1 - The Abbey Church

No trace remains of the church that probably existed here before the Norman Conquest. The building we see today is the parish church of St Peter and St Paul, better known locally as Bourne Abbey, and was founded by the Lord of the Manor, Baldwin Fitzgilbert (1095-1154), in the 12th century. It was neither large nor wealthy but it was Norman and impressive and dates from circa 1138. Baldwin's Abbey was one of the five English monastic houses attached to the Arrouaisian congregation that was a sub-division of the Augustinian order.

They took their name from the French village of Arrouaise in Artois where in 1090, three hermits had combined to build a cell or oratory in honour of the Holy Trinity and St Nicholas and there were eventually 28 houses, mainly in France and Flanders. The Arrouaisian canons were not very different from other Augustinians and the distinction between them tended to fade out as time went on and soon after 1470, the order became extinct. However, the abbots of Bourne always retained some of their independence and kept up their connection with the abbey at Missenden in Buckinghamshire that had similar origins.

The foundation charter of Bourne Abbey was granted to Gervase, Abbot of St Nicholas of Arrouaise, but the house at Bourne was not merely intended as a cell of that abbey. It was independent from the start with its own abbot and the first to hold that office of which we have any record was David about 1156. Baldwin also gave him several tracts of land in the vicinity, fisheries in Bourne marsh, the nearby fish pond, various rents from other properties and the tithes of mills and of deer hides killed in hunting and wool to make garments for the canons. When Baldwin's daughter married Hugh Wake, the patronage of the house passed into the hands of the Wake family and they retained it until the 14th century but twice, in 1311 and again in 1324, the king's escheastor tried to claim Bourne

Abbey as a royal foundation but the Wakes managed to uphold their rights and when Edward III subsequently visited the town, these were confirmed.

The origins of the Abbey church began during the great revival in religious thought and action in England during the early part of the 12th century as a result of the preaching by Bernhard of Clairvaux. The revival took many forms, expressed by many in preaching and in prayer, or by entering monasteries; others, in their enthusiasm and fervour, anxious to do something to further their faith, built churches and Baldwin, wishing to demonstrate his devotion, decided to erect a new church on the site of the old Saxon building which was then showing signs of decay. He started the task in 1138 but owing to political troubles, he never completed the work as he intended. He was also wounded and taken prisoner at the Battle of Lincoln on 2nd February 1141 and, according to the custom of the time, had to pay a large ransom for his release and this seriously depleted his financial resources.

The building programme was therefore cut back and it is safe to assume that the church was not finished at this time, only the nave, with a low roof, and the bottom portion of the tower being completed. The west front, the upper part of the tower and the clerestory were not finished until the 14th century and it would be another 200 years before the building that we see today was finally completed.

The nave as far as the clerestory is a beautiful example of Norman work and the lower part of the tower also shows traces of the Norman builders. About 1875, the Precentor of Lincoln Cathedral, the Rev Edmund Venables, a distinguished church historian, read a paper to the Bourne Archaeological Society giving an account of his researches into the church and which give a glimpse of the building as it was:

> **The oldest features, and aisles and arcades, are portions of the original church, founded in 1138. There is an arch of the same period at the end of the north aisle. The early English work, at the west end of the nave, is very good of its kind: there was a chantry chaperon on the south side. The window of the transept is a link between early English and decorated, three lancets surrounded by three circles. The Clerestory is of the perpendicular period when the principal storey of the remainder was built, the lower stages being early English. The present edifice is the parochial nave of the church, which being the property of the parishioners, was preserved for their use, the choir and the transept forming the monastic being pulled down at the dissolution of the monasteries [ordered by Henry VIII between 1536 and 1540].**

At the dissolution, the lead was usually taken off the roofs and the walls left standing, and this was possibly done to the church at Bourne although it was soon repaired because in 1602, both church and chancel are reported to have been in good condition. At the time of the Reformation, all images were removed from English churches and although no records exist as to what happened at Bourne, there is little doubt that this also occurred here and in the villages around. Hugh Latimer, the fearless bishop with a social conscience and Protestant leanings, is reputed to have preached in the church while on one of his visits to Grimsthorpe Castle where he was a frequent guest of those devout supporters of the Reformation, Lady Catherine Willoughby and Lord Bertie, and it has been suggested that

it might have been at Bourne that he preached his remarkable service on the marriage feast which is known to have been delivered in Lincolnshire.

In his book Bourne and the People associated with Bourne (1925), John T Swift gives his evocative impression of what the church would have looked like before the reformation:

> **It was more markedly cruciform in shape, the transepts having been removed at the dissolution. There would be a large crucifix affixed to the Rood Loft, supported on either side by the figure of a saint, probably the patron saints of the church, St Peter and St Paul. Near the altar, a large life-sized statue of the Madonna and the Infant Christ, on the walls of the Chancel, on pedestals or brackets, images of the Apostles. Round the church, various shrines or small railed-off chapels. At High Mass, the church full of people, all classes and conditions, ladies and gentlemen from the castle, peasants in their long slops, and their wives in plain homespun dresses. At the elevation of the Host, all, irrespective of class or rank, lowly bending or kneeling, for all are equal here. The solemn silence – the sweet smell of the incense – the sounding of the bell, must have been very impressive, but it is very doubtful if the ordinary people understood the meaning, the service and prayers being in what must have been to them, an unknown language. Think of the many generations of Bourne people who have walked up those aisles – Saxons, Normans, Tudors, Elizabethans, Puritans, Cavaliers, Stuarts, Georgians, Victorians and Edwardians - all in their different and distinct costume and dress. Yet we cannot fully realise the antiquity of our church until we place against it events which have taken place in the past, and which now seem so remote, as almost to belong to another world.**

The abbey never became rich or important and it is probable that there were twelve canons at the start but this number fell to seven after the Black Death. They worshipped in the church, a building largely rebuilt and restored, especially during the Middle Ages, although the 12th century plans of the building were much the same as today with a nave and narrow north and south aisles, a large chancel, a south transept and twin towers at the west end but only the south west tower was built and there is no evidence of a north transept. No traces remain of the other monastic buildings although it may be that the cloister lay to the north side and a stone stairway which was in the south east corner of the present organ chamber could once have been the night stairs from the dormitory into the church.

Bourne Abbey is the town's only Grade I listed building. Extensive alterations have been carried out to the fabric in a style transitional from Norman to Early English. This was probably the first stage of a scheme to replace the 12th century church with one of "cathedral-like proportions" but this did not come to fruition and it has been suggested that the ambitious plans were thwarted by the Black Death. The only Norman remains of the abbey are incorporated into the nave, four round arches on massive piers supporting scalloped capitals. The nave looks towards the high altar and behind that the east window. On the right stands a fine brass Victorian lectern in the form of an eagle supported on a pedestal. It was presented to the church in 1902 in memory of Margaret Dainty and was restored in 1938. In the centre of the nave is a huge brass chandelier that was given by

Matthew Clay in 1742 to the memory of his daughter who died at the age of 22. Its 24 candles are lit at festivals and this produces a splendid sight over the worshipping congregation. The chandelier is identical to that in West Deeping church that is also from the early 18th century and the two are therefore almost certainly the work of the same craftsman. The high altar was enlarged by a gift in memory of Charles Horne, a former vicar, who died a few days after his retirement in 1951.

The font marks the admission to the Christian church by water baptism and is therefore always placed in a prominent position at the west end of the church. They are often large as immersion was the practice in past times whereas today, a small sprinkling on the forehead is the usual practice. The carving round the font in the Abbey Church is in a form of Latin shorthand which translated means: "Jesus the Name above all other names" and a close look will reveal that it was both painted and gilded at some time in the past. The stone pulpit however is incongruous because it was installed in 1890 to replace its oak Jacobean predecessor that was sold to the parish of Frampton, near Boston, Lincolnshire, for £3. 3s. 0d in the belief that a Norman church should have a Norman pulpit. We now know that this supposition was incorrect and that such churches had no pulpit.

During the 20th century, the bells were re-hung in 1927, two having been re-cast, and further work was undertaken to strengthen the south west tower. These repairs started in the autumn of 1934 after the tower had been found to be in serious danger of collapse but the following January, as work was progressing, the full extent of the deterioration became apparent. The architects, Traylen and Lenton of Stamford, said in their survey report: "The imminence of the danger of collapse was even worse than anticipated."

They also discovered that in the west, south and east faces of the tower, were four very wide cracks extending from the base mouldings through all three stages of the tower. An appeal for £2,000 was launched to pay for the restoration work and the entire tower was encased in scaffolding and immense shores and timbers were built on concrete bases to counteract any possible movement while the repairs were carried out. They included

washing out the disintegrated rubble core, inserting metal rods to bond the inner and outer walls, the injection of a water and cement mixture and the replacement of damaged stonework. Further restoration work was required in 2006 costing an estimated £100,000 and an appeal was launched in December that year to raise the necessary finance.

2 - The Baptist Chapel

The origins of the Baptist Church in Bourne date back to the Civil War of 1642-49, the armed conflict between royalist and parliamentary forces arising from constitutional differences between Charles I and the Long Parliament. The old castle near St Peter's Pool is reputed to have been besieged by Cromwell's troops and a garrison established in the vicinity and the local belief is that many of these soldiers were Baptists and other non-conformists and attended meetings in the houses and barns of those with a similar faith living in the locality. Bourne Baptists therefore accept the date of 1645 as their founding year and celebrate accordingly, particularly in November 1995 when this was their 350th anniversary.

