

The Incumbents of St. Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe part 2

For a short period of time after William Gurney's death, services including burials were conducted by James Wynn who appears to have been his assistant for at least two years. It was Wynn who stood in for him at the opening of the National School, endowed by Evan Charles Sutherland Walker.

George Bagot was born in 1822 in Kildoon, Ireland and studied at Trinity College Dublin. In 1850 whilst a clergyman in St. Helen, Lancashire he married Agnes Luzmore, a surgeon's daughter from Sutton, Lancashire. They moved to Iver, Buckinghamshire where he was a curate on the 1851 census and where their daughter Edith was born during September 1851. By the time of the 1861 census the family had moved back up North to Richmond, in the then North Riding of Yorkshire where he was again a curate. At some point he became the senior curate at Halifax.

In 1869, **George Bagot** M.A., was appointed as the first Vicar of Lightcliffe. This was a speedy process. William Gurney died on 28th August 1869. But by 11th September the *Halifax Courier* was reporting that the Venerable Archdeacon Musgrave had presented the living of Lightcliffe to George Bagot, senior curate at Halifax Parish Church, by 17th September the *London Evening Standard* reported that the Archbishop of York had instituted him to the vicarage of Lightcliffe. This is, perhaps, the first recorded notification of the 'vicarage of Lightcliffe'. He took up his duties in early December. However, the first time he took a burial service in Lightcliffe on December 15th 1869 he signed himself as 'perpetual curate'. Perhaps he was still getting used to his new status!

The 1871 census records himself, wife Agnes and daughter Edith, 18, living in Lidgate which was, presumably, the new vicarage with two domestic servants. On the 1881 census he is in Lightcliffe Vicarage, with Edith and one servant. His wife, Agnes, had died on 19th June 1874 at the home of her brother, Castle House, Maghull in Sefton, Merseyside. She was buried in Anfield Cemetery in a 'Purchased Vault' on 23rd June 1874.

Around 1880 the Vicarage later named Abbotsford (present day picture below) was extended, with a new Great Hall and laundry and kitchens.



Between the two censuses the new St. Matthew's Church was built, funded by the Foster family at a cost of £15,000. It was consecrated by the Bishop of Ripon in 1875. The original tenor bell (all 18 cwt of it) was Rev. Bagot's gift to his new church. The inscription on one side of it has the names of his late wife and their daughter. On the other side there is this Latin inscription.

**Me Primam Domini laudes resonare per auras
Campanam posuere Deum laudate sodales,
Anno salutis MDCCCLXXV.
Hujusce ecclesie vicarius.
Georgius Bagot, M.A.**

*I am the first to echo the Lord's
praises through the winds.
I, the vicar of this church, put the
bell to praise God in the year of
salvation 1875. George Bagot, M.A.*

George Bagot died on Sunday 17th June 1883 from inflammation of the lungs. Newspaper reports at the time noted that he had suffered a 'severe illness of about a fortnight's duration.' He was buried with his wife, and later her brother and family, in Anfield Cemetery, Liverpool on 21st June 1883, the service being conducted by Rev. R.W. Bagot, presumably a relative, perhaps a brother. The headstone on this Liverpool plot is now laid flat, part of the long memorial inscription says: -



*ALSO AGNES BAGOT,
19TH JUNE 1874, AGED 43 YEARS.*

*ALSO GEORGE BAGOT,
HUSBAND OF THE ABOVE
17TH JUNE 1883, AGED 63 YEARS.*

Rev. George Bagot was described in the Lightcliffe Parish Magazine thus: -

'For 13 years the respected vicar of Lightcliffe, who was the moving spirit in the building of St. Matthew's Church...'



Within the baptistry of the present church there is a window to Rev. George Bagot which says:-

IN AFFECTIONATE MEMORY OF GEORGE BAGOT,
FOR 13 YEARS VICAR OF LIGHTCLIFFE.
BY HIS FRIENDS AND PARISHIONERS.
FELL ASLEEP JUNE 17TH, 1883.

[His daughter Edith Bagot then married into this family,
[The Carters of Giles House.pdf](#)]

The building of the new church was possible thanks to the generous funding given by Major Johnston Jonas Foster of Cliffe Hill mansion as detailed above. The Major died in Ludlow in 1880 but was buried in the Foster Vault in St. Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe.

