

The many Foster Churches part 2

St Mary, St Giles and All Saints, Canwell, Lichfield, Staffordshire.

Abraham Briggs Foster of Northowram Hall, the fourth son of John Foster, bought the Canwell Hall estate in October 1872. Canwell is a parish between Lichfield and Tamworth. A small Benedictine monastery was founded there around 1142. When it was dissolved in 1530 it was recorded as Augustinian but only a few remains can be traced. One account says that it was so small it could accommodate only one monk.

Canwell Hall was described as a spacious mansion in a finely timbered park and tastefully laid out grounds. At the time of the 1881 census Abraham, his wife and their son, Philip, were living there. But their 14-year-old daughter, Rosamund, was with a governess and servants back at Northowram Hall which her father retained. Abraham Briggs Foster became a magistrate in Staffordshire, served as a deputy-lieutenant of Staffordshire for many years and was High Sheriff in 1884. He died at Canwell Hall on 8th January 1904 and was buried at Weeford Church near his home.

His son Philip Staveley Foster had this private chapel built on an 'extra parochial tract of ground' at Canwell in memory of his father. The church, described as in the C14 Gothic style, was designed by Temple Moore and is now a designated Grade II* building



The *Lichfield Mercury* in August 1911 reported on the dedication of the church by the Lord Bishop of Lichfield. Gifts to the new church included the east window given by Mrs A. B. Foster, the altar cross by Lady Inchiquin, the candlesticks by the Marchioness of Normanby and a communion plate, chalice, flagon and paten by Mrs Johnston Foster, all Foster family members.

After attending Eton College and then Magdalen College, Oxford, Philip Staveley Foster became a director and then chairman of the family firm. He was a Conservative politician who after standing unsuccessfully for the Elland District in 1899 became the M.P for Stratford upon Avon from 1901 to 1906 and again from 1909 to 1918. The eighty-eight-year-old died in March 1933 at his home, Old Buckhurst, Wythlyham, Sussex, just after he had been High Sheriff of Sussex. He was buried in St Michael and All Angels Churchyard, Wythlyham, East Sussex.

St Hilda's Church, Egton, North Yorkshire.

In 1869 John Foster and three of his sons, Jonas Foster, Abraham Briggs Foster and John Foster junior bought the 12,500-acre Egton sporting estate for £155,000. They would later build a manor house there, obviously called Egton Manor. Egton is a few miles inland of Whitby. Incidentally this was relatively close to Mulgrave Castle, the family home of the Marquis of Normanby who would later marry one of Jonas Foster's daughters.

The Foster family were regarded as philanthropic landowners building first a local school and then the church whose foundation stone was laid in 1878. You can see in the image below that the clock face is similar to that at St. Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe. The building was finished in 1879 after the death of John Foster senior. The consecration of the church was reported in detail by the *Daily Gazette for Middlesborough* on 2nd December 1879.