Such meetings were banned by law but continued in private places, including the woods and the fields, but by 1689, the legislation had been relaxed and Baptists were allowed to worship as they pleased. In 1717, meetings, prayers and bible study began at a house in West Street owned by Robert Ives senior, who eventually sold the property for the use of baptised believers in the town and district. The money was provided by four gentlemen, Robert Ives senior, Robert Ives junior, Robert Arnold and William Hussey, who each contributed £19 which, together with a further £10 donated by John Richardson of Aslackby, enabled them to not only purchase the land and property but also to build a new meeting house. It was small and constructed of materials provided by the members themselves, some of them giving wood worked with their own hands, others providing stone and mortar, much of it carried to the site by friends from Haconby. The expenses for the building work were supplemented with another £5 each from eight other members.

By 1831, church membership had increased to 119 with 230 children attending Sunday School and it became apparent that a new building was needed. A church meeting was held in 1835 when 44 members pledged a total of £212 for the project to get underway. Voluntary labour was necessary because the church had no capital and the previous year, the treasurer presented the accounts showing a credit balance of only one shilling (5p in today's decimal currency). But this parlous state of their finances did not deter members from proceeding with the project and the first stone of the new chapel was laid on 6th May 1835 with the prayer: "May this home be a blessing to many generations".

The total cost of the church was eventually £1,700 and it was built with an attractive frontage and a low slate roof set behind a modish parapet and the foundation stone was laid by one of the deacons, Mr Edward Wherry, a grocer from Edenham who had established a new retail business in North Street. This was an appropriate choice because members of his family subsequently served in the Baptist congregation as deacons for over a hundred years. Extra galleries were erected in 1868 and a new organ, organ gallery and vestries were added in February 1876.


The organ and church interior and the church from the rear

The organ was built by Mr Nicholson of Lincoln and was the gift of Mr George Bettinson, of Dyke. The Rev Giles Hester, of Sheffield, preached at the opening and there was a public tea followed by an organ recital given by Mr Hopkins, of Grantham, consisting of selections from Handel, Best and Beethoven. The collection to help with the costs amounted to £18. The church was originally lit by gas lamps but electric lighting was installed in 1932 at a cost of £97 6s. 9d. which was paid by an anonymous benefactor, although the schoolroom was not wired until 1936. The Baptists were also the first non-conformists to provide a Sunday School in Bourne. Classes began in 1803 and by 1924, some 5,000 children had attended. The former meeting house was converted for use as a school but was eventually pulled down in 1891 to make way for the present Sunday School premises that are still in use but now called Covenanters, beginning with toddlers through to young people aged 15 and over. The foundation stones of the new Sunday School were laid on Monday 7th September 1891 when the cost of the building was estimated at £1,100 and this included an early form of central heating which was referred to as "the warming apparatus". The Stamford Mercury reported:

After a prayer by the Rev T Barras, and a few remarks by Mr Wherry, the ex-Sheriff of Norwich, Alderman George White who is a native of Bourne [later Sir George White MP], spread the mortar and laid the stone, receiving a silver trowel

from the architect, Mr F G Shilcock, and contributed a cheque for £20. The second stone was laid by Alderman Wherry, his two sons assisting, and a sealed bottle containing a newspaper, a history of the school and a list of the scholars and teachers now attending, signed principally by themselves, was deposited in a cavity prepared for it. Mr T R Allatt, on behalf of the friends at Morton, laid the third memorial stone, placing thereon a contribution from the people of Morton; and at his request, Miss Wherry also assisted in the laying of the stone. Amongst the amounts placed on the stones was a cheque for £10 from Mr Coleman of Norwich, who had been invited to attend; Mr F G Shilcock £5; Mr J T Swift £10; Mr Pearce and family £11 11s.; Mrs Stubbs £5; the Rev G H Bennett, a promise to give or get £5 5s.; and numerous small sums, a number of school children also coming up with their contributions. Afterwards, a well-attended public tea was held and later in the evening, a public meeting was arranged.

The chapel was badly damaged on the afternoon of Wednesday 30th June 1897 when a fire which broke out in an adjoining workshop spread to the building. The Stamford Mercury reported:

The blaze began at about 1.45 pm in the workshop in West Street of Mr Alfred Stubley, scenic artist, painter and plumber. As the building is a lofty wooden structure containing much inflammable material, the flames spread with alarming rapidity. The greater portion of Mr Stubley's valuable scenery was stored in a building adjoining but unfortunately what was in his workshop was destroyed. The roof fell in with a resounding crash. Immediately the outbreak was discovered, the Bourne Fire Brigade were summoned and they were speedily on the spot rendering effectual efforts to combat the destructive process of the flames. The western windows of the Baptist chapel nearby had caught fire and were soon burning fiercely. One of the helpers, Mr Razor, had his arm severely injured by the glass from one of these falling windows. The chapel is a beautiful and commodious building and it has only recently been renovated at considerable cost.

Efforts were concentrated towards saving the fabric from threatened destruction and by the united aid of the brigade and a host of willing helpers, the danger was ultimately averted. A large crowd of spectators thronged the street. The flames were got under effectually by 3 pm. Great vigilance was still exercised in case of another outburst. The interior of the chapel was pitiable, it having been deluged with water in the work of saving the building. The western wall, with its gaping window openings, looked like a dismal ruin. Two cottages in an orchard nearby, belonging to the Marquis of Exeter, caught fire and the doors, walls and bed were charred. The timely efforts of the brigade and voluntary helpers however, prevented further destruction in this direction. The vegetation in the gardens was hopelessly charred and the apples and plums on the orchard trees roasted. We understand that the buildings are insured. It is said that the fire originated in a lighted match being thrown on some straw by a two-year-old child.

During the Second World War of 1939-45, the schoolroom was taken over by Kesteven County Education Authority in 1940 in order to create additional classroom space for the

town which was providing homes for dozens of evacuees, mainly from the Hull area of Yorkshire. The authority paid an annual rental of £10 plus rates, heating and lighting costs and the wages of a caretaker. The threat of air raids meant that all windows were blacked out to prevent lights from showing after dark and a blast screen was erected in front of the two main windows in the schoolroom.

A major refurbishment scheme was undertaken towards the end of 2005 and completed in January the following year, the biggest project of its kind in over a century. The work was extensive and included a new floor and heating system, carpets and redecorating, the replacement of pews with upholstered chairs, a renovated baptistery, repairs to the roof, windows and frames, a new entrance foyer, disabled access and paved frontage. Cars were also banned from using the forecourt enabling the Regency frontage to be seen at all times. The total cost was £110,000 and the minister at that time, the late Rev Derek Baines, said: "The money was raised by friends and members of the church simply by extra giving without the need for any fund raising events."

This was a remarkable example of generosity at the grass roots to ensure that a fine building survives and the congregation can be satisfied that it has played its part in handing it on in good order to future generations.

3 - The Methodist Chapel

Methodism came to Bourne from the village of Aslackby, seven miles north of the town, where the cause had been active since 1800. John Burrows and his wife had moved there from Skillington, near Grantham, and their preaching was so successful that local communities were soon established at Billingborough, Rippingale, Pointon and Bourne. John Wesley is reputed to have paid a visit to the town during a journey south in 1782 and found the seeds of support but it was more than a quarter of a century later before his evangelism took root.

The Rev Thomas Cocking gives a graphic account of the steps some Christians took to encourage a Methodist ministry in the town in his book The History of Wesleyan Methodism in Grantham and its Vicinity (1836):

> **In 1808, four men of Bourne, like unto Noah's dove, had no rest for the soles of their feet, nor could they find any in Bourn. At the Church there was an old man to minister, who delivered a sermon, ten minutes long only once every Sunday, and Jesus seldom mentioned. The Baptist Minister affirmed the Word was Spirit, and robbed us of our Comforter; and except we were baptised in their water and we could not be saved. We (the four men of Bourne) consulted and agreed to get the Methodists to come and preach to us, for the people around us were desperately wicked. Knowing the Methodists preached at Aslackby, we went on the preaching night. Mr Pollard, the Grantham minister, preached. We staid till the people were gone and then spoke to him, to know if we could be favoured with preaching at Bourne. I told him of our reasons as above. We informed him that we could engage a room and take as good care of him and his horse as our circumstances would**

admit. Accordingly, on 14th January 1809, Mr Pollard came, when I told him he had done well to come. We paid two shillings and sixpence a night for the room to preach in. The Minister and his horse were obliged to be at a public house, until the dear Comforter opened some more blind eyes, and they opened their houses to take him in. And I am persuaded that many have been born again under their ministry and are now singing in glory the praises of Him, of whom they had never seriously thought before the Methodists came to Bourne!

The author of these words is not known but is believed to be John Redshaw (1761-1834), a saddler with premises in North Street, and as a result of the arrangements he and his three companions made, the minister subsequently stayed with one of them whenever he visited, usually with John and his wife Elizabeth, who became permanent hosts. The first meeting in Bourne was held in 1809 at a cottage in Star Lane, now Abbey Road, owned by John Brown, a convert to the faith and probably one of the "four men of Bourne" who claimed that his "blind eyes" had been opened. The cottage, rented by John Brown from the owner William Greasley, was probably situated on the present chapel's front garden. A Certificate of Preaching was granted in 1810 saying: "On the twenty third day of July 1810 a certain building, the property of William Greasley, situate in the parish of Bourne in the County and Diocese of Lincoln, was certified as a place of Religious worship for those of His Majesty's Protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England commonly called Methodists."

