

# Newsletter:

March 2023

<http://www.beverleycivicsociety.co.uk/>



## Chairman's Remarks

Spring must be in the air...

The changing seasons always bring a different and welcome enjoyment of our environment.

You may know that our Society is a member of two larger organisations: Civic Voice and The Yorkshire and Humberside Association of Civic Societies (YHACS). Who are they, and why is the Society a member of these two organisations?



Civic Voice is a national charity that works to make the places where everyone lives more attractive, enjoyable and distinctive, and seeks to promote Civic Pride and Heritage. It acts as a voice on the national stage for Civic and other Amenity Societies. One of its major successes has been the establishment of an All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) to represent the Civic Society movement in Parliament which creates a voice which is '*Greater than the Sum of its Parts*'. It runs workshops and speaker events for its members on many issues and policies: e.g.: 'How will we build better and beautifully?', and 'Levelling Up our Heritage High Streets'. It produces a monthly news update: See: <https://www.civicvoice.org.uk/about/>

YHACS offers assistance to local Civic and Amenity societies by providing information, support and advice, also producing a Quarterly Newsletter. It provides great networking opportunities through its quarterly members' meetings, held at different locations across the region in conjunction with the local civic society. We ran one of these meetings in April 2021 on 'Good Housing Design' with the architects who designed the RIBA Stirling Prize winning Goldsmith Street Council Housing project in Norwich; an inspiring occasion.

See: <https://yhacs.org.uk>

So these organisations provide members of local societies with the opportunity to keep up to date with Planning, Heritage and other issues, to learn, and contribute to the conversation.

Elsewhere in this Newsletter you will find news and comment on the Society's many activities, and articles covering a variety of interesting topics. We hope you enjoy reading these, and we always welcome any feedback, and suggestions for future editions.

Dick Lidwell

### Some planning matters around town:

Members will, no doubt, have heard from the media much about the temporary closure of the England Springs railway footpath and bridleway crossing. Discussions continue. The Society has always favoured keeping this crossing open and, given Network Rail's national policy of closing unsupervised crossings, has advocated the installation of a suitable bridge on the site to maintain the established right of way. From our regular meetings with ERYC we are aware of their plan to build a substantial bridge to accommodate all types of users further south; the actual site of which involves negotiations with housing developers.

The Society has been approached by ERYC to discuss their future policy regarding the longstanding plan to build the Park and Ride on the south of the town. This re-evaluation has become logical given that so many of the original needs have changed over the last twenty years. We look forward to learning more and inputting the Society's views at our meeting in early June. Should any members have views they would like the Society to take into account please do contact me.

The Society is also being consulted on a proposal to install four EV charging points in North Bar Within, just south of the entrance into Coombes Yard. The Executive has responded positively to the principle but has made several suggestions in order to protect and preserve the integrity of this important Conservation Area, including the use of green paint (as opposed to the standard white) for the four charging units so matching the existing street furniture, minimal signage and road markings, etc.

Members may have noticed that the flood lights on the North Bar have ceased to function (only two on the south side are working). We are trying to get these repaired as they are both an important asset to the Bar, and are a legacy of our former long standing member and town councillor, John Bird, following his great work in establishing the 'Festival of Christmas', residual funds from which funded the project.

Finally; plans for the re-organisation of the Champney Road Library, Treasure House and gardens are well advanced. As previously reported, these include relocating the Tourist Information Centre, bringing Customer Services and the Registry Office into the building, reorganising parts of the library, and improving the garden. If you haven't seen these plans do visit the Treasure House where the large plans are currently being displayed in the downstairs corridor.

*Dick Lidwell*

### Nesting birds

As the days grow longer one of the greatest pleasures is hearing our birds preparing for nesting season. Let's remember that we should not be trimming hedges or trees from March 1<sup>st</sup> until September 1<sup>st</sup>. It's worth checking even around those dates that you are not disturbing nesting birds as climate change impacts on our birds' breeding season.





## The Eagle and the *Magnificat*

### An amazing misericord in St Mary's Beverley: The Eagle and the *Magnificat* of the NE choir stall

A misericord (=mercy seat) is a hinged wooden seat found in choir stalls of some medieval churches that, when tipped up, provided a ledge on which someone could rest while theoretically standing during the long services. The small area beneath this ledge was often decorated with carvings.

St Mary's has 28 oak choir stalls, with carved angels on the divisions between the stalls, and carved misericords under each seat. We think our choir stalls were carved in the second quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps around 1445 when the chancel roof was completed. This article is about the carving on the stall at the east end of the north row.



