

## *Religion and Philanthropy*

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### *Introduction*

THE ORIGINS OF THE Ramsden family fortunes date back to the Reformation and the opportunities it presented to astute landholders and manufacturers to extend their economic and social standing through the purchase of former monastic properties from the Crown. The rectory of Huddersfield had belonged to the Priory of St Oswald at Nostell from the early twelfth century until the latter was suppressed 1539. William Ramsden bought this in 1546, giving him and his heirs the right as lay rectors to the great tithes and the advowson – that is, the right to appoint a vicar to the living – which the family retained until 1920. After William's death in 1580 his brother John continued the process of land acquisition in Almondbury, Huddersfield and elsewhere; then John's son, William, bought the manor of Huddersfield from the Crown in 1599. The manor of Almondbury followed in 1627 during the time of this William's son, another John, who was knighted in 1619. The advowson of Almondbury, though, had been bestowed on Clitheroe Grammar School by Queen Mary, and was not acquired by the Ramsden family until 1857. This they then held until 1920.

The ecclesiastical influence exercised by the Ramsdens was only partly through the right of presentation to the living. Indirectly their influence went far wider. As lords of the manors of Huddersfield and Almondbury and one of the leading families in the district, for three centuries they were able to exercise influence over the restoration and building of churches, chapels and schools for the Established Church and to exert some control over the development of Dissent. This was especially true of the nineteenth century when the population of the township of Huddersfield expanded rapidly, from around 7,000 inhabitants in 1801 to almost 45,000 in 1901. The parish of Huddersfield extended well beyond the township and the Ramsden's manorial jurisdiction. From Cooper Bridge in the east it reached all the way up the northern side of the Colne Valley

through Longwood, Golcar, Slaithwaite, one half of the village of Marsden and up into the moorlands of Scammonden, an area of over 12,000 acres. There were two ancient chapels of ease, in Slaithwaite and at Deanhead in Scammonden, each with a perpetual curate appointed by the vicar of Huddersfield, to which was added in 1798 a small chapel at Longwood which had been built by public subscription in 1749. The chapel at Marsden was in Almondbury parish and the curate there was appointed by the vicar of that parish which extended from the village and township of Almondbury through Honley, up the Holme Valley to Holme, and across through South Crosland and Meltham to the southern side of the Colne Valley from Lockwood through Linthwaite and Lingards to Marsden. Here there were chapels of ease in Honley and Meltham as well as Marsden. Though the Ramsdens built up considerable landholdings in both parishes, these were mainly in the lower townships to the east. Among the holders of significant lands elsewhere were, in Almondbury parish, the Kayes of Woodsome, and in Huddersfield, the Thornhills of Fixby. The Woodsome estate passed through the female line to the Legge family, earls of Dartmouth, in 1732. As lords of the manor in both Honley and Slaithwaite, they exercised considerable ecclesiastical influence there alongside the Ramsdens.<sup>1</sup>

There are two instances of Ramsdens holding the living at Huddersfield. Probably related to the Ramsdens of Longley, and the most distinguished, was Robert Ramsden, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge in 1565 and University Preacher in 1570. He became a Canon of Westminster in 1571 and was chaplain to Lord Burleigh, the most powerful member of the government under Queen Elizabeth. Rector of Spofforth from 1573 and Archdeacon of York from 1575 until his death in 1598, he was appointed by John Ramsden to the relatively poor living of Huddersfield in 1581. The second Ramsden to hold the post was John, briefly appointed by his cousin, the fourth baronet, in 1790 before resigning after less than two years to become vicar of his father-in-law's living at Arksey; he was also, very briefly, perpetual curate at Scammonden in early 1792 on the death of the previous curate. There were four other clergymen in the extended cousinhood of Ramsdens in the nineteenth century, but none held a living to which the Ramsdens had the right of presentation.<sup>2</sup>

### *Religious views in the 17th and 18th centuries*

The personal religious views of the Ramsdens appear only fleetingly in the family and estate papers, which are most informative for the nineteenth century during the lifetime of Sir John William Ramsden (1831–1914). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the family appears to have been conventionally loyal to the Church of England.

When Henry Venn was appointed vicar of Huddersfield in 1759, Sir John Ramsden, 3rd baronet (1699–1769), made an appointment which for a few years put Huddersfield at the centre of the map for northern Evangelicalism. The background to the appointment, though, suggests less about Sir John's personal views than about the process by which the propertied élite worked together in the administration of their estates. Venn was at the time the curate at Clapham in London and was known in Evangelical circles there for his preaching and his piety. But Ramsden did not know of him and it was the 2nd Earl of Dartmouth (1731–1801), himself a convert to Evangelicalism, who brought Venn's name forward. Dartmouth doubtless wished to promote Venn's career, but Huddersfield was a poor living worth only £100 a year. Dartmouth supplemented this sum, and may have been keen to see Venn in Huddersfield because, as vicar, Venn would have the right to nominate the curate to the chapel in his manor of Slaithwaite.<sup>3</sup> Sir John, the 3rd baronet, died in 1769, leaving a boy aged 13 to be the next Sir John, 4th baronet (1755–1839). When Venn resigned through ill-health in 1771 he suggested to Lady Ramsden that his curate, John Riland, should replace him, but instead Harcar Crook, curate at Bradfield, was appointed – probably because his patron at Bradfield (Thomas Bright, vicar of Ecclesfield) was distantly related to Lady Ramsden through her first husband.<sup>4</sup> This man's lack of Evangelical sympathies prompted a secession from the parish church and led to the formation of the first Independent (later, Congregational) church in Huddersfield with a chapel at Highfield. Crooke, who had also remained curate at Bradfield, died in 1773 but his replacement, Joseph Trotter, who had been his assistant curate at Bradfield and was alleged to be a drunkard, was no better and it was not until Sir John came of age that an Evangelical was once more placed in the vicarage at Huddersfield. With the appointment of John Lowe (later Fitzwilliam's curate at Wentworth) in 1784 and then John Coates, his curate from 1786 and then vicar from 1791 to his death 1823, the Evangelicalism associated with Venn was re-established in Huddersfield and for the next century the living continued in the Venn 'low' church tradition.<sup>5</sup> This was in contrast to Almondbury where appointments in the eighteenth century had usually reflected the old orthodox High Church tradition, though in the nineteenth century under Lewis Jones (vicar 1824–66) Evangelicalism prevailed.

This public face of religion, predominantly male, can be explored by reference to female religious influences expressed in private correspondence. There is a glimpse into this world of female evangelical piety in a letter written by Henry Venn in July 1769, shortly after the death of Sir John Ramsden, 3rd Baronet, in April 1769. Venn recalled a dinner at which he had spiritual conversation on the guidance of the Holy Spirit lasting two hours with the widow and her three daughters – by her first marriage, Mary

Bright (Countess Rockingham from 1752), and by her marriage to Sir John, Elizabeth (Mrs Weddell from 1771) and Margaret (Lady Ducie from 1774).<sup>6</sup> Though Lady Ramsden failed to promote John Riland for the Huddersfield vicarage, as Venn had hoped, it may well have been through the Countess Rockingham's influence that her half-brother, the 4th baronet, appointed John Lowe to Huddersfield (and Brotherton) in 1784.

In the next generation there is correspondence surviving between the Countess Rockingham, her husband's niece, Charlotte Wentworth, and her husband's brother-in-law, John Milbanke.<sup>7</sup> Even allowing for the conventional language of the day concerning religious matters, these letters suggest a deep personal piety which is reflected also in the attitudes and concerns imparted to their wider families – notably Charlotte Wentworth's daughter, Isabella (who married John Charles Ramsden) and her nephew, the 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, both of whom were to be key players in the history of Huddersfield in the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> When Fitzwilliam delivered a eulogy on Isabella's son, the young John William, at the opening of St John's Church, Bay Hall, in 1853, he referred to 'the example of his mother' and the son being 'deeply imbued with religious feelings'. It would be cynical not to take from this some insight into the upbringing and character of Sir John William Ramsden.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Public Philanthropy in the time of Sir John William Ramsden***

The Ramsdens were absentee landlords and this inevitably led from the later seventeenth century onwards to some disengagement from the local community. Although William Ramsden had been among the petitioners for a charter for the grammar school at Almondbury in 1608, no Ramsden sat on the school's governing body between the next William, who was the last Ramsden to live at Longley and died in 1679, and Sir John William who became a governor between 1867 and 1884.<sup>10</sup> Occasional charitable activities are noted in the intervening years. The Ramsden Charity, which in 1894 was yielding £80 a year for expenditure on clothes for the poor, was started in Venn's day in 1767 with five acres of land from Bay Hall common.<sup>11</sup> In 1818 a new lease was granted for parish schools in Huddersfield. The original lease had been given by John Ramsden in 1681 and this new lease for the balance of 999 years was for an annual rental of 'one red rose in the time of red roses, if the same be demanded'; but it was the 4th Earl of Dartmouth who was available to lay the foundation stone in 1818. While the Ramsdens were beginning to invest in the infrastructure of the town, there was little sign of this in its ecclesiastical buildings until land was granted for St Paul's church in 1829.<sup>12</sup> The parish church itself was rebuilt in 1834–6, and in this Sir John Ramsden played his required part as lay impropiator who was therefore

responsible for the chancel (see below), but it was only after his death that the pace of change, including religious change, quickened in the town and parish.