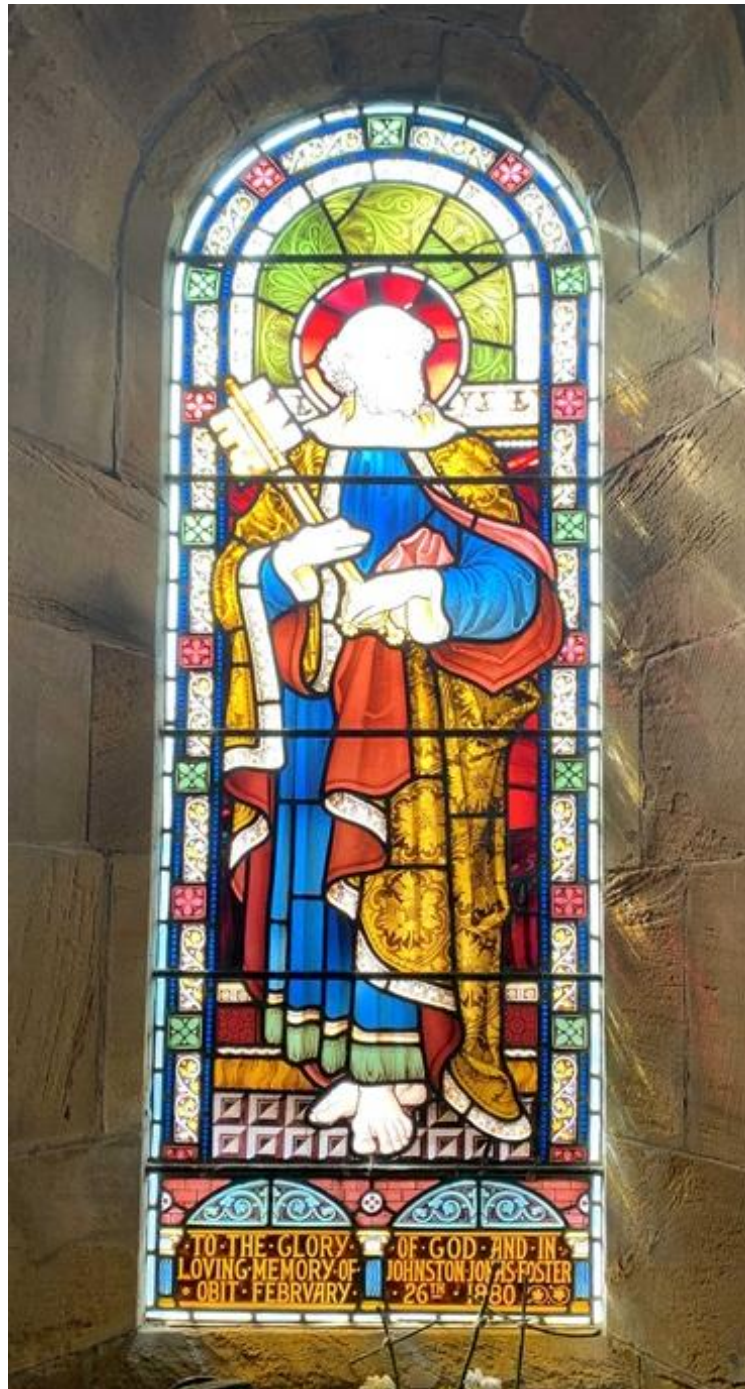
CONSECRATION OF EGTON CHURCH

On Monday afternoon the Archbishop of York consecrated the new Parish Church at Egton, near Whitby. The weather was exceedingly wintry, with a heavy fall of snow, and in consequence the company was not so numerous as it would otherwise have been. The new church is designed on the same plan as the original church, built about 1100, and is built upon a site situated between Egton and the village of Egton Bridge, which was presented by the owners of the Egton estate – Major Foster, of Moor Park, Ludlow; Mr A. B. Foster, Northowram Hall, Halifax; and Mr John Foster, of Lightcliffe. These gentlemen have also built the new church at their sole expense, which amounts to about £5,000. The parish church being in too ruinous state to restore, it was taken down, and the materials were removed to the new site and worked in as nearly as possible their original positions in the new building. The church is a mixture of two styles of architecture, the nave, aisles, and tower being Norman, and the chancel and vestries Tudor. The tower is about sixty feet high, and has a large double-light belfrey window. The fine three-light east window, filled with stained glass, is the gift of Mr John Foster. The pulpit is a beautiful piece of carved oak work executed by Mr Knox, of Lambeth, from the design of Mr. E. H. Smales, the architect. The reredos is in Caen stone, and was carried out from the architect's design by Mr Earp, sculptor of Lambeth. The heating apparatus is supplied by Mr H. Edwards, of Halifax. The roofs are covered with Westmoreland green slates. The church seats about 290 persons. The architect is Mr E. H. Smales, of Whitby. The consecration of the new church (St. Hilda's) took place at a special service, which was held at 1:30 p.m. The Archbishop was received at the principal entrance to the church by a procession consisting of the Messrs Foster, the clergy, churchwardens, &c. The clergy present were