After the death of George Bagot, **Vivian Rodwell Lennard** M.A. was appointed vicar in August 1883. He was born in Sheffield in 1847 and studied at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge before being ordained in Lichfield Cathedral in 1880. He married Janet Margaret Green at the parish church of Eyam, Derbyshire with the service conducted by Rev. Francis Pigou, Vicar of Halifax. It would be a reasonable assumption that Janet was given away by her father, Rev. John Green, Eyam's rector. Rev. Lennard had been a curate in Eyam. In 1885 he coordinated the fundraising for Hipperholme Infants School which opened that year.

In 1888, after five years at Lightcliffe, he announced that he had accepted the living of Astley, near Nuneaton, Warwickshire. The *Brighouse Echo* records that he entered into his service in Lightcliffe with all possible energy and heartiness and quickly became a popular clergyman. Unfortunately, noted by the Echo, he had not been of a robust constitution and members of his family had been in such feeble health that he was advised to take a permanent change. He preached his farewell service in St Matthew's Church in February 1890 to a capacity congregation with many unable to find room in the church.

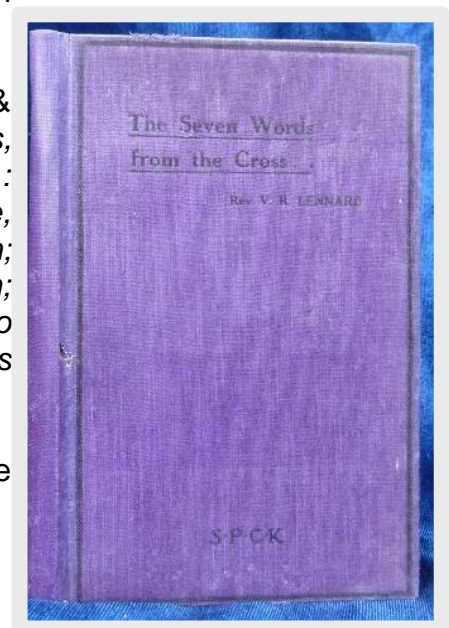
Yet by July 1890, the *Brighouse Echo* reported that he had taken the 'large and important' living of South Hackney, London. In the same article, Lightcliffe is said to have flourished during his time as vicar with the number of communicants increasing yearly, the offertories improved, the congregations were large and church work extended by means of good organisations.

Of him the 1895 Parish Magazine later records: *'It is with a feeling of pleasure and satisfaction that we make reference to the short visit the Rev. Vivian R. Lennard paid to Lightcliffe and the sermon he willingly consented to preach on Sunday morning...for about 7 years, Mr. Lennard was vicar of Lightcliffe and gained esteem and respect from all. He is now Rector of South Hackney, London and has the spiritual care of a large but poor parish and his church, St. John of Jerusalem has many times, we believe, held congregations of over a thousand; has a voluntary choir of 50 voices and also the assistance of 5 curates...'* By 1911 he, his wife and daughter Janet Ethel together with a housemaid, cook and visitor were living in the Rectory in Lower Heyford. (St Mary's in Oxfordshire).

He had many of his sermons published (by Skeffington & Sons, London). Examples include *Confirmation Addresses*, *Voices of the Year*. *Sermons for the Christian Year Vol.1: Advent to Good Friday and Woman: Her Power, Influence, And Mission. Twenty-One Sermons; On Woman's Mission; Feminine Characteristics; Parental Influence; Education; Attitude Of Christ Towards Children; Jewish Heroines; Also An Address In Commemoration Of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria.*

He was credited as Rector of Lower Heyford, Oxfordshire when these sermons were published.

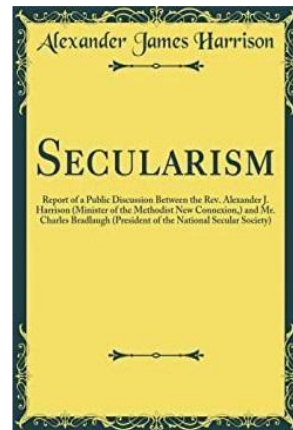
Vivian Rodwell Lennard died in October, 1928 in Oxford.



In 1889 another of the Lightcliffe characters arrived in the form of **Alexander James Harrison** B.D., M.A., Th.D. Born in Strabane, Ireland he was a preacher for the Methodist New Connexion until 1871 and then Vicar of Christ Church, Neuilly, Paris for five years before coming to Lightcliffe. In 1892 he was given a B.D. by the Archbishop of Canterbury for his work in connection with Christian Evidences and two years later, a Masters degree. He had been awarded a doctorate by the University of Jena in 1875. He had a debate with Mr. Charles Bradlaugh on secularism and this was published under the main title of *Secularism*.

