

A Guide to

the Parish Church of

St James' Ravenfield



Welcome to this gem of a church from the 18th century. The prime reason for its existence has always been as a place for the people of Ravenfield to meet with God. 'God does not live in a house built with his hand' but, over its 250 years, many have drawn closer to him in the light and peace of this space. We hope you do too.

The name Ravenfield is of Norse origin and means 'raven's open field'. There was a medieval chapel on this site which was replaced in 1756 with the present church, designed by the York architect John Carr.

The Porch (1)

You enter church via the porch which has its original stone floor. On the right are stairs to a gallery which originally would have been used by musicians. Some of the estate labourers and craftsmen would have enjoyed playing instruments in their free time (as in Thomas Hardy's novel 'Under the Greenwood Tree' which is an enjoyable story about one such choir).

The Vestry (2)

Still in the porch, the door on the left leads to the old vestry. On the left wall is a tablet commemorating the building of the church in 1756. Note the scallop-shell decorations which indicate the dedication of the church to St James the Greater. His famous shrine at Compostella in north-west Spain was near the sea shore. Medieval pilgrims would pin scallop shells to their hats to indicate that they had made the arduous journey.

The Nave (3)

Through the oak doors you enter the Nave. This is the main and largest part of the church. To the left and right are the pews where the congregation sit for services. The original seats were high boxed pews which were replaced around 1895.

The Apse (4)

If you look towards the end of the Nave you can see the Apse. This is a semicircular recess that contains the altar.

The Altar (5)

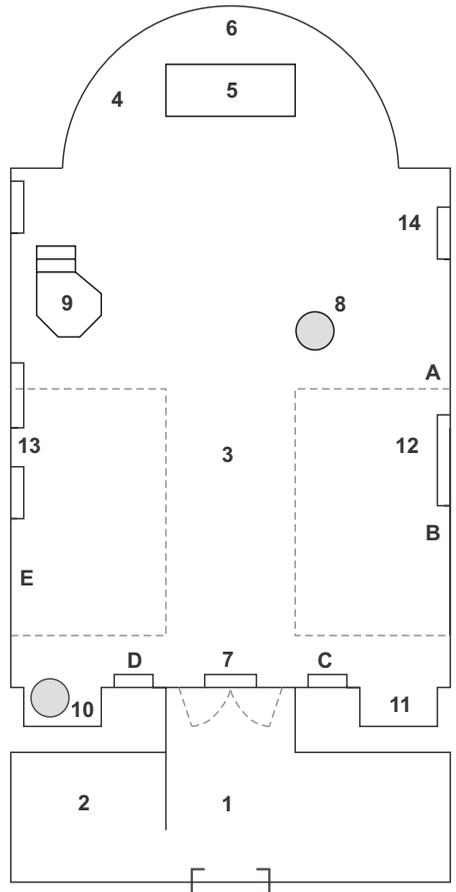
The altar is a holy table, the most sacred part of the church. It was replaced in 1994. The new altar was made from part of the reredos that originally covered the east window. The rails are made of oak and the design is called Barley Sugar. These are thought to be original.

The East Window (6)

Above the altar is the east window. The coloured glass was taken from the earlier window of 1811, which was designed by William Peckett. It was restored to its present state in 1994.

Hatchments

'Hatchment' is derived from the word 'Achievement'. Hatchments are the armorial bearings of a deceased person. They were displayed outside the Hall for a period of mourning and then taken into church. Those understanding heraldry can work out who the person was and information about their family. For example, if the arms are on a shield shape, the person was a man; if they are on a lozenge shape, the person was a woman. There is a special leaflet in church with more details.



- A. Is probably for Thomas Bosvile (d.1824)
- B. For William Parkin Bosvile (d.1811)
- C. For Walter Osborne (d.1778)
- E. For Mary, wife of Walter Osborne (d.1785)
- E. For Frances, wife of William Parkin Bosvile (d. Unknown)

Royal Coat of Arms (7)

These are the Royal Coat of Arms of George III who ascended the throne in 1760, a few years after the church was built. The date on the Coat of Arms is 1792 so perhaps it was part of the rejoicings following his recovery from his first bouts of 'madness' as portrayed in a well-known film.