NE stall of St Mary's Beverley, the raised seat with its 'hinge' and misericord. The adjoining stall has the full width seat down, hiding its misericord. Barbara English

The main carving on the NE misericord (central in the picture above) is of exceptional rarity and interest. It shows an eagle, with a songbook held by two animals wearing clerical stoles. The eagle is about 18 cm (7 in) high and the book 10.6 cm (4 in) high and 11.43 cm (4½ in) wide, so the images are very small, and hard to study as they are very close to the bench in front in shadow. Almost invisible, nevertheless the 15<sup>th</sup> century carver took enormous trouble with the detail in this scene.

You can see that the carving has been restored, with a new strip of differently coloured oak at the lower part of the design. The choir stall restorations (plus a few Victorian additions) are the work of the famous Peterborough firm Thompson & Ruddle, working under the architect Sir [George] Gilbert Scott in 1875. We do not know if the carvers had any guide to the former appearance of what they restored, or if they just used their own ideas.

The animals have been described as dogs, foxes, or wolves in modern catalogues of misericords (none of which has commented on the eagle or songbook). Usually, an animal in a clerical stole is interpreted as a satire against evil priests, especially friars, but this does not seem relevant here: I do not know what animals they are, nor what they should tell us.



The misericord in the NE Stall in St Mary's Beverley. Barbara English

### The eagle

The central figure is an eagle with a stylised sun behind its head, its wings outstretched, and a feathered body that continues below the book. In the new wood the carvers seem to have carved a stand, as if to show a moveable lectern.

A distinguished expert on lecterns, however, (Marcus van der Meulen) has suggested that this is not a lectern, but that the rising eagle is an allegory for Christ, and the 'stand' in the Victorian restoration is actually the eagle's tail: the section of the feathered body in the older wood does reinforce that view but does not explain why the eagle is provided with a book.

Medieval artists seem to have used eagles for various tropes. The sun behind the eagle's head is included in medieval bestiaries (collections of moral fables about real or imagined birds and animals) to illustrate the fable that when eagles became old, they flew towards the sun to renew their eyesight and their feathers. Eagles were also common in heraldry, often as 'spread eagles.' Another and much more frequent use of eagles is the eagle representing St John the Evangelist, whose Gospel would be read or sung from a lectern. Perhaps the medieval carvers had both the bestiary and an eagle lectern in mind: as the crucial part of the carving is Victorian, we cannot be sure.

Eagle lecterns are very familiar sights in Anglican churches, at the E end of the nave, often on the S side to balance the pulpit on the N side. These lecterns are almost all Victorian, located for Protestant services: in the Catholic Middle Ages they were close to the altar, and there were often two, one for the Gospel, and the other for choir purposes. Because of the music this misericord seems likely to be showing a choir lectern.



## Words and Plainsong Music

After discovering the songbook I consulted very helpful scholars, a palaeographer and three musicologists. It is possible to read the line of text as *Magnificat anima [mea]*, the first two words being those of the Song of Mary, from St Luke's Gospel and translated in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer as *[My] soul doth magnify the Lord*. It is one of the oldest Christian hymns, still used all over the Christian world; in England and in Beverley most commonly at Vespers and Evensong. The form of the medieval capital letter M, easy to see in the picture to the right, is correct for the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.



Enlargement of the songbook. Barbara English

I had guessed that the 'music' might be just a jumble of notes, but no, it is real. As I am completely unqualified to decode this, Professor John Bryan of the University of Huddersfield has very kindly written to me:

This is indeed 'real' music. You have identified the text as the opening of the Magnificat, and the notation gives the opening chant for this. It is on a 4-line staff, with a C clef on the 2<sup>nd</sup> line down, followed by the first notes, starting on G. This denotes 'Tone II' (the chant varied according to the service's position within the annual liturgical round)...this chant was ubiquitous throughout Europe, as well as in England (in the Sarum Use) up to the Reformation. This same starting melody can be heard, for instance, in pieces such as Monteverdi's famous 1610 Vespers. So I'm afraid it can't help with dating the carving, but would certainly have been current in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.



Three singing monks with eagle lectern. Illuminated capital letter from a palm-sized psalter of the 1320s. Dr Williams' Library MS Ancient 6

He and other musicologists confirm that examples of carved and painted medieval music like this one in St Mary's are extremely rare, perhaps unique in a misericord.