Other publications included

*Problems of Christianity and Scepticism,
Unreasonableness of Unbelief,
The Ascent of Faith and
An eventful life.*



Rev. Alexander James Harrison was inducted into the living at Lightcliffe on 6th December 1888 by the Bishop of Wakefield. In attendance were the Dean of Chichester (Dr Francis Pigou, former Vicar of Halifax) and two curates from Halifax Parish Church including Rev. R P Stedman who, incidentally, had turned down the opportunity to be Lightcliffe's vicar. Revs. T. Ashcroft and H. J. H. Faulkner were also present as our curates.

He was evidently a man with a mission! He gave lectures on Christian Evidence, going to the aid of others, dealing with sceptics and scepticism. He lectured in Swansea (twice), Wolverhampton, Nottingham, Norwich, Reading, Hull (twice), Leicester, Lichfield, Wakefield, Oxford University, 6 London churches, Northampton, Cambridge and Jarrow.

His daughter was baptised at Lightcliffe in 1893. New engagements were listed for that year in Beckenham, Brixton, Woolwich, Soho, Ealing, Charing Cross, Maida Vale, Harrow, West Hampstead, The chapel Royal, Brighton and Manchester Cathedral. Also visited were St Paul's Cathedral and York Minster several times.

Because of this work and poor health, he had a total of six curates. He left for Newcastle in 1894, to take up the Mastership of Mary Magdalene Hospital with a salary of £500 and a vicarage. Some years later, he appeared in the Bankruptcy Court!

It was in 1894 that the London Gazette records a change to the parish boundaries. This change related to the boundary between Lightcliffe and St Martin's, Brighouse. The change established the boundary between St Matthew's and the newly created municipal borough of Brighouse, removing a small part of the southern part of the parish. The article describes both parishes as being 'new' even though established in the 32nd and 33rd years of the Queen's reign, namely 1869 and 1870.

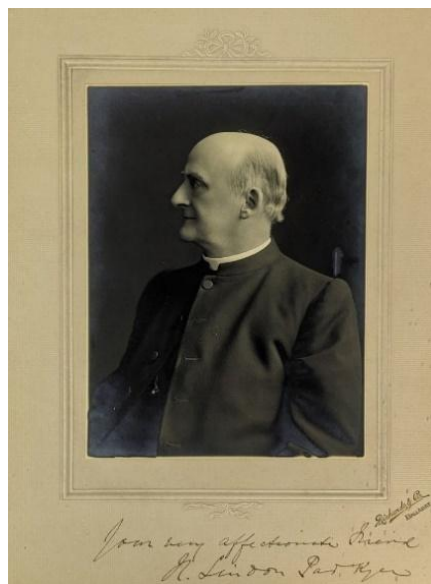
Nathaniel Lindon Parkyn M.A. was ordained in 1892 having previously been a Congregational minister in Swansea. He then held curacies in Keighley and Halifax before taking over in 1894, living at 1, Grandsmere Place, Manor Drive, Halifax for two months while the vicarage was renovated and altered. The value of the Lightcliffe living at the time was £300 per annum with a house.

The institution was by the Bishop of Wakefield and the induction by Ven. Archdeacon Brooke, Vicar of Halifax. The church was packed, the ceremony included, as by custom, the unlocking of the church door and the tolling of the bell. During his time in Lightcliffe he supported the movement to establish a church in Norwood Green which eventually bore fruit in 1908.

His final service at St Matthew's in the evening of Easter Day 1897 was described in the Church Magazine: *"On no other occasion in our recollection has the Church been so packed with worshipers in every available space. Chairs and forms were brought into requisition down the sides of each aisle; the Chancel Steps were also crowded. Notwithstanding this, large numbers had to be turned away."* The 1897 Parish Magazine records: *'Our beloved vicar...there are few who have not felt the warmth of our vicar's heart and the touch of his exquisite sympathy, both in the pulpit and in the home.'*

Rev. Parkyn left to become Vicar and Dean of the Cathedral church of Ballarat, 'a thriving town in Victoria', Australia, feeling that he was obeying the 'divine call'. He served there from 1897 to 1914 where he was remembered as an articulate speaker and benevolent public figure.

