

The many Foster Churches part 1



The crest and motto on a Foster memorial

Justum perficito nihil timeto

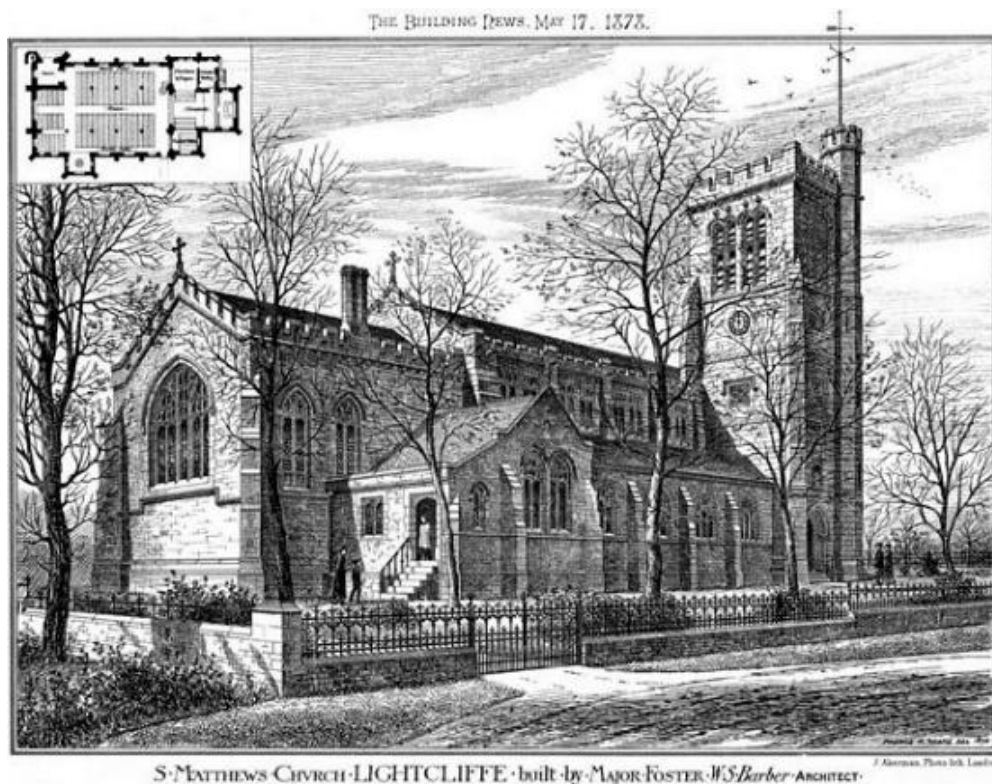
Act justly and fear nothing

When researching the establishment of Lightcliffe's new St Matthew's Church, we became aware that the wider Foster family had been involved in building and refurbishing churches wherever they lived. This is an informal article based on some personal visits and secondary sources including church websites, Historic England listings and local history society websites. All the churches are worth a visit.

St Matthew's, Lightcliffe, West Yorkshire.



When Major Johnston Jonas Foster of the Black Dyke Mills family 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 demolished and the new St Matthew's church built together with the terrace now called Greenhouses. Major Foster 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.



The foundation stone was laid in September 1873 by Hannah Jane Foster née Stansfeld, the wife of the founder, and the church was consecrated by the Bishop of Ripon two years later. The church is listed as Graded II by Historic England as are the gate piers.

As will be seen to be a pattern, there were many gifts to the new church from members of the Foster family. This took the form of several of the windows, the reredos from Mrs William Foster, a lectern from Abraham Briggs Foster and an octagonal font from John Foster of Holroyd House, Priestley Green. Prominent families also made donations. A Caen stone pulpit was from Sir Titus Salt, the organ from Evan Charles Sutherland Walker and the clock by Sir Henry William Ripley. Titus Salt who lived at Crow Nest and Henry Ripley of Holme House were near neighbours of the Fosters. Sutherland Walker who inherited the Crow Nest estate from his mother and aunt, Ann Walker, still took an interest in the Lightcliffe community as he owned land in the area even though he had moved back to Scotland.

A Foster chapel was established to the southeast of the church. Just five years after the completion of the building of his church Johnston Jonas Foster was buried just outside it. His plaque and one to his daughter can be seen in this little chapel.



In loving memory of Johnston Jonas Foster, Major of 6th West York Yeomanry Cavalry of Moor Park, Ludlow, Salop, and of Cliffe Hill in this parish, the founder of this church, who died at Cannes in France. February 26th AD 1880 aged 53, his body rest in the vault beneath this chapel.