It is tempting to see a connection of the eagle of St John the Evangelist (the saint to whom Beverley Minster is dedicated) holding a version of the Magnificat, the hymn of the Virgin Mary (to whom St Mary's is dedicated) as a reference to the Minster and its daughter church of St Mary. But most medieval churches would have had images of the Evangelists and the Virgin Mary, so it cannot provide any certainty about the true meaning of this tiny carving, now more than 500 years old. It opens a whole new world of research possibilities, and future generations may find more and more of these hidden and enigmatic treasures, in our great churches and ancient town.

Barbara English

## Hull Minster Revival: Back to Life Project

Since 2018, Hull Minster has been the recipient of Heritage Lottery funding, both to secure the fabric of the Minster and to develop and share a better understanding of its heritage. This phase - the Back to Life Project began early in 2022, with the specific aims of reviving the old town centre, conserving key features of the Minster and engaging the community with the church's heritage. Due to Covid restrictions some of the early work was conducted by individual volunteers' on-line research in relation to both monuments in the church and some of its stained glass, and through Zoom discussions. There have also been important archaeological digs, both in the immediate grounds of the Minster and at the Minster's separate Castle Street cemetery. At our meeting Jane Owen, the Minster's Heritage Manager shared with us some of their most interesting findings.

Thomas Broadley's Tomb: this tomb in the south choir aisle commemorates one of the early members of a family who went on to influence Hull life for at least a century and was one of those chosen for conservation. Research identified that Broadley land helped create Hull's first dock and the Hull Gaol, while Broadley money helped found a bank and bring the railway to Hull.



The Vestry Stained Glass: Nine stained glass windows had been kept locked in the vestry, where they certainly did not belong. These were removed for conservation with particular attention paid to three containing decorative panels. It was found that one commemorated St. Julian the Hospitaller - who was patron saint of ferrymen and innkeepers. Heraldic shields proved to connect to the Bedford family, which in turn linked to the anchoress Agnes Bedford, whose bricked up effigy had been found in the Minster in the 1821. Two other roundels proved to be examples of Flemish domestic rather than church glass from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and tell the stories of 'The Judgement of Solomon' and 'Tobias and the Angel'.

The Cemetery Archaeological Digs: It was found that in the Church graveyard, the headstones and the buried bodies did not match. One of the few which could be safely identified was that of William Westerdale who died in 1837 and was buried in a fine brick vault. Research showed that he had been an important ship's block, mast and tackle maker with his own yard. It is thought that his unusual large coffin plate had probably been made in his own yard. Osteology also showed that as a child he had had rickets and in later life suffered from a fusing of the spine. The graveyard dig also uncovered some interesting grave goods - most notably a very rare Rhineland bowl from the 15th century, thought to have been in one of the Minster's earliest chapels.



A fashion for placing plates containing salt on the stomachs of corpses, was identified at Castle Street with the discovery of such a blue and white glazed plate. A fine tankard, and, less attractively, a plate of false teeth made up from real human teeth were also uncovered. We were particularly fortunate that Jane brought with her some of these artefacts and also some 3D printed copies so that they could be safely handled.

This was a fascinating talk and one which left many of us wanting to visit the Minster and look in more detail at the project's findings.