The Lectern (8)

This oak lectern dates from 1895 and stands by the side of the choir stalls. It holds the Bible from which readings are made at each service in church.

The Pulpit (9)

The oak pulpit, designed in the Georgian style, was part of the re-ordering of the church in 1895 initiated by Squire Bosvile. The sermon is delivered from here at each service. Its decoration is well done in keeping with the period.

The Font (10)

Also made of oak, the font is an octagonal shape and was again part of the re-ordering of the church in 1895. It is in keeping with the pulpit. It stands in the recess between the doors to the nave and the north wall. It is said that the eight sides are symbolic of rebirth, renewal and eternal life. They may also represent the eight people rescued from the great flood in the Bible. On the back wall of the recess is a picture of the Madonna and Child painted on silk by Joyce Hurst, a worshipper here for 40 years.

Memorial Book (11)

The recess between the doors to the nave and the south wall houses the Memorial Book. It contains the names of those people whose cremated remains lie in the churchyard. There is a wrought iron candle-stand into which a memorial light can be placed after prayers in church.

South Wall Memorials (12)

The flat obelisk wall monument is a memorial to Elizabeth Parkin who ordered the building in 1756. She was lady of the manor of Ravenfield from 1749 until her death in 1766. It also remembers her cousins, the Obornes, who succeeded her. There are various 18th and 19th century urns sharing the base of the memorial which record the lives of various members of families who owned the Ravenfield estate.

North Wall Memorials (13)

The monument nearest to the apse is the fine Westby memorial. This is the only memorial transferred from the old Medieval chapel. It commemorates George Westby and his wife Elizabeth. The Westby family had been Lords of the Manor from about the 12th century.

The next memorial is dedicated to Thomas Bosvile, The Bosvile's inherited the Ravenfield estate from Elizabeth Parkin, who had purchased it in 1749 from the Westby family. The Westbys had no male heir. The last memorial on the north side commemorates the villagers who died in the First World War.

Annunciation Painting (14)

On the south wall above the organ is an oil painting of the annunciation, in the Italian style. This picture was first attached to the reredos which covered the east window before the re-ordering of the church. Nothing is known of the artist.

The Tower and Bells

The tower houses a set of six bells. These can be chimed by one person using a mechanism at gallery level. Three of the bells are also used by the clock, for striking the hours and the quarters. Once outside, notice the rare one-fingered clock on the tower, the unusual spirelet and the ogee arch windows. Can you find the date of starting the building of the church? (It's carved into the wall near the south east corner).

The Churchyard

The area around the church has some fine pedestal and table tombs. Can you find the grave of the person who lived to be over 100 years old?

The north east corner under the yew tree is now used for cremated ashes with a single gravestone. The tall monument near the north east corner of the church is thought to be for Elizabeth Parkin. The monument to Henry Hoole (not far from the gate) featured in an educational television film. He was an important figure in the iron and steel industry, one-time Mayor of Sheffield and a Fellow of the Royal Society.

The Church Today

We hope you have enjoyed your visit. If you wish to leave a donation, Gift Aid envelopes are available at the back, as are sale copies of the Parish Magazine. Please sign the visitors' book and consider yourself invited to join any of the regular Sunday services. May God, who hears our prayers, go with you as you leave.

Sunday Services (full details in the Parish Magazine)

9.15am Holy Communion
except for the 2nd Sunday each month when the services are:

9.30am Holy Communion at the Parish Hall (Birchwood Drive)
3.30pm Evening Prayer in Church

There is also a monthly afternoon service at the Elizabeth Parkin Centre (Longfield Drive) on the 4th Sunday at 3.30pm

This guide has been produced by St James' Ravenfield
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