In loving memory of Katharine Laetitia, eldest daughter of Johnston J Foster and Hannah Jane his wife, who died at Moor Park Salop on the 31st October 1883, aged 18 years. Her body rests in the churchyard at Richard's Castle, near Ludlow.

Widow Hannah Jane Foster died on 4th September 1918 at Mulgrave Castle, Whitby, the home of her daughter the Marchioness of Normanby. Her body was brought back to Lightcliffe for burial with her husband in the Foster Chapel Vault on 7th September 1918.

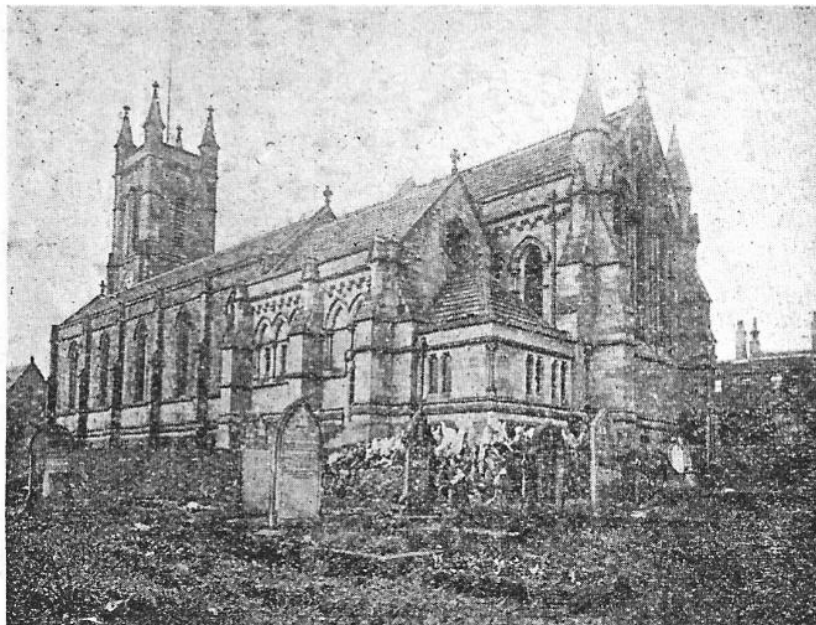
For more information about this Foster family read

Johnston Jonas Foster and family

Holy Trinity, Queensbury, West Yorkshire.

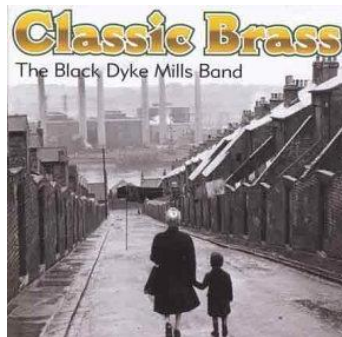


The above church was designed by James Mallinson (a famous local architect who designed at least 35 churches in West Yorkshire) and built between 1843 and 1845. It was one of many being built across the country as part of the 'Million Pound Church' scheme whereby a community could build a church with government funding which provided enough for a basic building. Further enhancement had to come from local donations. A major contributor and the man liaising with Mallinson was John Foster senior. The church has been restored twice in 1885 and 1906. The church is Grade II listed and built in the Gothic Revival style. John Foster also provided the peal of six bells, reputed to be the highest peel of bells in the country.



John Foster (1798 - 1879) had been a mill owner from the mid-1820s originally employing hand weavers. In 1819 he married Ruth (1801 - 1882), the daughter of Abram Briggs; they had twelve children. In 1835 he acquired the land on which to build Black Dyke Mills from his father-in-law. Over the next decades the mill grew massively. It was a family firm with John's sons helping to run and expand the business. The family owned 1,200 acres in and around Queensbury and even had their own coal mines. There were major extensions during the 1840s and 1850s including a weaving shed with 300 looms, a combing shed, a spinning mill and dyeworks. In fact, the whole process of manufacture of cotton, alpaca, mohair and silk was possible in-house. The workforce exceeded 2,000 and the mill area was over 15 acres. The firm's output went all over the country and abroad. It eventually closed in 1989.

John Foster was also a keen musician, a French horn player, who founded and funded the eponymous brass band. The Black Dyke Mills Band is one of the oldest and most well-known brass bands in the world today.



John Foster senior died on 6th March 1879 at Prospect House, the Foster family home in Queensbury. He was buried five days later in the Foster vault in Holy Trinity church. His wife, Ruth, died in 1882 and was interred with her husband. There is an east window in the church commemorating the two of them. Their eldest son William Foster died at Hornby Castle in 1884 but was also interred in the Foster vault back in Queensbury.

