

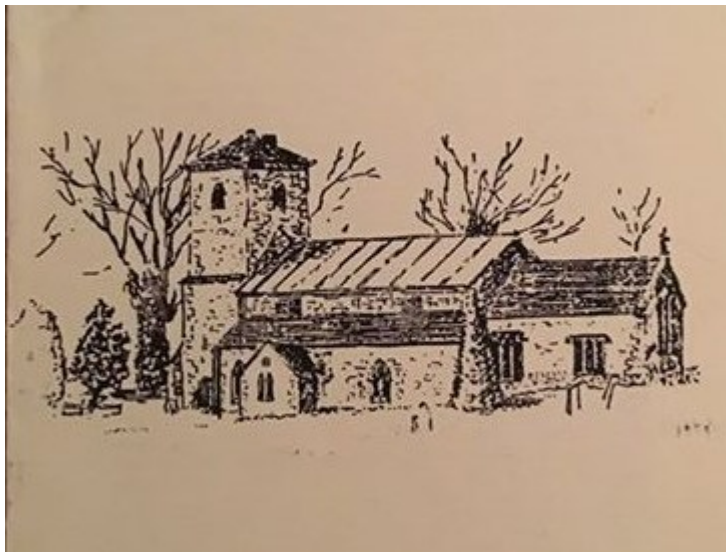
## A Short History of Horkstow and the Church

The village goes back at least to Roman times, for it is well known for the Roman Pavements which were discovered in the grounds of Horkstow Hall in 1796." The large and intricate mosaic Pavements now to be seen in the Transport Museum in Hull, include a representation of Orpheus, playing the lute, and surrounded with animals The depiction of Orpheus - one of only a few in the country – is interesting evidence of early Christianity. In the early centuries AD when the image of graven images was forbidden, Orpheus was often used as a pictorial representation of Christ. The border of the mosaic depicts a chariot race, possibly at Lincoln, and is unique.

We can be sure from all this, that the site marks the residence of someone of considerable importance and wealth. A Roman official probably, and quite possibly a retired soldier who had decided to settle, with his family, in this sheltered valley. The dedication of the Church to St. Maurice is further evidence of the Roman occupation. One of only eight such dedications in England, all of which have links with Rome and two of which are to be found in York. Maurice was a Roman Legionaire, martyred in the Rhone valley at what is now St Maurice en Valais, circa 287 AD, for his refusal to make sacrifice to Mars, the God of War. It is very probable that the Roman family, occupying the Horkstow villa, were Christian, and who more appropriate as a Patron Saint than their fellow Roman Legionaire. One can speculate that Horkstow was possibly one of the first sites of Christian worship in this part of England.

Like the rest of Lincolnshire, Horkstow would have been submerged by the Saxon and Danish invasions. The “-by” suffix meaning the home or the place of, of many of the neighbouring villages is evidence of this. But the village survived and is mentioned in the Domesday Book (Horchetou) when it was part of the Lordship of Barton in the ownership of Hugh the Fenman. This landowner of an enormous area stretching right down the East Coast was dispossessed by William the Conqueror and the land given to Gilbert of Ghent.

The original Church or Chapel would probably have been a wood and thatch building. The present



Rendering of Saint Maurice's Church, Horkstow

Church is basically Early English and much of it dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The first named rector of Horkstow was William de Herringburgh from 1241 to 1276. Norman names continue until we get to John Bryan in 1447. The list continues unbroken and is recorded in the Vestry. The village appears in the national news once more in 1536, the year of the “Lincolnshire Rebellion” against Henry VIII’s dissolution of the monasteries. The Squire stood by the Rector and both paid for their opposition with their lives, the

Squire being hung, drawn and quartered at Tyburn. It was probably at this time that the old Manor House was destroyed, now only to be identified by the humps in the grass field opposite the Church.

