

**Ryedale Vernacular Building Materials Research Group
Church Fabric Group
Coordinator: Richard Myerscough
Report of Visit to Crambe and Whitwell Churches
24 March 2007**

Crambe Church

The group met at this very interesting church with a tower built of Hildenley limestone ashlar blocks, with the rest of the fabric built of a wide variety of rubble blocks. Some of the blocks provided a lively discussion as to their origins in the fabric, whilst in a pile of dry stone wall material a very good example of Dogger was found (and taken away for the collection) containing prominent pebbles (conglomeritic).

Richard also found a friend to discuss the local geology with:



Many thanks to Tony Wright for providing handouts of Crambe Church and these are included here:

Notes Concerning Crambe

If you decide to approach or leave Crambe by the road to Howsham Bridge, remember that Howsham Crossing on the Scarborough railway line has manually operated gates and you have to call the keeper, who lives nearby. The best way to Westow (where the Spy Hill Quarries are) is via Kirkham, where the Abbey is well worth a visit.

Crambe has its own website at www.crambe.net, which has mainly information about the church, two leading lights of which are Mike and Fiona le Masurier.

St Michael's Church is located at OS Grid Ref. SE733648. There is a photo at: http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/YKS/PhotoFrames/NRY/CrambeStMichael_1.html in addition, there is another on the Crambe website in the description of the Four Churches Walk. The church has a tremendous variety of stone in it.

Description(s) from Bulmer's *History and Directory of North Yorkshire*, 1890 (transcribed on the Genuki website):

Wapentake of Bulmer - Electoral Division of Sheriff Hutton - Petty Sessional Division of Flaxton - Poor Law Union and County Court District of Malton - Rural Deanery of Bulmer - Archdeaconry of Cleveland - Diocese of York.

This parish lies in the vale of the Derwent, with the river for its eastern boundary, and is intersected by the York and Scarborough railway. The soil is generally rich and fertile, and the scenery varied and picturesque. Agriculture is the chief occupation of the inhabitants, but some quarrying operations are also carried on. The parochial limits include the townships of Crambe and Barton-le-Willows, the united area of which is 2,102 acres, and population, 398. The former township comprises 1,160 acres, the property and lordship of Sir Charles William Strickland, Bart., and Hildenley. It is valued for rating purposes at £2,719, and had, in 1881, 148 inhabitants.

The small, but picturesque, village, which gives its name to the township and parish, stands a short distance from the Derwent, in a beautifully wooded district opposite Kirkham abbey, and is about six miles S.W. of Malton, and 12 miles from York, The Church (St. Michael) is an ancient stone edifice, originally erected in the Norman era, and partially rebuilt in the Early English period. The chancel arch, with its two massive pillars, belongs to the early building, as does also the lower part of the tower with its round-headed doorway. The church was restored in 1887 at a cost of £750, when an unsightly gallery was removed, the Early Gothic windows again opened out, and the old pews replaced by open benches of pitchpine. The east window is a double lancet, filled with stained glass, representing Christ disputing with the Doctors at the age of 12 years, and the Raising of Jairus' Daughter. The font, with a square top resting on a central column, with a smaller one at each of the four corners, belongs to the Transition period. The living is a vicarage, worth £350 a year, with residence, in the gift of the Lord Chancellor, and held by the Rev. William Baker, M.A., Christ College, Cambridge.

[Scan, OCR and html by Colin Hinson. Checking and correction by Peter Nelson]

The civil parish is now Whitwell on the Hill with Crambe. The only sign I can find of quarrying on OS maps is on the 1954 1:25000, which has a gravel quarry in Wentworth Wood, just north west of Howsham Bridge.

There is a pamphlet available at the church: "St Michael's Church Crambe", my copy was written in 1991-2. It has detailed descriptions of each part of the church.

Pevsner has a one-paragraph entry for Crambe, mentioning only the church ("Yorkshire, The North Riding", Nikolaus Pevsner, Penguin, my copy is 1973 but it has been updated since then, pp129-130):

ST. MICHAEL. Early Norman nave and chancel. The chancel arch especially is characteristically early, with its simplest imposts and its un moulded arch with voussoirs not yet arranged truly radially. The nave has two Norman windows, one with indistinct carving on the arch stone, the chancel one. The big Norman stones of the walling are also typical. The nave was lengthened in the C 13 — sees two lancets. Short Perp. w tower of a different, grey, stone. The arch towards the nave on a grotesque head and a crouching figure. Top with battlements and eight pinnacles. — FONT. Square, Late Norman, with intersecting arches. Five supports. Waterleaf capitals. - PULPIT. Jacobean, with the familiar blank arches and close arabesque decoration. - PLATE. Cup, C17. - MONUMENTS. Tablets by Skelton and by Plows of York.

Arthur Mee also has a couple of paragraphs but none of his usual flowery stories ("The King's England: Yorkshire North Riding", London, 1950 p64):

CRAMBE. As it makes its way through the little hills the Derwent makes a big sweep round this village. Over the river is Kirkham Abbey, in a lovely green setting. Crambe's cottages and farms are dotted about the fine aisleless church, which has come from Norman days, with a Norman chancel arch. Very long and narrow, with sloping walls, it has an odd array of windows of all sizes and at all levels. One of the Norman windows was made pointed in the 13th century. The tower is 15th century, and at the sides of its round arch are a man on all fours and a weird face showing teeth and a tongue. Under the tower is a 12th century pedestal stoup; and a little older is the splendid font, whose square bowl, enriched with arcading, rests on a fine cluster of pillars with foliage capitals. The pulpit and a chalice are 17th

century. The almsdish has exquisite Italian filigree work. In the walling outside are fragments of coffin lids, a frightful face with bared teeth, and a stone, which may be Saxon, with crude carving of scrolls and a cross.