John William Ramsden came into his estates at the age of 7 on the death of his grandfather, the 4th baronet, in 1839 [see Illustration 18, p. 49]. For the next 14 years his affairs were administered by Trustees, the most important of whom was the 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, cousin and brother-in-law of John William's mother, Isabella Ramsden, who was the daughter of Thomas, Lord Dundas. Fitzwilliam, Mrs Ramsden and her brother, the Earl of Zetland, set the tone for the Ramsden approach to religion in the town for the next seventy years, with Sir John William Ramsden playing a full part from 1852 onwards. In this the Ramsdens were served by a series of able agents and their assistants, notably George Loch (appointed overall estate manager in 1844) [see Illustration 6, p. 9], Alexander Hathorn (Huddersfield agent, 1844–61) [see Illustration 7, p. 11], R. H. Graham (agent, 1864–85), and F. W. Beadon (agent 1885–1920) – who advised Sir John William across a range of policy issues, including those relating to religious matters. Sir John William was open to suggestions but also had clear ideas of his own and the agent had to tread carefully, advising but always deferring to his master. The notes of reply which Sir John William wrote on many of the letters he received from his agents and others give some insight into his views on religion and philanthropy.

Sir John William divided most of his time between Byram, the House of Commons, and his estates in Inverness which he began to accumulate and develop from 1865. In 1885 he also acquired through his wife's inheritance the Bulstrode estate in Buckinghamshire, which then became his principal address. He was also an MP for much of the time between 1853 and 1886. He depended on his agents for information and advice and it is remarkable how much attention he did manage to pay to Huddersfield in the light of his other interests and commitments. These latter, however, did determine and limit what he did. Parliamentary sessions could require him to be in London during the Spring and early Summer and by August he liked to be on his Ardverikie estate in Scotland for the shooting season – although he himself did not shoot.<sup>13</sup> If a foundation stone needed laying or a building opening he would usually do it, provided the date were convenient, often accompanied from 1865 by his wife, Guendolen, youngest daughter of the Duke of Somerset. For example, although he had taken an interest in the new church to be built at Newsome, not far from Longley Hall, for which he provided the site and a donation of £850, he declined the invitation to lay the foundation stone on 17 July 1871 as he would be in Scotland at that time. The ceremony was performed instead by Amelia, wife of Thomas Brooke of Armitage Bridge.<sup>14</sup> When he was briefly in Huddersfield his timetable could be overcrowded. After engagements at Byram on 9 and 10 July 1883, he and Lady Guendolen came to Huddersfield on 11

July where she with his assistance laid the foundation stone for the new chancel at St Paul's church, but they then had to go immediately to London, unable to stay even for the luncheon.<sup>15</sup>

It was easier to lend a name as a patron to some worthy cause – though that often meant heading the subscription list with a handsome donation. It was easier still to send a small contribution of £5 or £10. Sometimes, as in the case of a church or a school, Ramsden might donate the land – leasehold – or allow it to be let at a reduced rental. Small donations and favours oiled the workings of community relations; they controlled the mood in a thousand often hidden ways and were essential in the hierarchical and patriarchal social order that the Ramsdens were trying to maintain in the modern, industrial society of Huddersfield on which much of their wealth depended. Even so, Sir John was not a naturally emollient character and, as one contemporary historian noted with reference to the long-running dispute over the length of leases and tenant right between 1859 and 1866, 'relations of the present baronet with his Huddersfield tenantry have not always been of the most cordial description'.<sup>16</sup>

The policy of the Ramsden Trustees on donations was clearly set out in an advice note from Earl Fitzwilliam in 1850 with regard to whether the Trustees should contribute to the organ fund at Paddock church:

It is very true that an organ is not the most useful thing [on] which 5 or 10£ can be expended, but upon the whole I should advise contributing to it – for two reasons – first, Paddock is not a place where the rich of Huddersfield reside – only poor to be found there – second, I think it desirable that he [Ramsden] should not do anything, either in the affirmative or in the negative line, which may give him a reputation for stinginess – from none to 4 or 5 and 20 is the period during which his character in the world will be stamped – it is in *early* life that the world forms its estimate of man's disposition and character, and the world, having so formed its judgement, rarely, if ever, reverses it, however good reasons may appear subsequently for changing its opinion ...<sup>17</sup>

Thus spoke an experienced public figure and politician who had spent a lifetime dealing with such matters. It informed Sir John's thinking throughout his own life: philanthropy in the service of the people of Huddersfield – but best when it also served the purposes of the Ramsden estate.

Running the Ramsden estates was big business requiring careful management and the agent was always frugal with his employer's money. With some exceptions the largesse dispensed by the agents on Sir John William's account was a small price to pay for his reputation. The expenditure account for the year ending October 1881 shows regular expenditure to have been

£26,433-13-0, a few hundred pounds over the estimate; of this sum, £459-18-6 (1.74 per cent) was accounted for in subscriptions. These subscriptions were in support of various good causes, many but not all of which were religious. A further £171 was subscribed annually in support of St John's church [see pp. 134-5]. Extraordinary expenditure amounted to a further £30,124-5-1, well above the estimate of £13,409. Of this sum, £5,099-13-0 was accounted for in donations. This was unusually high because the total included £5,000 for Greenhead Park. The balance (0.33 per cent of extraordinary expenditure and 0.18 per cent of all expenditure) was made up of smaller donations, usually of £5 or £10.<sup>18</sup>

These sums were not insignificant to the recipient and, although small in terms of the estate income, Ramsden was well aware that such donations could rapidly get out of hand, but they had a value beyond mere money in the goodwill that they promoted. As Fitzwilliam had advised in 1850, it was important not to appear stingy. There were several reasons why it was good to give, not least of which was keeping up with the neighbours. The whole point of a public subscription list, headed by the great and the good, was to shame or encourage the reluctant to do likewise. When an appeal was made to fund a memorial to the deceased rector of Lockwood in 1878, Ramsden wrote to his agent: 'I should like to contribute to this Memorial – pray find out what subscriptions are being given, as a guide to the amount of my contribution.' In the end he gave £10.<sup>19</sup> When Sir Joseph Crosland's niece wrote to the agent in 1894, soliciting a £10 subscription for three years to aid the Mission Church which she was supporting at Johnny Moor Hill, Paddock Brow, the agent advised Sir John to agree because 'I do not quite like Sir Joseph Crosland doing so much as he does for the people who live on your property'. Sir John did not like annual commitments, so sent £25 outright.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, when he sent £10 to the Wesleyan Bazaar at Paddock in aid of their schools in 1894, he asked for his gift not to be 'paraded in public' – perhaps modesty, but more likely so as not to encourage too many expectations elsewhere.<sup>21</sup>

The sort of objects supported by regular small subscriptions were £5 a year for the schools at Cowcliffe (1850), a guinea a year to pay the fee of the independent examiner at the Huddersfield Collegiate School, so long as the examinations continued (1872), and £25 a year towards the salary of the curate at the Swallow Street Mission Church (1878).<sup>22</sup> The Trustees even decided in 1850 to contribute £5 a year to the Catholic schools in the town.<sup>23</sup>

In small matters Sir John could afford to be generous. Donations were usually preferred to subscriptions as they could be controlled year by year. Appeals for money in support of worthy religious objects were usually met with a donation, irrespective of the denomination. When Charles