The movement grew rapidly, from just eight members in 1810 to sixty-five in 1815 and during the intervening period, a piece of land 12 yards by 10 yards was bought from William Greasley for £20 for the building of the first chapel. This land was well away from the main road and it has been suggested that the Methodists were unable to buy a site any nearer the road because of the prevailing hostile attitude towards non-conformity but this is unlikely because adjoining land was subsequently purchased bringing the property up to the pavement.

A chapel was built and opened in 1812 at a cost of £200 and soon after Queen Victoria's accession in 1837, Bourne was placed at the head of the local circuit when the first ministers were the Rev J Waller and the Rev Thomas Bakewell. Mr Waller was described as "a fine gentleman of the genuine old Methodist type, very hearty but very eccentric". When it was discussed at the Methodist Conference who should go to the Bourne circuit, he said: "I will go if you will send my 'boy' with me." The "boy" was Thomas Bakewell and they worked together in harmony and with great enthusiasm but unfortunately, before a year had passed, Bakewell died of typhoid in 1839 at the age of 23, and is buried in the east end of the churchyard where a tombstone marks his grave. Mr Waller preached a deeply moving sermon at his passing based on the words: "As a son he hath served with me in the gospel".

The congregation in the early days was sustained by a small group of families but they managed to raise the £135 needed to purchase more land between the chapel and Star Lane in 1828 with a view to building a larger chapel. A house in West Street was also bought in 1834 for £320 for the use of another preacher who was appointed by the Grantham Circuit to cope with an increasing workload of 200 Methodist members. Further land was purchased in 1841 for £21 and in the same year, the present chapel was built at a

cost of £1,200 in what is now Abbey Road, with its façade of huge Doric pilasters. The work was carried out by Thomas Pilkington (1809-1889), a Scotsman who had settled in Bourne, and the building was opened the following year, 1842, by Robert Newton. The chapel was registered as a Place of Religious Worship on 17th February 1854 and authorised for the solemnisation of marriages on 9th July 1862.

A gallery was added to the new building in 1867, financed by Robert Munton in memory of his wife, and this increased the seating capacity of the chapel from 344 to 434. For some time, the choir and harmonium were situated there and for many years afterwards, the music at services was provided by the Redshaw family. Mr John Redshaw (1823-1895), grandson of John Redshaw, one of the "four men of Bourne", was the choirmaster and his daughter the organist, and there is a tale told that on one occasion, Mr Redshaw, from his position as choirmaster in the gallery, was clearly heard urging "the bottom singers not to drawl, but to try to keep up with the choir".

During 1874, a new manse was built in North Road and this served as a home for the minister until the present one was built in Coggles Causeway in July 1971. Further improvement work was carried out in 1877 and the Stamford Mercury reported on Friday 18th May: "The chapel has recently undergone considerable alterations. A modern platform has been erected instead of the old pulpit, the pews replaced by open seats, the ceiling and walls decorated and the chapel has now altogether a very improved appearance. The opening services were commenced on May 10th when the Rev T Champness, of Louth, preached in the afternoon and evening; and on the same day there was a public tea in the schoolroom. On the following Sunday, the Rev T H Brookfield, of Peterborough, preached in the morning and evening. The services are to be continued, the object being to raise funds the defray the expenses of the recent alteration which amount to about £200."

Major restoration work was carried out in 1891 and special services were held to mark the completion of the ambitious project. The Stamford Mercury reported on Friday 12th June:

The chapel has undergone a thorough renovation. The roof has been repaired and the rostrum has been altered to harmonise with the interior of the building. Over the two vestry doors have been painted floral scrolls. The pews on each side have been raised to the same level as the seats in the middle of the chapel. The ceiling and walls have been decorated, the blank windows being now adorned with texts of Old English characters. A floral text scroll also occupies the large arch behind the pulpit. The communion rail, vestry doors, the rostrum, and the vestibule have been finished in grained oak. The services, conducted by the Rev W H Johnson of Boston, were of an interesting character and hearty. The collections amounted to £5. The ladies' sewing meetings have proved a great assistance, about £20 having been thus collected. The painting, which has been entrusted to Mr Alfred Stubley [of West Street], and the woodwork, which has been placed in the hands of Mr Arthur Wall [of Abbey Road], have been admirably executed. To Mr John Wolstencroft, superintendent of the works, and to Mr Gill, great credit is due to the manner in which they have carried out their voluntary labours.

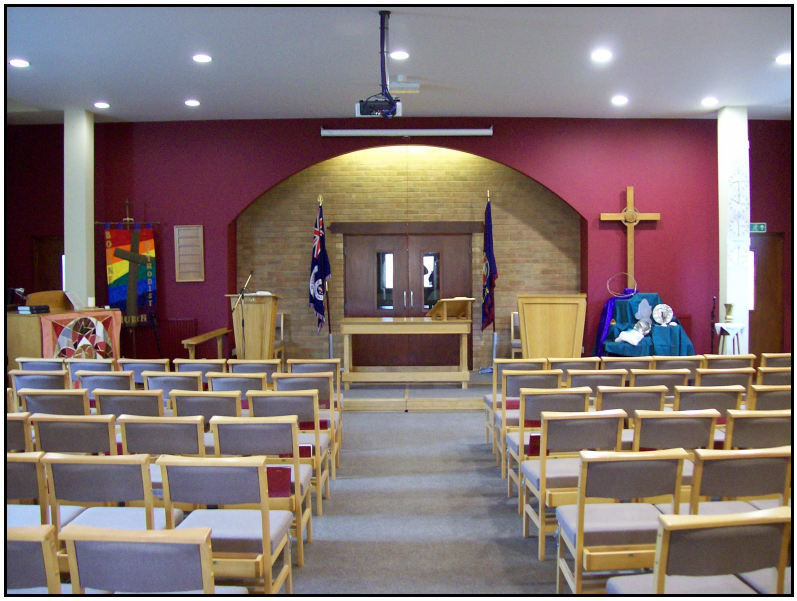
Five cottages in Hereward Street were purchased for £510 in 1941 with a view to demolishing them to make space for extensions to the premises for the Sunday School, that had become an active part of the church's work. An annual report of 1888 indicates that there were 150 children enrolled in Bourne with 21 teachers attending both morning and evening sessions while 11 neighbouring villages also had similarly busy Sunday Schools.

The old chapel remained in existence and served as a Methodist schoolroom for well over a century but was demolished in 1964 to make way for the present building. The new hall to seat 200 people with kitchen and toilet facilities was planned in 1953 and opened in two stages between 1958 and 1965. Other work included a start on the building of the caretaker's house, now known as Collins' House, built on the site of the old cottages in Hereward Street, and the provision of a new roof and heating system for the chapel itself for which additional money was raised by fetes and other activities. A stone-laying ceremony for the project was held on Saturday 9th January 1965 by Mr Harry Ringrose, a senior member of the church, with a short service of blessing conducted by the minister, the Rev Cecil Day, assisted by the Rev Anthony Dent. Also built into the wall was an inscribed stone bearing the date 1812 that had been saved from the original building. Although the work had been estimated at £1,550, the final bill was more than £9,000 and the debt was not cleared until two years later.

On Saturday 11th February 1967, a tablet was fixed to the wall of the church hall bearing witness to the donors and workers whose contributions had finally left the church free of debt. It was unveiled by the Rev Irving Scott, a former minister during whose time the project was initiated. The tablet said: "In grateful acknowledgement of legacies bequeathed by Robert Arnold Collins, Ruth Ellen Collins and Annie Hunt, also of gifts made in memory of Philip and Doris Emson, John and May Ross, and a generous grant made by the Methodist Church Department for Chapel Affairs, raised by willing efforts of which together with funds members and friends defrayed the cost of building this hall."

The Methodist Chapel in Abbey Road is now scheduled as a Grade II listed building and therefore cannot be demolished or altered without special permission at government level

but in 1988, surveyors who checked the building declared that it was unsafe. The classical frontage was sound but closer inspection revealed that it had a tilt of six inches and the movement had affected the roof which, surprisingly, was made of corrugated asbestos. A report from consultant structural engineers said: "The chapel is in a potentially dangerous condition. The lateral movement of the southern wall has affected the roof. All main frames have been displaced and are significantly out of vertical. Action to restore the church to a safe condition for long-term worship will be an expensive operation. It is very difficult to be precise about the extent of this work without a more detailed study but the costs at this stage are estimated at between £50,000 and £100,000, plus VAT."



The church interior

The report alarmed church trustees who immediately applied to South Kesteven District Council for permission to demolish the chapel and build a new one elsewhere. The minister, the Rev Kenneth Town, said: "We are very attached to this building but Bourne is changing rapidly and we want to change with it. The church is people and we want a church for tomorrow and not for yesterday. If we repair the building, we want to do it thoroughly in order that future generations of worshippers will not find themselves in the same predicament." But the application was refused.

The council ruled that all listed buildings should be preserved and that the answer to the church's predicament was repair rather than demolition. The case went to appeal but the council's decision was upheld by the Department of the Environment. The chapel was subsequently repaired and refurbished at a cost of £300,000, becoming part of the Bourne Circuit of Churches until August 2008 when it was replaced by a new circuit known as the Lincoln and Grimsby District Circuit, thus bringing together several local churches including Bourne, Thurlby, Deeping St Nicholas and Market Deeping, under the superintendent minister, the Rev Colin Martin of Bourne. To celebrate the change, 120 people gathered at Bourne Methodist Church on Tuesday 12th August 2008, for a special service.