On his return from Australia, he became Vicar of All Saints, Blackpool serving from 1915 to 1921. After retirement, he continued to preach in London and the north of England. On occasions he returned to Lightcliffe to preach, including at the 1918 Harvest Festival. By 1929 his health was failing, and he lost his sight. He died in Bath in June 1931 aged 80 and was buried in the churchyard of St Mary's, Bathgate, Bath.



His son, Rev. Frederick Lindon Coulson Parkyn, had married Charlotte Lucy Peel, daughter of William Peel of Hopewell House, Leeds Road, Lightcliffe on 14th October 1903 in St. Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe. In 1906 he was appointed to All Saints, Clayton-le-Moor (Lancashire).

James Robert Hill M.A.(Oxon) became Vicar of Lightcliffe in 1897 with this endorsement from his predecessor Rev. Parkyn.

: *'.....My dear brother who is to succeed me ...has travelled widely, is well- versed in men and things and has that breadth of view which is never found in men ignorant of human nature during the 7 years that Mr. Hill has been Senior Curate of Brighouse, he has greatly endeared himself to the parishioners there. If I wanted to describe my warm- hearted and lovable successor in 3 words, I would call him "The Children's Friend".'*

He was born at Dollar, Clackmannan, in Scotland, the son of a Presbyterian minister, Ebenezer Brown Hill and his wife Elizabeth Vaughan Ball. All four of their sons became priests, a daughter never married.

In his early years James R. Hill had business pursuits in Glasgow and gained a B.A. from Glasgow University. Later he was educated at St. John's College, Oxford where he presumably adopted the Anglican church. After university he sailed round the world with a friend.

He, and his brother, Rev. John Brown Hill, were lieutenants under the captaincy of the founder of the Boys' Brigade (William Alexander Smith – later Sir William) in Glasgow in October,1883. (*Falkirk Herald*, 1934) The Boys' Brigade was established as a non-denominational organisation for young lads in 1891.

Following his global trip, he became a curate in Brighouse in 1891 lodging at Needless Hall, on Halifax Road out of Brighouse. When he left Brighouse, its vicar, Rev. R Phipps, spoke of his huge contribution to the work of the parish especially in relation to the new St. Andrew's mission room and new infants' school. For a time, Rev. Hill, was in charge of the parish during an interregnum and this duty he discharged successfully.

When Rev. James Robert Hill left Brighouse the gifts and tributes paid to him by the parishioners, as recounted in our Church Magazine, show great appreciation and affection. And as already recorded Rev. Lindon Parkyn was glowing in his praise.

He became Vicar in Lightcliffe in May,1897. The ceremony of institution was conducted by the Bishop of Wakefield and, in the absence of the vicar of Halifax, he was inducted by Rev. W Davenport, Vicar of Coley. In his first letter to the parishioners, he wrote passionately about the importance of education and the church's work with the young. His time in Lightcliffe was exemplified by his love of children and his work with the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society as well as the formation of Company No. 1722 Lightcliffe (Wakefield Diocese/Regiment) of the Church Lads' Brigade, the Anglican equivalent of the Boys' Brigade. On 9th July 1900 he was enrolled as Chaplain and Captain of this Company with the other officers being John Lister Clay, G.G. Hague and William Simpson Baines – Read [John Lister Clay and family.pdf](#) . This Company, which met at Lightcliffe National School on Tuesday evenings, appears in 1901, 1902 and 1903 records.

It was the Rev. Hill who caused the second vicarage to be built. He decided that he wanted a vicarage more conveniently sited for the Church and so Abbotsford was sold for £2300. The sale advertisement shows that the house contained three reception rooms with a kitchen, sculleries, cellars and bedrooms. Interestingly, it states that the mineral rights under a portion of the land were reserved without the written permission of the perpetual curate and the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty. It would not have been often that this body was quoted in a sale.

Prior to the completion of the new vicarage, Rev. Hill lived in the new Manse for the Congregational Church. Then on census night, 31st March 1901, his mother and sister, Mary, were with him in Bleak House, Wakefield Road, Lightcliffe.



The new Vicarage was completed later in 1901. It is in the Arts and Crafts Jacobean style, in sharp contrast with Abbotsford's Victorian Gothic style. In spite of it being the work of the well-known local architect J. F. Walsh, there was some difficulty in satisfying the local council in Hipperholme. They even threatened to take action against the builder because he had proceeded to build it before the plans had been approved and they were in breach of the byelaws.