Drawbridge, curate at Honley, appealed for funds for a parsonage but had not yet launched an official appeal, Fitzwilliam advised Loch: 'if you find a loose £5 note in your pocket I should think it might very properly find its way with Mr Drawbridge'.<sup>24</sup> When the clergyman at Holy Trinity, serving the north of the town, appealed for donations of over £250 towards the liquidation of debts, he was sent money – but only £10.<sup>25</sup> In 1890, Ramsden sent 15 guineas for the fund for new Church of England Sunday schools at Moldgreen; and in 1905 he gave £10 to the new Sheepridge Providence Church United Methodist Free Churches building fund – as the Methodists pointed out, 'we are only a working class congregation' and the chapel was being built on Ramsden land.<sup>26</sup> Though Ramsden's sympathies were with the Church he was alive to the strength of Nonconformity in the town and the prudential as well as charitable reasons for a relatively even-handed approach. When, in June 1875, the local Baptist minister appealed for aid for the new Baptist church in New North Road, Ramsden was inclined to refuse on the grounds that he had already granted a favourable lease and the Baptists 'have no claim which is not equally possessed by every other chapel built on the Estate'. Nevertheless, the estate cashier, Hordern, recorded a donation of £50 in 1877.<sup>27</sup> Only occasionally was an appeal rejected outright, as in 1891 when an appeal for a donation to the Queen Street Wesleyan Schools was rejected because in giving to them Ramsden would be 'open to the charge of partiality if I did not also give to many other schools of the same class to which I do not now give'.<sup>28</sup> But two years later he was prepared to give £50 to the new Catholic Schools being opened in Commercial Street, one of the least desirable parts of the lower town.<sup>29</sup> Such open-handedness was, of course, liable to abuse. When John W. Moran sent a printed appeal to Sir John William on 13 July 1878 soliciting a donation for the extension of the altar nave at St Patrick's Catholic Church, to which had been added in manuscript the names and generous sums already promised by leading gentlemen in the town, Graham was suspicious, and was able to report ten days later that on 22 July Moran had appeared before the magistrates charged with obtaining money under false pretences.<sup>30</sup>

Donations and favourable leases sometimes had clear ulterior motives. During the Tenant Right agitation of the late 1850 when T. W. Nelson, was ruffling a few feathers with his less than diplomatic handling of leases, [see pp. 92-111], the Ramsden Street Congregational Chapel was reminded that their lease had been for an annual rental of sixpence a square yard. They had in fact paid only fourpence but had no paperwork to justify this, so the full sixpence was insisted upon. However, an annual payment of ten guineas to the Ramsden Street Schools was also authorised – the equivalent of a rebate on the annual rent of about 1½d. a square yard.<sup>31</sup> The Unitarians were



not so successful when they claimed that they were not obliged to pay for the drainage and paving of the street outside their new chapel in Fitzwilliam Street,<sup>32</sup> but the Free Wesleyans did better. They had acquired a site for their new chapel in what was to become Brunswick Street and found they needed extra land for the caretaker's house. The going rate was 4d. but they hoped for the usual discount down to 2d. as with the chapel site. Nelson advised 'having regard to the state of public feeling at the present moment and to the fact of Mr Thomas Mallinson the principal party connected with the chapel being one of the deputation on the Tenancy and [sic] Will question, I think it may be best policy to let them have the whole 209 yards at 2d per yard' – in effect an annual subscription of about £1-15-0 towards the rent. Sir John approved. Perhaps it was this dubious decision which prompted the generous resolution of the Ramsden Street case – and may have earned for Nelson both promotion to be steward of the manor of Almondbury, and the dislike for him felt by the estate cashier, Isaac Hordern [see Illustration 8, p. 11].<sup>33</sup>

The Ramsden policy of benevolent neutrality was felt to be both prudent and appropriate, which meant that, on the one hand, requests from Nonconformists for financial assistance were always considered on their merits, and on the other that the Church of England did not always get its own way. When the Rev. Josiah Bateman, appointed to the Huddersfield living in 1840, kept coming back to the Trustees for more money, Loch cautiously advised 'against concurring in some of Mr Bateman's applications'.<sup>34</sup> There was indeed considerable friction between the vicar and his patron. Bateman later recalled his brush with Sir John William over pew rents. Ramsden controlled sixty-five pews in the parish church which his agent let out at 10 guineas each a year, the income going to the Ramsden estate, not the church. Bateman arranged for a lawyer to rent a pew and then refuse to pay the Ramsden agent. This challenge was successful, securing for the church all the pew rents previously due to the Ramsdens and other private pew owners.<sup>35</sup> Bateman also drove a hard bargain over the sale of vicarage land to Ramsden which raised £7,000, paid into Queen Anne's Bounty to augment the income of the vicar.<sup>36</sup>

Occasionally there were outright refusals of assistance even for the Church of England. Sometimes this was for a good reason: in 1875, in the middle of heavy capital expenditure on Almondbury parish church, there was nothing left to augment the living at St John's church.<sup>37</sup> Sometimes the refusal expressed Sir John William's disapproval. When the vicar of St Paul's appealed for a donation towards improvements to his church in 1890, Sir John rejected his claim. The agent, F. W. Beadon, attempted to persuade him, re-iterating the sorts of considerations a benevolent landlord had to bear in mind, but Sir John was not a man to change his mind easily on subjects dear to him.

As well as the site for the original church, St Paul's had had £50 in 1856 for general repairs, £5 for additions to the schools in 1868, £200 for the chancel in 1883, and £25 towards the liquidation of the schools' debt in 1889. The grounds for his hostile reaction to the appeal give an insight into Ramsden's personal religious views:

To establish "a surpliced choir", to alter "antiquated" pews, to put new heating apparatus, and gas standards, and windows are all very well if the congregation have a mind for these changes and like to spend their own money in effecting them. But they certainly constitute no sufficient justification for appealing to those who are not members of the congregation, and when a clergyman applies such language as "earnest effort" and "renewed zeal and usefulness" to such trivialities as these, the effect is only to destroy my confidence in anything the same clergyman may say on graver matters.

It was left to the agent to communicate this more diplomatically. Ramsden's reaction to the idea of supporting 'a surpliced choir' and his scathing comment on 'trivialities' are evidence of his prejudice against the 'modern' trend towards clericalism in the Church of England and any signs of ritualism in worship.<sup>38</sup>

Ramsden's overriding concern was to protect his freehold and to maintain a reputation for open-minded generosity while balancing the estate books at the end of each year. Sometimes he made larger donations. In 1849 the Trustees gave £200 towards the Mechanics Institute building fund; and the following year they refunded as a donation half the £3,554 they received for the site for the new cemetery in Blacker Road; in 1872 Ramsden bought land from his own Trustees in order to release £1,200 to give to the fund for the enlargement of the Infirmary; and in 1881 there was the £5,000 for the new public park, though this was paid as a rebate on the purchase price of £27,533-17-6 that Ramsden received for the 30 acres from his Greenhead estate, in an arrangement similar to that reached concerning the cemetery thirty years earlier.<sup>39</sup>

The preferred way of giving regular support to smaller causes was through reduced rents, and several appeals from Nonconformists were met in this way. An application from the Independent minister at Highfield, Dr Robert Bruce, for a free site and a donation for an Independent chapel at Paddock might have been thought a cheeky try-on had Bruce not been such a well-respected figure in the town. Ramsden – who only in the most unusual circumstances would agree to convert leasehold into freehold land – offered instead to discuss a lease at a reduced rent, 'as I have granted in similar cases': 1½d instead of 3d a yard rent plus a donation of £50 or £100 was suggested. It was expected the Wesleyans would ask the same for a chapel they wished to build

just down the road.<sup>40</sup> An equally chancy request came from the Berry Brow Methodist New Connexion Salem Chapel in 1885, asking for a donation for their new chapel and a conversion lease at no increase in rent. The advice was to withhold any donation until the matter of the rent had been settled.<sup>41</sup> An appeal for funds to reduce the debt on Hillhouse Free Wesleyan chapel had been rejected earlier that year on the grounds that they were already paying a reduced rent.<sup>42</sup> Rarely was a request turned down out of hand, but when J. E. Willans, leading Congregationalist and Liberal politician, applied for a site for a new Independent church and school in 1881, he was informed that rents could not be reduced in the desired part of the town because available land there was scarce and so prices were high. Instead Ramsden suggested he look at cheaper sites not far away; Milton Chapel duly appeared in 1884 in Queen Street South, next to the new Technical School which had been opened the previous year.<sup>43</sup>

### *Religious toleration*

As these and many similar transactions with the Nonconformist bodies of the town suggest, though the bulk of the Ramsden philanthropic support went to or was administered through the Church of England, Ramsden and his agents were acutely aware that in Huddersfield they were operating in a strongly Nonconformist town where many of the most prominent individuals, including tenants of the Estate, were Congregationalists, Baptists or Methodists. It was therefore necessary to appear even-handed in approach, as Fitzwilliam had advised in 1850. A few months after this advice the vicar of Paddock had urged the Trustees not to permit a Wesleyan, Edward Brooke, to convert a disused water house opposite his church into a Dissenting chapel. Loch suggested that it would be dangerous for Sir John not to be neutral in religious matters: it was desirable in a town where at least half the inhabitants were Dissenters to avoid stirring up religious jealousies, 'always more formidable and less controllable than those springing from any other sources'. He went on to observe, wryly, that 'In a town ... it must constantly happen that the Dissenting Meeting House will be near the Church'.<sup>44</sup> This advice came when religious tensions could be close to the surface, only three years after the final attempt of the vicar to raise a Church Rate for the maintenance of the churchyard had been defeated by the Nonconformists.<sup>45</sup>

Though Ramsden was a loyal member of the Church of England, his commitment was to the whole community of Huddersfield – which therefore included the Nonconformists and even, to some extent, the Catholics. He was wary of anything which might suggest he was partisan. On one occasion the local YMCA invited him to be their president for the year.