the Revs J. C. Hyatt, B.A., vicar of Queensbury, Bradford; J. H. Warneford, M.S., vicar of All Saints' Halifax; George Austen, M.A., vicar of Whitby; J. W. H. Carr, St. Ninian's, Whitby; Ishmael Fish, vicar of Huttons Ambo; Edwin Evers rector of Preston-in-Holderness; J. C. Atkinson, vicar of Danby, P. Ahier, vicar of Glaisdale; M. E. Jenkins, vicar of Egton; H. Robinson, vicar of Grosmont; W. Sayer, vicar of Goatland; T. Walker, vicar of Sleights. The Archbishop having received the petition, signified his consent to it, and then proceeded with the ceremony of consecration. The prayers were said by the vicar of Egton. His Grace then ascended the pulpit, and before giving out his text said it was usual on these occasions to have to collect for the church building fund, but on this occasion there was nothing of the kind, The church was a gift of one family to the people of this parish. They could not but envy them the privilege of being able to make such a gift out of the things which God had blessed them, and he was sure that the Messrs. Foster would always account it one of the chiefest pleasures that had been given to them to be able to erect a house of Almighty God, to be a place of worship for generations to come, perhaps as long as the world should last. His Grace then appealed for the alms of the congregation towards a fund for erecting an unpretending mortuary chapel on the site of the ancient church in the old parish burial ground, to be used for funerals only. The church was a gift of the Messrs Foster; let this mortuary chapel be the gift of the parishioners. His Grace then preached a powerful discourse from St. Matthew, xxv., 31 and 32.

The Archbishop and clergy partook of luncheon with the Messrs. Foster at Egton Bridge Lodge. A public tea and parishioners' festival took place in the school-room in the afternoon; and in the evening Rev. J. H. Warneford, M.A., vicar of All Saints' Halifax, preached in the new church.

Just a few weeks later, in February 1880, Major Johnston Jonas Foster died. The stained-glass window below was dedicated to him by his brothers. There is also a brass plaque stating that he and his brothers, Abraham and John, had St. Hilda's Church, Egton built.



The *Whitby Gazette* for 19th August 1882 noted that the church got a new organ, in a oak case with spotted metal pipes. It was given to the parish church by John Foster, Esq., in memory of his late brother Johnston Jonas Foster, of Moor Park, Ludlow. Mr Walker Joy, of Leeds, was the first organist to play the new organ and all who heard it declared their 'complete satisfaction'.

With Abraham Briggs Foster having moved his main residence to Staffordshire and the passing of Johnston Jonas Foster, John Foster junior had the most use of the sporting estate at Egton. After his marriage to Francis (Fanny) Elizabeth Hudson on 2nd August 1865 they lived at Holroyd House, Priestley Green, near Lightcliffe. Seven of their eight children were born there. Their youngest daughter was born at Whitchurch-on-Thames, Oxfordshire after her father bought Coombe Lodge. He renamed the house Coombe Park after he enlarged and remodelled it.

But John Foster still appears to have retained a strong connection with the Egton estate often staying at Egton Manor, apparently a three-hour rail journey from Queensbury. There are newspaper reports of him generously establishing charities, donating to local causes, chairing local meetings, being president of Egton Horse Show etc., etc. Like many of his family John Foster junior was a Justice of the Peace and High Sheriff of Oxfordshire in 1890. He died on 1st February 1910 at Coombe Park and was buried in the family vault at Egton church which he had helped to finance. In his will he left many bequests to local charities including £1,000 to the Vicar and Churchwardens of Egton to be called the John Foster Charity, for warm clothing, blankets and coal for the deserving poor of the parish.



SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF
JOHN FOSTER ESQ. LORD OF THE
MANORS OF EGTON IN CLEVELAND
AND WHITCHURCH IN THE COUNTY OF
OXFORD.

WHOSE MORTAL REMAINS LIE IN THE
FOUNDERS' VAULT OF THIS CHURCH
OF ST. HILDA WHICH HE AND HIS
BROTHERS BUILT IN THE YEAR 1879.