All of the Foster family wills indicate how successful their company was for much of its existence. This wealth enabled them to buy estates in different parts of the country. On some of these country estates they then financed the building or renovating of parish churches. The church builders who feature in this article are John senior (1798 - 1879), his sons William Foster (1821 - 1884), Jonas Foster (1827 - 1880), Abraham Briggs Foster (1829 - 1904) and John Foster junior (1833 - 1910). And then two grandsons will also get a mention, as will other members of the family. Arthur Wellesley Foster (1855 - 1929) was one of William Foster's sons and Philip Staveley Foster (1865 - 1933) was the only son of Abraham Briggs Foster.

St Margaret's, Hornby, Lancashire.



John Foster senior bought Hornby Castle as his country residence in 1859. Over the next few decades additional properties in the area were purchased. On his death in 1879 the ownership of the castle passed to his eldest son William Foster (1821 - 1884). When he died in February 1884, he left £1.2 million in addition to his landholdings and business concerns. William's eldest son William Henry Foster (1848 - 1908) then became the new owner of the Hornby estate. For decades therefore, St. Margaret's Church in Hornby - now a Grade I listed building - was the Fosters' local church. William's sons were left £3,000 for its renovation.

The Lancastrian architects, Messrs Paley & Austin, had already worked on Hornby Castle when they undertook restoration work on the St. Margaret's Church, starting with reroofing it. This was done by reducing the height of the aisle walls in the nave and supporting the new roof with slim pillars forming five bays. The floors were completely replaced using York flag in the aisles and encaustic tiles in the chancel. The box pews were replaced by more modern seating, and wood block was laid under the new pews - wood is a better insulator than rushes on a stone floor. A pulpit and choir stalls were also commissioned. The old vestry was converted into an organ chamber, and a new vestry was built. An organ built by Abbott and Smith was moved from Hornby Castle into St. Margaret's Church in 1889. All the work was financed by William Henry Foster and his brothers after the deaths of their grandfather and father.

Whilst in residence at Hornby Castle Colonel William Henry Foster was very much involved in the local community as his grandfather and father had been as local squires. He was High Sheriff for Lancashire in 1891 and MP for Lancaster from 1895 to 1900. In 1908 he and his wife went to Algeciras in Spain, primarily for the benefit of her health. But just a week later, on 27th March 1908, he suffered a heart attack and died. With some difficulty and delay his body was brought back to St. Margaret's Church for burial on 22nd April 1908. The *Halifax Guardian* reported that he was laid to rest in a new vault to the rear of the burial ground in a spot 'almost within the shadow of Hornby Castle'.





William Henry Foster's family had the St. Cecilia window (pictured above) installed at St. Margaret's Church in his memory. His wife Henrietta was the daughter of Rev John Henry Warneford, Vicar of All Saints, Salterhebble, Halifax and Canon of Wakefield Cathedral. In the late 1850s Rev J. H. Warneford managed to acquire the land on which that church and a school were built. This church now has a window dedicated to one of William Henry Foster's uncles, Alfred Foster. See later for more details.

When Henrietta Foster died in March 1912, the plaque above was placed in St. Margaret's Church, Hornby by their children, Marjory, Gladys, Hermione and Cyril Foster.

St James the Less, Tatham, Lancashire.

Rev Arthur Wellesley Foster, born in 1855, was the fifth son of William Foster of Hornby Castle and so the brother of Colonel William Henry Foster. He graduated from Merton College, Oxford and then went to Wells Theological College. In 1881 he was ordained to a Staffordshire curacy. This may well have been at Canwell (see later) as his uncle would be patron there at the time. In November 1885 he married Alice Madeline Jordan in Trinity Church, Boston, Massachusetts. She was the daughter of Eben Dyer and Julia Jordan. The Jordans were descendants of a Church of England clergyman who had emigrated to the USA from Devon in the 1640s. For generations they farmed in Maine. But young Eben Dyer Jordan (1822 - 1895) moved from Maine to Boston where eventually he became a very wealthy man having founded the departmental store Jordan Marsh and *The Boston Globe*.

As you have read, Arthur's paternal grandfather, John Foster, was also an entrepreneur having built up the large woollen textile manufacturing business at Queensbury mills. When John Foster purchased Hornby Castle as his country estate he had the advowson (right to appoint to a living) of St James the Less, Tatham (pictured below) as well as to St Margaret's, Hornby. When William Foster died in 1884, he left £70,000 to his son Arthur Wellesley Foster who was destined for the church.