Major changes to the church were announced in 2009 when it was decided to move the worship area to the first floor and develop the ground floor for increased community use. The £500,000 project will incorporate stairs and a lift and provide a link with the church hall next door, thus turning it into one large building. Fund raising is already underway and the work will take eight months to complete.

4 – United Reformed Church

One of the busiest religious buildings in Bourne is the United Reformed Church that is used for a variety of community activities as well as services. The first signs of congregationalism appeared in the town during the mid 19th century and the Congregational Chapel [now the United Reformed Church] opened in Eastgate in 1846, constructed from the distinctive red brick that was used for many buildings in the town during that period.

There was a rapid growth in the size of the congregation that reached 400 within three years. A Sunday school was started in 1849 and for a long time its meetings were held in private houses yet by 1874 there were 235 children on the roll with 18 voluntary teachers. The popularity was such that a permanent Sunday school building was erected towards the end of the century on land adjoining the church at a cost of £1,000, the architect being Mr F G Shilcock of Bourne and the contractor Mr Thomas Hinson, also of Bourne. The new building consisted of a large central hall, 60 feet by 33 feet, with 12 flanking classrooms opening into it.

The memorial stone laying was held on Thursday 10th August 1899 when the need for the new premises was stressed by the pastor, the Rev T H Parker. "For many years", he said, "the enlargement of the school has been a matter of deep concern to officers and teachers as 300 scholars have to be accommodated in a space designed for a third of that number. For the past 15 years, the work of collecting contributions has been perseveringly continued and now over £400 of the amount required has been secured."

Memorial stones were laid by Alderman William Wherry, Messrs Thomas Mays, George Mays, Edward Andrew and John Wall, and afterwards, over 200 people sat down to a public tea in a large tent on the Abbey Lawn. In the evening, a public meeting was held when addresses were given by several visiting ministers. Collections during the day in aid of the project amounted to £106 including several handsome donations. The building was

officially opened on Wednesday 17th January 1900 when the pastor, the Rev Thomas Parker, presided at the ceremony and Alderman George White of Norwich [later Sir George White], an eminent old scholar and teacher at the Sunday School, gave a dedication address. The leading non-conformists of the town and district attended including the Rev A Eason (Sleaford), the Rev C R Gardner (Stamford), the Rev James Carvath (Bourne Baptists) and the Rev H Brown (Bourne Wesleyans) and Alderman William Wherry.

The meeting was told that £500 had already been raised towards the cost of the building and the opening ceremony brought in another £150 in donations. Soon afterwards, in 1911, the church was altered and renovated and the re-opening ceremony was performed with a silver key by Sir George White, who had become M P for North West Norfolk, and was a former president of the Free Church Council. The improvements included new seating arrangements, the presentation of a communion table and chair and two stained glass memorial windows, extensions to the gallery and the installation of the present pulpit and organ that remain in use today although an electric blower was installed in 1934 and replaced in 1991.

Old minute books containing records of meetings give an insight into the growth and activities of the church and it is obvious that membership was regarded far more seriously in earlier times. In 1868, a member was expelled for creating a disturbance in a polling booth and a little later, a resolution was passed saying that any member who missed three consecutive sacrament services without good reason should be interviewed and given one more chance. If they still failed to attend, then their name would "regretfully be struck from the Church Roll". When the church celebrated its centenary in 1946, the secretary Mr W H Hemsell, said:

> **We speak, and probably think too much of the church as a building but the real church consists of its members, and the record of its achievements which really matter are contained in the church roll of members. We are proud that today, the number of members is the highest ever recorded since those faithful six founders banded together in 1846. Today, we have 130 names on the roll and the number of those who have been welcomed into the fellowship of this church since the first communion service on 20th October 1846 is no fewer than 491. Through varied experiences of spiritual death and prosperity, the church and Sunday School have unfailingly borne their witness for a century and the faithfulness and sacrifice of those who have gone before should encourage us to a deeper devotion with renewed hope and courage to face the tasks that still await us.**

In November 1971, the church was one of the many congregational churches throughout the country which became members of the United Reformed Church, the proposed union taking four years to come to fruition. The act of union took place at the Central Hall, Westminster, London, at which Bourne was represented, followed by a service of thanksgiving in Westminster Cathedral with an overflow covered by close circuit television in St. Margaret's Church. The church today remains a busy place of religious observance while the schoolroom is also used for various activities and is frequently let out to many organisations for meetings and other functions.

5 - The Red Hall

The architect and builder are unknown yet their legacy remains with the Red Hall which dates back to the early 17th century. It has a chequered history as a home and institution, even as part of a Victorian railway complex, yet survived 100 years of vibrations from steam locomotives and rolling stock to become our most famous secular building which has been Grade II listed since 1977.

The house is believed to have been built for a wealthy businessman, Gilbert Fisher, and is typical of the new style of residence being constructed for prosperous gentlemen of the early Stuart period, remaining in his family for almost a century although the evidence is that the high costs involved also put them deeply in debt because the building was heavily mortgaged for several years afterwards and the liabilities were not finally settled until the family vacated the property over ninety years later.

The favoured designer of the Red Hall is John Thorpe (circa 1565-1655), one of the foremost architects in Britain during the time of Elizabeth I. A volume of his architectural drawings survives [in the Soane Museum of architecture in London] and these enable us to judge his work and to say with some certainty that he was responsible. The house was built on similar lines to Dowsby Hall, also designed by Thorpe about the same period, and was set in formal gardens. In fact, the original plans show a striking resemblance not only to the preliminary studies for Dowsby Hall, built for Sir William Rigdon between 1603 and 1610, but also to a whole series of drawings by Thorpe who was consulted by a circle of landowners about house building projects in this part of England, particularly in the Kesteven area of Lincolnshire.

The building of the house is not documented but construction is assumed to have been between 1600 and 1610, with 1605 being the favoured date. There is, however, a theory that it could have been a decade before, suggested by David L Roberts in his pamphlet

(undated) which appraises John Thorpe's designs for Dowsby Hall and the Red Hall. "It would appear improbable that the rather coarse quality of the Red Hall could be contemporary with the relative polish of the work at Dowsby", he writes, "and an earlier date, possibly nearer 1595, might be more appropriate. Could Sir William Rigdon have built the house and then sold Dowsby to cover his expenditure?"

No documentary evidence survives to identify the builder but the first tenant was undoubtedly Gilbert Fisher, a London grocer, who had amassed a sufficient fortune to finance such an ambitious project that would give him a standing in the community. He was the son of Richard Fisher, who died in 1597, who had been chief constable of the hundreds or wapentake [an ancient division of the county] and was therefore a man of some importance while his son had made a success of his business and was classed as "a gentleman" in the parish register.

The house, as with Dowsby, was set within formal gardens and the design was conceived on the double pile principle with rooms two deep, a practice that was less common than the more traditional design of a hall with one or two cross-wings and two storeys with garrets. The walls are made of locally produced hand-made bricks of a distinctive deep red with stone detailing and ashlar quoins, hence the name, and the original intricately carved oak staircase with attractive turned balusters remains intact. The house is many gabled and has a fine Tuscan porch.

The four main rooms on the ground floor comprised an entrance hall and dining parlour at the front with the kitchen and buttery-cum-pantry in the rear. Above these, on the first floor, were four bedrooms, while on the second floor, running right across the front half of the building, was the high gallery. It is interesting to see that the two main living rooms downstairs were without beds, as we would expect them to be nowadays, but in that period it was still quite usual to find parlours that were used for sleeping in. It is therefore apparent that Gilbert Fisher and his family were well up with changing trends. There were also a number of outbuildings attached to the Red Hall, the most important of these being a kitchen or scullery, a brew house, and a dairy.

The interior furnishings of the Red Hall show how the standard of domestic comfort was rising and this is reflected in the growing prosperity of families such as the Fishers. When Gilbert Fisher died in 1633 when an inventory of the house showed that in the hall stood a table, stools and a pair of andirons. The dining parlour had a green cover for the table, green chairs, two needlework chairs, stools with covers, cushions, two green curtains and rods for the windows. The kitchen contained 42 pieces of pewter with brass pots for cooking, and a warming pan. The bedroom on the first floor had tapestry coverlets, silk curtains and hangings while one had a china basin and ewer. The so-called high gallery contained not only spare beds, but also stores of cheese and butter. He also owned 97 sheep, 10 kine [cows], 16 calves, 17 young beasts, a heifer, steer and bull, four yokes of draught bullocks, eight draught horses and a filly. There were also hens, a sow and some pigs, while barley, peas and oats in the field were worth £90. He also had £230 worth of land on lease, the smaller lot containing 90 acres, and a larger quantity being unspecified. However, life was not without its difficulties and Fisher died in debt, his goods totalling £663 13s. 4d. but his liabilities and funeral charges exceeded the amount he owed and it was to by many years before these debts were finally paid off by his descendants.

