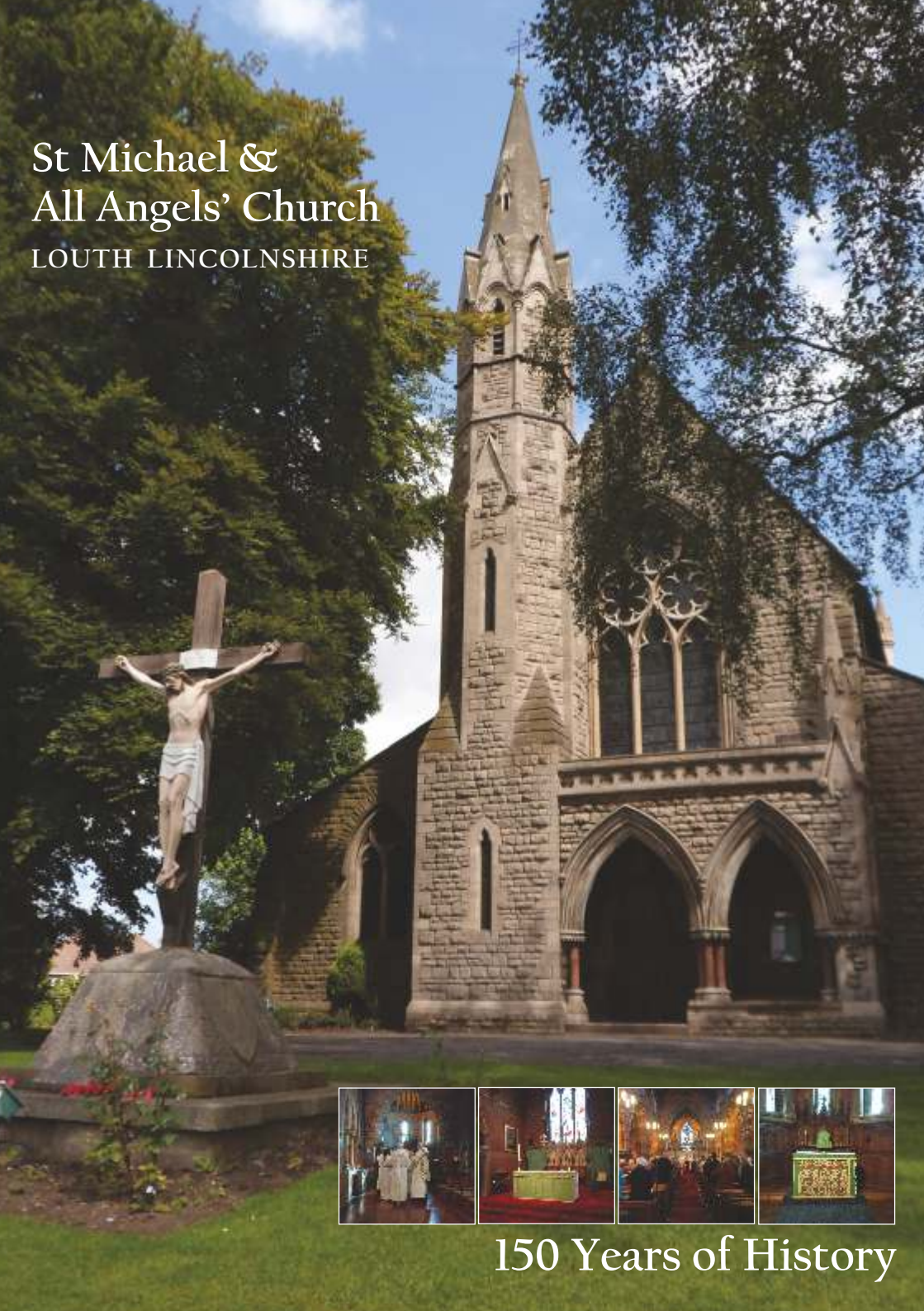


St Michael &
All Angels' Church
LOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE



150 Years of History

St Michael & All Angels' Church

LOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE

Acknowledgements

Our thanks are due to all who have assisted in any way in the production of this booklet throughout its many publications.

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Contents

Louth in 1863	3
St Michael & All Angels	5
Gallery of Priests	6
Fr George Nash	7
Father Ernest Lloyd Gardner	9
Father William Ernest Yates	10
Canon George Jordan	11
Father Joseph Loughton	12
Father Edward Wrexal-Holborrow	13
Father Cedric Norman Frank	14
Father Michael Wright	15
Father Gordon Sleight	16
Father John William Travers	17
1989 onwards	19
St Michael's School	22
St Michael's Church House	24



Louth in 1863

In a book issued in 1838 Louth was described as 'a neat little town . . . the metropolis of the surrounding district . . . There being no road through this town northwards the inhabitants of forty years ago knew as little of the general concerns of the country as the people in Holland. It might be compared to one of the oases in Egypt, standing as it does in a flat uninteresting country, but the society of the place was of a superior order'.

The description was somewhat inaccurate in 1863. The day had gone when the families of the gentry came in from the bleak Wold or wind-swept Marsh to winter in Louth, and enjoy the gaieties of the Assembly Rooms in Ugate or the theatre in the Cornmarket. The houses remain, but their story had departed. On the other hand, the town was still 'the metropolis' for the common folk of the surrounding district, and on market days the inn yards were crowded with carriers' carts from places as distant as Caistor, Horncastle, Grimsby and West Rasen. The number of local residents had also increased rapidly. There had been 4,236 of them in 1801. In 1861 there were 10,677, and Louth had only just been outdistanced by Grimsby in the population race. In brief, Louth had nearly as many

inhabitants as it had up until the end of the 20th century, but it was relatively more important. A directory of 1849 said 'The chief manufacturing establishment is that for carpets and blankets on an extensive scale. There are also some tanneries, a soapery, several breweries, roperies and two ship-building yards'.

The isolation which had made Louth an oasis of culture and gaiety was ended by the coming of the railway. Until its arrival the man who wished to travel swiftly had to endure the discomforts of horseback or the jolting of the stage coach. The stage wagon took a week to reach London. But in 1847 Miss Pye, Tennyson's, 'Claribel', laid the foundation stone of the railway station, and in the following year the line was extended to Grimsby.

The daily goods train was to be the death of the Navigation Canal, which had once made the River-head so busy that it seemed like a separate little town. In 1863 packets still made weekly journeys to Hull and Grimsby, and the 'Zephyr' still brought Isaac Smith's tea from London once a month. But the days of the coasters were over, and it was ominous that the railway company had secured the lease of the canal in 1846.

A writer of 1637 said that Louth was not 'particularly sober'. Two and a half centuries later that was still true. White's Directory for 1856 lists twenty-seven inns and twenty-five beer houses. Among those in the second category was the Pig and Whistle, where St. James' Church Choir had its annual supper. It stood on the south side of Walkergate (now Queen Street).

There was, however, a strong temperance movement supported by such men as John Booth Sharpley, who led out a thousand expelled or seceding Methodists when it seemed that the Wesleyan Conference might be weak on the temperance issue or in keeping the ministers in their places. The chapel of these Reform Methodists was built in 1854, and its Corinthian pillars were one of the sights on Eastgate.

In the middle of the nineteenth century there was great building activity in Louth. By 1863 there was a splendid new Town Hall, on the site of the old Guildhall stood the Cornmarket in its pristine freshness, and plans were well advanced for moving a 'set of dilapidated hovels' to make room for a spacious Market Hall. The various religious bodies were caught up in the boom. Mention has been made of the Reform Chapel. The Wesleyans enlarged or rebuilt their place of worship in 1835, the Roman Catholics in 1845 and the primitives (of Northgate) in 1850. Six feet had been added to the parish church spire, and the interior was soon to be transformed.

In addition to places already listed there was another Wesleyan Chapel on Newmarket. The Baptists had one in Northgate and another in Walkergate. The Congregationalists were in what is now the Playhouse Cinema, and at the east end of the town the original Holy Trinity Church of 1834 would soon be replaced by a finer edifice.

In 1863 it could be said that Louth was full of religion. Unfortunately it was a dividing rather than a unifying force. Not all ages can hold charity and zeal together. Some say that today we have the charity without the zeal. In the nineteenth century there was little charity and much zeal. Men carried their politics into their religion and vice-versa, so that wise tradesmen of Louth put up their shutters on election day, and on Sunday the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. It would seem, however, that all places of worship were crowded in 1863.

In most ages the Englishman has not been conspicuous as a churchgoer, but the nineteenth century was exceptional. There is a suggestion that this phenomenon may be connected with the spread of popular education. Certainly in Louth, 'the churches' were the pioneers of education, and the age of church building was the age of school building.

It is against this background of increased population, building activity, interest in education and a fashion in church going that we see the building of the churches and schools of St. Michael and Holy Trinity. In 1859 Albert Sydney Wilde began his long ministry in Louth. He was to be the first, and, for more than a hundred years, only, Rector of the whole town. His predecessors had been vicars because the prebend had received the rectorial tithes until 1859, and within a very short time two large areas of the parish were to become independent.

St Michael & All Angels'

In many ways William Wright could be called the founder of St. Michael's. He was born at Somerby, near Brigg on 24th March, 1785. He attended Louth Grammar School until 1805 when he went to Cambridge and eventually graduated LLB in 1810. He became the Vicar of Healing from 1837-59. He was the person who gave to the then Rector of St. James, Canon Wilde, a blank cheque for the purchase of a site and followed it by a cheque for £1,000.

The cornerstone of the church was laid on Tuesday, 22nd July, 1862, by Mrs. Wright, wife of the benefactor who was absent because of illness. He died before the church was completed.

The ceremony on that summer morning saw the fruition of plans made by Canon Wilde, and increases in the number of working class homes in the district of Newmarket showed the need for a separate church and priest.

An architect from Lichfield had set up a practise in Louth; his name was James Fowler, a man of his time who was possessed with great energy industry and ability. He designed St Michael's Church in 'High Victorian' style, in top quality red brick and using carved stone

facings where appropriate, such as the capitals on the nave pillars. During the reign of George III in 1784 a brick tax was introduced, this was increased twice and the size of bricks were limited to prevent giant bricks being produced - this tax was abolished in 1850 thus giving encouragement to James Fowler. He used the brick as decoration in the arcades, cream, red and black (the black bricks are actually red bricks dyed), in pleasing patterns. There are fine pointed arches through to the Lady Chapel and a string course of glazed letter tiles bearing their up-lifting texts. When opened the church contained the present chancel, choir and north and south aisles.

The choir screen was erected in 1894 in James Fowler's memory. A much smaller chapel and vestry in place of the present Lady Chapel was connected to the choir by the three arches and pillars which are now on the south side of the chancel. There were windows in both walls of the chancel, the west window consisted of three separate circular windows and none of them contained any coloured glass.

The building and equipping of the church cost £3,266. 13s.11d. Canon Wilde himself assumed responsibility for the debt and it was finally paid off in 1866.



St Michael's in 1904

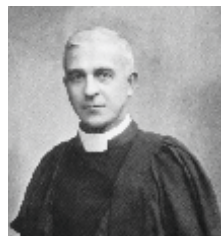
Priests in charge at St Michael & All Angels'

George Nash
1st Vicar of
St Michael's Louth
Died 10th Nov 1873
Aged 58 years

Fr George Nash



Fr Ernest Lloyd Gardner



Fr William Ernest Yates



Canon George Jordan



Fr Joseph Loughton



Fr Edward Wrexal-Holborrow



Fr Cedric Norman Frank



Fr Michael Wright



Fr Gordon Sleight



Fr John William Travers



Fr Ron Lettall



Canon Stephen Holdaway



Fr David Wise



Fr David Davis



Fr Nick Brown

1863-1873

Father George Nash, M.A.

It is difficult to imagine a better choice as first district curate of St. Michael's than Father Nash. A graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, he spent ten years in Australia before returning for ordination in 1850. During his ministry he won love and esteem of many and the respect of all - not, however, because he was all things to all men - far from it. In his day he was a pioneer of the Anglo Catholic movement, started thirty years before - a movement attacked from inside and outside the Church. The fight for its principles was to lead to the imprisonment of faithful priests and even the trial, by his fellow bishops, of blessed Edward King, Bishop of Lincoln, long before the turn of the century.

Father Nash's ministry laid the foundations of Catholic worship at St. Michael's which has been continued by successive vicars and its Church District Council throughout the 150 years of its life.

The church was consecrated by the Lord Bishop of Lincoln, the Right Revd. John Jackson, in the morning of 5th May, 1863, assisted by Canon Wilde, Revd. Moore and the new incumbent. The 'large and respectable' congregation were suitably moved by the Bishop's sermon which called on them to imitate the Revd. Wright in his liberality - the collection amounted to £53. Choral Evensong in the evening was sung by St. James' choir accompanied by their organist, Dr. Dixon, on the harmonium.

The first Vestry, held on 13th August, 1863, saw the appointment of B. Crow as Vicar's Warden, Allan Towle as District Warden, and James Wood as Vestry Clerk. Shortly afterwards, in September, 1863, the monument to the memory of Revd. W. Wright, regarded as the founder of St. Michael's, was placed on the north side of the chancel.

A revolutionary idea was the introduction in the church of collections on every Sunday.



The current altar

St. James' church, with four collections only a year, supplemented by a subscription list, is said to have viewed the experiment with interest.

The next year, 1864, saw the local 'Improvement Commissioners' renaming 'Long Lane' Church Street, and bestowing the name of St. Michael's Road on what had been known hitherto as the 'new cut'. The erection of the church wall and gates at a cost of £177, led to the paving of Long Lane throughout its length from Monk's Dyke to the Newmarket Inn.

A highly successful bazaar at the Town Hall raised £300 to buy an organ from Foster and Andrews of Hull, which was erected where the Lady Chapel now stands. The report of the bazaar in the newspaper talks of 'ingenious devices' . . . for emptying the pockets of the visitors'.

December saw the start of the Sunday and Day Schools, and on New Year's Eve was held what were probably the first Watchnight Service and Midnight Mass in Louth.

The poor of the parish, of whom there were many, were the constant concern of George Nash and each Christmas saw an appeal for gifts for them. In 1866 the charities previously held by St. James' were divided between the three parishes of the town.

The correspondence and news columns of the Louth Advertiser of those days give an insight into church and chapel life in the town. 'Ritualists and Romanism' were the hares being chased by the 'Church Association' in church and court; the local Methodists, represented in the Louth Protestant Association, were as tireless and vehement in their attacks both in the press and in some very lively public meetings. Toleration was a non-starter and Christian charity conspicuous by its absence. The Rev. Robert J. Ives, Vicar of Clewer, described later as an 'Arch Ritualist' conducted a very effective ten day mission at St. Michael's in November, 1872. But the presence of the 'Arch Ritualist' added more fuel to the flames, resulting in protest meetings and letters from the Protestant Association.

George Nash held office as Chairman of the Louth Branch of the English Church Union (now the Church Union) and thus started an association with that body which has carried on almost continuously.

In the field of music there was a choir. Hymns Ancient and Modern were used, and, rather curiously, Gregorian chants at morning services and Anglican chants in the evening. St. Michael's had a reputation for the quality of its floral decorations. At Christmas in 1872 they were described as 'extremely pleasing and harmonious' and 'almost the perfection of design and workmanship'. It was at this festival that Mr W. Davies presented the St. Michael's banner, designed and made by him.

George Nash's death in November 1873, was sudden and followed a slight accident at Lincoln Railway Station. This extract from his

obituary in the Louth Advertiser sums up admirably the man and his aims:
' . . . he was a not extreme representative of the Anglo-Catholic party, and was well known for his conscientious adherence to what he believed to be right in the principal teachings of that school. The affection for the services of his religion . . . compelled him to adorn his office by a chaste and unblameable life, and by his attention to the services of the Church, which for him could never be too solemn and seldom too ornate. Pioneer as he was in some matters, his conduct like that of all who come to the front, was at the time warmly criticised ; but it may be observed that what were at one time his extremes, have been largely copied around us, and it is only fair to credit his memory with that revival in Louth of the solemn and reverent performances of the services of the Church so largely due to his exertions. In the words of one who knew him well, 'he was no trimmer in principles, he uttered no uncertain sound, nor did he look round him to see which way the public wind blew before he set the sails of his religious opinions'.



The Lady Chapel today where the altar servers prepare for Mass

1873-1896

Father Ernest Lloyd Gardner

T.A.K.C.L.

Ernest Lloyd Gardner came to St. Michael's from Marshchapel, with the reputation of being a 'High Churchman and an energetic man'.

A change in the law in 1868 meant that he was appointed Vicar of St. Michael's whereas his predecessor was appointed only as curate of the District Church. He was a bachelor when instituted in 1874 but married Frances Locock of Elkington Thorpe, in 1879. In contrast to her husband, Mrs Gardner was of a quiet nature but her great help in parish affairs was a great stimulus to its work.

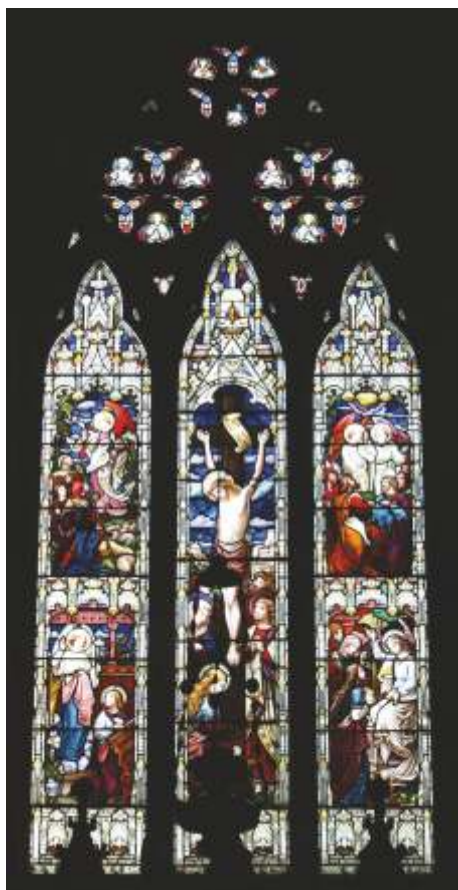
Probably the greatest of Ernest Lloyd Gardner's contributions to parish life was the erection of the Church Day School, described in the history of the school towards the end of this book.

But additions were made to the church also. In 1875, the east window was filled with stained glass to a design by James Fowler, and by public subscription in memory of George Nash. The chamber which now houses the organ and choir vestry was added, and the present doorway from the chancel into the choir vestry was created.

The first curate, Fr. A. L. Roysds, was appointed in 1876 and was the first of nine curacies, including that of Rev. C. W. Stanford, later Vicar of Elkington, during the vicariate.

The Mass was celebrated on two Sundays in each month and on Saints' Days only. By popular request, Sunday evening services were made fully choral in 1879. The Harvest and Patronal Festivals were combined and lasted a week. The reports of large congregations and the lavish decorations make interesting reading.

A parish magazine of 1885 shows how involved in the life of its people the Church was, with its coal club, for providing free or cheap coal (the price was 13s.9d. a ton), a clothing club run with the Sunday school and women's meetings at the "Welcome" in Newmarket. The School's gala each year was very impressive, with processions



The East Window glazed to a design
by Norman Fowler 1875.

Dedicated to the memory of Fr George Nash

and bands, games, tea and fireworks, lasting eight hours or more, and attended in 1876 by 400 children. At the annual prize giving the Vicar in 1879 provided tea for 750 people.

Under Ernest Lloyd Gardner, following the Catholic movement of the day, St. Michael's brought a new ideal into Louth of glorious service in the Church, centred on the Mass and the energy of parish life. Side by side with the building of the material fabric, was the building up of many souls, with the great care bestowed on the young people.

1896-1915

Father William Ernest Yates, M.A.

William Ernest Yates came to St. Michael's from Louth St. James where he had been a curate since ordination in 1891. During his vicariate, extensive alterations were made to church and vicarage, very largely through his own generosity.

He set up, in 1903, the Parochial Fund to supplement the Churchwarden's Fund, to pay for the schools, church improvement and curates' salaries, financed by subscriptions and in a variety of other ways. This fund secured the installation of a ventilation system and the enlarging of the west window in 1904. This same window was filled with its present coloured glass at the church's Jubilee in 1913. By 1902 the vogue for painted glass had resulted in the filling of the small windows in the two aisles featuring -the Angels of Mercy in the Bible - Old Testament in the south and New Testament in



West Window

the north aisle. The two liturgical windows at the west end represent texts from the Te Deum and the collect for St. Michael's Day.

The addition of the present Lady Chapel in 1908 at a cost of £1,300, to a design by R. H. Fowler, included the construction of the present large arch into the choir

with its pillars and arches, in the chancel. At this time an oak priest's Sedilia was installed, this is engraved with the symbols of the four evangelists, an eagle for St John, a lion for St Mark, an Ox for St Luke and St Matthew as a man. These are a reminder of soaring prayer, moral strength, patient assiduity and God given intelligence.

The reredos and windows in the apse were given by his sisters in memory of C. M. Nesbitt, who up to his death, in 1903, had been at St. Michael's since it began (he had also given anonymously eight of the coloured windows in the nave). The Christmas window was a gift in memory of Mrs Annie Pahud,

(her husband gave Hubbard's Hills to Louth.) The altar cross and candlesticks were provided from special self-denial savings of parishioners.

The dedication on February 29th, 1908, was the occasion of the last visit of Bishop Edward King to St. Michael's and possibly also to Louth.

It would be wrong to remember William Ernest Yates only for the material improvements made in his time. Spiritually there were great advances. His teaching resulted in the establishment, in 1915, at the unanimous request of the Church Council, of the 11 o'clock Sung Mass as the chief Sunday morning service. A modern trend was foreshadowed in the "cottage lectures", services conducted by the curate, Rev. E. R. Tuxford in people's homes in the Stewton Lane and Legbourne Road area.

1914 saw the election of the first Parochial Church Council, and the transfer to it of the Parochial Fund. Parish life was varied and vigorous. The concert committee was in full swing, with a banjo and mandolin band. Communicants' Guilds, tennis and cricket clubs, and a very successful Boys' Club were among a host of activities offered. A glimpse of social and economic conditions of the time is got from the news that the Church Lads' Brigade had to close because members were too tired, after working until 8 o'clock, to parade and drill.

Bodily needs found relief through the Parochial Relief Fund and the coal and clothing clubs. A roll of 300 in 1903 testifies to the liveliness of the Sunday school, and the annual galas and parents' teas were even better!

William Ernest Yates left St. Michael's in 1915 to take the living of Keddington.



A parade in Church Street

1916-1929

Canon George Jordan

In a farewell letter, Fr. Yates said of his successor, "I am thankful to think that the Catholic Faith will be steadfastly preached and I am full of hope that new methods will have a revivifying influence upon the spiritual life of the parish". To his successor he handed over a church, structurally complete and fitted for worship, with a tradition of Catholic teaching. It fell to George Jordan to further equip the church and to introduce that ceremonial which is the outward expression of that teaching.

He endeared himself to his congregation. A Christian Socialist, his compassion for his fellow men is shown in his writings. During his ministry George Lansbury, the Socialist leader, visited St. Michael's, in 1916, and preached at Evensong, and the famous Father Sam Healy, another Christian Socialist, served as curate from 1919 to 1920.

The respect of his fellow clergy secured his election twice as Proctor in Convocation and in 1928 he was made Rural Dean and a Canon of Lincoln - becoming Prebendary of Kilsby. But he was fearless and spoke his mind his own Diocesan, Dr. Barnes, the Bishop of Birmingham, and Sir Joyston Hicks, the Home Secretary, were among the people he took to task in the parish magazine.

Nagging ill-health resulted in a number of absences from the parish but, in spite of this, the parish life flourished. A keen Scouter himself, he gave the same opportunity to his young parishioners by starting a troop in 1916, and shortly afterwards a Guide troop.

The Mothers' Union started in late 1916 and was followed in 1918 by a series of guilds covering all walks of church life.

A memorial to the dead was mooted even before the war ended and was originally inside the church. The Crucifix was dedicated by the Bishop of Grantham on the Feast of Corpus Christi in 1921.

But it was in the form of worship where Canon Jordan left his mark at St. Michael's; vestments including copes were first worn in 1916. Ash Wednesday, 1916, saw the start of the Daily Mass and Stations of the Cross were used in Holy Week. Three years later the Mass of the Pre-Sanctified was celebrated on Good Friday.

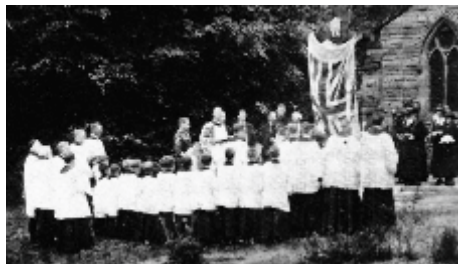
The Feast of Corpus Christi was kept first in 1916 and became a major event in the district. Christmas, 1918, was the occasion of the first regular Midnight Mass and the erection of the crib lit by electricity thirty years before it was in general use in the church.

In the Lady Chapel, the statue of Our Lady was given to the Church in December 1918 and the Stations of the Cross were bought by public subscription. A year earlier the altar was altered and a tabernacle installed to allow, with the Bishop's permission, reservation of the Blessed Sacrament.

The records are not particularly clear, but following a petition by members of the congregation, in 1917, incense was introduced, again with the Bishop's permission.

It was ill-health which finally forced Canon Jordan to resign to take the living at Rothwell, in September, 1929, when he was satisfied that his successor would be one who would maintain and build the tradition for which he had worked and which he held so dear.

The bell hanging over the Lady Chapel, rung at the consecration, is a memorial to Canon Jordan. The bell was originally hung in the old Louth prison and dates from 1715.



Unveiling of the crucifix 1920

1929-1940

Father Joseph Loughton, B.A.

Father Loughton was the first of a line of three ex-missionaries to serve as Vicar of St. Michael's. A widower, he brought with him his daughter, Eleanor.

Gifted with a strong sense of vocation, he financed his education by his own efforts, studying Greek and Latin in his spare time, to achieve his aim of becoming a priest.

During his vicariate the Catholic tradition in worship was very strongly backed by the ministry of the Word a regular contributor to the local press, he also included a "potted sermon" in every parish magazine.

Parish activity continued unabated and was enlarged by the reviving of the Communicants' Guild, and starting of men's and boys' clubs. Scouts and Guides also flourished for a few years but the Scouts ceased in 1935 for lack of leaders.

The Mothers' Union, which celebrated twenty-one years of life in the parish in 1937, and presented a silver paten in commemoration, was particularly active under its enrolling member, Mrs Stanley Walker, who held that office from 1921 to 1940.

St. Michael's band appears on the scene in February, 1934, and a year later, now raised to the status of 'orchestra', was taking part in the services.

Father Loughton's time was marked by two notable anniversaries. The first in 1933 was the centenary of the Oxford Movement, celebrated at St. Michael's by a High Mass, the first at the church (and probably in Louth since the Reformation). The second was the Jubilee in 1935 of the consecration of Bishop King 'a Bishop of the poor' a particularly moving occasion for Father Loughton who had been ordained by the Bishop.

When Miss Edith M. Porter died in 1930, a devout Anglo Catholic and for many years a Sunday School Superintendent, the statue of St. Michael, dedicated in 1934 by Canon Jordan, was given in her memory by the Wright family of Wold Newton. The design comes from the Oriental Church where St. Michael is regarded as the Archangel of Justice.

A serious attempt was made to place the finances of the church on a sound basis. In 1930, there was 490 on the electoral roll but only thirty-eight in the Free Will Offering Scheme. 1931 saw a deficit in the accounts of £59, and a Church Council resolution regretting the introduction of alms dishes in place of the bags used until that time. In 1934, systematic giving was encouraged by the starting of the Duplex scheme, but only after years of propaganda.

Yet another vicariate was ended by ill-health when on 15th October, 1940, Father Loughton resigned and left the town to live in Doncaster, dying in 1959, at the age of 90.



Statue of St Michael

1940-1958

Father Edward Wrexal-Holborrow

Father Holborrow, like his predecessor, had spent a number of years in Australia as a missionary. Like so many who have worked in the mission field, he firmly grasped the Catholic faith and was clear as to its presentation and interpretation through the liturgy of the Church. His special interest was the ministry of Healing. Publicly, this showed itself in attending and organising conferences, some at St. Michael's, at which doctors and priests met to discuss this important work. Privately it found expression in his parish, in his work as a comforter of the sick and bereaved and a counsellor of the troubled.

His ministry covered a very difficult period in the life of the parish. He arrived in the early part of the war and this was followed by the era of social change and re-adjustment, in which so many long-held views and values were overturned.

This post-war period saw the first real expansion of the parish's population since the church was built - the start of the Borough Council's housing estate which was centred on St. Bernard's Avenue. He, at least, at that time, was able to see the opportunity for Christ which this influx of people presented, and in 1956 suggested that provision be made for worship on the estate itself. Unfortunately, the chance was not seized!

There was an abundance of parish activity, including Mothers' Union, Girls' Friendly Society, and the C.E. Men's Society, in spite of the fact that the Church House was taken over by the army until the latter part of the war.

Finance was a difficult problem, particularly during the war. Following a decline in Duplex subscribers, collections were restarted in October 1945, only to be dropped again in 1948 and then started again in 1954.

The end of the war raised the problem of how

best to commemorate the dead. Originally it was intended to alter the chancel screen to incorporate a rood. This was later quashed and the names of the Second World War dead were added to the Calvary outside the church. Attempts were made to improve the comfort of worshippers by the installation of electric light in 1948 at a cost of £365 (after being discussed since 1943) and a new boiler and other heating improvements in 1955.

The Vicarage needed to wait until 1952 before it got rid of its gas globes. The making of a Children's Corner in 1948 was an attempt to give the children a status and to get them to use their church. However, when it was completed, the church could not afford the bill and Mr Moses Day offered to pay the balance. Mr Day was a generous benefactor to St. Michael's.

The death of Father Holborrow came quite suddenly at the Patronal Festival in 1958, and not many months after that of his wife. A guest in his home at the time was the Bishop of Nandyal, in India, who had officiated at the festival. After his death his children presented a white cope, which had belonged to him, to St. Michael's.



Phyllis West and George Ford are married by Fr. Holborrow at St. Michael's in 1954

1958- 1962

Father Cedric Norman Frank, M.A.

Father Cedric Frank came to take charge of the parish following Father Holborrow's death and accepted the living some months later. He was the third successive ex-missionary, to become Vicar.

A man of considerable energy, he soon threw himself into the life of town and parish. His experience as a journalist before ordination assisted considerably in launching the parish magazine "Challenge" in July, 1959, first in book form and then as a newspaper.

His decided views on finance persuaded the Church Council to abolish all raffles or other games of chance, and to run a Christian Stewardship campaign in October, 1959. Whilst not fulfilling his expectations it did, nevertheless, raise the annual income of the Church from £400 to £1,100 - no mean feat in a mainly working class parish. The Annual Gift Day at the Dedication Festival and the Talents Scheme started in 1960 were two more ideas.

Social activity of the Church was centred on Friday night — the parish night with a variety of programmes containing social and instructive activities. In 1961 a Youth Club was started with the motto "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning", encouraging attendance at club on Saturday and the Mass on Sunday.



Fr Frank holding a Vigil to raise funds



The altar of the Lady Chapel

The approach of the Centenary and an inspection of the Church by the Diocesan Architect led to the launching of a restoration fund with a £5,000 target in 1959. As a result of monies collected, the heating was improved and converted to oil-firing at a cost of £313 and a year later, in 1960, the nave and side aisles were re-roofed and the clerestory windows improved at a cost of £1,450.



The Reredos

Spiritually, the highlight of this vicariate was the Teaching Week, conducted in November, 1961, by Father Michael, S.S.F., and Brother Howard Novice, S.S.F.

This short but vigorous ministry ended with Father Frank's resignation of the living in March, 1962.

1962-1973

Father Michael Wright, B.A.

After an interval of six months, during which Father Dennis Hawker, the St. Hugh's missionary, did much to maintain the round of daily worship, Father Michael Wright was appointed Vicar, at the time the youngest man to hold the post in the history of St. Michael's. Under his guidance, assisted by his wife, the parish prepared for the celebration of its first Centenary.

As part of the preparations, the parish held a conference/retreat at the Diocesan Retreat House at Lincoln over the last weekend in March, 1963, under the guidance of Father Humphrey Whistler of the Community of the Resurrection.

In 1965 an examination took place of the interior lighting system and at no point could the light meter used give out a reading of more than 2.5 foot candles and so part of a new lighting system was installed in consultation with the diocesan advisor in 1966.

The spire and west gable were repaired and grouted in 1969-70 and an area for the burial of cremated remains was set aside in the church grounds in 1971.



Fr. Wright in Church House in 1963



The West Door

During the latter part of the incumbency of Canon Ward at St. James, the idea of a group or team Ministry developed. Initially a group ministry was inaugurated, on the arrival of the Reverend Michael Aidie, (who went on to become the Bishop of Guildford) to St. James, in December, 1969, and in early 1973 the various church councils of the parishes in Louth agreed to form a Team Ministry.

Father Wright moved in October, 1973, to a new living at Warmsworth near Doncaster.



Inside the church showing the lighting

1974-1981

Father Gordon Sleight, A.K.C.

Father Sleight and his family moved to Louth in April, 1974, and was licensed in May as 'Priest in Charge and Team Vicar Designate' for St. Michael's and Stewton.

The Team of Louth came into legal existence on 1st January, 1975.

Two initial tasks seemed obvious to Father Sleight. The first was to calm fears that the Team would mean monochrome services and the eventual absorption of all other churches into St. James'. Secondly to progress with the re-ordering tentatively begun by Father Wright.

In pursuit of the first task, Father Sleight started immediately to use more incense than his predecessor and pursued the line that St. Michael's had a vital contribution to make to the whole Team in terms of colour and symbolism, the centrality of the Eucharist and the need for a disciplined approach to prayer and devotion.

Progress began after six months of Father Sleight's tenure with the continued re-ordering of the Church. Choir stalls were moved out of the Chancel and placed in the north aisle. The Priest's Sedilia was placed before the reredos and the altar was brought forward so that the celebrations of the Mass could be made by the priest facing the people.

The area around the altar was extended with an extra step being created in front of the Screen. The congregation was divided over these proposals and so a 12 month experimental period was agreed. After some time in deliberation as to whether the 'new' should replace that 'which had been for many years' a final scheme came into being. The north aisle was then re-arranged and completed with the purchase of a Screen from a redundant Church in Oxfordshire.

With Father Sleight's arrival in 1974, it was assumed that a new Vicarage would be built. However, these plans did not come to fruition until 1981 when a new Vicar had arrived at St. Michael's.

Michael Aidie's departure as Team Rector to become Archdeacon of Lincoln in 1976 forced the issue of the plethora of Sunday services and the 'Lay teams' was the result introduced during the St. James' interregnum. They were the first attempt to involve lay ministry to other areas than church offices and fete committees.

Interestingly enough in 1974, all of the now combined parish officers were members of St. James'. However, by 1981, a number of parish posts were held by St. Michael's congregation. St. Michael's was now playing a very significant role in the parish of Louth.

In 1980 Father Sleight decided that it was time for him to move, and was offered and accepted the living of St. George's, Crosby, Scunthorpe and in February of 1981 left the town, with his wife and children, to take up his new appointment.



The current Calvary

1981-1989

Father John William Travers, M.A.

After a short interregnum following upon the departure of the Fr. Gordon Sleight, Fr. John William Travers, creating a new record as the youngest man to hold the position, was appointed.

His Institution as a licenced Vicar of St. Michael and All Angels', took place on Tuesday, 29th September, 1981 being most appropriately the Festival of the Patron Saint. The Institution was carried out by the Right Rev. David Tustin, Bishop of Grimsby who preached the sermon, the Archdeacon of Lindsey, the Ven. R. W. (Bill) Dudman, inducting and later celebrating at the Mass which followed. The Rector, Canon David Owen, and many other local clergy also took part. Among the congregation of 300 present to witness the licencing, were about 45 people who had travelled down from his last parish of St. Michael and All Angels', Headingley, Leeds, where he had been a Curate for the previous three years.

By this time Father John, with his charming wife and six week old daughter, Rachael Louise, were living in the newly built Vicarage in Little Lane which was their home during the time in the parish.



Fr Travers baptising his daughter



Fr Travers giving Communion

Inevitably, with the coming to the parish of a new vicar, changes must, and do take place, and one of the first major problems which confronted him was the future role of the Church House. This had been placed on the market for sale, plans having been made to erect a smaller type prefabricated building on spare ground to the east end of the Church. However, when a faculty was sought for permission to carry out this scheme, it was refused by the Diocesan Board as not being suitable for erection in this position unless the facade and other elevations were constructed in stone to match the Church. With the cost of such construction this was found to be impracticable. In view of the foregoing, the new vicar called a meeting of the Church Council at which it was decided that the sale of Church House should not be proceeded with, although at this stage what to do next was the question. The Council having before it a previous report on a survey made by a local firm of architects, that to renovate and modernise the building, would cost in the region of £45,000. This again was found to be impracticable.

John Hoodlass, a retired building surveyor, and a member of the Church Council, offered to prepare sketch plans, working drawings and cost a new scheme to modernise the existing kitchen, construct new toilets and re-decorate the rooms on the first floor level. On the ground floor level to turn the existing garages into a new hall with (for the first time in Lincolnshire) a licensed bar, and further toilet and cloakroom facilities. He also suggested

that if the work were to be carried out by the Man-Power Services, who would supply the labour force, the Church Council to finance the purchase of materials and assist in any practical way they could. The estimated cost would be in the region of £8,000. The scheme was placed before the D.C.C. and the P.C.C. with posters and graphs drawn up by the vicar, to show ways and means by which the money could be raised to finance it. On being put to the vote it was agreed by 20 votes for to 2 against that the scheme as outlined should go ahead, the P.C.C. granting a loan of £2,000 from parish funds for an early start to be made.

A parish appeal was launched to raise the £8,000 to cover the cost.

The vicar negotiated with the M.P.S this being under the authorisation of East Lindsey District Council, and the work was commenced, the young men employed being under the direction of skilled Supervisors. The work on the ground floor phase was carried out by the two Churchwardens, Mr S. Brown, Mr G. Warne, John Hoodlass and other helpers from the congregation and to the forefront of this work could be found the vicar helping in the demolition work on walls, the erection of woodwork, the mixing of cement, the glazing of windows and painting and decorating, all this together with his part in the planning and raising of the £8,000.

The Church Council at its meeting had set a target of four years to acquire this amount, whereas in actual fact the sum of £8,500 was raised in little over 18 months. The work was completed by the end of December, 1982, and on the 6th January, 1983, after a Concelebrated Mass in Church, it was blessed by the Bishop of Grimsby, the Right Rev. David Tustin, and officially opened by John Hoodlass.

Thus from being for many years a semi-derelict building, it was restored and returned to its rightful and worthwhile use as a meeting place, a Social Club for the whole of the parish.

1983-84 was a period during which alterations were carried out in the Church itself to the Choir Vestry and the Sacristy. It involved the removal of seating in the North aisle to form an area for display purposes and the serving of coffee after morning service.

In the main body of Church, the old carpets were removed and a new one laid including the whole of the chancel and a new carpet to part of the Lady Chapel. Other furnishings included new curtains to the rear of the font, display area and the hymn book case, together with new altar frontals, reredos curtains and pulpit falls, all made by Mrs Travers and other skilled needlewomen of the congregation.

Mrs Travers and others were also responsible for the making of the new choir robes. Sets of new vestments (Chasubles and Dalmatics) were also made during this time to match the altar frontals; these vestments were designed and made by an ordinand from the parish, Father Gavin Kirk.

The vicar was also been responsible for the re-introduction of the service of a daily Mass, the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in a new Tabernacle situated over the altar in the Lady Chapel, and for the reservation of Holy Oils in the Aumbry adjacent.

On November the 8th, 1983, a new microphone system was installed complete with loudspeaker outlets together with pickup points at various places within the Church for use by those taking part in the service. This was a great innovation not only for the hard of hearing but for the congregation as a whole.

1985 proved to be momentous for several reasons, the first being that on Friday, the 12th of April, another baby daughter was born to Mrs Travers, the first at the new Vicarage.

On Ascension Day, 16th May, the vicar attended a dinner party given at the home of

Mrs P. West, 'The Cedars', St. Mary's Lane, Louth. During the evening Mrs West made a gift to him of eight 14ct. gold goblets, these having been made for export and sale in the United States market. However, the sale of gold articles in the United States must not be less than 18cts. The gift to the Church was unconditional ' the vicar being able to dispose of them in any way he wished to provided funds for the Church.

The matter was brought before the Church Council where it was decided to have the goblets valued at Sothebys; this was accordingly carried out. They gave the advice that a better price might be obtained as scrap value than being sold by auction; and eventually the goblets were sold to a bullion dealer. It was agreed that part of the scrap gold should be used to plate a chalice for use in the Church, the remainder of the money from the sale to be accredited to Church funds. A gold and silversmith from Lincoln was commissioned to carry out the work, this being in the form of a Ciborium /Chalice and Patten of modern design with a deep base, fluted column stem, surmounted with capital, enriched with gothic decoration to match the arches in the Church, the whole being suitably inscribed.

The ciborium was blessed and dedicated to the Glory of God and St. Michael and All Angels by the vicar at a High Mass on Sunday, the 15th December, Mrs West, and her family, being present for the occasion.

During December 1985 a new floodlighting system was installed to the main facade of the Church and Crucifix. The first part of the installation work, was switched on and officially opened by the Mayor, on Advent Sunday.

With the coming of Father John William Travers to the parish, St Michael's witnessed a revival of Catholicism centred upon the Sacraments and a regeneration of parish life.



Fr. Travers at St Michael's Fete

1989 Onwards

John Travers left in 1989, and Father Ron Lettall came to the church for five years. He was a very well liked priest, but in 1994 he left.

In the early 1990s, thanks to John Hoodlass who worked for Lincolnshire County Council, St Michael's had installed a new inside disabled toilet in the Choir Vestry, a long awaited addition and very much appreciated!

Some of the church wardens during this period were Geoff Warne and Sid Brown who served for approximately 20 years, and among the long-serving church vergers were Dorothy Dalton and Sheila Willietts, Sheila who continues to do a wonderful job in this post to this day.

A new sound system was brought in which made a great difference to the church congregation having the T-induction loop facility for those who had hearing aids. The priest now had a roving microphone allowing everyone to hear the whole Mass.

Sadly as congregations continued to fall, many groups that had been well supported waned including the mothers union which had been so strong in the church, finally folded.



Fr David Davis (centre) with John Atkinson and Phil Smith

In 1993 Revd. Stephen Holdaway came to and joined the Team Parish of Louth as the Rector.

In 1996 Fr. David Wise came to St Michael's and left in 1998. He was a very popular priest with the congregation. Fr. David Davis came in 1998 and left in 2001 and he was the last dedicated vicar to St. Michael's. He was known for giving the best sermons not just in the parish, but in the district.

During the late 90s the large Calvary at the front of the church grounds was vandalised and smashed to an irreparable state. This was replaced with a similar statue and rose bushes were planted around it to prevent vandals from easily accessing it.

After David Davis left in 2001 and during the interregnum, Sunday services were altered to 8.30 am and 9:30am – occasional evensong and benediction at 6pm on the first Sunday of month, then Tuesday at 6:30pm and Saturday at 10am.

During the following ten years many of the clergy in the team celebrated Mass at St Michael's as a part of the Team of Churches, Andrew Wickens, Richard Holden and Alan Barton being three who were very dear to the congregation at St Michael's. The Rev'd. Sue Oliver joined the Parish as a Team Vicar in 2009 and was the first woman priest to live in St. Michael's vicarage.

Up until 2011 women priests had not celebrated Mass in St. Michael's, undertaking weddings and baptisms only. Following discussion with the Rector Stephen Holdaway and the Bishop of Grimsby, David Rosedale, St. Michael's was left little choice but to accept women priests to celebrate Mass.

This decision divided the congregation greatly and caused, at first, much upset between those who would accept women priests and those who wouldn't. Eventually the congregation settled and accepted that everyone had their own belief and different point of view. But although some of the congregation left, others joined and so the family continued to worship with peace.

In 2011 the Parish went into an interregnum when the Rector Stephen Holdaway retired. Just a few months later Rev'd. Sue Oliver left leaving no full time priest for the parish.

But during the 15 months that the interregnum lasted, St Michael's enjoyed traditional High Masses celebrated by a variety of dedicated, retired priests including Ian Partridge, Keith Tomlin, Moira Davies and Daphne King, along with the local non-stipendiary priest Robert Mansfield.

2013 brings a new era when St Michael's celebrates its 150th anniversary with two new priests joining the parish, Rev'd. Nick Brown as Priest-in-charge (Rector) of the Louth Team Ministry and Rev'd. Stephen Johnson as Community Chaplain within the Louth Team Ministry.

As St. Michael's looks back at the first 150 of its life the Parish of Louth is exploring ways of continuing to proclaim the Christian faith to those who live, work and visit the town. St. Michael's is in the process of exploring the opportunities that this will bring as it seeks to make a contribution from its sacramental, Anglo-catholic heritage, and looks to serve the people of the parish in the many years to come.



Fr. Robert Mansfield



John, the Sacristan, Harvest Festival 2012



Patronal Festival 2012



The Children's Area



Coffee after Mass



Fr. Nick Brown,
Priest in Charge of Louth Parish 2013

St Michael's School

Cultural education was started in the earliest days by the Church and since then education and religion have gone hand in hand. In England, when the parish priest was the only educated man in town or village, he strove to pass on his knowledge to any who would listen. This was so in Louth, and in December, 1864, a year after the consecration of the Church, Sunday and Day Schools were started by Fr. George Nash.

The Day School which was carried on in an old carpenter's shop, now No. 4 St. Michael's Road, was a Dame's School run by Mrs Brain, with Mrs Wilkinson to look after the infants. In March, 1874, £40 a year secured the services, as master and mistress, of Mr and Mrs Adams. Miss Wilkinson continued on the princely sum of £10 a year. Although the parents had to pay a penny a week and buy all books, a problem in those days of low wages and large families, the number of children at the school was too large for the limited room available, so on June 1st, 1874, the managers and subscribers, under the vicar, Ernest Lloyd Gardner, launched an appeal for funds for a new building - an appeal so successful that £375 had been provided by the October of that Year.

The foundation stone was laid on 29th April, 1875, by Mrs Wilde, wife of the Rector of Louth, and the school opened on 3rd January, 1876. The new building, designed by James Fowler, who designed the church, cost £689. A very successful bazaar at the Town Hall raised £255 towards the cost.

The sudden death of Mr Adams in 1880 led to the appointment of Mr and Mrs Southerton at £50 a year, plus house, rates and coal. Mr Southerton, a man of considerable energy, ran a choirboys' guild, cricket and football clubs, paper chases and a glee club. Caps and knickerbockers were made for the teams by the girls' sewing classes with each article filled, as soon as it was finished, by its prospective wearer and paraded.

Mr and Mrs Gregory followed as teachers towards the end of 1882. Mr Gregory's fame centred on his wooden leg and his habit of sleeping in class in front of the fire. His dreams were rudely shattered on the day some of the boys set fire to his leg.

In 1887, conscious, no doubt, of the continuing deficit in the school finances, the managers decided that increased efficiency would result from placing the school under government auspices this led to a grant of £145 from the Education Department, it also led to the dismissal of the Gregorys, who were un-certificated teachers, and to the appointment of Mr and Mrs Gibert, who were certificated, a condition of the grant. This appointment was followed soon afterwards, in 1889, by that of Mr and Mrs Wright at a joint salary of £115 and a house, an appointment which lasted in the case of Mr Wright until 1923.

Following representations by H.M. Inspector, it was decided in July, 1891, to extend the school. In that same year, the school was declared "free" under the 1891 Act. Thus ended an era in school life - no longer the "Monday morning feeling" when the master collected the school pence or the threat of being sent home because of non-payment or absence because father was unemployed. A tribute is due to the parents in a poor working-class parish, so many of whom were so keen to see their children instructed in the three Rs that they were willing to spend relatively large sums out of meagre wages.

The history of most Church Schools is of an endless battle to make ends meet, and St. Michael's was no exception. From 1920 the Lindsey Education Committee sought to re-organise elementary schools in Louth in various ways, aimed at securing the transfer of all voluntary schools to the County Council. But first under Canon Jordan, then under his successors, the fight went on to preserve the remaining Church School in Louth.

Economy led to the appointment of one head teacher to cover the infants and mixed schools, a post first filled in 1925 by Mr M. L. Grylls, B.A., B.Sc., M.I.H. Unfortunately this scheme resulted in the departure of Miss Burdett, for many years headmistress of the infants.

Many were the pressures exerted on the managers from time to time to secure the transfer of authority; in 1929 allegations of overcrowding; in 1931 further expansive alterations ; in 1932 the addition of heating.

From the mid-thirties the future of the school was very much in the balance. In 1939, at the request of their staff, the managers agreed to an old proposal to transfer all the seniors to Monks' Dyke, and to leave St. Michael's as an Infants' School. The expected drop in numbers was, however, delayed by the influx of large numbers of evacuees. 1932 saw a change of head in the appointment of Mr G. H. Yarker, of Barnetby, who was in turn replaced by Mr F. S. Sharp in 1946.

The 1945 Education Act inspired further efforts to preserve the school, in the plan to erect a new school in Newmarket. The price of £25,000, and the unwillingness of either St. James' or Holy Trinity to help preserve aided status made the proposal too great an obstacle. In 1951 control of the school passed to the State, when "controlled" status was accepted. This we do regret, but we must also thank God for the ideal which inspired men and priests to labour for ninety years to secure for the children of this parish the right to an education rooted firmly in the Faith of the Church.

However Church involvement did not cease because the State had now taken over Church duties. Close contact was kept between the incumbents of St. Michael's and head teachers at the school.

In 1968 the bungalow behind the school became vacant. It was demolished and the site incorporated into the school providing a space for a mobile classroom. However, by September, 1962, there were only about 60 pupils attending the school. The closing of Kelstern school, in April, 1963, brought in another nine children but numbers remained below one hundred until just after the new school was opened, then children from Tathwell and Welton-le-Wold were transferred to St. Michaels. The school then continued to flourish and in 1968 Mr Donald Elliott arrived as the new Head.

During 1969 the Local Authority provided a playing field in Monks' Dyke Road and this soon became a site for a new school - St. Michael's was to move.

The school moved to its present site and was opened in September, 1974. Consideration was given by St. Michael's Church Council of buying the old school for a parish headquarters but little support was offered from the other two churches and because of this and the expense the scheme was abandoned. The buildings were eventually demolished and new housing built on the site.

St. Michael's School now has a role of 225 children, and by arrangement with the Head Teacher, still visit our church to enjoy a service a three times each year.



The original St. Michael's School

St Michael's Church House

St. Michael's Church House had originally belonged to Fr. Yates who used it as a coach house and stables. The upper floor was used to store such items as hay to feed the horses which were stabled below and provision was also made for the Vicar's coach to be housed. After Fr. Yates' departure from the benefice of St. Michael's, Fr. Jordan, his successor, pressed the Church Council to purchase, for £500, the building. This was opened after alteration on St. Andrew's Day, 1922, with a crowd of some 200 people present.

The building was used by all of the parish organisations for there was a great deal of parish activity up until the war when, like so many of the church's buildings, the army requisitioned it for the billeting of soldiers. This took its toll on the building and even though minor repairs were undertaken, the building began to show signs of age until consideration was given during Fr. Sleight's vicariate to selling the property and extending the choir vestry at the back of the church. However, all this changed soon after the arrival of Fr. Travers who bought the building back into use for clubs and parishioners use.

Church House continued being used throughout the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, the main group using it was St. Michael's Playgroup who had started up during the 1980s, dancing classes and local community groups.



St Michael's Playgroup



Hum Bug Activity Club at Church House

During 2011 a new group moved into Church House, the Hum Bug Activity Club, a place where those suffering from strokes or the older generation could meet and broaden their minds whilst enjoying good company.

It soon became apparent that Church House needed a new fire alarm and emergency lighting system to meet the regulations following recent changes in risk assessment and health and safety.

During 2012 Church House had a new system installed and also had some major maintenance work undertaken. Work is still underway to update the carpeting and kitchen area.



The Hum Bug Activity Club at Church House