Beadon advised that the local YMCA 'is rather sectional [meaning sectarian] in its managing staff – and you might appear to uphold Nonconformists against Church people'. Accordingly, Ramsden politely declined, citing 'many considerations' why he could not accept.<sup>46</sup> But when in 1884 he suspected his new vicar, James Bardsley, of attempting to side-line the Nonconformists at an important civic occasion he attempted to steer him towards a more neutral stance. The occasion was the visit to Huddersfield of the new Bishop of Ripon, William Boyd Carpenter. Bardsley had asked Sir John Ramsden to preside over a meeting to welcome him in the new Town Hall on 11 December 1884. Ramsden had agreed, having been assured that the Mayor, Wright Mellor, who was a member of Highfield Independent chapel, would also be present and would be invited to speak [see Illustration 26, p. 104]. Sir John 'was greatly pleased to hear this and expressed to him [the vicar] my satisfaction and the importance I attached to inducing as many as possible of those who did not belong to the Established Church to join in the welcome to be offered to the bishop.' But a week before the meeting Sir John realised that since the invitation there had been a change of mayor and that the new mayor, John Varley, was a Churchman, thus making the Town Hall gathering an exclusively Church of England affair. Half suspecting that the vicar was pleased about this, Sir John now urged his agent to ask the vicar to try to remedy the situation by inviting Mellor and other leading Nonconformists and even adding another Resolution to the agenda so one of them could speak. 'That the clergy and laity of the Church should welcome the Bishop is all very right and proper ... If however he could receive a welcome from the whole community, irrespective of sect, the occasion would be full of hopeful meaning'.<sup>47</sup> What Sir John did not admit at the time was that Wright Mellor was in fact one of his 'oldest and most valued friends at Huddersfield'.<sup>48</sup>

Such progressive views, however, had their limits. In December 1871 T. McGregor Miller, a draper from Hillhouse, applied to the Ramsden estate on behalf of the Huddersfield Secular Society to lease land on which to build a Hall and School. Graham refused so Miller approached Sir John directly to appeal the decision. At first Ramsden ignored their letter but the Secularists wrote again. As Graham explained to Sir John, 'The Secularists, as you suppose, avow hostility to the Christian religion, and they do everything in their power to discredit the teaching of the Bible'. A reply was sent stating that Sir John had ignored the appeal at first 'to avoid a painful refusal' but now spelling out clearly the limits of his forbearance: 'Sir John does not consider he would have acted rightly in giving facilities for such a purpose' ['disseminating doctrines hostile to the Christian religion']. The Secularists were to try again in 1886, with the same result. 'Freethought,' commented G. W. Foote, one of the national leaders of Secularism, 'is thus boycotted in Huddersfield by one

man, who holds the mental life of the town in the hollow of his hand'<sup>49</sup>

### *Church Patronage*

Next to atheists, Sir John William disliked ritualists the most. This becomes clear in the way he set about choosing new incumbents for those churches where he had influence. The Ramsdens' principal ecclesiastical patronage lay with the two ancient parish churches of Huddersfield and (from 1857) Almondbury, and the new church of St John, Bay Hall, opened in 1853. There were also two other new churches where he was a trustee – St Andrew's on Leeds Road, built in 1870 for which Ramsden gave £1,000 towards the £5,000 building cost; and St Mark's, also on Leeds Road but closer to the poorer bottom side of the town centre on Lowerhead Row, built in 1887.

Possession of the advowson of a church could be a source of great influence in a parish, which is why Sir John paid £3,500 for the Almondbury advowson in 1857. The first time Ramsden was asked to exercise his right of appointment there came when Lewis Jones, vicar since 1824, died suddenly in 1866. During his long tenure at Almondbury (1824–66) he had succeeded in staffing the parish's increasing number of churches with clergy who shared his Evangelicalism – several of whom were fellow Welshmen.<sup>50</sup> As his successor, C. A. Hulbert, noted with satisfaction in 1882, 'The Churches [of the parish] have been favoured with an unbroken series of devoted Clergymen of sound Evangelical views'.<sup>51</sup> As soon as Jones's death was announced there was a rush to succeed him, with applications from clergy in the ancient parish and beyond. Some parishioners and clergy wished to ensure an Evangelical succession. Others were equally determined to break with recent tradition and supply a more 'modern' – that is, Oxford-inspired – style of churchmanship. There were, in all, 41 applications. As Sir John William noted, 'The Living is a very important one, especially from the large Patronage it carries with it, and the selection of a new Vicar will be a very onerous and difficult duty. I am already overwhelmed with applications.'<sup>52</sup> The churchwardens helpfully arranged a canvass of the parish with five names on the slate and put two names forward as the parishioners' choice. A second anonymous canvass was made for only one of the candidates, Edmund Snowden, first vicar (and nephew of the foundress) of St Thomas's church, Longroyd Bridge, the first High Church in Huddersfield. Although supported by 11 former churchwardens, the current churchwardens refused to endorse him, pointing out that the Snowden canvass had been unofficial and fraudulently conducted. Letters came in both for and against his candidature, and there developed an Evangelical fear that Snowden might be appointed. A deputation comprising two clergymen from the parish and the vicar of Kirkburton waited upon the agent to urge their belief

that 'the clergy throughout the parish would, without a single exception, unfavourably regard his nomination'. Such opposition to a High Churchman accorded with Sir John William's personal views and after some delay he made an offer to one of the more experienced clergymen within the parish, Thomas Bensted, who had been vicar of Lockwood since 1848. When he declined the offer, Ramsden turned to Charles Augustus Hulbert, the long-standing moderate Evangelical clergyman at Slaithwaite, whom he knew only by reputation and who accepted. The delighted Evangelical Bishop of Ripon congratulated Ramsden 'upon having made such an excellent appointment'.<sup>53</sup> What none of the candidates and lobbyists appears to have known is that Snowden and Ramsden had been at Eton together and Snowden was 'a very old friend'.<sup>54</sup> Ramsden was clearly prepared at times to put his own preferred brand of churchmanship above personal friendship when it coincided with the wishes of a majority of parishioners; just as in the case of Wright Mellor he was prepared to put personal friendship when it coincided with the needs of the wider community above narrow churchmanship.

Other cases were less arduous and contentious but, in contrast to the earlier Sir John's style when Venn was appointed in the mid-eighteenth century, Sir John William always showed a keen personal interest in who he was appointing to his livings. Sometimes this involved no more than approval of a proposed exchange of livings between likeminded clergymen, though even then in each case careful enquiry was made, either in person or through a reliable contact. When Canon W. B. Calvert, vicar of Huddersfield since 1866, sought retirement to a quieter parish through a three-way exchange of livings in 1884, James Bardsley came to Huddersfield – but only after Ramsden had received the reassurance that he was not a Ritualist.<sup>55</sup> The same concern was expressed when Charles Edward Story was permitted to succeed the Evangelical G. S. Wilson at St John's, Bay Hall in 1891, but only after Ramsden's local clergyman at Bulstrode had made the necessary enquiries to assure Sir John that 'There is no hint of Ritualism about him'; it also counted to Story's credit that his wife was the daughter of Canon Garratt of Ipswich, 'and therefore clerically trained and she is an excellent helper of her husband'.<sup>56</sup>

The procedure which was followed and the patron's contribution to it when there was no obvious candidate – and no queue of candidates as at Almondbury in 1866 – is well illustrated by two well-documented instances, both in 1905, when by coincidence Ramsden had to deal with vacancies at both Huddersfield and Almondbury.

