

## COMMUNION TABLES

St James's Church is currently in possession of two wooden Communion Tables both of which are still in use today. They both have certain provenance to this church and can be accurately dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Wooden communion tables began to appear during the Reformation when it was ordered that they should be used, instead of the existing stone altars, for the sacrament of the Eucharist (Holy Communion). This was enacted as early as 1549 during Edward VI's reign by *The Act of Uniformity* which also first introduced *The Book of Common Prayer*.

### 1. Communion Table 1613



Our earliest table, which is dated 1613, clearly replaced an earlier one that had probably been acquired soon after this enactment for in the churchwardens' accounts for the year 1550-1 we have –

*'The altars were taken down and the church plate was sold.'*

then later in 1613

*'The old Communion Table was sold and a new one was made by George Browne'.*

Between these dates, during the reign of Mary I when Catholicism was briefly reintroduced, a new altar had been erected and various items *'pertaining to the old religion'* were bought.



However, by 1566-7 after the death of Mary and during the early years of Elizabeth's reign these items, including the altar cloths were again being disposed of.

In the centre of one of the long aprons below the table top is the date 1613. On the opposite side the initials 'JM' in the centre stand for *John Melton* who was Vicar of Louth at that time. There is some uncertainty on the length of his incumbency but he was still signing the church registers in 1636.



In addition to the date, initials and the decorative elements on the apron, there are four sets of initials, one on each leg. These are for the churchwardens in office in 1613 as follows –

IW = John Waring      IR = John Rowle  
RW = Richard Wadsley      CL = Clement Lavinder



## 2. Communion Table 1630



The second table currently resides in the Angel Chapel and is dated slightly later to 1630. It also has decorated aprons and along one long side is a rectangular cartouche inside which in reserve are carved the initials 'DR'. Between these initials on a triple-fleur crown the date 1630 is engraved and below this the word 'loyner' (for Joiner).

In *'Louth Parish Church: A General Description and History'* (1916), Richard Goulding records that in the year 1630 a new Communion Table was given by David Roberts. Presumably then David Roberts was the maker and the donor.