BORN AT QUEENSBURY DEC 11TH
1852, HE DIED AT COOMBE PARK
WHITCHURCH OXON ON THE 8TH DAY
OF FEBRUARY 1910.

HE WAS A WISE AND JUST MAN, A
BENEFACTOR OF THIS PARISH AND
BELOVED AND RESPECTED BY ALL
WHO KNEW HIM.

AND OF HIS DEVOTED WIFE
FANNY ELIZABETH HUDSON
BORN JULY 29TH 1844
DIED AT WALLISCOTE OXON
FEBRUARY 24TH 1928.

On the death of his father eldest son John Kenneth Foster (1866 - 1930) inherited the estate but all members of the wider Foster family continued to use it even though their main residences were elsewhere. John Kenneth Foster was a Conservative Party politician who briefly held a Coventry seat. Guests that he entertained at Egton Manor, included Prince Nicholas of Greece. John Kenneth Foster's main residence was in London where he lived with his wife and three daughters. He died there on 2nd March 1930. His funeral was at St. Hilda's, Egton where he was buried on 6th March 1930 with his parents. The second son Robert Lionel Foster (1870 - 1952) then inherited the estate. His family lived at the Foster family home Park House in Queensbury but seem to have spent much time at Egton Manor. The church plaque below indicates that he was the lord of the manor. He and his wife were certainly there on the 1939 register, from when they may have made Egton Manor their main residence



St. Bartholomew's Church, Richard's Castle

As already explained Major Johnston Jonas Foster, the second son of John Foster senior, financed the building of St. Matthew's Church in Lightcliffe built, when he lived at Cliffe Hill. But by then, 1875, he had bought Moor Park, Richard's Castle near Ludlow. He had little time to enjoy his new Shropshire life, as he died in Cannes in 1880. His body was returned to Lightcliffe to be buried in the vault at the side of St. Matthew's Church there.

Just a few years later, in 1883, his eldest daughter Katharine Laetitia Foster died aged eighteen at Moor Park. She was buried in the churchyard of the nearby St Bartholomew's Church (pictured below). This old medieval church dates from the 12th century. It was a Knights Templar chapel, sited near to the ruins of a Welsh Marches castle from which the village gets its name. The church is now in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust and open to the public. It is a Grade I listed building; little changed from Georgian times. The furnishings inside include box pews and a canopied pew for the Lords of the Manor, the Salwey family



St. Bartholomew's Church stopped being used for regular worship when Hannah Jane Foster née Stansfeld had a new church built.

All Saints' Church, Richard's Castle on the Shropshire Herefordshire border.

In August 1890 in the presence of the Bishop of Hereford the widow Hannah Jane Foster laid the foundation stone for All Saints' Church, Richard's Castle. The church cost £9,600 for the building and £1,581 for the interior fittings. The architect was the already mentioned Richard Norman Shaw, well known for designing Cragside in Northumberland and the 1909 extension to Bradford's town hall amongst many other buildings in London and across the country.



The same Bishop of Hereford, who had previously been in the Diocese of Ripon was there to consecrate the church on All Saints' Day 1st November 1892. After the service a luncheon was held in a large marquee in the grounds of Moor Park. In the chair and proposing the loyal toast was her brother-in-law Mr John Foster junior. The toast to the bishop and clergy was proposed by Mr Alfred Salwey whose family had been lords of the manor having previously owned Moor Park. The bishop thanked Mrs Foster and her daughters for their generosity. John Foster responded on their behalf and also gave credit to Mr Salwey for providing some of the stone from his land. The health of the architect was proposed by Sir Edward Ripley and Captain Stansfeld responded in the absence of Mr Shaw. This demonstrates continuing links between the Foster family and the Ripleys. Additionally, it seems likely that Captain Stansfeld was Mrs Foster's older brother, John Stansfeld. From today's perspective, it does seem a shame that although the Foster ladies had funded this church, the formalities were conducted by a close male representative.