Folliott G. Sandford, vicar of Huddersfield since 1903, resigned after only two years to become vicar of Doncaster. The procedure adopted by the agent, F. W. Beadon, was to seek 'advice and recommendations' from the Bishop of Wakefield. Sir John concurred with this but added, 'You know my

wishes so well that I need not tell you. I should consider I acted wrongly if I appointed any clergyman with the slightest tendency towards High Church or "Ritualism". Beadon considered six names and his reasons for rejecting them all tell us as much about him as they do about Sir John. Edgar Boddington, vicar of Swinton, was ruled out, despite being educated at Repton and Jesus, Cambridge, because of his family connection with Boddington's brewery of Manchester and because 'he is described to me as not being a gentleman nor his wife a lady'; no references could be obtained for a second, a third was considered 'vox et praeterea nihil'<sup>57</sup> and another was unlikely to accept; a fifth was a poor preacher who had almost emptied his church; the final one, Thomas Rawlinson Sale (Marlborough and New College, Oxford), rector of St Mary's Crumpsall, was ruled out because, wrote Beadon, 'I am afraid his views would be considered too Evangelical by the Huddersfield congregation'. But the bishop was not so hostile and Sir John noted on a letter from the latter with reference to Sale: 'in my opinion a strong recommendation, and I am quite prepared to offer him the living'. He drafted a letter to this effect. At this stage in the negotiations, the agent was clearly set against Sale as much as the patron was in favour. So Beadon produced another candidate, Albert Victor Baillie, rector of Rugby, whose wife was the daughter of Lord Boyne, but he refused on the grounds that Huddersfield would not suit his wife. Beadon also came up with Cecil Henry Rolt of Holy Trinity, Darlington. The Bishop then reported of Sale and Rolt that both were moderate Evangelicals. Sale was, the bishop assured him, 'a liberal Evangelical, and I understand he would not be likely to upset any existing arrangements of church worship.' Sir John then got out the draft letter, re-dated it to a fortnight later, and invited Sale. To attract Sale he pointed out that the vicar would have seven other livings in his gift – the old chapels and the new district churches in the ancient parish – and he repeated his desire that 'his views should be in harmony with those of his parishioners, to whom anything savouring of Ritualism or High Churchmanship in any of its forms, would be most unwelcome.' We may assume that by 'parishioners' Sir John included himself. Sale assured him that he was no party man, adopting neither medieval ritual nor the narrow dogmas of hyper-Calvinism. Sir John got his man. He stayed five years and was then succeeded by C. H. Rolt.<sup>58</sup>

At the same time, in May 1905, a vacancy occurred at Almondbury when Owen Thomas Lloyd Crossley resigned to become Archdeacon of Melbourne. Beadon at first tried putting forward the son of Bishop Gott of Truro, but Ramsden sought and took the advice of John Brooke of Fenay Hall, the most influential member of the local gentry, and he recommended Charles Dixon Hoste. The Bishop was happy with either Gott or Hoste and so Sir John invited Hoste, whom the Bishop described as 'a very moderate



Churchman – perhaps not so advanced as they have been accustomed to at Almondbury'. Again Sir John had shown himself prepared to get involved in the detail of the appointment, to make his own enquiries and to follow his own preferences to secure a sound, moderate Evangelical clergyman for his church, even when this meant overruling his agent.<sup>59</sup>

Ramsden may well have got clergy of his own choice but sometimes they could still annoy him and he may well have come to regret approving the appointment of James Bardsley. The matter of the visit of the Bishop of Ripon [see p. 126] was not a good start. Then, in 1890, Ramsden had cause to suspect Bardsley of deceitful practice when the vicar approached Sir John as 'patron paramount' to sign a form agreeing to the incumbent at Slaithwaite borrowing £145 to repair dilapidated farm buildings on the glebe land to increase the rental income of the chapelry. Ramsden did not believe the rental value would be increased, and so refused. Bardsley then tried a second time, not admitting this was still for the same purpose. Ramsden, who had clearly read the paperwork, was furious and declared that had Bardsley not been a clergyman he would have called his actions 'dishonest'.<sup>60</sup> Bardsley nevertheless survived until 1901, but the next two vicars each stayed only two years. When Canon Sandford left in 1905 the usual testimonial fund was set up. Sir John gave £5 to this and to a similar fund set up for Crossley who had been at Almondbury for four years. Sir John was incensed then to be asked for £44 to pay the balance of a ten-year debt incurred by Sandford in repairing the vicarage: £44 was not much, he thought, and Sandford had received a very generous testimonial considering the short time he had been vicar; he was refused.<sup>61</sup> Sir John William Ramsden may have become more acerbic and assertive with age and experience, but he was never in doubt that he was the (benevolent) master in his own house and was careful that none should forget it.

### *Church buildings*

Buildings were and remain highly visible evidence of the public support given to religion. Places of worship and attached schools needed large funds for building, extending and running costs, and the landlord and lord of the manor was expected to play his part in this, not only by granting a lease on a site but also by allowing his name to go forward as a patron, heading a subscription list with a handsome donation, and setting an example to others to make their own contributions to the worthy cause.

Before the start of the nineteenth century, the Ramsdens had only two church structures to consider, the ancient parish churches of Almondbury and Huddersfield. In both places they were lords of the manor and owned an increasing amount of the freehold.<sup>62</sup> The chapels of ease, though, even

in Huddersfield parish, were not on Ramsden land. The rebuilding of Slaithwaite chapel in 1789 fell to the Earl of Dartmouth who granted the land.<sup>63</sup> Three new churches were opened in Huddersfield parish in the early nineteenth century: Holy Trinity, built in 1819 by Benjamin Haigh Allen of Greenhead, a wealthy banker and Evangelical, at a cost of £12,000; Christ Church, Woodhouse, built by Allen's brother-in-law, John Whitacre, in 1828 at a cost of £6,000; and St Paul's in the town centre, built with the aid of a parliamentary grant in 1829. The land for St Paul's at the end of Queen Street was given by the Ramsden estate.<sup>64</sup> Two further new churches were erected just outside the town centre in the 1850s: St John's, Bay Hall and St Thomas's, Longroyd Bridge. This latter, designed by George Gilbert Scott and consecrated in 1859, was built for the widow and brothers of the local mill-owner, Thomas Starkey, who had died of typhus in 1847;<sup>65</sup> St John's was closely associated with Ramsdens, particularly Isabella Ramsden and her son Sir John William.

The Ramsden papers show involvement in several projects for new churches in the later nineteenth century. In addition to St Andrew's in Leeds Road [referred to above, p. 127], and St John's [to be discussed in more detail below, pp. 134-5], Ramsden gave sites for new churches at Newsome (1871) and Primrose Hill (1904) and was greatly concerned that a new church should be erected in the Somerset Road area near to Longley Hall [see pp. 138-9].<sup>66</sup> He also gave land and money for parsonages and supported schools in connection with churches on his estates. In this he was not unusual – many local landowners did the same in their own areas, according to their means. For example, a chancel was added to Lockwood church in 1848 at the expense of James Crosland Fenton, a local solicitor who also acted for the Ramsdens, and the chancel at Paddock (1879) was paid for by the local industrialist and banker, Sir Joseph Crosland; the site for St Stephen's, Rashcliffe (1864) was given by Bentley Shaw, the Lockwood brewer; and St Paul's, Armitage Bridge (1848) was entirely funded by the Brooke family for the workers in their adjacent woollen mills. These men were visible and active in their communities.<sup>67</sup> The largely absentee and not always popular Ramsdens had to maintain their reputations and influence alongside and in competition with these local families – a fact of which Ramsden and his agents were well aware in offering their support for the Church.

In 1890 the Bishop of Wakefield launched an appeal for Church Extension in the diocese, in which he listed a number of building projects, some of which were in the Huddersfield area. Sir John William offered £1,000 to the appeal but then stipulated conditions which the Bishop was unable to accept. Ramsden did not wish his donation to disappear into the general fund; it was to be used only for projects of his own choosing, some but not all of which

were on the bishop's list. For example, the priority in Huddersfield was for new churches in Marsh and Crosland Moor but Ramsden was interested in promoting a new church for Moldgreen, nearer to Longley Hall. As he explained to the bishop:

I will devote a thousand pounds to the extension of churches in the Borough of Huddersfield, including under the term "extension" the improvement of existing as well as the building of new churches. I do not however wish to hand the money over to a Committee, but to give it direct from myself in each case to such churches and in such amounts as the strength of their respective claims upon me may seem to me to warrant.

He added, 'My difficulty about making any Committee the channel of a gift is that for all objects at Huddersfield application is made direct to me and those interested expect a direct response from me.'<sup>68</sup> In other words, for the gift to serve its function within Ramsden's way of managing his reputation, people and estates, specific gifts were what counted. Perhaps he was recalling the way that his £5,000 gift to Greenhead Park had been 'lost' in 1881 when in the public accounts the price paid for the land was shown net of his gift with no separate acknowledgement of the gift and so no public credit for it.<sup>69</sup>

#### ***Four Ramsden Churches***

The parish church of St Peter, Huddersfield, last rebuilt in 1503, was in a poor, neglected condition by the 1830s. It was, recalled Bateman, 'very dear, very old, very long, very low, and very badly ventilated'.<sup>70</sup> The Ramsdens recognised their responsibility as lay impropiators and patrons of the living to repair the chancel, but apart from £36-15-8 spent on chancel repairs in 1772-3, the only sum over £10 given by them in any one year between 1774 and 1829 was for the churchyard (£85-15-3 in two instalments, 1786 and 1787). The only other expenditure of note was a small annual sum, usually 10 shillings, for the repair of the chancel windows. In 1805 consideration was given to providing a new church, for which Sir John Ramsden subscribed £25 towards expenses; two years later an assessment was laid for repairs, with a Ramsden contribution of £56-10-0; in 1811 he gave £47-19-7 to balance the account for pews; and the following year he subscribed £50 for an organ. These were not inconsiderable sums but they did little to secure the long-term future of the old church. A Faculty for taking down and rebuilding the tower in 1814 was not acted upon, and in 1829 Sir John had to give another £33-15-0. for chancel repairs.<sup>71</sup>