Rev. Hill had a strong belief in the value of education. He was a member of the Education Board which had control over the National Schools at Knowle Top and Hipperholme Infants School. He was also a governor at Hipperholme Grammar School. Whilst Brighouse's curate, he had been a member of the school board.

He seems to have been very popular and particularly concerned with the school. Unfortunately, he did not enjoy good health. The *Brighouse News* said that he suffered from an affliction of the throat. Lightcliffe school records reported on 12th June 1901 as follows; 'The vicar came in today to say "Goodbye". He is going to Canada for 6 months' rest, being in very bad health just now.'

His return from British Columbia, after several months away, was greeted enthusiastically at a reception at the National Schools. The vicar of Halifax, Ven. Archdeacon Brooke, several clergy including one of his brothers, churchwardens and prominent residents, such as Mr. W. H. Aykroyd and Mr. G. Watkinson junior, were in attendance. However, in September, 1903 he had to resign because of ill health. He spent the rest of his life living with his widowed mother and unmarried sister in Scotland.

Unfortunately, Rev. Hill's resignation meant that the Lightcliffe Company of the Church Lads' Brigade was disbanded after 1903. But Rev. James Robert Hill's legacy would include the 'new' vicarage, the extended vestries and the replacement church organ.

The Rev. James Robert Hill died of tuberculosis at the family home of Shinnelwood, near Thornhill, Dumfries on 18th September, 1904. He was interred in the Hill family vault at Dryfesdale Cemetery, Lockerbie, Dumfriesshire on 21st September 1904. His is the last name on this memorial.



ALSO OF REV. JAMES ROBERT HILL, M.A. (OXON)
 VICAR OF LIGHTCLIFFE YORKSHIRE 1897 – 1903
 ENTERED INTO REST 18TH SEPTEMBER 1904
 FOR EVER WITH THE LORD

The Lightcliffe school records show that on 21st September 1904, 'A service is being held at Church, during the time that the remains of the late Vicar, the Rev. J. R. Hill, are being interred in Dumfriesshire... No fewer than 55 boys are absent, with their parents' consent, in order to attend the service. The Rev. J. R. Hill was much beloved by the children.'

Probate was granted to two of his brothers, Rev. Henry Erskine Hill of The Rectory, Maryhill, Glasgow and Rev. Ebenezer Brown Hill of the Vicarage, Ashampstead, Berkshire. His brother Rev. James Brown Hill was the Vicar of Thornhill Lees, Dewsbury. He came over to Lightcliffe to conduct services at St. Matthew's Church, as well as speaking at various meetings on such topics as Oberammergau after a visit there.

Henry Alexander Kennedy M.A. came as Vicar in 1903. The living was valued at £310. He had been inspector in religious knowledge of the Church schools in the diocese of Wakefield and he was a curate at the cathedral. As part of his duties, he preached at the annual service at the old church. In 1906 the collection raised nearly £4 for its upkeep.

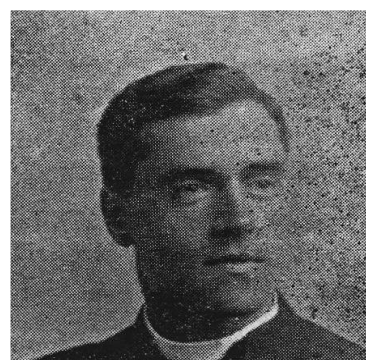
It was in 1903 that the new organ by William Andrews was commissioned for Lightcliffe church at a cost of £1350. This project involved the building of the 'Blower House' in the rear corner of what is now the car park, with the air being passed through a long underground pipe.

Rev. Kennedy's resignation from the parish in 1907 came as a surprise including, it seemed, to himself. He was asked to take up the parish of Horbury by the Bishop – the implication being that there was a problem there and he had the skills to deal with it.

There were expressions of regret within the parish as he and his wife had settled in well and he was respected for his intense zeal and earnestness. (*Halifax Daily Guardian*, February, 1907.) He wrote in the parish magazine of his thanks for the gifts that he had received and expressed appreciation for the support given to his wife who had suffered spinal pain for over a year but had continued to serve the parish. He commended his successor, well known to many, saying that he would bring a spiritual force to God's work in the life of the church.