Before his death William Foster had expressed a desire to renovate both Hornby and Tatham churches which were in a very poor condition. He named his other four sons as trustees for St James, Tatham with the express intention of securing the appointment of Arthur to the living when it became vacant. They set aside £2000 for the renovation of St James the Less, Tatham. The church dates back to C12 or even earlier. In 1887, Arthur's American father-in-law, Eben Dyer Jordan, paid for the east window (pictured below) knowing that Arthur would be a future rector of Tatham.



Other members of the family also donated items: Arthur's wife Alice Madeline paid for the font and its oak cover; her mother donated the lights; Arthur gave the candelabra and font ewer; his widowed aunt, Mrs Johnston J Foster of Moor Park near Ludlow, paid for the lectern; his uncle John Foster of Coombe Park financed the alabaster work of the reredos and his wife Francesca (Fanny) donated the collection plate.

In April 1888 Rev Arthur Wellesley Foster obtained the living of St. James the Less when Rev Richard Denny resigned due to old age and ill health. Although Tatham rectory was improved by this time, the Arthur and Alice Madeline chose to live at Caton Green with a large number of servants. This was where their second son Arthur Cedric Foster was born on 26th April 1891. His older brother Cuthbert Wellesley Foster was born in London on 29th March 1887. Arthur and his wife were both very involved with the local community. They regularly visited Lower Tatham School where Alice Madeline offered occasional elocution lessons. She also raised money for the new Royal Lancaster Infirmary.

Rev Arthur Wellesley Foster resigned from St James the Less in October 1893, and his family left in December 1893 for Brockhampton Court, Herefordshire. The story of these Fosters will continue next when we get to Brockhampton.

The Church of the Good Shepherd, Tatham Fells, Lancashire

Meanwhile, in August 1888, Alice Madeline Foster laid the foundation stone, receiving a commemorative trowel and mallet, for a replacement to an old chapel that had become unsafe in the neighbouring hamlet of Tatham Fells. The new church (pictured below) was consecrated in 1889. It cost £1,200 and members of the Foster family made donations to the building fund and made gifts to the new church. Alice Madeline and Arthur donated a font ewer, antependium and red frontal, while the organ was donated by his brother Colonel William Henry Foster.



The Church of the Good Shepherd, which is Grade II listed, was designed by the architect firm of Messrs Paley & Austin sometimes known as Paley, Austin & Paley and then Austin & Paley. The original business was founded by Edmund Sharpe in 1835. Fifteen-year-old Edward Graham Paley was apprenticed to him in 1838 eventually becoming a partner. After Sharpe retired in 1851 Paley worked alone until joined by Hubert Austin in 1868. Then Edward's son Henry Paley became a partner in 1886 until the death of his father in 1895. An Austin son also joined the firm in 1914, hence all the name changes. They are seen as the most important provincial architects of their time in England. Based in Lancaster, the firm built or renovated a huge number of Lancashire churches as well as working on other buildings including railway stations. Many of the buildings they designed are now Grade listed.



St. John the Baptist, Low Bentham, Lancashire

Close by to the Tatham churches sits the church of St John the Baptist, Low Bentham. This Grade II* listed building, dates back to the mid-C14.



On 10th May 1870, as reported by the *Lancaster Gazette*, there was a ‘Fashionable Marriage at Bentham’. Alice Catherine Teale the only child of Dr. Joseph Teale of Leeds and “The Ridding” estate at Bentham married Alfred Foster, the youngest son of John Foster of Hornby Castle. Assisted by priests from Bentham and Leeds, the ceremony was conducted by the Bishop of Hereford, James Atlay, a friend of the family. A grand ball was held in Hornby Castle although the bride and groom had apparently already left for London.

Previously Alfred had gained his M.A. at St. Peter’s College, Cambridge and was expected to become ordained. Instead, he joined the family firm in Queensbury. Just three years after he was married, Alfred died very suddenly of rheumatic fever at Spring Head, Northowram, Halifax on 10th July 1873. He was buried in the churchyard at Low Bentham on 16th July 1873.

Two years later in 1875, it was decided to undertake a major restoration of St John’s. Mrs Alfred Foster promised £1,000 for the rebuilding of the chancel (pictured below) in memory of her husband. Others, including Alice’s parents, ensured that there was enough for the venture.



The restoration architect was Richard Norman Shaw with some internal work, including the font, by William Lethaby. Both Shaw and Lethaby were involved in other Foster church works. The work was estimated at £3,500. In 1876 this major restoration work was begun. It was completed in 1878.

A further tribute to Alfred Foster can be seen in the form of a window in the previously mentioned **All Saints' Church, Salterhebble**, Dudwell Lane, Halifax. It was placed there by Alfred's sister, Jane, and her husband Sydney Perfect Norris.