The situation was becoming critical. When the York architect, J. P. Pritchett, was called in to advise on repairs in 1831 he found that part of the roof had



27. Huddersfield old parish church, rebuilt 1503.  
*Kirklees Image Archive*



28. Huddersfield new parish church (1834–6), by J. P. Pritchett.  
*Kirklees Image Archive*

fallen in and was being propped up on long poles: this would cost £500 to £750 to put right. A proposal to levy a church rate for £500 was rejected and one for £250 was never collected. Pritchett next proposed rebuilding the nave and chancel, leaving the tower, at a cost of £2,000. Then it was decided to raise the chancel floor, so Pritchett proposed raising it sufficiently to create a crypt; then it was decided to replace the tower; this meant that the nave could be extended to increase the accommodation. So, Pritchett ended up designing a new church. Even by taking the cheapest quotation (which turned out to be a costly error) the total bill came to £9,869-14-5. The work was completed in October 1836. Sir John Ramsden and his Trustees' contribution over the years from 1834 was £650. Large though this sum was, it is put in proportion by the £218-17-6. spent in 1842-3 on a monument to Sir John placed in the new church by his Trustees after his death.<sup>72</sup> There is little sign that Sir John himself took much interest in this rebuilding: he was in his late seventies and played little part in the affairs of the town – the foundation stone for St Paul's church had been laid in 1828 by the vicar of Huddersfield and that for the Infirmary in 1829 by his heir, John Charles Ramsden.<sup>73</sup> There may have been some Ramsden influence over the choice of architect. Although Pritchett was a leading Congregationalist, and had designed the Ramsden Street chapel in 1824, he had also worked on projects for the Fitzwilliam estate, including Norton church (in the classical style) in 1816, and Greasbrough (in the Gothic style) in 1828. Though Mrs Ramsden was to lose confidence in Pritchett when Brotherton church, which he designed for her in 1842, suffered subsidence, Fitzwilliam persisted with him and he was to become most celebrated in Huddersfield as the architect of the railway station (1848).<sup>74</sup>

It was only after Sir John's death in 1839 that the Ramsden Trustees, and then Sir John William in person, became more active in the development of Huddersfield, including its churches. The church which most expressed the Ramsdens' religious commitment was St John's, Bay Hall. The original architect considered was Edward Blore (1787-1879), an enthusiast for the Gothic whose commissions had included several cathedrals and Oxford colleges and churches, and – in Yorkshire – the restoration of the choir of Ripon Minster. Mrs Ramsden thought his a 'beautiful but too expensive plan'.<sup>75</sup> The second architect, considered in the summer of 1846, was William Butterfield (1814-1900) and a drawing and plan were submitted by him in the autumn. The Trustees wished to build somewhere in the Hillhouse area and eventually settled on the Bay Hall estate which was purchased for them by Mrs Ramsden.<sup>76</sup> There was some delay while this estate was transferred to the Ramsden Trustees who then gave the site for the project. By 1850 both Mrs Ramsden and the local inhabitants of Hillhouse were

growing impatient, and she urged the agent, George Loch, 'Pray take this matter into immediate consideration'.<sup>77</sup> Progress was then rapid, and the correspondence shows the personal involvement of both Mrs Ramsden and her son in the detailed arrangements. It was, for example, she who sent the cheque to pay for the silver trowels to be used at the laying of the foundation stone by her son, which took place on 16 October 1851.<sup>78</sup> The construction was undertaken by local builder, Joseph Kaye, and completed in 1853 [see Illustration 29, p. 136]. This church, which cost £7,000, twice the original sum discussed, was the gift of the Ramsdens to the town in memory of John Charles Ramsden, who had predeceased his father in December 1836. They continued to support it financially, not only with an annual subscription of £171 for the clergyman but also with further gifts and grants for the vicarage and schools at Cowcliffe and Hillhouse.<sup>79</sup> Philanthropy, though, conveniently merged with self-interest. The siting of the church, it has been suggested, was part of an estate policy to open up Bay Hall to development and the style of the vicarage, funded entirely by the Ramsdens, was meant to serve as a model for villa development in the area.<sup>80</sup>

There was a marked difference between the earlier Ramsden attitude towards the restoration of Huddersfield parish church in the 1830s and that adopted by Sir John William Ramsden when plans were developed in 1871 for a thorough restoration of the medieval church of All Hallows, Almondbury, parts of which dated back to the fourteenth century [see Illustration 30, p. 137]. Ramsden gave his consent as lay impropiator and patron to alterations to the chancel and an appeal was launched, headed by Charles Brook of Meltham and Thomas Brooke of Armitage Bridge, each of whom gave £300, and by Lord Dartmouth who undertook to fund the restoration of the family's Kaye chapel. Sir John William held back during the first phase, which was the restoration of the nave and the tower, but then became involved and even enthusiastic once the vicar, C. A. Hulbert, had convinced him that until 1691 there had been Ramsden burials in the chancel. He then agreed to fund the restoration of the chancel, not as a matter of duty but as one of family pride with an antiquarian interest in tradition – a characteristic also displayed in his 'restoration' of Longley Old Hall (1885) [see Illustration 2, p. 3].<sup>81</sup> In this as in other matters, Sir John William showed a keen, detailed interest and was determined to have his say. So, when the old medieval screen, which had been serving as a reredos, was moved back to its original position, he wished to ensure the pulpit and reading desk would be situated within the nave. The reseating of the church was to be in oak, as was the chancel roof, to match the medieval nave roof, and not in cheaper pitch pine. The architect's plan to replace the three lancet east windows with 'a large and handsome East Window' was abandoned on the advice of members of the Yorkshire



29. St John, Birkby (1851-3), by William Butterfield.  
*Kirklees Image Archive*

Archaeological Association [sic]. Ramsden was consulted and deferred to at every stage because he was paying for it. He showed himself sensitive to the fabric of the medieval church which housed the burial place of his ancestors, and was doubtless reassured by Hulbert's promise that 'I am equally watchful that nothing Scriptural and Protestant should be left out, any more than anything leaning to Popery introduced' – but one wonders, in view of his later comments, what he thought of the 'new Surpliced choir' present at the re-opening of the chancel and chapels in November 1876.<sup>82</sup>





30. Almondbury parish church before restoration.  
*Kirklees Image Archive*



31. Almondbury parish church after restoration in 1876.  
*Kirklees Image Archive*

The fourth Ramsden church, St Michael's, is the church that never really was – certainly not in the form that Ramsden had intended – but the discussions about it tell us something about Sir John William's attitudes and priorities. They also illustrate two of his principal weaknesses: a propensity to micro-manage and a well-meaning indecisiveness.<sup>83</sup> The Moldgreen area straddled the parishes of Almondbury and Kirkheaton, from the edge of Longley Park to Dalton. A new church was proposed for this rapidly-growing district in 1859. Ramsden offered £1,000 if matched by £2,000 from other sources but only for 'a building of sufficient size and creditable appearance'. He clearly had in mind another church like St John's for this part of town. Various sites were suggested: Lewis Jones, the vicar, wanted a church at Longley, but Ramsden was opposed to this as he was set on one large church for the whole of the Moldgreen district, not just a village church, but when Sir John Lister Kaye gave a site in Moldgreen which left all but 200 of Ramsden's 1,690 tenants living nearer Almondbury parish church than the new Moldgreen church, Ramsden's plan collapsed. A church for the Kirkheaton side was opened in 1863 at a cost of £3,000, leaving nothing for the Almondbury side.<sup>84</sup> Other developments intervened: the restoration of Almondbury parish church, the building of a new church at Newsome (1871); and in 1888 the former Primitive Methodist Sunday School at Longley was acquired to become St Mary's Mission Church.<sup>85</sup> But there was still no church for the area below Longley Park except the Aspley Mission room in St Paul's parish, rebuilt in 1890 on the Huddersfield side of Somerset Bridge. Sir John persisted with his dream for a church to occupy a prominent position at the bottom of Somerset Road.<sup>86</sup> The problem was that, even if the additional £2,000 were forthcoming, Sir John William's offer of £1,000 would not pay for the kind of church that he was wanting, for which the estimate was £7,500. His mother's St John's had been pared back as far as possible and had still cost £7,000. The Starkeys had spent £11,000 on St Thomas's.<sup>87</sup> The Bishop of Wakefield's fund had not prioritised the area, except for a mission room on Mulberry Street next to Ramsden's proposed site. The new vicar of Almondbury, W. Foxley Norris (appointed in 1888) wished to revive the scheme, beginning more modestly with a temporary wooden or iron mission room on the site given by Ramsden, and then proceeding in stages, first building a basement floor of vestries only, and then adding the church proper on top as funds became available, but Sir John wanted all or nothing: in particular he wanted a spire which would create a vista on the road from Huddersfield to Almondbury.