After Gilbert Fisher's death in 1633, his family remained in occupation until 1698 when the Red Hall was sold by his grandson, also Gilbert Fisher, first to Richard Dixon and then to Richard Warwick and subsequently passed into the hands of the Digby family when James Digby (1707-51) married Warwick's daughter and heir, Elizabeth, circa 1730. After James died, his eldest son, John, became tenant and when he died in 1777, ownership passed to his younger brother, James. He achieved some distinction in the county, becoming Deputy Lieutenant of Lincolnshire, clerk to the Turnpike Trust for the south east district of the road between Lincoln Heath and Peterborough and treasurer of the Black Sluice Drainage Commissioners.

James Digby was also twice married, firstly to Mary, daughter of Francis Green, of Dowsby, in 1757 but she died in 1792, and in 1796 when he was 60 years old, he married Catherine, 23-year-old daughter of the Rev Humphrey Hyde, Vicar of Bourne, and it was to the Red Hall that he brought his young bride who was 37 years his junior where they seem to have lived in some style and comfort with many servants and a wine cellar stocked with fine wine and port. James Digby outlived his two other brothers, George and Richard, and by the time of his death in 1811, he had built up a considerable estate in Bourne and Dyke and a fortune reputed to be around £200,000. The Red Hall and a portion of his lands remained in the possession of his widow, then known as Lady Catherine, together with a legacy of £500 and an annuity in the same sum, until she died in 1836 when under the terms of her late husband's will, ownership passed to his youngest sister, Mrs Henrietta Pauncefort.

An inventory of the Red Hall from this time also survives to give a glimpse of the way the family had lived during the early 19th century. The ground floor rooms were now known as the hall, drawing room, dining room, breakfast room and kitchen while the next floor comprised four bedrooms, three of them being designated by colours, namely green, yellow and blue. On the top floor was a storage garret and rooms for the men and maid servants. The rooms, as in a previous period, seem to have been somewhat over-furnished, the dining room containing mahogany and claw furniture with two ottomans and a dozen chairs. In the drawing room were a sofa, two ottomans, numerous small tables, seven elbow chairs and four Swiss chairs. Four-poster beds with hangings were still to be found in the bedrooms upstairs while there was a six-foot bath in the closet.

There is evidence that the next tenant was Charles Sleith Esq, the Red Hall being described as his seat in 1841 in Pigot and Company's Trade directory for that year, and it is assumed that the property was leased to him and ownership remaining with the Duncomb family. Duncomb died in 1849 and his property was inherited by his son, also named Philip Pauncefort Duncomb, who lived in Buckinghamshire. For ten years, the Red Hall was leased for use as a private boarding school for young ladies, firstly under the direction of Miss Elizabeth Sardeson and then Miss Eliza Wood, and in 1859-60 Duncomb sold the property, together with the adjoining buildings and five acres of land, to the Bourne and Essendine Railway Company for £1,305 and so it came about that the town's railway station arose almost on the doorstep of this famous building.

While conversion work was going ahead, a disastrous fire that might have destroyed the Red Hall was narrowly averted. Shortly after 5 pm on Sunday 27th November 1859, the alarm was raised when smoke was seen coming from one of the rooms. The town fire

engine was called out and its prompt attendance and help by others who were already at the scene prevented more serious damage. A subsequent investigation revealed that the fire had started in a room that had been occupied the previous day by men employed on converting the building for use as the railway premises.

They had lit a fire in the fireplace to keep warm but there had been a large quantity of wood and other rubbish in the chimney, probably lodged there by jackdaws while the hall was unoccupied, and this caught light, the flames then spreading to a large beam and to several of the floor joists. A fire brigade official said that the blaze could easily have spread to a quantity of old timber that was lying around the premises and had the outbreak occurred a few hours later when no one was about, it was probable that the entire building would have gone up in flames.

The Red Hall was eventually used as the stationmaster's house and ticket office for the railway line but when this closed, the company expressed an intention to give the building away but no one wanted it and many councillors, including some from Bourne, suggested that it should be left to fall down. But help was at hand, notably through the efforts of the late Councillor Jack Burchnell, and after a long and determined fight, he ensured that Bourne United Charities acquired the freehold in 1962 and they remain the owners to this day. The hall was in a dilapidated condition when they took over, the chimneys having been dismantled in 1957 because they had become dangerous although the remainder of the building was intact, and with the aid of local funds and grants, it was carefully and sympathetically restored to its former elegance under the guidance of the Lincolnshire architects Bond and Read and re-opened in December 1972 as a museum, community centre and the offices of Bourne United Charities.

The first impression during a tour of the house is that very little has altered since Gilbert Fisher and his family moved there in 1605. It has a sense of permanence, thick walls, seasoned wood, solid flooring, and a magnificent staircase that takes you to the very top floor and to the long gallery where the family would relax in the evenings and at

weekends or to entertain their guests. This room is the finest of all in the Red Hall, still redolent of its past, and to walk its length is to experience an expectation of meeting past occupants. The long gallery and upper rooms have been refurbished in recent years but the work has been so well executed that it is hardly noticeable except for small plaques that remind us of recent philanthropy, one on the top floor hallway and another inside the door of the long gallery remembering those who helped with the work. Further restoration has also been carried out in the boardroom where the trustees of Bourne United Charities hold their regular meetings to administer the various funds under their control.

The gatehouse to the Red Hall is now a private house, standing in South Street at what was the entrance to the drive. The cubic building has lancet windows and was originally finished in the same distinctive hand-made red bricks but the outside walls have been rendered and painted and turrets which adorned each of the four corners of the roof were removed during the early part of the 20th century. As with the Red Hall itself, this is Grade II listed as is the section of wall with pyramidal caps on the two pillars that can be seen on the left of the building. The gateway to the Red Hall that once stood in South Street was demolished by prisoners of war in 1918 to make way for the garage premises of Tuck Brothers, motor engineers.

An earthquake which struck Lincolnshire in the early hours of Wednesday 27th February 2008 may have caused damage to the stone pinnacles on the gable ends of the Red Hall. Surveyors revealed that they may already have been unsafe and that the problem could have been made worse by the seismic shock which registered a magnitude of 5.3 on the Richter scale. Builders arrived on Wednesday 16th April to repair the damage using a 12-ton cherry picker to reach the roof sixty feet up and each of the limestone pinnacles was removed and then cemented back into place.

The Red Hall continues in use today as the headquarters of Bourne United Charities but the modernised Dunbar Room on the first floor is also used for a variety of functions by local groups and conservation organisations. The attractive period appearance also makes

it a magnet for visitors and it must be one of the most photographed buildings in Bourne, almost as famous as the Abbey Church itself. It is not, however, easily accessible for public inspection. Visitors are unable to make a tour of the building without prior arrangement with Bourne United Charities and its interest is therefore restricted. Other public buildings such as the church, the Heritage Centre and Wake House, may be seen during opening times but no such facility exists at the Red Hall and its beauty is therefore only seen from the outside.

6 - The Town Hall

There has been a building in the market place at Bourne serving as a town hall for centuries and it was also the centre of the community and particularly for the dispensation of justice through the Petty and Quarter Sessions and the meetings of the various manorial courts that controlled land and property and heard grievances. The earliest reference to a town hall is in 1586 and can be found in an account of the town by the historian William Camden (1551-1623) in Britannia, his survey of the British Isles, which says:

> **Bourne has four streets, and out streets from these. East to west is 1¼ miles and north to south ¾ of a mile. In the centre of the market place is an ancient town hall, said to have been built by the Wake family. The Cecil arms carved in basso-relief over the centre of the east front and this town hall was probably rebuilt by the Lord Treasurer, Burghleigh.**

William Cecil, the Elizabethan statesman and the first Lord Burghley, was born at a house in the market place, now the Burghley Arms, and although Burghley House near Stamford later became his principal residence, it is most likely that he remembered his birthplace by bestowing a new town hall. This building probably stood somewhere near the junction of South Street and West Street and underneath it would have been a shambles and stalls

that formed part of the weekly market while the petty and quarter sessions were held in the town hall itself, together with the court of the manor of Bourne of which the Lord was the Marquess of Exeter and both he and his ancestors had been accustomed to receive tolls from the market which also extended to the shops and stalls.

By the early 19th century, the town hall had become dilapidated and a site occupied by a house adjoining the Bull Inn (now the Burghley Arms) on the east side of the market place was chosen for a new building but this too was to have a shambles or set of stalls underneath. The architect Bryan Browning, who later designed Folkingham goal in 1825, was asked to draw up the plans and he decided on an exterior staircase and recessed twin flights of steps within the front of the building that was to be constructed with Doric columns after the fashion of the Roman baths.