*Pictures courtesy of Hull Minster*



## News From Other Societies

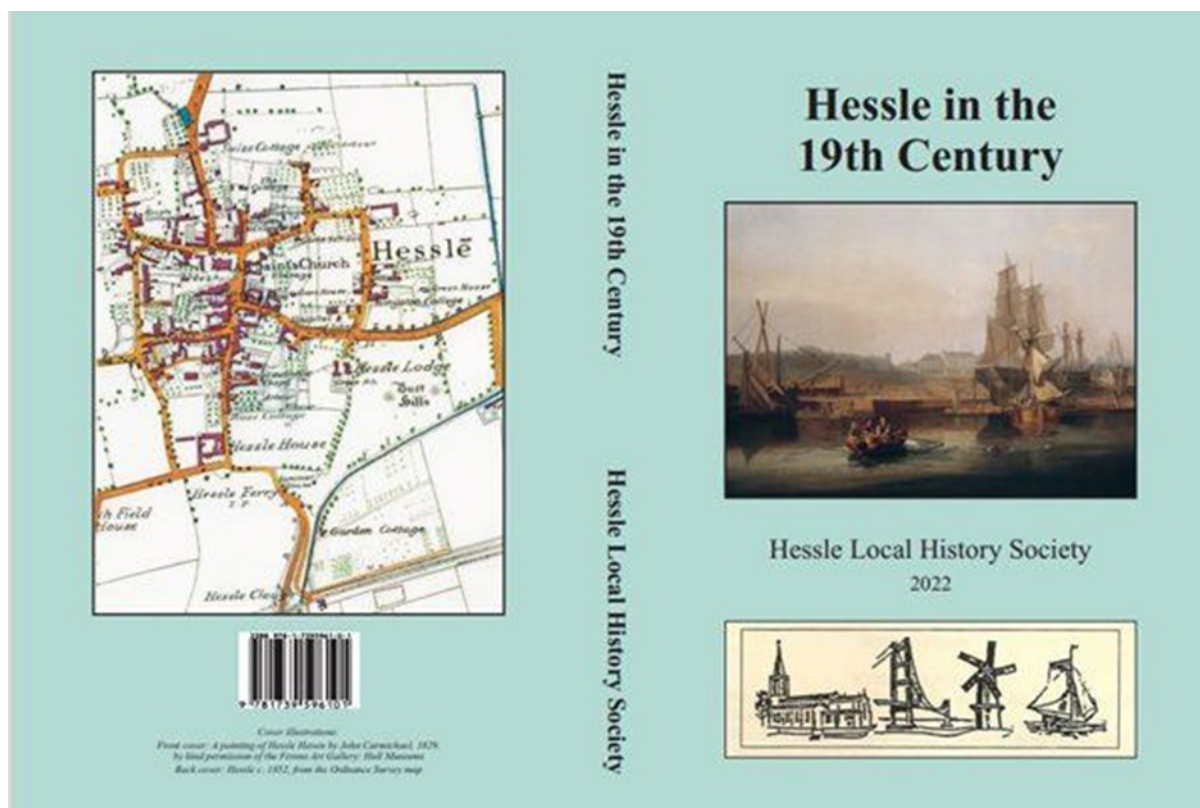
Hessle – *the hazel grove* – is a fascinating place. Founded possibly as early as the sixth or seventh century A.D., it appears in the Domesday Book and until 1661 All Saints' Church Hessle was the mother church of Holy Trinity, Hull, now Hull Minster. It owes its existence to its position on the Humber and the safe havens it offered for speedy passage across the estuary to Barton and Lincolnshire. As transport links improved between Hull and Hessle it became an attractive place for Hull merchants to make their homes, seeking to escape the dirt and pollution of neighbouring Hull. Although agrarian in nature for much of its history, it also has had distinct pockets of industry namely ship building and the extraction of chalk at Hessle Cliff.

The Hessle Local History Society celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022. In that time the Society has produced almost 100 newsletters and held well over 200 talks and lectures. However, despite the sterling work of the society and its members, there is no official *History of Hessle* which can be easily picked off a shelf and delved into. Indeed, Hessle

has often been neglected by local secondary sources. The probable reason for this is that from 1447 Hessle was part of the Hullshire ward in the County of Hull and only became part of East Yorkshire in 1835. In 1929 part of eastern Hessle was added to Hull's boundaries. Consequently, Hessle is often viewed as having a foot in both Hull and East Yorkshire, and local studies often do not know what to do with it! At best, there are fleeting references to Hessle in works which are exclusive to Hull or East Yorkshire.

To rectify this frustration, the society has embarked on publishing a series of four volumes on Hessle's history. The first volume *The History of Hessle in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* was published in October 2022. The volume sold out and a small second run has just been completed. Copies are available from Lucy at Hessle Bookshop at £9.99. It is hoped that the next volume *Hessle 1500 -1800* will be available in October this year.

Ian Wilkinson  
Hessle Local History Society



## Coming Up Daisies

Following the successful selling of our “Beverley from Above” 2023 Calendar we have made a donation of £1,000 to the Daisy Appeal.

The Daisy Appeal is a charity based at Castle Hill Hospital in Cottingham. Its aim is to fund cutting edge research, state of the art equipment and facilities. These are used to help detect and treat cancer, heart disease and dementia in Hull, East Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire.

After the donation to Daisy Appeal, we have been able to retain approximately £600 for our society’s funds to help fund the work and projects we undertake in Beverley and District.



Members of the Calendar Group present a cheque for £1,000 to representatives of the Daisy Appeal in Beverley.



*For your Diary*



## Siemens Development in Hull

**An update (with exhibits)  
by Mark Jones MBE,  
Director of Regeneration, Hull City Council**

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023 – 7.30pm  
at St Mary’s Church, Beverley**



### Disclaimer

**The Beverley and District Civic Society assumes no responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions in the content of this Newsletter.**