Plans were sought from Charles Hodgson Fowler, one of the leading exponents of ecclesiastical Gothic in his generation. Ramsden did not like his Perpendicular design: 'I cannot think that any architect would of his own choice copy from Gothic in its decrepitude, when it would cost no more to



32. St Michael, Somerset Road (1913–15), by Oswald White. Became St Joseph's Catholic church, 1953.

*Kirklees Image Archive*

copy from it in the time of its full vigour and beauty'. The design compared unfavourably with that of St John's. But Ramsden was clearly muddled in his ideas, saying he wanted 'a really handsome church' whilst also maintaining that the most important thing was to have a church, 'the appearance of a building is quite a secondary consideration'. The result of this indecision and lack of funding was that nothing was achieved beyond Norris's iron mission church, replaced in 1913 by a pleasantly modest building with a schoolroom beneath and church above – and no spire – designed by local architect, Oswald White [see Illustration 32]. The corner stone was laid by Mrs J. F Ramsden in the presence of her husband and other dignitaries. In his final years Sir John William was unable to match his mother's earlier achievement at St John's.<sup>88</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

The Ramsdens were not unusual in their approach to religion. The Church of England represented their values across the centuries and they loyally supported it. A comparison with the earls of Dartmouth would suggest many similarities in their patronage of schools, churches, and other worthy causes

on their estates, though without showing that degree of personal piety and religious commitment exhibited in the life of the second Earl of Dartmouth. While the Ramsdens' religious beliefs were undoubtedly sincerely held, the estate papers unsurprisingly bring little of this out beyond communicating Sir John William Ramsden's deeply conservative moderate Evangelicalism, his conscientious support for tradition, and his abhorrence of 'medieval' Ritualism and other such un-Protestant innovations.

What is clear is that the religion of the Ramsdens, whatever it meant in private, had a public purpose and a part to play in the management of all who lived and worked on their estates. It helped determined the Ramsdens' influence and upheld their local power. This re-enforced their Whig predisposition towards religious toleration, something they shared with their Rockingham and Fitzwilliam relations. In a predominantly Nonconformist town, they were even-handed in their treatment of the various denominations while giving their principal support to the Established Church. Though absentee landlords since the later seventeenth century, they maintained their presence by patronage and paternalism, with many small ceremonial and financial gestures which have now left little trace, punctuated by occasional acts of significance which are still remembered and acknowledged. Chief among these are the appointment of Henry Venn to the Huddersfield living in 1759 – something for which Sir John Ramsden can actually take little credit – and the building of St John's church by Isabella Ramsden in memory of her husband at the time when Sir John William Ramsden, her only surviving son and heir, came of age. This chapter has focused on his life and activities partly because the surviving sources are so rich, partly because the expansion of the town during his lifetime created many new needs for charitable activity and opportunities for church and school building, and partly because, in an age of improved communications – the postal service and railways – it was easier than ever before to be an absentee landlord who at the same time could be in active and even daily contact with the affairs of his Huddersfield estate.

### *Endnotes*

- 1 These 8 churches had become 25 by 1858 and over 40 by 1914. For a brief survey of religion in Huddersfield, see Haigh (1992), chapters 5 and 6.
- 2 Foster (1874), vol. 2, 'Ramsden of Longley Hall and Byram'; Venn (1924), p. 417 and (1953), p. 240
- 3 Venn (1836), p. 68; *ODNB* (2004), 'Venn, Henry (1725–1797)'.
- 4 Venn to Mrs Riland, 17 November 1770, in Venn (1836), pp. 164–5; Foster (1874), vol. 1, 'Bright of Badsworth'.

- 5 Information from the Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540–1835 (<http://theclergydatabase.org.uk/>, accessed 7 July 2017).
- 6 Venn to James Kershaw, 8 July 1769, Venn (1836), p. 154–5.
- 7 DD/RA/F/3a, Letter Book, ‘Correspondence between Lady Rockingham, Mr Milbanke and Lady Charlotte Wentworth, with other writings chiefly on Religious Subjects’.
- 8 Foster (1874), vol. 2, ‘Wentworth of Wentworth–Woodhouse’.
- 9 Richardson (1903), p. 15 reproduces the speech in full.
- 10 Hinchcliffe (1963), pp. 147, 358–61.
- 11 Lawton (1842), p. 137; White’s *Directory* (1894), p. 396; Ahier (1950), pp. 112–17.
- 12 DD/RA/C/21/10, ‘Huddersfield Parish Schools’, special supplement to the Parish Magazine for July 1881; Taylor Dyson (1932), p. 231.
- 13 DD/RA/C/26/4, JWR to Calvert, 11 June 1870.
- 14 DD/RA/C/26/3, Rev. T. B. Bensted to JWR, 12 June 1871. Hulbert (1882), pp. 280, 285.
- 15 DD/RA/C/20, Henry Barker to JWR, 8 June 1883.
- 16 See chapter 3; Sykes (1898), pp. 219–27.
- 17 DD/RA/C/4/8, Fitzwilliam to [Loch?], 4 January 1850.
- 18 £5 adjusted by the RPI would now be worth about £500.
- 19 DD/RA/C/15/1, JWR to Graham, 9 and 13 February 1878.
- 20 DD/RA/C/34/1, Sophie Crosland Robinson to Beadon, 6 April 1894 and Beadon to JWR, 9, 19 and 24 April 1894; JWR to Miss Robinson, 25 April 1894.
- 21 DD/RA/C/34/1, W. Dawson to JWR, 4 January and 12 February 1894; Beadon to JWR, 9 January and 16 February 1894.
- 22 DD/RA/C/4/8, Rev. J. W. Grane to JWR, 15 April 1850; DD/RA/C/3, Graham to JWR 30 May 1872; DD/RA/C/15/1, Rev. W. M. Calvert to JWR, 21 October 1878 and Graham to JWR, 25 October 1878.
- 23 DD/RA/C/4/8. Loch to Mrs Ramsden, 3 January 1850.
- 24 DD/RA/C/4/8, Fitzwilliam to Loch, 29 November 1850.
- 25 DD/RA/C/4/8, N. Maning to Mrs Ramsden, and Loch’s notes, 13 and 17 May 1850.
- 26 DD/RA/C/8/1, Ben Walshaw to JWR, 20 November 1905.
- 27 DD/RA/C/27/7, note by JWR, dated 26 June 1875 on letter from Rev John Hanson, 2 June 1875; Hordern, ‘Notes’, 1877, p. 114.
- 28 DD/RA/C/34/3, note on C. H. Bates to JWR, 21 May 1891.
- 29 Hordern, ‘Notes’, 1893, p. 173. JWR had refused to grant a 999 year lease on a better site at the bottom of Kirkgate because this would prevent further improvement and mean ‘I hand over this central position for ever to the lower class of Irish’ – DD/RA/C/34/3, note dated 12 May 1891 on Beadon to JWR, 4 May 1891.
- 30 DD/RA/C/15/1, Moran to JWR, 13 July 1878, Graham to JWR, 23 July 1878.
- 31 DD/RA/C/28/2, William Willans to JWR, 12 March, 19 May and 10 November 1858.
- 32 DD/RA/C/28/2, Memorial from Thomas Ibbetson and other, 29 March 1858.
- 33 DD/RA/C/28/5, Hathorn to JWR, 21 October 1858; T. W. Nelson to JWR, 8 October 1858; Nelson to JWR, 12 October 1858; Hordern, ‘Notes’, 23 August 1883, p. 138; see also above, chapter 2, p. 23.
- 34 DD/RA/C/4/8, Loch to JWR, 9 July 1850 and 31 January 1850.
- 35 ‘Senex’ [Josiah Bateman] (1880), pp. 101–3; the Ramsden cashier, Isaac Holdern, recalled only 34 Ramsden pews – Hordern, ‘Notes’, 23 March 1855, p. 39.
- 36 [Bateman] (1880), pp. 99–100; DD/RA/C/14/8, Loch to JWR, 31 January 1850; DD/RE/C/62–73, esp. Hathorn to Loch, 27 July 1849 and Fenton to Loch, 5 and 20 June 1850.