Rev. Kennedy's successor was Canon **Richard Piers Whittington** M.A. who claimed to be descended from Dick Whittington. He was educated at Winchester College and Keble College, Oxford and then ordained in Winchester in 1893. Before moving to Lightcliffe he was vicar at Heptonstall. His institution and induction at Lightcliffe were held in October 1907. The institution was performed by the Venerable Archdeacon Norris, Rector of Barnsley acting on behalf of the Bishop. He delivered a striking sermon which caused much discussion. (*Brighouse News*, 18 October 1907) The Archdeacon together with Rev. Kennedy conducted the induction. At the time the living was described as a 'vicarage', net yearly value £270, including 16 acres of glebe with residence in the gift of the Vicar of Halifax. Perhaps this glebe relates back to the properties purchased under the Queen Anne Bounty scheme mentioned earlier.

Thirty-nine-year-old Richard Piers Whittington (pictured right) married Ethel Mary Watkinson in St. Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe on 29th October 1908. The service was conducted by the bride's brother, Rev George Watkinson with the Rev. H. A. Kennedy giving the address and Lightcliffe's curate, Rev. H. H. Green in attendance.



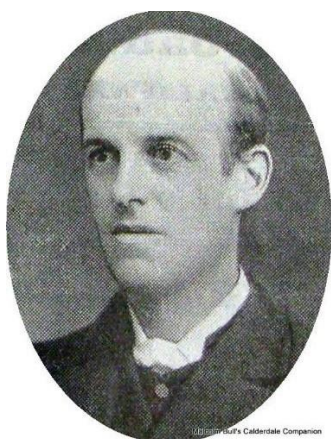
The thirty-three-year-old bride was the daughter of [George Watkinson the Younger.pdf](#). Follow the link to a People of Interest article about the family on the churchyard website.

Next Rev. Whittington became the vicar at Brighouse for five years from 1911 to 1916. From there he went to Penistone where he acted as Rural Dean of Silkstone. He also held livings in Almondbury and then, for 18 years, in Darrington, both in West Yorkshire. He became an honorary canon of Wakefield Cathedral. He retired to Charmouth, Bridport, Dorset in 1946 after 53 years' service as a clergyman, dying there aged 78, in 1948. His wife (Edith) Mary also died there in 1953.

In 1909 there was a further alteration to the parish boundaries to accommodate the establishment of St Matthew's in Northowram. The changes took away small parts of the western boundary including a piece by Woodfield House, Wood Lane where the new Vicar of Northowram, Rev George Watkinson, lived. The London Gazette article is still referring to the 'new' parish of St Matthew's, Lightcliffe. The Watkinson family were firm supporters of our church and, indeed, were instrumental in the creation of the Lady Chapel.

From 1911 to 1914 **Charles Lacy Hulbert** M.A. was Vicar. He was born in Slaithwaite, Huddersfield, Yorkshire in 1870. He served in parishes in the southern Lake District from 1893 until moving to back to Yorkshire. In 1907, he became curate in charge of St Barnabas' Mission Church in Lock Street, Caddy Field, Halifax - near the railway station - and then vicar at St George's Church, Ovenden, Halifax in 1908.

He married Catherine Hone, in the same year, 1911, as he came to Lightcliffe. She married well, because he was the nephew of Sir Francis Powell of Wigan and a member of a rich family. He succeeded to the Powell estates in Wigan and Lancashire. As befits such a man, he moved from Lightcliffe after a very short time to become Vicar of Great St.Mary and St.Michael, Cambridge; he was an honorary canon at Ely. On the death of his uncle, he inherited the family estate and changed his surname to Hulbert-Powell to reflect that. He died a very wealthy man on 11th March 1959 in Cambridge.



Charles Lacy Hulbert



In the 20 previous years, St Matthew's had had five vicars with illness, promotions, a Bishop's directive reasons for relative short stays. This now changes with a long period of stability as Rev. **Harold Lancaster Taylor** M.A. became vicar in 1914. He was born in Trawden, Lancashire on 16th September 1878. His father was Rev. William Lancaster Taylor, Vicar of St Anne's, Lytham. Harold graduated from Worcester College Oxford in 1900 and studied further at the Leeds Clergy School. During his college days he had been a cox. It is reported that he had a section of boat on the wall beside the fireplace in the Lightcliffe vicarage! He was ordained in 1902 in the Diocese of Oxford.

Before coming to Lightcliffe he had been Curate in Mirfield, then Halifax and Vicar of St. Augustine's, Scissett, Huddersfield for 7 years. He married Beatrice Emily Stancliffe on 17th April 1907 in Mirfield. They had two children, Joan Mary and Colin Stancliffe Taylor, whilst they were in Scissett. And then Rachel Margaret and John Kennett Lancaster Taylor, were born whilst the family were in Lightcliffe.