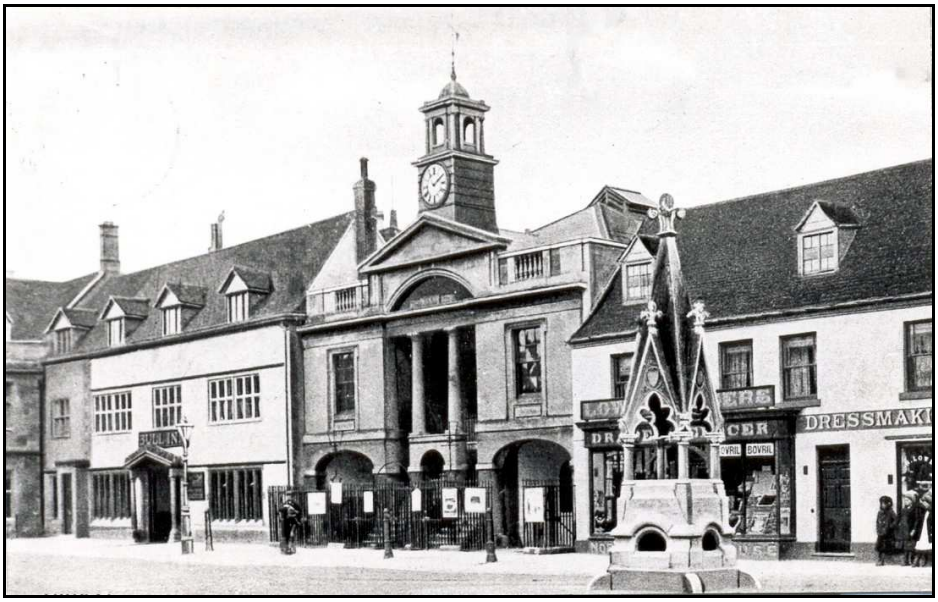
The project would be financed with money raised through the county rate, from the sale of salvaged materials from the previous building on the site and from public subscription with contributions not only from Bourne but also from neighbouring parishes such as Market Deeping, Morton and Haconby, which between them eventually raised just under £1,400. A large painted board containing the names of the original subscribers and the amount they contributed is still on display in the main courtroom. An agreement to build the Town Hall was eventually drawn up between the magistrates and the project's organising committee and Bryan Browning's architectural practice, Woolcott and Browning, of 54 Doughty Street, Stamford. In the event, the total cost was £1,640 plus £811 15s. 1d. for extras that had been decided after the original plans had been approved. These included increasing the height of the building by 2 ft., extending the hall by 6 ft., constructing the front staircase in Portland instead of York stone and increasing the size of the prisoners' room underneath the building from 9 ft. to 14 ft. The tower and the clock, however, were financed separately as a gift to the town by Mrs Eleanor Frances Pochin, widow of George Pochin, who was Lord of the Manor of Bourne Abbots for 37 years from 1761-98, shortly before she died on 16th July 1823 at the age of 76.

Construction was completed within five months and the Town Hall was duly opened in 1821 and was soon in frequent use, not only as a court house but for many other varied events and it appears that permission to hold these was frequently given by individual magistrates without resorting to any other authority. Damage had been caused on some occasions and on 3rd January 1842, the magistrates met under the chairmanship of William Augustus Johnson to regularise the position and they passed the following resolution which became the basis for the present licensing system:

> **It having been represented to this court that frequent applications have heretofore been made to individual magistrates, for the use of the Sessions House at Bourne and the Rooms adjoining, for purposes irrelevant to the object for which the building was erected, and the Hall having occasionally been much injured, it is ordered by this court and her Majesty's Justices of the Peace here present, that all future applications for use of the Hall be made to the Magistrates in Quarter Sessions assembled, and not to individual Magistrates; and that such applications be decided upon by a majority of the Justices then present. - W Forbes, Clerk of the Peace for the said Parts of Kesteven in the County of Lincoln.**

The town hall has remained in use ever since and is relatively unchanged except that the shambles has disappeared although the market is still in the vicinity, occupying a purpose built precinct at the rear.

The tower and the clock on the Town Hall were financed by Mrs Eleanor Frances Pochin shortly before she died on 16th July 1823 at the age of 76. She was the widow of George Pochin, who was Lord of the Manor of Bourne Abbots for 37 years from 1761-98. The clock continued in use until 1882 when a new one was installed at cost of £85 [£4,500 at today's values]. The contract was awarded jointly to two local clock and watch makers, Thomas Pearce, of North Street, and Joseph Ellicock, of West Street, after they had submitted an acceptable estimate for a two-dial eight-day turret clock striking the hours and quarters. Work began in October and was completed by Christmas, the cost being met by donations and public subscriptions.



This clock remained in use until the end of the century when the parish council which was then responsible for administering local affairs, decided that the tower needed strengthening and that the clock should be illuminated at night. The project was the brainchild of Councillor Alfred Stubley, a local decorator and scenic artist, and it was mainly due to his practical knowledge and capability that it came to fruition. The work was carried out in 1899 by a local expert Mr Edward Pearce, a clock and watch maker with premises in North Street, and the son of Thomas Pearce who had helped supply the previous clock. The timepiece had been in need of restoration for some time and Mr Pearce

fitted a new dial with gilded hands and black figures in an opal glass, allowing the clock face to be illuminated after dark, a modern innovation at that time. The illumination was provided by gas light regulated by automatic machinery and the old wooden turret or cupola was lined with asbestos to render it fireproof. The clock mechanism was sited in the constable's room in the Town Hall below and connected to the dial by wires. Total cost of the work was £47 14s. 1d. [£3,000 at today's values]. "The illuminated dial of the clock

gives universal satisfaction", said the Stamford Mercury. "The new clock is a decided improvement for which the parish councillors may justly claim credit."

The clock continued in use until it was badly damaged by fire in 1933 although during the Great War of 1914-18, the striking mechanism was silenced in case it might be confused with an air raid or an invasion alert. The minutes of Bourne Urban District Council do not say but merely recorded in April 1916: "In compliance with an order from the Home Office, it was decided that the striker of the Town Hall clock be tied up for the duration." Ironically, it would appear that it was the gas lamp in the turret used to illuminate the clock that overheated and caused the 1933 fire. The tower was never replaced and the clock was later refurbished and reinstalled on the pediment below where it can be seen today.

The Town Hall was used as a courthouse from the time it was built in 1821 with petty sessions or police hearings usually held weekly and by the quarter sessions, convened every three months for the imposition of heavier sentencing and more serious cases. The appearance of the courtroom remained virtually unchanged from 1821 until the layout of the upper floors of the Town Hall was altered during refurbishment in 1974-75, thus reducing its size, but it continued as the seat of justice in Bourne and the magistrates' court was held there weekly for summary jurisdiction with a public gallery for anyone who wished to watch the proceedings. The courtroom was also used for regular meetings of the town council and there was an adjoining library or committee room where the magistrates adjourned to consider their decisions when necessary. A reception room area with a counter and access from the street has been added on the ground floor and used by South

Kesteven District Council for the payment of the council tax and other public inquiries. The authority also has offices behind while those of the town council are upstairs at the back, overlooking the new market place. The courtroom was refurbished in the spring of 2004 at a cost of £90,000 and during the autumn, the exterior doors, woodwork and ironwork were also given a fresh coat of paint. While Lincolnshire County Council now

owns Bourne Town Hall, it is South Kesteven District Council which leases it and in turn allowed the Magistrates Courts Committee to make use of the facilities on payment of a peppercorn rent. This arrangement came to an end with the final sitting of the magistrates which was held on Monday 1st April 2008 when judicial hearings were finally phased out, the courtroom was closed and arrangements made for cases to be heard elsewhere in the county.

The future of the entire building then became uncertain pending a review of council services for the town which involved turning it into a Community Access Point or one-stop centre for local government, centralising services provided by our three councils under the same roof, a scheme agreed by Lincolnshire County Council, South Kesteven District Council and Bourne Town Council. It was envisaged that the Town Hall will eventually house a multitude of services such as a customer counter, computer suite, offices and a meeting area for the town council, offices for the district council, the public library, a lift to the first floor to solve the ongoing problem of disabled access and probably the relocation of the registrar of births, marriages and deaths, currently based in West Street. The scheme was originally mooted in 2008 but by the spring of 2010 nothing had been decided and discussions were ongoing.

7 - The Corn Exchange

One of the most enduring buildings in Bourne is the Corn Exchange which was built in 1870 on the site of the old post office where Abbey Road approaches the market place. The premises were owned by the Marquess of Exeter, then Lord of the Manor of Bourne, who had sold the property on favourable terms to make way for the new development and he also promised that a large portion of the proceeds from the sale would be invested in shares for the new enterprise.

The decision to proceed with the scheme was taken at a public meeting at the Town Hall on February 10th of that year when local magistrate William Parker of Hanthorpe Hall presided. He said that the object was to obtain a public hall and corn exchange by means of a limited liability company and added; "This is of considerable importance to the town and neighbourhood and therefore I have great pleasure in identifying myself with the project."

Parker said that there were three main advantages in the erection of such a building, firstly the establishment of a much needed corn exchange on a proper site, secondly the opening of a reading room and library and thirdly the provision of a suitable room for lectures and concerts, "and in this way to afford instruction and rational amusement to larger numbers than could be accommodated in Bourne at present." Five resolutions were put to the meeting:

- **That a public hall and corn exchange, with reading and ante-rooms, are much required in this town and that a company be formed to carry out such object under the Joint Stock Company's Act of 1862. - *moved by William Parker and seconded by William Wherry.***

- **That the name of the Company be the Bourne Public-hall and Corn Exchange Company Limited. - *moved by Mr E H Edlin and seconded by Mr R M Mills.***
- **That the following nine gentlemen be the committee to form the company and be the first directors thereof, namely, William Parker Esq., and Messrs Thomas Lawrence, John Freeman, R J Shilcock, John Gibson, Thomas Presgrave, William Wherry, R M Mills and Thomas Harrison. - *moved by Mr Charles Roberts and seconded by Mr S W Andrews.***
- **That the capital of the company be £1,500, divided into 300 shares of £5 each. - *moved by Thomas Harrison and seconded by Mr R M Mills.***
- **That Messrs Andrews and Bell be the solicitors to the company and take the requisite proceedings to form and register the company and prepare articles of association and that the offices of the company be at Bourne. - *moved by Mr Thomas Lawrence and seconded by Mr John Gibson.***

All resolutions were carried unanimously and by the time the meeting closed, 250 shares had already been taken up. The contract for the construction work went to Robert Young of Lincoln in May 1870 after his tender of £1,150 was accepted and work began on clearing the site.