The church is very simple, featuring the decorated style of the 14th century. It has a massive south tower which was designed as the main entrance and holds the single two-ton bell. This All Saints' Church is now designated a 'Festival Church' with services only held at Easter, Christmas and Harvest time.

Our local interest is to be found in the several brass plaques to members of the Foster family and in this dedication carving behind the lectern.





TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN LOVING MEMORY OF JOHNSTON J. FOSTER OF MOOR PARK IN THIS PARISH, ALSO OF CLIFFE HILL, LIGHTCLIFFE, AND OF EGTON, YORKSHIRE. MAJOR 2ND WEST YORK YEOMANRY CAVALRY WHO DIED AT CANNES IN FRANCE ON THE 26TH FEB 1880 AT THE AGE OF 53 YEARS. HIS BODY RESTS IN THE FAMILY VAULT BENEATH THE CHAPEL IN THE CHURCH OF ST. MATTHEW, LIGHTCLIFFE. THIS MONUMENT IS PLACED BY HIS WIFE HANNAH JANE FOSTER.

In the brass plaque above you can see the reference to both Cliffe Hill and the Foster chapel in St Matthew's. There are other Foster plaques including one to Katharine Laetitia who died on 31st October 1883 aged 18. Hannah Jane Foster died in September 1918 aged 76 at Mulgrave Castle near Whitby the home of her daughter, the Marchioness of Normanby. She was buried back in Lightcliffe in the Foster vault with her husband. Her surviving daughters, Ethel Jane, Baroness Inchiquin and Gertrude Stansfeld, Marchioness of Normanby, placed a commemorative plaque to her in All Saints', Richard's Castle.

After Ethel Jane O'Brien, Baroness Inchiquin, died at Dromoland Castle, Ireland on 5th June 1940 a memorial plaque was placed in All Saints' Church, Richard's Castle.



In her will Ethel Jane bequeathed a picture, *Eloquent Silence* by Sigmund Goetz to All Saints' Church. [You can just see it in position to the right of the arches in the middle image of the inside of the church.] She also left the church an Irish chalice and patten.



Later, in December 1945, at a morning service, her eldest son Donough Edward Foster, Baron Inchiquin, gave this picture of the *Last Supper* by Giovanni Grignaschi to the church in memory of his mother.



Conclusion

The Foster family were one of the most successful textile manufacturers in the country. They were known for their philanthropy and commitment to the community wherever they moved to from their origins in Queensbury. One expression of this is the number of churches that they built or refurbished. All their churches were built to a high standard and design, judging by Historic England's listing. The family may be unique in this respect and have, certainly, left a legacy across a wide area.

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Acknowledgement and sources.

Historic England listings

<http://www.english-church-architecture.net/bradford/queensbury/queensbury.htm>

Malcolm Bull's Calderdale Companion

In the Shadow of Lightcliffe's Old Tower, D Barker & I Philp

Church websites

Roland Alden, Churchwarden, All Saints Church, Richards Castle

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

Illustrated Rambles from Hipperholme to Tong. James Parker. 1904

Ancestry and Findmypast websites

Dr Mike Winstanley, Secretary Tatham History Society

The photos are either from church websites, the internet or Ian's.

After thought!

John Foster senior, founder of the successful Queensbury business, John Foster & Sons, rented Cliffe Hill, living there with his family including Jonas Foster his second son. Then Johnston Jonas Foster – read his People of Interest article to find out why Johnston was added to his name - was able to buy the property as the sitting tenant from Evan Charles Sutherland Walker in the 1860s. When resident in Lightcliffe the Fosters worshipped at the nearby old St. Matthew's Church. One of John Foster's daughters was married there, and it was where two of Jonas Foster's daughters were baptised. But then Major Foster decided to have a new church built.

Without this sequence of events would the old St. Matthew's Church, built in 1775 by William Walker, still be standing and in use? Think it might have needed some renovation work on it!

Just a thought!