The bad news is that both Robin Wardell and I have relatives buried in the churchyard...
Tony Wright March 2007

The site of Crambe is interesting in that it is built on a prominent hill formed from Early Jurassic sediments (The Lias Group) and the junction with the Whitby Mudstones and underlying Staithes Sandstone/Cleveland Ironstone was clearly seen as a spring line. To the south and west, a postglacial melt water channel was clearly seen; whilst to the north the Dogger formed a prominent landscape feature. The building stones of the Church fabric are well documented by Lorraine Moor in a University of Hull assessment (<http://www.ryedale-buildings.org.uk/reports/crambe-church.pdf>), to which we can now add examples of mudstones from the Lias as well as Mid Jurassic channel sandstones and Carboniferous 'millstone' grits.

Whitwell on the Hill

The group did not spend much time here but can confirm that the building stone was Mid Jurassic channel sandstones probably from the Aislaby Quarries near Whitby. A similar quarry is located at Lowthers Crag, Grosmont.

Once again, thanks to Tony Wright for the following handout:

Notes concerning Whitwell on the Hill.

The parish has a website: <http://www.thelocalchannel.co.uk/whitwell/home.aspx>

St John's Church is located at OS Grid Ref. SE724658, there is a photo at: http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/YKS/PhotoFrames/NRY/WhitwellOnTheHillStJohn_1.html

Transcribed information from the early 1820s

WHITWELL ON THE HILL, in the parish of Crambe, and wapentake of Bulmer; ¾ mile NW. of Crambe, 6 miles SW. of Malton. This village takes its name from a singular well, the water of which is nearly the colour of milk. Pop. 182

Description(s) edited from various 19th century sources by Colin Hinson. © 2007 (Genuki)

The village website describes the water as clear!

More info about the church and a photo on the web at www.crambe.net in "The Four Churches Walk".

Arthur Mee does not mention Whitwell on the Hill but Pevsner has:

ST JOHN EVANGELIST. By Street, 1858-60. A fine sight with the robust SE steeple and a grand walnut tree. The tower has a semicircular staircase attachment, bell-openings with heavy plate tracery, and a broach spire with a set of purposely too-far-projecting lucarnes. The body of the church is less aggressive. Nave and chancel only. Geometrical tracery. However, inside again the dado zone is sombrely and yet stridently tiled throughout. - FONT and PULPIT clearly by Street too: circular, of stone, with stone inlays. Neither exterior nor interior meant to be attractive or endeavoring to make it easy for us.

WHITWELL HALL. 1835. Tudor Gothic. A squarish block with battlements, windows with four-centred or straight heads, a big porte-cochere. Large central staircase with iron balustrade and four-centred arcading up on the landing. (Fine later c 18 chimneypiece in the drawing room.) A superb view over the plain to the S. - The STABLES on three sides of an oblong yard in the same style, with a turret. In the outer E wall is a large three-light Perp window, said to be the E window of a former chapel, but much more probably re-set.

("The Buildings of England, North Riding of Yorkshire, 1973, p400)

Spy Hill (NGR 751646) and Westow Village

On route to Spy Hill, the local building stone(s) were briefly studied. The main building stone was the Whitwell Oolite (Mid Jurassic marine horizon) that has been extensively quarried at two local quarries off Henlow Lane, NGR 753648, with the best preserved section to the east of the road with the Whitwell Oolite overlain by iron rich sands (with Badger Sets as usual). This quarry section needs to be protected and so Ryedale District Council will be approached with a view to RIGS (**R**egionally **I**mportant **G**eological **S**ite) status.

Fox-Strangways recorded a wide outcrop of the Scarborough Formation (Mid Jurassic marine horizon) around Whitwell Church and blocks of a gritty limestone from this unit were observed in a wall of Whitwell Oolite (and a sample collected) near the junction of High Lane trackway in Westow, NGR 758652.

The party then ascended Spy Hill and noted en route the reddish-brown soils associated with the Dogger here and at Mowthorpe. The ruined building on the top of Spy Hill was made of blocks of Dogger and Whitwell Oolite. In Howsham woods, there were a number of overgrown quarries (one with a half-buried 'Anderson-type' bomb shelter) with one exposing approx. 1 metre of Dogger with channel scour features. The Dogger was very variable in its matrix ranging from iron rich fine-grained sands to coarse conglomeritic grits with derived pebbles and drifted plants, with much of the rock decalcified into 'ginger bread' rock. Any fossil material was reduced to finely broken calcite fragments and so could not be identified. The floors of some of the quarries were wet underfoot indicating the junction of the Dogger and the underlying Whitby Mudstone Formation (Early Jurassic Lias Group). This spring line feature and the observed slope failure in nearby fields were identical to those seen at Mowthorpe. The total thickness of the Dogger was suggested as at least 5 metres although this estimate may be exaggerated by ploughing and gravity slippage.

The samples of Dogger observed led to the possible conclusion that the Dogger used in the Howsham village houses may have come from these quarries?

Many thanks to

Tony Wright for handouts
Lorraine Moor for report on Crambe Church
The coordinator's new friend (the only good conversation I had all day)

Final Comment

This report reflects the aims of RVBMRG in that a number of members from different disciplines can have an input into the work undertaken.

Richard Myerscough
Church Fabric Group

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