

# THE STORY OF ST MARY'S CHURCH CLAXBY



*Paul Belliday*

*Claxby Church*

# **THE STORY OF ST MARY'S CHURCH, CLAXBY**

## **About the Village**

We know that people have lived here in Claxby for at least 2,000 years. We have found bits of a Roman mosaic near the church and we have also found a Roman kiln for making pottery. We also know that the name Claxby only dates from about 800 as it comes from old Danish and the Danes came here at about that time.

The settlement of Claxby was mentioned in the Domesday Book and there was a church here at that time but nothing of it remains.

From about 1869 to 1882 Claxby had an ironstone mine which changed the village while it was open. The size of the village grew from 262 in 1861 to 357 in 1881 and 20 new houses were built in a terrace just beyond the school (now the Viking Centre). Other villages in the area did not increase very much. Lots of miners came from other parts of the country and because it was a dangerous job some of them died and were buried in the churchyard.

The present Church was started 700 years ago but has had lots of changes since then. The part of the church which has the altar (called the chancel) is the oldest part. The other old part is the side of the church next to the old rectory. If you look at the columns there you will see they are much more worn than those on the other side of the church. The roof of the main part of the church, where the pews are, was made higher about 500 years ago. If you look at the walls above

your head you can see where the original builders put in supports for the rafters

In the 1700s the church became dilapidated and in 1870 it was restored. The architect added the main entrance and all that side of the church. He rebuilt the tower and put new stained glass in the window above the altar. Inside, the church walls were painted in bright colours but only the paintings above the arch in the middle of the church now remain. No other changes have been made to the building so what you see now is the same as the Victorians saw.

## **Walking Round the Church**

As you go into the church turn right and walk past two windows and find the war memorial. This was to remember the Claxby boys who died in the Second World War. You will see that it also lists all the Claxby boys and girls who returned safely from the war. This is very unusual. Now go through the wooden carved screen towards the altar. On each side of the opening you will see two very worn carved heads. Both of them are pulling faces. This was thought to ward off evil. In this part of the church you will find the organ. This was bought for the church at around the same time as the church was restored so it is about 130 years old. We have just had it restored and some information has been put on the organ by the firm that did the work. On the opposite side of the church are some photographs describing everything that was done.

Now come back into the part of the church where the pews are. This is called the nave. With your back to

the altar go to the right to where a big picture is hanging. This shows the Angel Gabriel telling Mary that she would have the baby Jesus. Turn round to face the main door. Ahead of you is the large stone font where people are christened. On the right hand wall are two framed lists of Rectors of the village of Claxby going back to when the church was built.

Go into the room below the tower. In the stained glass window you will see pictures of a car, an envelope, garden tools, bells and several other ordinary things. This was done to remember a man called George Ogg. He was the postman, he loved gardening and ringing the church bells and he had a car.

Lastly stand in front of the font looking at the altar. The church is not quite straight. The Chancel (where the altar is) is at an angle to the part of the church where you are standing. It's called a nodding chancel and no-one really knows why this happens. While you are standing in front of the font you can also see the paintings over the arch. There is also some writing. The paintings represent Saint Matthew, Saint Mark, Saint Luke and Saint John. And the one in the middle represents Jesus. The words say "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise'.

We hope you have enjoyed looking round our church and we hope this leaflet has helped you with the Church Trail.

*St Mary's PCC May 2007*