Rev. Taylor's Lightcliffe ministry included both World Wars. During and immediately after the first War, he officiated at the burials of those who died as a result of the conflict e.g. Private Walter Pybus, Corporal Joe Willie Shaw, Private Robert Brownrigg, Private Leonard Sucksmith and May Hartley, the only female name on the Roll of Honour in St. Matthew's Church. See our [People of Interest](#) page for their stories. At the beginning of August 1918 he conducted a service commemorating the declaration of war and, in his sermon, emphasized the impact of the intervention of the USA.

A month later in September 1918 Hannah Jane Foster, the widow of Major Johnston Jonas Foster, the church's main benefactor, died in Ludlow. She too was brought back to Lightcliffe for burial with her husband in the Foster vault. The funeral service was conducted by the vicar, Rev H. L. Taylor, and Rev. the Marquess of Normanby, her son-in-law. Memorial services were later held in St Matthew's Church for Ethel Jane (1867-1940) and her husband (1864-1929), Lady and Lord Inchiquin.

Throughout his time at Lightcliffe Rev. Taylor wrote regularly to his parishioners in the monthly parish magazine. A couple of these letters urged, politely, further contributions to the war memorial. This project had been approved in 1920 to provide a canopy over the churchwardens' pew at the west end of the church (it now, largely, forms the divide between the nave and the entrance lobby.) The estimate for the cost was estimated at between £400 and £500. Mr. W H Aykroyd had provided an initial donation of £100.

At the time of the 1921 census his elderly parents and his mother's lady's maid were visitors at the Lightcliffe Vicarage. All the rest of his family were there except eleven-year-old Colin Staincliffe Taylor who was at school in Ely.

1925 saw the completion of another project, that of the Lady Chapel, which had been created in the southwest aisle of the church. The chapel was in memory of two former churchwardens, father and son, George Watkinson and Samuel Lord Watkinson. The dedication service was conducted by another son Rev. George Watkinson, vicar of Northowram and Rev. Harold Lancaster Taylor.



Rev. Harold Lancaster Taylor (above) with school children and (left) in a line of dignitaries at an unknown event

In 1936, in recognition of his 34 years of faithful service, he was appointed an honorary canon of Wakefield Cathedral. To mark his 50 years as a clergyman, of which 37 were as vicar of St. Matthew's, Canon Taylor was presented with a cheque for £250 in October 1951. He is seen in the newspaper image below showing it to Canon George Watkinson.

50 YEARS A CLERGYMAN



Harold Lancaster Taylor died on Friday, 30th September 1955 in hospital. On the Sunday after his death, muffled bells were rung and after the services the organist, Mr Ambler, played Chopin's Funeral March. An all-night vigil was kept before his funeral on Tuesday October 4th. The funeral service was conducted by Rev. John Lister, Vicar of Brighouse. Many clergy were in attendance including Right Rev. Dr. R. P. Wilson, Bishop of Wakefield. The church was filled to capacity and many tributes were paid reflecting his 41 years of service. The Bishop said that it was not so much the things that Canon Taylor had done as the quality and integrity of his life which had been an inspiration to others. A private cremation followed at Lawnswood, Leeds.

His ashes were buried in the Sanctuary where there is a plaque, together with a dedication, in the Lady Chapel which was built during his ministry. This latter took the form of a seat and frontal on the west wall of the side chapel (carved by Mr H P Jackson).



Rev **Alban Bodley Mace** was not a Lightcliffe vicar but after his ordination in 1910 he became a curate at St Matthew's Church. Whilst in Lightcliffe he lodged with Miss Mary Waring at Crow Nest Cottages. In early 1913 he became curate-in -charge at St. James Church, Brighouse Church (opposite the Bonegate/Bradford Road junction in Brighouse). Not long after that, at the beginning of April 1913 he married Evelyn Goldthorpe at St. Matthew's Church Lightcliffe. She was the youngest daughter of the late Mr. Guy Goldthorp and the niece of Sir Algernon & Lady Janet Firth of Holme House.

During World War 1 he served as a Temporary Chaplain attached to the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. He was killed in action in Salonica, Greece on 3rd October 1916 and buried in Struma Military Cemetery Greece.

