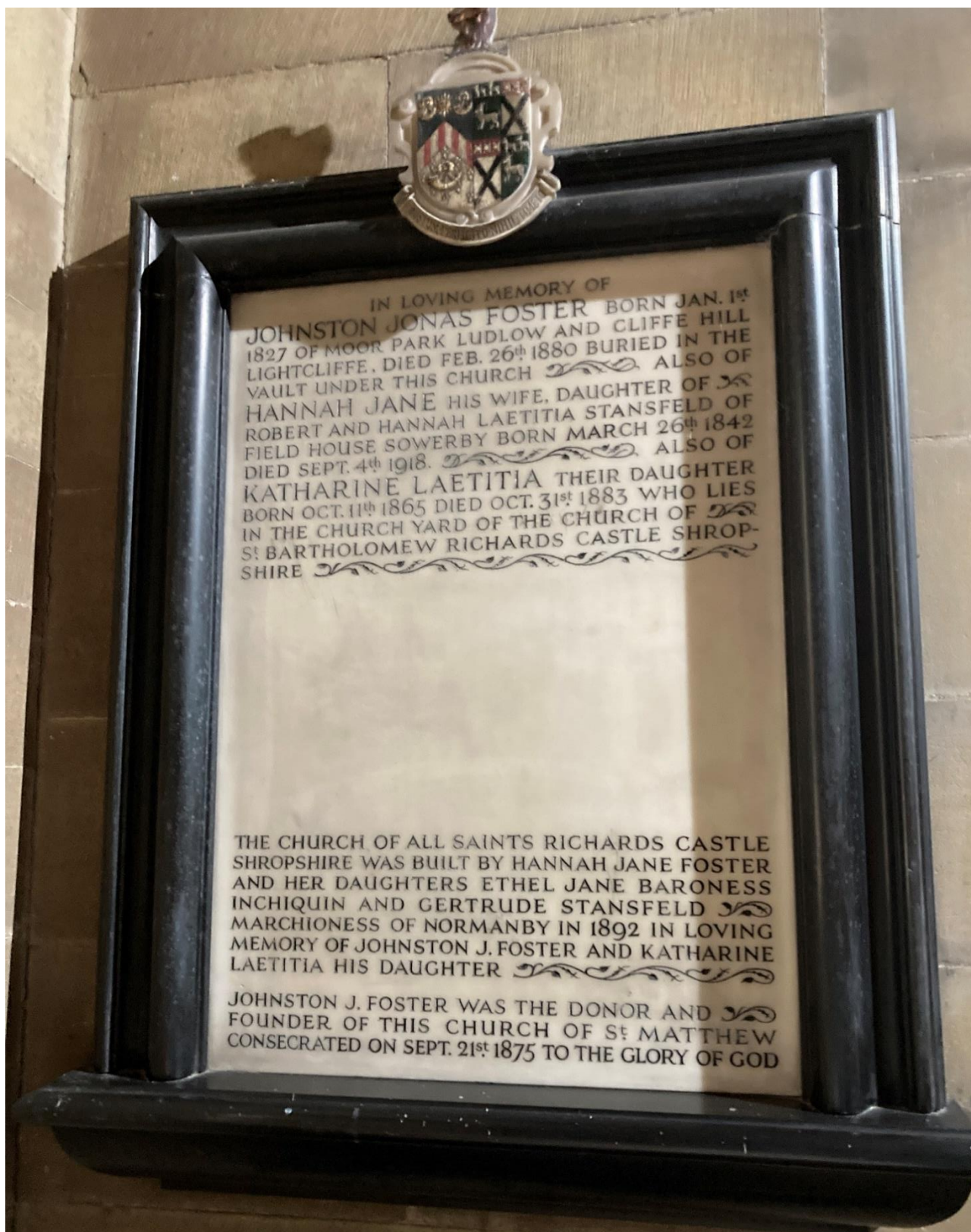
Sophie Denman, Museum of the Order of St John.

Chess Community Web for photo of Mulgrave Castle as a hospital.

For more information on the 'Lady Inchiquin' Stradavari: <https://tarisio.com/cozio-archive/cozio-carteggio/lady-inchiquin-stradivari-1711/>

The Fosters of Black Dyke Mills. F Barrett Halifax Antiquarian Society Transactions, 1967.

There is an account of Ethel's work during WW1 in an academic essay available at a cost at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09612025.2016.1221286>



The memorial tablet in the Foster chapel at St. Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe