

**A History of**  
**St Edmund's Church**  
**Seaton Ross**

**Revd. Henry Stapleton**

**(with additions by Seaton Ross History Group)**

## Author's note

I am very grateful to the many villagers who have helped and encouraged me with the preparation of this brief history. I wish also to thank the Revd. N. A. H. Lawrance who has helped me untangle the list of Curates of Seaton Ross; N. Higson, Esquire, for the chapter on the Parish Documents; Mrs. Jack Warriner for her impeccable typing of the MSS; a parishioner, who wishes to remain anonymous, for paying the cost of publication; and Mr. Gore-Browne, the duplicator.

Henry Stapleton  
April 1965

## Additional material

The Very Revd Henry Edward Champneys Stapleton MBE was Vicar of Seaton Ross from 1961 to 1967, moving to Carlisle to become Dean from 1988 to 1998. Whilst at Seaton Ross, he penned a history of the church and the village. The present document reproduces the church material with Henry's kind permission and consent. Additional material has been included where appropriate to record what has happened in the 55 years since it was originally written.

Seaton Ross History Group  
April 2020

# A History of St Edmund's, Seaton Ross

## The Church

The present building consists of Tower, Chancel and Nave, in red brick and dates from 1789. However, there is evidence of a previous church building on this site. Under the Tower is a large Norman font dating from the eleventh century. Its size no doubt dictated by the fact that in early times the font was filled and children were plunged under the water. This practice is reflected in the 1662 Prayer Book rubric:

*'And then naming it after them (the godparents)  
(if they shall certify that the Child may well endure  
It) he shall dip it in the Water discreetly and warily.'*

In the twelfth century Geoffrey FitzPain gave to the monks of Warter Priory the Church and lands called Prestthwarth (Priest-bridge), which may be identified with the field known as Preston Hides, opposite the White House<sup>1</sup>. This land was to be the site of a new Monastery but the proposal was never carried out, although Pope Innocent III gave it his approval in 1140. Nevertheless the Church was confirmed in 1170-1180 as the property of Warter.

The Church is dedicated to St Edmund whose cult began soon after his martyrdom in the ninth century. This Saint was a King of East Anglia and the scene of his death is portrayed in the Preston Memorial Window. There in the West light is St. Edmund and his bishop Humbert who had crowned him in earlier and happier days. The two figures are shown at prayer before the battle of Hægelisdune<sup>2</sup>. The centre light shows St. Edmund tied to an oak tree, transfixed by Danish arrows – these arrows and the three crowns are his emblem and are embroidered on the White (altar) Frontal. The East light tells the story of how the Saint's decapitated head was recovered by the Angles. They were led to it by a Wolf which barked 'Heugh, Heugh,' (Here! Here!) The body of St. Edmund was taken and interred with great solemnity at Bury St. Edmunds. The reason for this dedication may be due to the desire of a local landowner Edmund de Mauley wishing to honour his 'name saint.'

In 1455 Robert White of 'Seton in Spaldingmore' directed in his will that his body is to be buried in the "Chappell of Seton." Ralph Elwick, likewise, in 1531 orders that his burial is to be in the "chauncers (chancel) of Sanct Edmund de Ceytton."

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<sup>1</sup> The now dilapidated (soon to be demolished) building, going out of Seaton Ross on the Everingham Road

<sup>2</sup> Hægelisdun. It's precise location is obscure – see Keith Briggs (2011). Was Hægelisdun in Essex? A new site for the martyrdom of Edmund. *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* volume XLII, part 3, pages 277–291.

When Warter Priory was dissolved in 1536 the Church received a number of vestments from the monastery: 'Also one SUTE for the PREST, DECANE and SUBDECANE of WHITT SYLKE for the PREST and VI copes of WHITT BUSCHAM for the Chanteries (choristers) and for the RESYDEW of the Ministers of the QWERE'

Only a few of these were still here when, in 1552, King Edward VI ordered lists of Church Goods:

'Inprimis two bells, one challis of silver  
item one blewe vestment of saye  
item one of white bustian  
    one of altar cloth  
item one hand bell, one cope of whyst bustian.'

This list was attested by William Harte, Curate; Thomas Blacburne and John Heslewood, Churchwardens; John Catton and John Watton 'inhabitants of the same parish.'

The Parliamentary Survey of 1650 refers to 'Seton Chappell' and it was about this time that the bell was put up. It has the inscription SOLI DEO GLORIA PAX HOMINIBUS (to God alone by the glory – peace towards men) and the initials TT which probably are the initials of a seventeenth-century bell founder, Thomas Tompion.

In 1653 the Registers begin.

What did the pre-1789 Church look like? We may assume that it was built of wattle and daub or rough masonry, like Bielby Church. It probably had a small tower for the bells. Of the interior one may only surmise – there would be the font and by the door the Holy Water stoup (now outside near the Tower) and possibly the oak communion rails and the stained glass heraldic window depicting a fleur de lys in the Tower. The Jacobean chair is of this date but it was donated to the Church ca. 1945.

The Canons of 1604 ordered the Ten Commandments to be: "Set up on the East End of every church and chapel where the people may best see and read the same". The Commandment Boards show signs of water having come in from the roof and these may have been on the East Wall of the original church. The Ten Commandments are on one board, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer on the other. For centuries the Priest used these as his blackboard to teach his candidates for Confirmation.

A Memorandum at the base of the latter board records the rebuilding in 1789:

MEMORANDUM

This CHURCH was rebuilt at the Expenche of the Parishioners of Seaton Rofs, and the Chancel by William Haggerston Maxwell Constable Esqre: The same was furnished, with a new Pulpit and Reading Desk, and properly ornamented by the Minister of the said Parish in the year of our Lord 1789. And that no Benefactor to this church may be forgot; be it remembered that a new cornice was made round it by the Direction and at the Expenche of Mr. Richard WALKER of Bielby.

The Revd. Robert Robinson Minister  
Mr. Robert Ibbetson Churchwarden

With this we must take the stone tablet on the Tower which reads – ‘H. NOTTINGHAM RAISED THE STEEPLE AT HIS CHARGE FROM THIS STONE, 1788’

We are fortunate in being able to see the Application for the Faculty to rebuild the Chancel among the Diocesan Records at the Borthwick Institute and so we can piece together the whole story. It seems that about this time there was quite a lot of rebuilding going on. Everingham Chancel was rebuilt in 1763, East Cottingwith in 1780 and Wheldrake in 1789 – all are in the same brick. East Cottingwith (except for its apse, like Everingham) and Seaton Ross are very similar and it may be by the same architect.

In 1788 then the Parishioners decided to rebuild the Chancel. Mr. Nottingham (who built the upper part of the Tower)<sup>3</sup> is described by the Parish Clerk in the Registers: “He lived at Seaton Ross 40 years; he was a kindly man and a good neighbour.” William Haggerston Constable Maxell was responsible for the Chancel and in his Petition for a Faculty he says:

“It is proposed to seat the church anew and by the intended arrangement seats will be provided for 24 persons more than the church would contain before. A new gallery will be erected and the old one enlarged which will make more room still.”

This was stated as Mr. Robinson referred to his scheme for decreasing the size of the Chancel:

“Mr. Constable proposes to build it on the same plan with the same sort of materials and in the same style in which the Church has been lately built, that the whole church

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<sup>3</sup> There is a plaque on the south side of the tower.

will then be one new uniform complete fabric perfectly decent and in all respects becoming the House of God..... (He proposes) to contract the chancel 10 feet in length setting forth that no inconvenience will arise thereby to the Parish as there is ample room left for the communicants to pass and repass to and from the Altar rails and the same accommodation as before for the communicants.”

So the Church was rebuilt ‘one new uniform complete fabric perfectly decent and in all respects becoming the House of God.’ We cannot fail to admire the co-operative effort – the parishioners build the Chancel, two wealthier members supply the upper part of the Tower and the Cornice, the Squire improves the Chancel and the Vicar the Pulpit and Reading Desk. The text for his sermon at the re-opening was recorded by a meticulous Parish Clerk – “I was glad when they said unto me: We will go into the House of the Lord.”

It is tempting to think that a contributor to this rebuilding was a grocer, Paul Easton, who died at Seaton Ross in 1786. The Parish Clerk records: ‘He lived at Seaton Ross 35 years and upwards and acquired a handsome fortune and was a very useful member of society. Sponsor Multorum.’ The last two words are Latin for “promoter of many things” – could he have left money for the Church?

We are fortunate in having William Watson’s Notebook of 1845 which shows the church as it was then rebuilt (see frontispiece)<sup>4</sup>. The outline is the same as today. There were Georgian sash windows, no window in the Chancel. The congregation sat in box pews, the panelling of which was reused as the DADO in the 1901 restoration. There was a plaster ceiling with an ornamented cornice. To put the church valuables in safe custody was the YORK - TYPE SAFE now in the Tower. However, the chalices were still kept in the Church chest and were stolen in 1814 – the story is told later.

At the West End was a Minstrels’ Gallery lit by a window on the North now blocked up. The instruments used to accompany the singing appear to have been a clarinet and a bass violin. When the new churchwarden, Robert Rook, took over in 1827 he acknowledged the receipt of:-

First	4 Books Numbered No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, No. 4
Secondly	Bafs Violin
Thirdly	A Claronet marked Goulding & D. Amaire

One of these books is still extant. It contains the settings of a number of psalms and anthems and, curiously, the Collect for Purity in the Holy Communion Services and that for the Second Sunday in Advent. The Churchwarden’s Accounts record almost annual payments for ‘fiddle strings’ and ‘Claronet Reeds.’ In 1803 the ‘Singing Master’ received the princely wage of £6.

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<sup>4</sup> See plans and drawings in appendix

Extensive repairs were carried out in 1833 but little was altered apart from the addition of the Memorandum Board about Henry Watson's bequest and the addition of the candelabrum over the font. Outside, however, the sundial was put up by William Watson in 1825 and no doubt he was responsible for many of the verses on tombstones outside. His own records the gift of the Sun Dial:

'At this church I so often with pleasure did call  
That I placed a sun dial upon the church wall.'

In 1901 Mr. Temple Moore, the famous Victorian Church Architect, undertook the restoration of the Church which cost £600<sup>5</sup>; he bricked up the lower part of the nave windows and inserted a new one in the Chancel. The gallery was taken down and the ceiling of the Nave removed. The panelling of the box pews was made to form the dado, pulpit and reading desk. In front of the East Window he erected a reredos<sup>6</sup> with curtains either side. He designed new pews and, no doubt the wooden cross (above the reading desk) and candlesticks for the altar. To commemorate the restoration a board was set up on the West Wall and a List of Vicars compiled.

After the 1914-1918 War a fine war memorial tablet was erected and a commemorative window depicting the Resurrection<sup>7</sup>. In 1926 the St Edmund window was installed to the memory of a former churchwarden and his wife, Charles and Betsy Preston. The oak lectern was donated in 1928 to the memory of George Deane as was also a chancel chair for the Bishop. The organ is an example of the work of the famous Willis family.

In 1953 Mr. George G. Pace reorganised the Chancel by removing Temple Moore's reredos. A very fine window of the Ascension was inserted in the unblocked windows. The artist of this window was Mr. Harry Stammers, who formerly lived in York and did much work in this area, examples too may be seen in the Cathedrals of Canterbury and Lincoln. The side windows depict Adam and Eve and Serpent in the Garden of Eden and the Blessed Virgin Mary and Child holding a Chalice and Host. It is indeed a remarkable window. Mr. Stammers has carefully used colours that appear in the other windows so that they form a harmonious unity. The donor was a former churchwarden, William Ibbotson, whose ancestors have long been connected with this Church.

Other gifts in the recent years are the two five-branched brass candlesticks, the brass altar cross, designed by Mr. Pace, the velvet curtains of the Tower, the Mother's Union banner and a 1928 Altar Book. On Christmas Day 1963 two servers' candlesticks were dedicated. Mr. Pace designed them, the ironwork was carried out by Dowson of Kirby

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<sup>5</sup> Equivalent to £72,000 in today's money.

<sup>6</sup> Photo in appendix

<sup>7</sup> The names of the fallen from the parish are on the window, but more recently a memorial plaque from Seaton Ross school (now the village hall) has been donated. There is also a record of the fallen in a display at the back of the church that includes names not on either the window or the plaque.

Moorside, the wood by Thompson of Kilburn, whose mouse can be seen at the base of the shafts.

In 1964 the dado around the base of the Tower was found to be rotten and removed. The interior of the Church was redecorated and the Boards on the North Wall were cleaned to reveal some very fine initialling and lettering done probably towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Since 1965, there have been only minor modifications to the building, the most significant of which has been the removal of the electric wall heaters installed sometime in the 1960s and the installation of an oil-fired (external boiler) wet radiator system which maintains a more even temperature and preserves the fabric of the building.



## The Churchyard

The Village is proud of its gardens and its Churchyard. In Spring-time it is a delight to behold the numerous daffodils and the flowering trees around us borders. When the interior of the Church was remodelled in 1789 the governing theme was harmony and there is a similar, if accidental, harmony in the gravestones about the exterior.

From the earliest times the dead have been buried in and around the Church. But it was not till the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the centuries old superstition against being buried on the North side was overcome. The North in ancient folklore was thought of as the 'wrong side', the source of evil.

The lack of gravestones earlier than 1800 is due to the absence of stone easily available in the neighbourhood. But after that date transport improved and stones could be brought. The majority are simple headstones of York stone, now mellowed with age and lichen. The oldest are perhaps the Table tombs on the South side but the inscriptions are indecipherable. Good examples of style and lettering are those to GEORGE JOHNSON (1838), MARY COULSON (1834), JOHN BURNETT (1837) and ROBERT DEAN (1803). Among the more recent memorials there is the attractive monument to KATHLEEN WATSON (1934) and MARTIN TURTON (1963).<sup>8</sup>

In the Canons of 1603 it is required that the Churchwardens should ensure that the Churchyard 'be well and sufficiently repaired, fenced and maintained with walls, rails or pales.' It became customary to make local landowners responsible for such fencing. The Churchwarden's Account Book records the allocation of the various portions in 1818 among 50 of the parishioners. The fencing was divided into 59 parts and several have more than one section upkeep. The Parish was responsible for the gate.

In February 1832 the fence was renewed and the quick hedge planted. This excerpt from the Churchwarden's Account itemises the expenditure<sup>9</sup>:

A Journey to Sutton & York to buy Quickwood & posts & rails	9s. 0d.
3 Load of thorns for the Churchyard fence	£- 10 0
For Loading the same	£- 10 0
Paid Mr. Massey for 50 Oak Posts @ 6½d. each	1 7 1
Paid for 150 Rails @ 5d. each	3 2 6
For Leading the same	- 10 0
Paid for 500 of Quickwood for the Churchyard @ 37s. 6d. per Thousand	- 18 9
Paid carriage for the same	- 2 0
Paid to Samuel Hall for cleaning the soil, planting Quickwood & Fencing 9 days @ 2s. per day	- 18 0

<sup>8</sup> There is also a Great War Commonwealth Grave (John Henley).

<sup>9</sup> These costs amount to around £11-6s, which in today's money is equivalent to about £770

George Whitacre 4 days at Do.	- 8 0
Paid John Shaw for 9 days at Do.	- 18 0
Paid James Walker for 3 days at Do.	- 6 0
Paid for allowance	- 2 10
My attendance at Churchyard 9 days at same time	1 2 6

The Churchyard was extended<sup>10</sup> in the 1930s and the Cross erected<sup>11</sup>, the proportions of which are much to be admired. At the same time the flowering trees were donated. In the South West Corner is the Parish Bier, perhaps rather an unusual commemoration of the Coronation of King George V in 1911.<sup>12</sup>

The older gravestones abound in epitaphs, the best known being those to MARGARET HARPER (d. 1853) who was thought to be a witch<sup>13</sup> –

THE FAULTS YOU'VE SEEN IN ME  
STRIVE TO AVOID  
SEARCH YOUR OWN HEARTS  
AND YOU'LL BE WELL EMPLOYED.

and to WILLIAM WATSON (D. 1857) –

At this church I so often with  
Pleasure did call  
That I placed a sun dial upon  
The Church Wall.

The same man may well be the author of some of the epitaphs.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century epitaphs were often wordy<sup>14</sup> but they became shorter in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, e.g. 'Gone but not forgotten.' 'Till the day dawns,' 'At Rest'; words of Scripture were quoted and in two cases there are verses of hymns. But the lines at Seaton Ross remain as a fine example of the local versifier's art<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> See churchyard plans in appendix

<sup>11</sup> This cross stood in the middle of the churchyard in living memory, but fell into disrepair many years ago and there is now no trace of it.

<sup>12</sup> The bier shed was demolished in 2019 and the bier is in the process of restoration. The original bier notice now hangs in the church.

<sup>13</sup> An excellent account of Margaret Harper can be found at <https://seatonrosswitch.com/tag/margaret-harper/>

<sup>14</sup> For the sake of brevity, the 4 pages of epitaphs in the original version of this history have been placed in the appendix.

<sup>15</sup> East Yorkshire Family History Society have recorded all the monumental inscriptions for Seaton Ross, along with a map of earlier graves in the churchyard in *Everingham, Seaton Ross & Harswell Monumental inscriptions*, Monumental Inscription Series, No 125 (1999). There is also an up-to-date churchyard map within the church.

*Seaton Ross History Group Note:* Since the original history was written in 1965, there have been a few changes to the churchyard: the creation of a plot in 2012 for the interment of cremated remains, and the inclusion of a large area of land within to the north-west of the property in 2017. An archaeological survey of the new (2017) ground included three trenches, but no significant material was discovered, merely a 10g piece of medieval pottery.

## The Serving of the Cure

In the Middle Ages there were three main ways a parish might be served: by a Rector, a Vicar or a Curate in Charge. A Rector, as at Everingham and Harswell, received as payment for his duties both the greater tithes (corn, hay and wool) and the lesser tithes (chickens, lambs, etc.). A Vicar was appointed by a Rector who kept the greater and let the Vicar have the lesser tithes. Thirdly there were the daughter churches or Chapelries served by an assistant priest who was appointed by the rector or vicar of the Mother church, e. g. Shiptonthorpe (Market Weighton) and Bielby (Hayton). Such priests were called in Latin Capellanus (English, Chaplain) and were later known as Curates.

Seaton Ross Church was 'appropriated' to the Priory of Warter. In 1140 the care of the 'Chapelry' was given to the Monks and in 1291 when the country was assessed under the Taxatio Nicolai – a valuation of the whole country in parishes made upon Pope Nicolas IV's grant of tenths to King Edward I in 1288 for six years towards the expenses of a crusade – Seaton Ross occurs under the Warter entry:

'Church of Warter with a moiety of Seaton Chapel £24.'

The Monks were responsible for the spiritual care of Seaton Ross. It would be simpler for one of them to serve the cure or to engage a stipendiary priest. For this reason it is impossible to trace the names of the clergy among the Institution Books of the Diocese.

When the Priory was dissolved in 1536, who was now responsible for the parish? The duty fell upon the man who received the lands formerly owned by the Priory (the impropiator). In this case it was the de Ros family. They continued to receive the tithes and appointed a Curate to perform the pastoral cure.

The appointment was in the hands of the owner of the land and hence in the Parliamentary Survey of 1650 we find the following:-

"Seaton Improprate – formerly belonged to Sir Edward Osborne but now the Commonwealth. Sir Edward when he made his composition found the living worth one hundred yearly but we find (it) to be worth but yearly three score pounds that is settled by the Committee for plundered ministers upon Mr. Hammond and the person minister of Gunthwayte Chappell in the West Riding."

This connection with Gunthwaite is interesting. It is said that during the Civil War Parliament fined a Royalist supporter £1,000 and this was given to Col. William Bosville who was a Roundhead. Perhaps in consideration of this he and his successors undertook to give £25 per annum to the Incumbent of Seaton Ross. Richard Donn in 1716 writes:

“There is likewise an augmentation of 25 p.a. being the interest of £500 lodged in the hands of Wm. Bosville Esq. of Gunthwayte Hall in ye West Riding of Yorks. But as for ye security of this augmentation Qua re (Latin, ‘for what reason’); for I find no better security than payment to me out of mind and confession of the party in whose hands ye money is lodged.

The family were faithful in their annual payments. In 1955 Col. Bosville’s descendant, Sir Somerles Macdonald of Sleat commuted by paying a capital sum, the interest of which was for the Incumbent’s income.

It is not till 1706 that we have evidence of the separate existence of the parish. Under Aughton in Archbishop Sharpe’s Manuscript occurs the entry:

‘The Chappell of Seaton, Dedicated to St. Edmund And is Parochiall.’

and below:

‘1706 Mr. Donne who serves this cure certifies that the value of Seaton Ross (which he calls a living) is £37 19/-.’

At the back of the Church is a board headed ‘Vicars of Aughton and Cottingwith and Curates of Seaton Ross’ and below names to 1689 and afterwards ‘Curates of Seaton Ross’ beginning with ‘1706 John Donne.’ The compiler has obviously based his assumption that Aughton provided the priest from earliest times on Archbishop Sharpe’s manuscript but, as will be seen, there is no evidence that all the Vicars there served Seaton Ross as well.

Sir Edward Osborne bought the estate in 1620. His son, Sir Thomas, was created the first Duke of Leeds in 1694. Hence the presentation by the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke in 1749. In 1788 the Constables of Everingham acquired the property. But, being Roman Catholics, they could not present an incumbent and the presentation passed to the University of Cambridge in 1794. It is not clear how Kingsman Baskett was the presenter. When Mr. King came to the United Benefice in 1931 the Institution Book states it was so long since an appointment had been made that the patrons were unknown.

Till 1931 there had never been a *Vicar* of Seaton Ross, only Curates in Charge. Thus in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century William Alderson signs himself in the Register as ‘Incumbent Curate’ to distinguish himself from the other clergy performing ministrations.

The smallness of the Parish meant that it has frequently been served by priests from adjacent parishes. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Thomas Browne appears never to have taken any of the occasional offices, but the parish was served by Assistant Curates or Vicars from neighbouring parishes. Although William Alderson of Everingham was Curate in Charge

from 1826-1839, the main connexion has been with Harswell. As far back as 1668 Joseph Blande, the Rector there, was also Curate of Seaton Ross; in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Robert Robinson, and from 1869 to 1931 when the United Benefice of Seaton Ross, Harswell and Everingham was brought into being by Order in Council. In 1959 Bielby was detached from Hayton and added to this group.

*Note: Parish Boundaries*

Starting on the road from Bielby the boundary goes North along an old footpath 500 yards West of Rythamgate – East along Gale Carr drain till it comes in line with Melbourne Lodge, when it turns South, across the aerodrome to the Foss Dike: along this dike over the Selby Road to the junction with Foulness. The boundary then turns North East along the Foulness (to include Lincoln Flatts) up the Black Beck and across the Carrs to Rythamgate.

## Curates of Seaton Ross

Presented by

1531	THOMAS AILL	
1549	WILLIAM HARTE	
1551?	THOMAS EMPSON	
1552	WILLIAM HARTE	
1576	JOHN DUNNINGE	
1601	THOMAS BRITTAN	
1626	WILLIAM SQUIRE	
1668	JOSEPH BLANDE	
1680	EDWARD CARVER	
1706	WILLIAM DONN	
1710	JOHN DRAKE	
1715	RICHARD DONN	
1749	ROBERT ROBINSON	Duke of Leeds
1791	RICHARD BASKETT	Kingsman Baskett
1794	THOMAS BROWN	University of Cambridge
1826	WILLIAM ALDERSON	
1839	THOMAS HUGHES TERRY	
1876	CHARLES SLINGSBY ATKINSON	
1880	EDMUND WILLES ATKINSON	
1901	GEORGE DEAN	

## Vicars of Seaton Ross, Everingham and Harswell

1931	REGINALD JOHN L'ECUYER KING	Lord Londesborough
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1945	ALFRED THOMAS HUXLEY	Archbishop of York (by lapse)
1952	THOMAS GILBERT HORWOOD	“ “ “ “
1955	DONALD BURNETT	“ “ “ “

### Vicars of Seaton Ross, Everingham, Harswell and Bielby

1961	HENRY EDWARD CHAMPNEYS STAPLETON	Lord Chancellor (by lapse)
1967	PETER S THORNTON	

### Rectors of the Seaton Ross Group (with Holme-on-Spalding Moor, Bielby, Everingham and Harswell)

1986	JOHN VICKERS ANDREWS
1998	DAVID S COOK
2003	NIGEL STAFFORD
2013	STEPHEN COPE

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### CURATES OF SEATON ROSS

The first known Curate is THOMAS AILL who occurs in a Will of 1531. THOMAS EMPSON appears in a Diocesan Act Book in 1551. But WILLIAM HARTE was witness of a will in 1549 of a Seaton Ross man and signs the Inventory of Church Goods in 1552. He was Vicar of Thornton with Allerthorpe 1558-83. JOHN DUNNINGE recorded as “Vicar” of Seaton Ross in the Diocesan Act Book in 1576.

The signatures of THOMAS BRITTAN are to be found at the bottom of the transcripts of the Parish Registers sent to the York Registry 1600-1613. In 1605 he describes himself as ‘Minister de Seton’, by 1613 he says in Latin that he is a ‘Master of Arts and Preacher of the Word.’

WILLIAM SQUIRE signs the Transcript Registers 1626-1639. He was Vicar of Bubwith 1617-1640. He married Mary Bayle of Everingham, 1628.

During the Commonwealth the parish was served by a Preaching Minister, PETER HAMMOND, no doubt the same man who was at Everingham. He was born at Sancton, attended school at Newbald and Sydney Sussex College, Cambridge. He was Curate of Holme-on-Spalding Moor 1623-1640. A man of Puritan sympathies, the Church of Everingham was forbidden by the Court of High Commission to receive strangers, i.e. to

allow visitors to preach. He later conformed to the Restored Church of England and was the Rector of Everingham 1662-1669.

JOSEPH BLANDE was Rector of Harswell 1664-1704 and is described as Curate of Seaton in 1668. He was Vicar of Sancton 1691-1699.

EDWARD CARVER is found as "Vicar" in 1680, but also appears to have held the Rectory of Harthill 1665-1685.

WILLIAM DONN was Curate from 1677 and incumbent 1706-1710. A Yorkshire man, he was born at Lockton and went to school at Levisham. He was the first of a number of incumbents to be connected with Pocklington School where he was Usher 1662-1710, perhaps receiving leave of absence to attend St. John's, Cambridge, as he took his B. A. in 1665. He was also Vicar of Aughton and Cottingwith and Curate of Ellerton from 1693, and is buried at Aughton.

His successor, JOHN DRAKE, was born at York. His half-brother Francis produced 'Eboracum' or 'History and Antiquities of York.' Francis was born in 1695 and in early life lived at York where he was a surgeon. John was Head Master of Pocklington School 1709-1714 and Curate of Seaton Ross 1710-1715. He had been educated at Sedbergh School. In February 1697 he was admitted as a chorister at Southwell (presumably as he was 21 at the time), not to sing but to qualify for a Keyton fellowship to which he was elected in April 1701. Made deacon at Lincoln in 1703, priest at Rochester in 1707, he was appointed to the Vicarage of Isleham, Cambs., but received dispensation to be absent from that benefice. During his time here he remained a fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge; was awarded his Bachelor of Divinity degree and later became a Prebendary of York, 1716, Vicar of Pontefract 1727, and Rector of Kirk Smeaton.

RICHARD DUNN was William Dunn's son. Born at Pocklington, he went to school there and attended Sydney Sussex College, Cambridge. He was Curate of Seaton Ross 1715-1749 and Usher of Pocklington School 1710-1745. In Archbishop Herring's Visitation Returns of 1743 he says that he resides at Pocklington in view of his position there. But he writes, 'I constantly supply the cure myself' and he had service twice a Sunday. Further evidence of his care of the parish are the neat entries on the Parish Registers. He died in 1749 and was buried in this churchyard.

The gravestone of ROBERT ROBINSON in front of the altar rails records that he was "Senior Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, Rector of Harswell and for forty-two years Curate of this parish," 1749-1791. He was Headmaster of Pocklington 1740-1749. It is fitting that he should be buried in the church as he was Curate when it was rebuilt in 1789 and preached at the reopening. It appears that he lived at Harswell. In 1764 St. John's presented him to the living of Ufford, Northants. He delayed institution, no doubt in the hope of being allowed to hold both benefices, but he was unsuccessful and returned the

presentation, with the result that the College decided that he should not be offered the next two livings that fell vacant.

RICHARD BASKETT, Curate 1791-1794 was the second son of Kingman Baskett, Headmaster of Pocklington School, dying unmarried in 1794. He was assisted by Nicholas Bourne from 1792 (a Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, 1790-1806 and later successively Vicar of Kirk Ella, Elloughton and Finghall).

It is perhaps strange that at the election for the Curacy held at the University of Cambridge in 1794 THOMAS BROWN polled 78 votes to Mr. Bourne's 46. Nevertheless he (Bourne) appears to have continued here, now as Mr. Brown's assistant till 1796.

THOMAS BROWN, Curate 1794-1826, does not appear at all in the Parish Registers. He had a distinguished academic career being a fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, 1791, Master 1808-1814 and Vice Chancellor of the University in 1811. He is said to have been a man much given to practical jokes and was not popular in the University. He lived chiefly at Bourn, Cambridgeshire.

From 1796-1807 WILLIAM ANDERSON was the Assistant, 1808-1814 John Ponsonby (later Vicar of Pickering, 1814-1857). Mr. Alderson was "Incumbent Curate" 1816-1839, being Rector of Everingham 1809-1839, and was assisted by F. Read (1835), John Compson (1836).

THOMAS HUGHES TERRY came from the Curacy of North Newbald where he had been 1833-1839. He was Curate here 1839-1874, serving at Everingham 1841-42, Muston 1853-1859, Ferrybridge 1859-1861. In addition he was Curate of Beeston, Norfolk, 1861-1862. He also had Assistant Curates, some of whom may have been local clergy. A. Keir (1853-1855); T. H. Hollier (1855-1856); George Mower Webb (1855-1858); Mr. Webb was Curate of Aughton with Cottingwith 1848-1852, Vicar 1852-1860; George Beardsale 1857-59; John Wilson 1859-1860; Samuel Wilson 1860-1861; Charles Henry Dinsdale (1861).

CHARLES SLINGBSY ATKINSON (1876-1880) was the first of three Curates to combine the care of Seaton Ross with the Rectory of Harswell to which he had been appointed in 1869. He was instrumental in rebuilding the Church of Harswell. He became Rector of Kirby Sigston in 1880. An old-fashioned "squarson" he died in the hunting field and is buried at Moor Monkton.

EDMUND WILLES ATKINSON (1880-1901) served both villages till he also went to Kirby Sigston.

GEORGE DEANE (1901-1928) was Rector of Harswell and the last Curate of Seaton Ross. He had been Curate of Helmsley, 1886-1901 and served his entire ministry in this parish. Many remember him walking over the Carrs from Harswell each week. A meticulous man, his service registers are a model of clarity and neatness. And at the back of the book he recorded the attendances of each of his parishioners. He is buried in the churchyard.



In 1931 the benefice was united with Everingham and Harswell and the first Vicar was REGINALD JOHN L'ECUYER KING. He was followed by ALFRED THOMAS HUXLEY (1945-1951), THOMAS GILBERT HORWOOD (1952-1954), DONALD BURNETT (1955-1960).

The present incumbent is the Revd, HENRY EDWARD CHAMPNEYS STAPLETON, appointed in 1961.

#### THE CURATE'S HOUSE

Archbishop Sharpe's Manuscript mentions a 'little house and yard' belonging to the benefice and this is probably the predecessor of the house South of the Churchyard now called "Ashley Cottage" and still Glebe property.<sup>16</sup> This was known as the 'Parsonage House' in 1818 in which year it was also declared by the Diocese as being unfit for residence.

The White House on the Everingham Road was built in 1826 according to William Watson's Notebooks and it is therefore hard to account for the declaration of the unfitness of the parsonage in 1834. For this building was known as the "Vicarage" in Mr. Terry's time.

However an examination of the livings held by the Curates shows that very few appear to have lived in the village. Perhaps those prior to Thomas Brittan may have lived here. But in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, William Squire was at Bubwith, Peter Hammond, Everingham; Joseph Blande, Harswell, Edward Carver, Harthill. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century William Dunn lived at Aughton, John Drake, Richard Dunn and (?) William Baskett, Pocklington: Robert Robinson, Harswell. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Thomas Brown was never here; William Alderson was Curate of Holme-on-Spalding Moor, which leaves Nicholas Bourne and John Ponsonby as possible residents.

Mr. Terry no doubt lived in the White House 1839-1853, perhaps letting his assistants use the house till he returned from his various other curacies in 1863, although his address in a Directory of 1865 is given as New Street, Pocklington. Charles and Edmund Atkinson and George Deane lived at Harswell Rectory.

From 1931 Everingham Rectory has been the home of the Vicars of this now combined parish<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Built in 1800, Ashley Cottage fell into disrepair, was demolished and rebuilt in the noughties as a private dwelling.

<sup>17</sup> The present incumbent Canon Stephen Cope and his predecessor Rev Nigel Stafford have resided in the Rectory at Holme on Spalding Moor.

## THE PATTERN OF WORSHIP

From the earliest days of Christianity Christians have gathered together on the Lord's Own Day for the Lord's Own Service – the Holy Communion. Though called the mass this was the worship attended by the villagers at the Parish Church up till the time of the Reformation.

In 1549 the service was translated into English from the Latin and various alterations made. A further revision was made in 1552. Then, with Queen Mary, came the restoration of the Latin Mass 1553-1558. With the accession of Queen Elizabeth I an English Prayer Book was produced (1559) and this served till in 1645 it was proscribed by the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell. Following the Restoration of King Charles II came the Book of Common Prayer (1662) which is the basis of worship in the Church of England today.

It is difficult to say what were the services here each Sunday after the Reformation. But in 1743 the Curate appears to have had two services a Sunday, Morning and Evening Prayer; and Holy Communion four times a year. From the Churchwarden's Accounts these were held from 1795 at Easter, Whitsun, Michaelmas and Christmas. The Sunday services were accompanied by singing metrical psalms. The Holy Communion, too, had various parts to music also. However, it was not till the 19<sup>th</sup> century that Hymns Ancient and Modern was produced.

From Mr. Deane's Service Register we get a clear picture of the pattern of Sunday worship at the turn of the century – Holy Communion 8, Children's Service 9.30, Evensong 6.30. Mr. King started a Sung Holy Communion in November 1935 once a month. His rota was 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday, Evensong at 6.30; 2<sup>nd</sup> Matins, 10.30; 3<sup>rd</sup>, Holy Communion, 8, and Evensong 6.30; 4<sup>th</sup> Choral Eucharist, 10.30.

With the union of the parishes various systems have been tried. The present arrangement is Holy Communion at 10.30 and Evensong at 6 on alternate Sundays. Holy Communion on Friday each week at 9<sup>18</sup>.

But the villagers showed devotion to the "Old Religion"; in 1567/8 there is evidence of Catholic practices in the Church.

The Sunday School has been in existence for over a hundred years. Each Christmas parishioners tour the village singing carols in aid of Sunday School funds – the account books record that this custom has been continuous since the 1860s.

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<sup>18</sup> This has since reduced to a 9 a.m. Holy communion service every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday.

## CHURCHWARDENS OF SEATON ROSS

1795	MATTHEW VARVILL
1796	JOHN WATSON
1797-98	GEORGE JOHNSON
1799	ROBERT CHAPMAN
1800	ROBERT TAYLER
1801	RICHARD IBBETSON
1802	GEORGE COOK
1803	THOMAS ELAND
1804	MATTHEW VARVILL
1805-06	WILLIAM WILKINSON
1807	THOMAS HARRISON
1808	THOMAS HARPER
1809	JOHN WATSON
1810	THOMAS STUBBINGS
1811-12	WILLIAM PEXTON
1813	RICHARD IBBOTSON
1814-15	THOMAS IBBETSON
1816-17	ROBERT VARVILL
1818	WILLIAM WATSON
1819-20	JOHN WATSON
1821-22	JOHN SYKES
1823	JOHN CHAPMAN
1824-26	ROBERT ROOK
1827-28	ROBERT VARVILL
1829	CHARLES WATSON
1830-34	JAMES WATSON
1835-37	WILLIAM WATSON
1838-40	GEORGE WATSON
1841-42	JOHN CHAPMAN
1843-44	CHARLES WATSON
1845-46	WILLIAM BROWN
1847-48	JAMES WATSON
1849-51	ROBERT IBBOTSON
1852-64	(Unknown)
1865-66	W. G. GIBSON
1867-68	JAMES WATSON
1869-72	(Unknown)
1873-75	WEBSER FEATHERBY
1876-81	(Unknown)
1882-1911	THOMAS GILLAH IBBOTSON
1912-26	CHARLES PRESTON (I)

Since 1951, the following have served as church wardens, in chronological order: Charles Preston; John Hall; Robbie Preston and David Benson; Robbie Preston and Keith Barber; Keith Barber and David Benson; David Benson and Joyce Horsley; David Raffaelli (to date).

#### PARISH DOCUMENTS

Parish Registers were ordered to be kept as early as 1538. In 1598 Queen Elizabeth reinforced this command and required a transcript to be deposited at the Diocesan Registry. The earliest records of this parish are to be found in this transcript form from 1600-1639. However, the Registers themselves do not begin till 1653. These contain the entries of births, marriages and deaths of the inhabitants and it is interesting to trace some of the names which still persist in the parish.

There is nothing special about our Registers apart, perhaps from the odd notes and poems written by the Parish Clerk. Reference is made elsewhere to the note about Paul Easton. There is also:

John Nottingham Gentleman died at Seaton Ross on Tuesday ye 10<sup>th</sup> September 1793 and was buried at Aughton on Friday ye 13<sup>th</sup> In the 62 year of his age, he lived at Seaton Ross 40 years he was a kindly man and a good neighbour.

and a note on John Blanshard:

To the memory of John Blanshard in remembrance of whom a stone is laid he was born at Seaton Ross in 1725 and was left by his parents at the age of 15 not worth above ten pounds and from that time he lived by himself until a few months of his death which happened 27<sup>th</sup> March 1792. He always discovered a natural propensity for the love of money so by his parsimonious manner of living and industry he gained chiefly by mending old shoes a fortune of upwards of two thousand pounds except one hundred and forty pounds left him as a legacy.

The following are three poems by the Parish Clerk:

#### EPITAPH

Learn to Know Christ  
Thou needst no more obtain  
Not knowing him  
All knowledge else is vain

Short was my stay in this vain world

All but a feeming laufhter  
Therefore mark well my words & ways  
For thou comst posting after.

Remember me when this you see  
When I am fare and gon.  
You may go out and look about  
But scarce find such a one.

In one Parish Register are the names of Roman Catholics born in the village ca. 1800. The number of 'recusants' remained fairly constant (between three and five) 1577-1706; 1767, 7; 1780 e. g. The proximity of the village to the Constables of Everingham no doubt accounts for the presence of adherents to the Roman Catholic faith.

The CHURCHWARDEN'S ACCOUNT BOOK from 1796 contains a wealth of interesting material about the Church. It should be remembered that up till 1868 the upkeep of the Church was paid for by a compulsory church rate. (There was a dispute about this in 1840 and the Curate records the name of those who voted for and against.) Seaton Ross is unusual in that since 1796 up to this present day there has always been one churchwarden only<sup>19</sup>.

In this book we find entries concerning:

1. The upkeep of the fabric:

1806 Nov.	5 putting Tyles on Church.....	6d.
1807 June	9 Whitening, Glue & Whitewashing Church.....	2. 6d.

2. The payment for Bread and Wine at the Holy Communion held four times a year:

In 1816 this was 16/- a time – quite a lot of money but it has been suggested that the high cost may be due to the fact that the Parish bought an excess of wine and let the Curate have what was left as a sort of gratuity, see the Rubric at the end of the Holy Communion Service:

And if any of the Bread and Wine remain unconsecrated, the Curate shall have it to his own use.

This practice however died out and in 1849 we read:

Bread & Wine 5 times and Carriage @ 4/9 £1 3. 9.

3. Journeys to the Archdeacon's Visitation:

The scale is recorded at the back in 1836; Beverley, 8s. ; York 7s., Pocklington 3s.; Melbourne 3s.; Bubwith 3s.; Holme Workhouse 4s.; Thorpe 2s; Howden 6s.

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<sup>19</sup> Since Henry Stapleton's time, there has often been two churchwardens appointed (see above)

When one compares the decrease in the value of money these sums were pretty generous.

Reference is made elsewhere to the Churchyard and the Stolen Chalices. But it is interesting to find that the Parish employed a 'Dog Whipper' at 2/6d per annum to keep the villagers' dogs in order in church. There is also the puzzling entry of the almost annual payment of Aughton Holds or Hods 4/4d.

Amongst the Parish documents there is also the Tithe Award and Map of 1850, William Watson's Notebook, Service Registers from 1901 and a number of legal papers concerning the Parish. The Poor Law Papers were deposited at the County Record Office at Beverley in 1964.

#### POOR LAW DOCUMENTS

(by N. Higson, Esqre., County Architect, Beverley)

From the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries parishes were responsible for providing for their own poor, who were maintained and set to work under the direction of annually-appointed overseers. How they discharged their duties is well illustrated by a series of parish records of Seaton Ross, now on deposit in the East Riding County Record Office in Beverley, and dating from 1721 to 1857. The basis of the law was the question of "settlement," in other words of deciding to which parish a needy individual belonged. Normally this was the parish of one's birth, but a settlement could be obtained elsewhere on other grounds, such as apprenticeship, serving a year in service, paying a parish rate or serving a parish office, or, in the case of women, marriage. Naturally parishes were anxious to make sure that strangers likely to fall on hard times, and so on the poor rate, did not come in and gain a settlement. If they looked like doing so an order could be obtained from the magistrates for their removal to their home parish; unless they could produce a certificate from that parish acknowledging its responsibility in the matter of undertaking to have the individual in case of need. There are a number of settlement examinations (enquires into the origins of a newcomer) and certificates, and removal orders among the Seaton Ross records; and they provide interesting biographical information on a section of the population, the poorer, about whom little else is available. The examinations show people coming in from many nearby townships, as well as from Warthill in the North Riding, Armley in the West and Crowle in Lincolnshire; and there are forty certificates brought from their home parishes by people from all over the East Riding. There are also over fifty orders of the magistrates for the removal of unwanted newcomers to their places of origin, as far apart as Ireland and Ayrshire; as well as returning to the fold strays from Seaton Ross. The longest journey of restoration was perhaps that in 1819, when Thomas Stubbins, the overseer, accompanied John Rennie formerly a soldier in the 7<sup>th</sup> Foot, his wife and two baby daughters all the way back to Symington in Ayrshire in order to hand them over to the minister there. Other problems faced the overseers. That, for instance, of illegitimate children born in the parish, who could certainly become a burden on the rates: a dilemma which they solved by

obtaining bonds from the putative fathers to maintain their offspring, or orders from the magistrates commanding them to do so if they attempted to evade their responsibilities. There was also the question of providing for poor children by apprenticing them to local farmers or tradesmen; a system which broke down occasionally, as in the case of Henry Fowler who, in 1819, had to be taken away from his master who “hath misused and evil treated him and ... neglected to teach him the trade of a shoemaker.” Unfortunately, the accounts of the overseers (1780-1818), which were still in existence in 1939, appear to have vanished; but the records which do survive include an interesting agreement, 1820, with the overseers of Holme upon Spalding Moor, uniting the two parishes for the relief of the poor, and for the reception of the needy from Seaton Ross into the workhouse at Holme.

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### THE STOLEN CHALICES

This story can be pieced together from a Memorandum in one of the Parish Registers and the Churchwarden’s Account Book.

In 1812 the Parish bought an ‘iron chest’ for £2.16.0., where the Communion Plate appears to have been kept. There were two chalices:

one had an inscription of Thomas Gibson churchwarden Seaton Ross weight 7oz 1 dwt 9 gr the other a Latin Inscription English Sacred to all Mighty God three in one Farther Sone and holey Gost. 1743.

Sometime ‘Betwixt Good Friday the 15<sup>th</sup> of April and the Fryday following the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1814’ – no doubt after the Holy Communion Service on Easter Day the chest was broken into and the cups stolen. A search was then made – at a cost of 2/ 6d.; an advertisement placed in the Hull papers (£1.9.0.); and posters printed (6/-).

The cups were eventually traced to Hull and  
‘found in the possession of Alice Becock and she was taken and one Robert Hartley and some others got away.’

However, Hartley was apprehended and the case opened in Hull. Mr Winter acted as their solicitor (£3.16.8.). The Churchwarden, Richard Ibbotson and a parishioner, Thomas Stubbings, attended the hearing and indented for expenses there £1.13.4., the journey back 9/6d. , ‘Two Days at Hull’ 5/ -.

In July the trial took place at York Castle. Here no doubt Mr. Ibbotson and Mr. Stubbings gave evidence for they received a ‘Lowance at York Casel 5/- ‘and the stabling of Mr.

Ibbotson's Horse for two days at York was 5/-. Mr. Powell, solicitor of Pocklington, acted for the Parish. Alice Becock was acquitted. The York Chronicle of 28<sup>th</sup> July records the verdict: 'Robert Artley for having in his possession two Silver cups, part of the Communion Plate of the Church at Seaton Ross – GUILTY. DEATH.'

However, the sentence was commuted to Transportation for 14 years.

The chalices were retrieved in a damaged state and it appears that they were melted down and a new one bought. The Churchwarden records:

'Going to York to get Silver Cups Exchanged 5/-.'

This Chalice was duly marked with the inscription:

Richard Ibbotson  
Churchwarden of SEATON ROSS  
1814

The marks show that it was made by Robert Cattle and J. Barber of York in 1809. It is difficult to discover how much this cost. The Accounts have the entry Cups £55. 3. 6½ but this is the whole cost of the case. Mr. Powell was paid £48. 10. 0. and it is possible that his account included the bill for the new chalices.

The parish lost no time in repairing the chest and William Pexton was paid for:

'a Key and hinging Iron Chest 3/ 6d.'

and Robert Ibbetson for:

'Boards at iron Chist & Labour & Bass fidel mending 8/ 4d.'

#### WILLIAM WATSON

One of the most versatile villagers of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was William Watson. In a notebook now in the possession of his family he describes himself:

Farmer, aged 54 in 1838. Born on Monday the 17<sup>th</sup> day of May 1784 unmarried. Retired from farming at Lady Day 1838. Then went to live in York. My farm was at Seaton Ross, common. The house was called Dial Hall. My brother George succeeded me on the farm.

The same notebook describes his first years on the farm which was created when the Common Fields were enclosed in 1812. He took possession on 20<sup>th</sup> March and 'began to burn sods about the 14<sup>th</sup> May.' Between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> he sowed 'oats Poland.' Work on the house began on 'Seaton Feast Monday the 6<sup>th</sup> July' the same year. His account of that Harvest is as follows:



Began harvest to mow oats (poland) on the common on thursday the 10<sup>th</sup> September 1812 – got all down (except a few friesian oats) on the 26<sup>th</sup> September. Got all the corn in on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 1812. Had 173 quarters of oats the first year about 4 qrs acre.

Other harvest and crop prices are recorded for subsequent years and there are six pages of weather notes.

But Mr. Watson was not only a farmer, he also was an excellent draughtsman. Among the Parish Records is a book containing drawings of the frontages of all the houses in Seaton Ross in 1848. Each house is recorded – its distance from Pocklington measured to the nearest foot and the name of landlord and tenant. He also did a map of Pocklington and Market Weighton showing each house, etc. The map of Market Weighton is in the lobby of the Londesbrough Arms<sup>20</sup>.

He set up the Sun Dial on the Church in 1821 and another on the front of Dial farm and he is probably responsible for the large one on Dial Cottages. His notebooks also disclose and interest in local history and he compiled a list of the dates of local Feasts. He collected epitaphs and one may surmise that he composed his own and many others in the Churchyard here.

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<sup>20</sup> William Watson also produced a map of Seaton Ross in 1811.