You have come into the Church by the porch on the North side, and you are immediately faced with the round Norman pillars dating back to the early 13<sup>th</sup> Century, which separate the aisle from the Nave – in contrast to the octagonal pillars on the South side which are 14<sup>th</sup> Century. We suggest that you should stand with your back to the tower, facing east, towards the Chancel and the Altar. You will be struck straightaway by the unusual architecture of the Choir and Chancel. Raised much higher than the Nave and sloping upwards to Early English lancet windows in the East wall, flooding the Sanctuary with a pale green light. This design of arches leading the eye to two simple lancet windows is evidence of the early history of the Church, being associated with Churches built by the Knights Templar – the medieval order of Knights who were prominent in the Crusades and were a cell of the main Templar organization in Eastern England, at Willoughton near Gainsborough. Subsequently, much of the Templar lands passed to the Prior and Brethren of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem – and a passage in the Ross manuscripts in Lincoln refers to the grant of the Church at Horkstow to the Hospitalers in 1338.

The height above the Nave, however, is explained by the fact the Church is built on the sloping ground of the Wold escarpment, being raised so as to avoid excavating too deeply into the hillside. It is said that the space underneath the Chancel was used as a family vault. Booney's notes of 1846 support this by recording an inscription on the floor marking the interment of Marmaduke Darell who died on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of June, 1678, at the age of 76.

Still standing in the centre of the Nave, you should look up at the roof. Massive oak beams span the Nave and support the roof. These were erected in 1609, almost certainly the date of the removal of the previous, steeply pitched, thatched roof. (When you are outside, you will notice, on the east side of the tower, the stonework which marks the pitch of this ancient roof). Further strengthening of this new, and much heavier, and probably tiled, roof was necessary 50 years later. The date 1659 can be seen carved in the oak of one of the vertical supports to the main beams. Now, nearly 400 years later, even the massive beams have been dangerously weakened by death watch beetle and major restoration work has been necessary and carried out in early 1991.

Turn now to face the tower, where a small pointed doorway leads into the ringing chamber. There are four bells. The earliest is certainly pre-reformation but is unrelated of the other three, the earliest is dated 1578. The West wall now carries a particularly fine George I Coat of Arms, as well as Hatchments of the Shirley Tufnell and Hele families – all recently restored by the Lincoln College of Art.

The other furnishings of the Church are plain and mostly Victorian. The building was restored in 1868 when the pews and pulpit were installed. The modern Font sadly replacing one much older, still in the Church, is dedicated to the memory of Edith Mary Moore, the wife of the then Incumbent, who died in 1887. In 1898, the aisle floors were re-surfaced.

The exterior of the building reflect much of the restoration work that has gone on over the centuries. In places, much of the softer chalk stone has been replaced and patched with brick of varying types and colour. Most noticeably, the Nave roof is now covered with stainless steel sheet, an unfortunate

economy measure following the theft of the previous lead covering in 1985. However, despite these somewhat less than aesthetically satisfactory changes, the Church still presents a most pleasing aspect tucked under the Wold slope and sheltered by large trees – a building of great character and antiquity, to say nothing of solid beauty.

Turning now to the rest of the village, we should record the connection with George Stubbs (1724 – 1806), one of England's great artists. At the age of 32, he moved to Horkstow and there spent 10 months devoted to the dissection of the horse and the production of anatomical drawings. A man of great strength, he is said to have hauled the carcasses to an upper room of a "remote farm house" where he did his work. Sadly, we have no record of which house that was.

Horkstow today remains what it has always been despite these various historical intrusions into its life – a quiet rural village nestling on the spring line of the Wold escarpment facing west over the Ancholme valley. Farming has been, and one hopes always will be, its mainstay. Covering some 2000 acres and including excellent quality chalk soils suited to the production of potatoes, sugar beets, and vegetables, as well as the much more difficult clay soils of the valley, it is a small Parish but one which has played an important role in the agricultural technical revolution which has so transformed the industry. Though so much has changed, one can perhaps speculate that the Roman family, were they here today, would feel equally at home, looking across the valley towards the busy Ermine Street, as they did some 1,600 years ago.