MACE, The Rev. Alban Bodley, Chaplain to the Forces, 4th class. Attd. 2nd Bn. Duke of Cornwall's L.I. Killed by high explosive shell, near Yenikeui, 3rd Oct., 1916. Age 31. Son of the Rev. and Mrs. J. C. Mace, late of Hawley, Hants.; husband of Evelyn Mace, of 3, St. Mark's Road, Alverstoke, Gosport, Hants. II. H. 1.

His name appears on the Lightcliffe Roll of Honour in St. Matthew's Church, and he was remembered at the Lightcliffe service for those killed in the Great War. In Brighouse, at St. James's Church, a memorial window was erected to him. When this church was demolished, the window was donated to Cliffe Castle Museum, Keighley.



The next Lightcliffe Vicar was Rev. **Frank White** who arrived in 1955. He was born in 1911 at Crossland Moor, a native of Huddersfield. After being educated at Huddersfield College and then training at Lincoln Theological College he was ordained at Wakefield Cathedral in 1937. He had been a curate at Penistone from 1936 to 1939 then moved to St. Paul's King Cross. From 1941 to 1946 he was a Senior Army Chaplain, serving in Berlin from May 1945 to 1946.



He married Elizabeth Rosemary Pollit on 9th November 1945 at King Cross, Halifax. They had three children, John, Elisabeth and Catherine. After the war he was Vicar of Clayton West, then in 1950 Vicar of Liversedge, before coming to Lightcliffe in 1955. He was captain of the Diocesan cricket team, Rural Dean of Brighouse and Elland and Mayor's Chaplain. He attended two royal garden parties.



Rev. Frank White

The new Vicar of Lightcliffe, the Rev. F. White (left), with the Bishop of Wakefield (Dr. R.P. Wilson), who performed the institution ceremony at St. Matthew's Church, and the Vicar of Halifax (Archdeacon Eric Treacy, M.B.E.), who conducted the induction service.

The congregation included the vicar of Brighouse, Rev. J. F. Lister, and the Mayor and Mayoress of Brighouse, Alderman & Mrs. Hinchliffe, and members of Brighouse Town Council. In 1963 he became a Canon of Wakefield Cathedral and in 1967 he was made Rural Dean of Brighouse.

Rev. Frank White inherited the **'Steady Deterioration of Lightcliffe Old Church'** – as a newspaper headline from 1958 put it - and the problem of what to do with it, as it became a financial burden to the parish. At first the vicar was an advocate for preserving it and finding alternative uses for it. He suggested a number of possibilities, including a funeral home and a public library. However, by 1970, the end was in sight. Canon White said that once a building is no longer needed by anyone for anything you cannot preserve it. You should be able to leave it without it being wrecked by vandals.



So, despite Canon White's fight to find alternative uses, including being in contact with Halifax Civic Trust and a hundred local organisations, a redundancy scheme was approved. Discussions then took place with Friends of Friendless Churches and the tower was saved.



Images courtesy of FoFC

Up the road at St. Matthew's new church, girls were admitted to the church choir in the 1960s allowing all three White children to also take part in services. In 1970 the church bells were recast to make them lighter and so 'ringable'. Canon White conducted the dedication of the recast bells in 1971. But by the beginning of 1972 illness caused him to seek a smaller parish. He became Vicar of St. Oswald's Church, Leathley-with-Farnley near Otley later in 1972 retiring in 1979. He and his wife then moved to Hubberholme, Skipton where he died in 1986. He was buried in the churchyard at St. Oswald's.



Frank White

In October 1972 the induction of the next vicar took place at Lightcliffe.

Our policy is not to write in detail of those still alive or recently dead, so this article stops here. The following names complete the incumbents of St Matthew's, Lightcliffe.

From 1972 to 1979 **Rev. Michael George Whitcombe, M.A.**

From 1979 to 1998 **Rev. David Wilding B.D., A.K.C**

From 1998 to 2006 **Rev. Robert Gerard Cooper B.A.**

From 2006 to 2010 **Rev. Peter Sutcliffe**

From 2010 **Rev. Kathryn Buck B.A.**

This article extends the earlier work of Michael and Barbara Stephenson - for a talk to Lightcliffe and District History Society - in time for the 150th anniversary of the new church in 2025.

The main sources of information were: -

- The Stephenson notes
- A letter from Rosemary White
- J. Horsfall-Turner. *Lightcliffe Old Chapel*, with the description of the new church 1529 – 1908
- Malcolm Bull's *Calderdale Companion*
- The websites Ancestry and Find My Past.

Dorothy Barker and Ian Philp

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