The building was ready for use by the autumn and the corn market opened for business in October. It had a large hall in which the corn exchange was held with stage and retiring rooms and capable of seating 500 people and so it was also used for public meetings and musical entertainments, the first of which was held during the following week. The total cost, however, had risen to £2,000, a sum that included the purchase of the land and the fittings. The result was an unpretentious Victorian building of red brick and stone dressings and a blue slate roof but lacking the sober grace of the Georgian Town Hall just round the corner. The Corn Exchange was soon in use and the Stamford Mercury reported on Friday 18th November 1870: "We are requested to state that the building is a boon to the inhabitants as the large room is ample for all requirements and, being well adapted for a ball, a hope is entertained that arrangements will be made during the winter with this

object in view. The opening of the room is said to be likely to increase the market, as 1,500 quarters of wheat were sold on the 10th inst. It is suggested that a meeting of merchants and farmers should be called to decide upon and establish a system of buying and selling corn without 'chap money' [a promise to pay rather than a payment] which has caused so much unpleasantness at Stamford. In referring to this matter, a merchant recommends '14 days net cash'."

The new venue also became busy as a centre for social and community events, being the largest hall available in the town. In September 1874, for instance, the Stamford Mercury reported: "The highly talented company of Japanese artistes gave a clever entertainment in the Corn Exchange on the 9th inst. which was well attended and the performances were much applauded."

Ice skating as a public pastime was introduced in 1876 at a time when many rinks were being opened around the country and making a profit for those who invested in them. The Stamford Mercury reported on Friday 14th January that as a result, "several gentlemen were accordingly trying to arrange to adapt the Corn Exchange for this simple means of exercise and entertainment". The facility, known as the Bourne Skating Rink, opened the following month and was administered by a committee of management who advertised in the newspaper on Friday 18th February when their news columns commented: "The pastime has become so fashionable of late that there can be no doubt it will find numerous votaries at Bourne."

In 1889, the Corn Exchange was struck by lightning although no serious damage was done. The incident was reported in the Stamford Mercury on July 26th which said: "On Sunday evening, a thunderstorm of unusual severity passed directly over the town while divine service was being held at the church. About 7 o'clock, it grew very dark and the storm broke with terrible violence. The flashes of lightning were extremely vivid and the peals of thunder following each other in rapid succession, were deafening. The vane on the Corn Exchange, to which the point of the lightning conductor is attached, was bent, falling about five inches, and the wire was twisted throughout its length. A passerby noticed a flash of light run from the point to the earth. No further damage occurred to the property as far as we have been able to ascertain and no person was injured."

The Bourne Public-hall and Corn Exchange Company Limited was wound up in June 1938 when the building was bought for £1,100 (£53,000 by today's values) by Bourne Urban District Council who had used it as a council chamber since its formation in 1899. Then, under the local government re-organisation of 1976, ownership passed to South Kesteven District Council who are the current administrators. It has therefore served the town well as a public hall and as a venue for a variety of social and business functions, including periodic exhibitions organised by the Chamber of Trade which did much to attract customers to the town's shops at a time when competition for retail trade from nearby towns and cities was becoming particularly acute.

During the centenary year, Councillor John Wright, chairman of Bourne UDC, said in a speech at the Corn Exchange at the annual civic dinner on Friday 19th May 1970: "This building has in the past been the hub of the agricultural community, providing essential services for farmers, corn merchants and citizens. Today, the Corn Exchange is a real

centre of community and it is particularly gratifying to welcome the representatives of so many of the town's organisations and firms to celebrate not only this civic occasion, but the building's centenary year."

A move to close the Corn Exchange was made at a meeting of Bourne Urban District Council on Tuesday 12th February 1969 when Councillor Lorenzo Warner proposed that the building should be sold for use as a supermarket and the proceeds used to finance a new town drainage scheme following severe flooding the previous year. He said that the issue should be settled with a referendum to decide whether electors wanted a well drained town or continue to subsidise social and cultural activities. "In all businesses, the right thing to do is to cut out all unprofitable waste and the Corn Exchange has been a very big charge on the rates for the last decade", he said. "In the years 1952-1967, a loss of £7,999 is shown. Has the Corn Exchange outlived its usefulness?"

Councillor Warner suggested that school halls should be used as public meetings places out of school hours to encourage the social and cultural life of the town and added: "The use of the Corn Exchange has to meet intense competition and I cannot see how the town can afford the luxury in these days of high rates. More benefit would accrue from providing a well drained town than continuing to meet the very heavy losses from retaining the Corn Exchange."

The suggestion received overwhelming and even hostile opposition from other members of the council who pointed out that the Corn Exchange was providing a valuable service for a town with a population of 5,500 and that the costs involved were reasonable in return for the benefits that resulted and in the previous five months, the building had been let 112 times. "I think that Councillor Warner has his priorities wrong", said Councillor G H Astley. A motion that the Corn Exchange should not be sold was carried, with only Councillor Warner dissenting. The acrimony generated by his proposal did not however last because he was eventually elected chairman of the council for the year 1970-71.

Major alterations were carried out to the building in 1972 when a new entrance was added and the old council chamber re-modelled as a foyer, new cloakrooms and a bar. The kitchen was modernised and in the main hall, alterations were made to the proscenium arch over the stage, the lighting and the general decor.

The pyramid-style blue slate roof of the 19th century marks the last remains of the old building from 1870. In 1990, the Corn Exchange and its facilities were completely rebuilt, refurbished and enlarged on a much bigger site as part of a £900,000 project for the area although a stone tablet bearing the date 1870 and the town's coat of arms were incorporated in the wall of the new building which borders Abbey Road. The extensions at the rear of the property also created a new façade overlooking a new market square and car park. Although the red brick facings associated with Bourne have been retained in the design, the overall appearance has not found favour with many residents who fear that its ultra-modernism is far too ostentatious for this historic market town.

Apart from the main hall, the Corn Exchange also has a small reception area and a bar and has therefore become the major venue for social and business occasions in the town ranging from meetings of the Bourne Organ Club, regular productions by the local dramatic societies and the annual Civic Dinner and Ball, to blood donor sessions, a periodic farmers' market, displays and exhibitions. It is also hired out for family celebrations such as wedding receptions, birthdays and christenings.

8 - Baldock's Mill

The Domesday Book of 1086, the great land survey ordered by William the Conqueror, records that at least three water mills existed in Bourne at that time out of an estimated 5,000 mills in the whole country. They were owned by Oger the Breton and produced an income of thirty shillings a year. He also had two parts of the profits from another mill that brought in a further five shillings a year. Other landowners in Bourne are also recorded as having "parts of mills", a system we would refer to today as shares, but it is not known how many there were. These values seem insignificant by today's monetary standards but in Norman times they were a most important incomes for the Lords of the Manor.

Another source of manorial revenue in the late 11th century were fisheries and there were 24 in Bourne. Ivo Taillebois had three that brought in eight pence a year while Alfred of Lincoln had six producing sixteen pence and the revenue from Oger's six fisheries is counted in terms of produce rather than currency and amounted to 2,500 eels. A further fifteen fisheries are mentioned in the Domesday Book entry for Bourne and so they would appear to be a quite important business venture. Imagine a pound consisting of 240 pence, as it was before the introduction of decimal currency, and you will have some idea of the amounts involved. The fisheries continued to play an important role in providing food, the monks of Bourne Abbey having their own Monk's Pool, now the site of the outdoor swimming pool, where carp were bred for the monastery table.

Baldock's Mill was one of the three water mills mentioned in the Domesday Book that survived into the 20th century and still stands today at No. 21 South Street. It was built on

the banks of the Bourne Eau in 1800 and operated until the mid-1920s, taking its name from the last family to work it, i e Baldock. The mill wheel was 15 ft in diameter by 3 ft wide and there was a smaller fly wheel measuring 5 ft by 1 ft. Corn was brought in to be ground into animal feed by farmers and smallholders who paid for the grinding. Maize was also split for chicken feed and horse beans and a flour dresser provided sufficient for the family's own use. Two sets of stones operated on the first floor fed from hoppers on the floor above, the corn being lifted up from the ground floor where it had been previously delivered by a chain hoist driven, like the stones, by the wooden undershot water wheel. Access to the two upper floors by the miller was by ladders. The mill operated twice a day for three hours and this time was increased by the digging of the leg between the paddock that is now the War Memorial Gardens and the Wellhead cottage. After powering Baldock's Mill, the water then ran downstream and could be used by Notley's Mill in Eastgate.

A gas engine was run at other times to provide power and as the owner, Mr Frederick Baldock, ran a carpentry and timber business from the premises, it also kept his saw bench in operation. Ground meal was packed on the downstairs floor, using the same bags brought in by the farmers, then hoisted up to the store on the first floor ready for collection via a wooden chute that was attached to the iron bar that can still be seen today below the stable door entrance.

The mill stopped working about 1924 when the water wheel collapsed. The owner, the Marquess of Exeter, called in experts to inspect the damage but decided not to repair it because of the high costs involved. The wheel and machinery were removed but the mill race that turned the wheel can still be seen within the building which was listed Grade II in 1973 as being of architectural and historic interest. Then in 1981, Bourne Civic Society sought permission to turn it into a Heritage Centre and Bourne United Charities agreed to lease them the building for a peppercorn rent in order that it would be preserved for community use. This lease was renewed in 2002 for a further 21 years and the full potential of the building in this new role is slowly being realised.