All Saints' Church, Brockhampton, Herefordshire.



In December 1893, Rev Arthur Wellesley Foster and his wife Alice Madeline left the Hornby area and moved into the recently restored Brockhampton Court mansion on a 1500-acre estate which had been given to them by Alice's parents, Ebenezer and Julia Jordan of Boston, Massachusetts, as a wedding present. Her father, Eben, died in 1895 and her mother, Julia, two years later. Alice commissioned and funded a church in their memory which replaced the former parish church of Holy Trinity, Brockhampton whose ruins are nearby.



The church was designed and built by architect William Lethaby who has already been mentioned as being involved with other Foster Churches. He was one of the leading lights of the Arts & Crafts Movement. The building, which was completed in 1902, is now Grade I listed in recognition of its architectural importance. Like the church and gate posts at St. Matthew's Church in Lightcliffe, the thatched lych gate is also listed



With its thatched roof All Saints' Church, Brockhampton is simple, beautiful and elegant. The interior (pictured below) is unusual with steeply pointed arches leading towards a well-lit crossing and then a sanctuary. The altar has tapestries which are part of the dedication to the Jordan family. They were by Burne-Jones and made in the William Morris Workshops.



As they had done when Rev Arthur Wellesley Foster was the incumbent at Tatham he and Alice Madeline were very involved with the local community for nearly 40 years. Assuming the role of benevolent local gentry they funded many projects including the gift of a village hall.

In 1899, whilst described as being a Church of England priest, in full orders, Arthur was picked by Queen Victoria as High Sheriff of Herefordshire. He was also Master of the South Herefordshire Foxhounds – an unusual post for a priest according to a local paper. Given that he was given the name of the Duke of Wellington perhaps it is not too much of a surprise that he became a captain of the Shropshire Yeomanry and, at the outbreak of the war, he became a Captain in the Reserve of Officers, later promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel and County Commandant of the Herefordshire Volunteer Services.

Both their sons served in WW1. Lieutenant Arthur Cedric Foster of the Grenadier Guards died from wounds after the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in March 1915. He is commemorated in the church by a memorial west window and the shield pictured below. His married older brother, Captain Cuthbert Wellesley Foster, thankfully survived.



To enshrine
the dear memory of
ARTHUR CEDRIC FOSTER
Grenadier Guards younger Son
of ARTHUR and MADELINE
FOSTER, who mortally
wounded at the battle
of Neuve Chapelle died
in hospital at Merville
the day following,
March 12th 1915. Aged 23.
“Ante diem periit. Sed
miles, Des pro patria.”

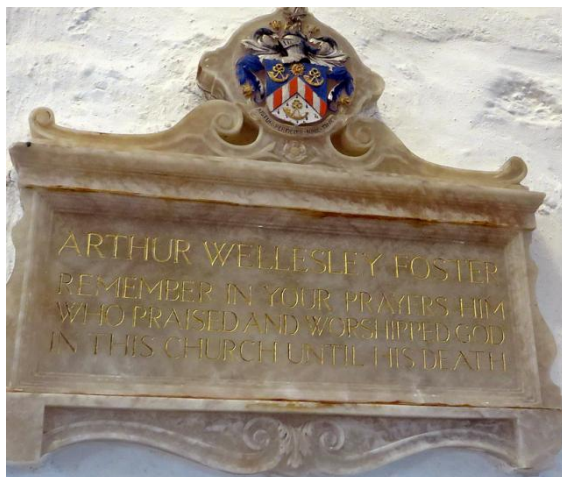
The Latin inscription translates as “*Died before his time, but a soldier, but for his country*” from Sir Henry Newbolt’s poem *Clifton Chapel* often used as a soldier’s epitaph.

This window, clearly visible on the outer south side and then internally, is dedicated to his Jordan grandparents.



On the north side are the memorials (pictured below) to Arthur Wellesley Foster and Alice Madeline Foster née Jordan. The Foster coat of arms and motto are clearly visible.

Arthur Wellesley Foster died on 13th September 1929 in Newquay, Cornwall. His funeral, back at Brockhampton, was conducted by the Bishop of Hereford. Amongst the mourners were his widow and surviving son together with other members of the Foster family and Mr and Mrs Robert Jordan from the USA. Tenant farmers were joined by representatives of the magistrates, the police and his sporting interests. He was buried in the churchyard of All Saints' Church in Brockhampton, the plot marked by an elegant cross. Alice Madeline Foster née Jordan died in September 1932 and was buried with her husband.



Continued in part 2

Dorothy Barker and Ian Philp

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