This project has been achieved mainly through volunteers, the early work being carried out by boys and girls from Bourne Secondary School (now the Robert Manning Technology College) under the guidance of teachers Mike Watkins and Alan Dawn. It was then envisaged that the building would eventually become an industrial and agricultural museum but no firm plans had been drawn up. Nevertheless, the youngsters tackled the work with gusto, chipping and renovating brickwork, plastering, fitting new doors, painting and decorating. The roof was repaired and broken windows re-glazed and while work was going ahead, gifts of old equipment and other artefacts began to arrive for the museum display planned for the building.

The mill and the Bourne Eau as seen from the rear

Further restoration work has been carried out by a dedicated band of helpers and although funds have been slow in coming, the Heritage Centre is now well established with a memorial room dedicated to the life and times of Raymond Mays, the motor racing pioneer who lived in the town. This feature was opened on Sunday 24th August 1999 by the local MP, Mr Quentin Davies, the member for Grantham and Stamford, and the display includes the racing goggles worn by Raymond Mays, some of his trophies and an impressive display of old photographs reflecting his career.

Other rooms are slowly being filled with artefacts and archive material relating to the town's history including a detailed survey of the water supplies that brought commercial success a century ago, railway maps and memorabilia from the days when Bourne was a rail junction, the old water cress beds, the brewing industry and a history of the Bourne Eau, and a collection of old photographs showing aspects of Bourne in times past. In April

2006, a major addition came with the opening of the Charles Worth Gallery commemorating the life and times of Charles Worth (1825-95), the solicitor's son from Bourne who established an internationally famous fashion house in Paris, and containing a copy of one of his creations from 1885, a collection of fashion artefacts from the period and a photographic record of his career.

Also on display in the Heritage Centre are the stones from an Anglo-Saxon arch reputed to have been removed from Bourne Abbey during restoration work in the late 19th century. They were taken to the old vicarage, now the Cedars residential care home for the elderly, where they stood in the copse area adjoining the church hall until the vicarage was sold in the mid-1980s. The field adjoining the mill was also known as Baldock's Paddock but this was acquired by Bourne United Charities in 1947 and the land used for the creation of an open space incorporating a stone cenotaph with the names of the dead from two world wars in a dignified setting which we know today as the War Memorial Gardens.

Jim and Brenda Jones in the Worth Gallery

In June 2001, the Heritage Centre was presented with a silver rose bowl by the Rotary Club of Bourne for the most outstanding community achievement during the previous 12 months, an award that was handed over to the chairman of the Civic Society, Mrs Brenda Jones, at a special lunch. The same award was presented to the society for a second time in 2004, this time recognising the work of society member Jim Jones carried out during 2002-03 on restoring the two water wheels that originally powered the mill. The project cost £12,000 and was funded through grants, mainly from Lincolnshire County Council, which enabled the society bring the building back into its original state when it was used for milling corn. As a result, in the summer of 2005, he was presented with a highly commended certificate by Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust for his achievement as part of an awards scheme launched in 1992 to promote the environment and raise awareness of wildlife and conservation.

9 - Brook Lodge

The house we know as Brook Lodge was originally built as the vicarage for Bourne in 1776 by the Rev Humphrey Hyde who was Vicar of Bourne from 1763 until 1807, and stands at the end of Church Walk but the frontage is on a bend in South Road. It was then known as the Vicarage House and was used as such from 1763 until 1848, being enlarged and altered in the summer of 1842 at a cost of £450. However, the incumbent at that time,

the Rev Joseph Dodsworth (1797-1877), who had been appointed vicar in 1842, considered that it was not big enough or sufficiently convenient for himself and his family and as a larger property was needed, the Abbey House in nearby Church Walk was deemed to be a suitable place.

The Abbey House had been built in 1764 by the Lord of the Manor of Bourne Abbots, George Pochin, but when he died in 1798, the property passed to various family members and was then rented for a period to several tenants but by 1849 it was standing empty and Dodsworth spotted an opportunity to acquire it for the church and as a family home for himself. He therefore arranged a deal in which the old vicarage, Brook Lodge, was traded with 40 acres of land in the North Field then owned by the church for the Abbey House, the Abbey Lawn and a small piece of land in the South Fen and this was satisfactorily agreed. The only details of this transaction to survive are included in a brief, handwritten account by Dodsworth in the back of the parish registers (Baptisms 1759-1812) where he used several blank pages to record various events during his ministry.

Dodsworth remained there until his death after serving the parish as curate and vicar for more than half a century. But after his death, the Abbey House was phased out and demolished and two years later a new vicarage was built close by using the materials salvaged during the demolition. This building remained in occupation until 1986 when it was sold by the church for use as a residential care home for the elderly known as The Cedars, named after the five cedar trees growing in the 1½ acres of grounds, and was officially opened after extensive refurbishment in February 1987 by Canon Gordon Lanham and his wife Josephine who had lived there when he was Vicar of Bourne from

1970-84. During the work, builders found information about another former resident because a letter from Jenny Neesham, a 15-year-old girl who had lived there 20 years before, was discovered tucked away behind a brick in the attic giving details of her family and a description of how she looked at the time. The building continues in use today and has been extensively modernised over the years, particularly during 2000 and again in 2009.

The present modern vicarage was first mooted by the Lincoln Diocesan Trust and Board of Finance in 1983 and a planning application was submitted for permission to build it on the bowling green next to the Abbey Church, a site within the town's designated conservation area. But there were difficulties to be overcome because the green had been used by the Bourne Abbey Bowling Club since 1923 when it had been officially opened by a previous vicar, Canon John Grinter, and was still leased by the church to the club at a peppercorn rent of £8.50 a year.

The Abbey House was described as "a fine mansion" when it was built in the mid-18th century but its life was a comparatively short one because it was demolished in 1878 although history does not record the reason why.

There was also a great deal of opposition from Bourne Civic Society and Bourne Town Council and so South Kesteven District Council refused the planning application on 27th April 1983 but the diocese appealed and a public inquiry was ordered. In the meantime, Bourne was without a vicar for six months until the appointment of the Rev John Warwick, rector of Long Sutton in Lincolnshire, in the autumn of 1983. The diocese therefore bought a spacious, four-bedroom house with gas central heating in the Austerby for £50,000 as a temporary home for the new vicar and his family until the future of the vicarage had been settled.

The public inquiry was held at Wake House in February 1984 under the chairmanship of a government inspector, Mr J M Steers, who was also a chartered architect, when counsel for the diocese, Mr Richard Phillips, outlined the difficulties the church faced with the old vicarage. "It is too large", he said, "being well over twice the size recommended by the Church Commissioners. It is far too costly for a vicar's stipend and it is beyond him to employ a full time gardener. Construction of the house makes modernisation impossible and the necessity to replace the building has been recognised since 1950." The vicar's stipend at that time was £6,450 a year but annual heating costs alone were £3,000 compared with £497 for a modern four-bedroom house at that time.

Even the Bishop of Grantham, the Rt Rev Dennis Hawker, was in favour of the new site. He told the inquiry: "It is essential that the incumbent should live in close proximity to the Abbey, not only to facilitate easy access but also to keep an eye on the security of the church building. The incumbent should also be given adequate privacy to enable parishioners to call at the vicarage out of the public gaze. I consider this to be an important pastoral requirement."

But South Kesteven District Council was adamant that the new vicarage would damage the setting of the church that was the town's only Grade I listed building. Their assistant

planning officer, Mr Graham Oxborough, said that the bowling green made an important contribution to the existing amenities and facilities of the town. "The site is separated from Church Lane by a high wall", he said, "but it is nevertheless considered that the building of a dwelling house on this land would seriously detract from the character and visual amenities of this part of the conservation area and from the setting of the very important listed building."

The church's argument won the day and in June 1984, the inspector ruled in their favour that a new vicarage could be built on the site. He said that it would not have an adverse affect on the character of the conservation area provided the building was sensitively designed and he added: "I suggest that the new vicarage should be made either of stone or second-hand red bricks with second-hand pantiles or slates on the roof so that it harmonises with other buildings in the neighbourhood." He also stipulated that facilities should be provided for an archaeological investigation of the site as work got underway.


The Cedars and the present vicarage

The new vicarage was built in 1986 in a combination of the materials suggested by the inspector, red brick with ashlar quoins and pantiles on the roof, and now that it has been standing for over two decades it is hard to understand what the fuss was all about apart from the loss of the green to the bowling club which was eventually wound up in July 1986 when its funds were divided between local community groups and its 67 members joined other clubs in the area, including the bowling club at the Abbey Lawn.

Meanwhile, Brook Lodge has remained in useful occupation throughout the years, firstly as a doctor's surgery and home to a succession of general practitioners who have served the town for well over a century, among them, Dr John Gilpin (1864-1943) and Dr George Holloway (1905-67), both of whom gave their names to the dangerous double bend which runs past the front and became known successively as Gilpin's Corner and then Holloway's Corner. But in recent years, much of the original grandeur of the house has gone and the property converted into flats, the exterior rendered and whitewashed and the surrounding garden far less formal than in those days of church garden parties and other social occasions to which the people of the parish flocked during the summer months.