- 37 DD/RA/C/27/7, Graham to JWR, 14 July 1875.
- 38 DD/RA/C/21/10, Beadon to JWR, 19 and 28 April 1890 and JWR's reply, 23 April 1890.
- 39 DD/RE/C/67, Mrs Ramsden to Loch, 10 December 1849; DD/RA/C/4/8, Loch to Fitzwilliam, 18 and 27 November 1850; White's *Directory* (1895), p. 394; DD/RA/C/26/2, Graham to JWR, 20 March 1872; Griffiths (2011b), p. 10, and above, chapter 2, p. 73.
- 40 DD/RA/C/26/3, JWR to Graham, 12 May 1871; for Bruce, see I. Schofield (1999), pp. 89–101.
- 41 DD/RA/C/22/1, W. Yeoman to JWR, 18 October 1884.
- 42 DD/RA/C/22/1, Graham to JWR, 8 February 1884.
- 43 DD/RA/C/20/2A, JWR to Willans, 21 December 1881; DD/RA/C/21/10, Appeal for new Independent Chapel, May 1884.
- 44 DD/RA/C/4/8, Loch to JWR, 9 July 1850.
- 45 Sykes (1898), pp. 390–1.
- 46 DD/RA/C/21/10, T. R. Porritt to JWR, 24 December 1890, Beadon's advice, and JWR's draft reply dated 1 January 1891.
- 47 DD/RA/C/22/1, Bardsley to JWR, 28 September, 2, 3, 4, 5 December 1884; JWR to Graham, 5 December 1884.
- 48 DD/RA/C/34/3, JWR's reply, 22 May 1893, to Thomas K. Mellor on hearing of the death of his father. For Mellor and the Tenant Right dispute, see above, chapter 3, pp. 98, 103, 108.
- 49 DD/RA/C/26/2, Miller to JWR, 26 December 1871; Graham to JWR, 26 January, 6 and 26 April 1872; Wadham Powell to Miller, 27 January 1872; *Freethinker* vol. 6 no. 33, 15 August 1886, p. 258 and *Secular Review* vol. 19 no. 7, 14 August 1886, pp. 106–7. For the Secularists, see Royle (1996), pp. 205–7.
- 50 Brown (2001), pp. 6–12. Jones was president of the Association of Welsh Clergy in the West Riding for 30 years. The new churches were Lockwood (including Rashcliffe and Newsome), Honley (including Brockholes), Meltham, Milnsbridge, Linthwaite, Holmbridge, Netherthong, South Crosland and Marsden; the vicar was also joint patron of Armitage Bridge and Helme – DD/RA/C/34/4, Beadon to JWR, 9 September 1892.
- 51 Hulbert (1882), p. 272.
- 52 DD/RA/C/33/9, note dated 1 September 1866 on Graham to JWR, 27 August 1866.
- 53 DD/RA/C/33/9, various letters dated 27 August 1866 to 28 February 1867. Although Slaithwaite was in Huddersfield parish the chapelry also served Lingards township in Almondbury parish.
- 54 DD/RA/C/34/4, note dated 1 November 1893 on W. J. Kaye to JWR, 31 October 1893.
- 55 DD/RA/C/22/3, various letters, 1 November 1883 – 4 February 1884, esp. Wadham Powell to JWR, 22 November 1883.
- 56 DD/RA/C/34/3, Rev. Alfred Kennion from Gerards Cross to JWR, 16 March 1891, enclosing a letter from R. I. Knight dated 14 March 1891.
- 57 'a voice and nothing else' – a Latin translation from the Greek of Plutarch's *Moralia*, section 233A, no. 15.
- 58 DD/RA/C/10/3, Beadon to JWR, 2 March, 26 April, 15 May, 18 May, 29 May, 30 May, 2 June, 1905; Bishop of Wakefield to JWR, 16 May 1905, 30 May, 2 June 1905; JWR to Sale, 30 May changed to 13 June 1905; Sale to JWR, 14 June, 26 June 1905.
- 59 DD/RA/C/10/3, Brooke to JWR, 6 June, 9 June 1905, Bishop of Wakefield to JWR, 10 June 1905; Hoste to JWR, 19 June and JWR to Hoste, 20 June 1905.

- 60 DD/RA/C/22/3, W. Powell to JWR, 22 November 1883; DD/RA/C/21/10, Bardsley to JWR, 1 May 1890 and subsequent correspondence between Beadon and JWR, 5 and 8 May 1890.
- 61 DD/RA/C/10/3, Beadon to JWR, 26 June, 5 July and 28 August 1905.
- 62 In 1859, excluding recent purchases totalling nearly 620 acres, the Ramsden estate held 1,213 acres in Huddersfield and 1,603 in Almondbury – DD/RA/C/28/3, Memorandum of estates in 1859.
- 63 Hulbert (1864), p. 103.
- 64 Weatherhead (1913); *White's Directory* (1894), pp. 394–5. There were six other churches built by parliamentary grant in 1829–31: Golcar, Lindley and Paddock in Huddersfield, and South Crosland, Lockwood and Linthwaite in Almondbury. For subsequent support given to St Paul's, 1856–1889, see DD/RA/C/21/10, JWR to Beadon, 19 April 1890.
- 65 *The Church at Longroyd Bridge, 1859–1899* (1899).
- 66 DD/RA/C/28/3, 26/1 and 26/4, correspondence about St Andrew's, 15 November 1859, 3 June 1869 to 21 July 1869 and 1 June to 23 November 1870; for Newsome church, see DD/RA/C/26/3, Bensted to JWR, 12 June 1871 and Hulbert, *Almondbury*, pp. 279–86; DD/RA/C/10/9, correspondence about the site for Primrose Hill, 31 March 1902 to 23 December 1904.
- 67 See *White's Directory* (1894), pp. 397–9, and Hulbert (1882), pp. 270 (Lockwood), pp. 275–8 (Armitage Bridge) and pp. 387–90 (Rashcliffe).
- 68 DD/RA/C/21/10, correspondence between Bishop of Wakefield and JWR, 31 May to 11 June 1890.
- 69 Hordern, 'Notes', 1881, p. 130; D. Griffiths (2011b), pp. 8, 10, 65.
- 70 [Bateman] (1880), p. 198.
- 71 A detailed list of Ramsden expenditure on Huddersfield parish church between 1768 and 1843 was provided by Graham for JWR in 1874 – DD/RA/C/27/5, 9 February 1874; Lawton (1842), p. 137.
- 72 Ahier (1950), pp. 207–30; DD/RA/C/27/5, Graham to JWR, 9 February 1874.
- 73 *LM*, 15 November 1828, 4 July 1829.
- 74 See chapter 5, p. 161; *ODNB* (2004), 'Pritchett, James Pigott (1789–1868)'; also Colvin (2008), pp. 834–7; Broadbent (1956); DD/RE/C/3/26, Isabella Ramsden to Loch, 20 August 1844; Gibson and Booth (2005), pp. 44–54.
- 75 *ODNB* (2004), 'Blore, Edward (1787–1879)'; also Colvin (2008), pp. 128–34; *ODNB* (2004), 'Butterfield, William (1814–1900)'; DD/RA/C/20/3, Isabella Ramsden to Loch, 9 July 1850.
- 76 DD/RE/C/27, Butterfield to Loch, August 1846. For the proposed plan, see DD/RE/C/28, 12 September 1846 and DD/RE/C/29, 24 October 1846. For the Bay Hall estate transaction see chapter 2, p. 58 and chapter 7, p. 197.
- 77 DD/RE/C/74, Memorial to Mrs Ramsden, July 1850; DD/RA/C/4/8, Mrs Ramsden to Loch, 9 July 1850; DD/RA/C/4/8, Loch to JWR, 17 July 1850.
- 78 There is an extensive correspondence concerning the building of the church in DD/RE/C/74 – 91, July 1850 to December 1851. The speeches at the various ceremonies are reproduced in Richardson (1903).
- 79 DD/RA/C/15/1, correspondence 13 and 25 September, and 3 October 1878; and printed leaflet, 'St John's Bazaar', 7–9 November 1878.
- 80 Springett (1992), p. 475.
- 81 For Longley Old Hall, see above, chapter 1, p. 36; Gibson and Booth (2005), pp. 15–16; and Redmonds (2003), pp. 118–20.



- 82 Hulbert (1882), pp. 33, 88–91, 115–18; DD/R/dd/VII/165; DD/RA/C/26/2; 27/2, 27/4, 27/6 and 27/7, various papers and letters, July 1873 – March 1875.
- 83 See chapter 2, p. 67
- 84 DD/RA/C/28/3, Rev. C. Alderson to JWR, 13 December 1859, Hathorn to JWR, 14 December 1859; DD/RA/C/28/6, correspondence between Hathorn, Jones, Alderson and JWR, 8 January–21 February 1860; Jenkinson (1963).
- 85 Jenkinson (1988).
- 86 Completed in the early 1870s; Somerset Bridge was opened in 1874 by Lady Guendolen and her father, the Duke of Somerset – see Illustration 44, p. 203.
- 87 DD/RA/C/34/2, Beadon to JWR, 10 June 1893.
- 88 DD/RA/C/21/10, Norris to JWR, 17 September and 2 October 1890 and JWR's reply, 24 September 1890; 34/3, Norris to JWR, 16 April 1891; 34/4, JWR to Norris, 26 May 1892; 34/2, JWR to Norris, 6 February 1893; *HE*, 28 June 1913. The Church of England sold the building in 1953 to the Catholics (who rededicated it to St Joseph), and built a new church nearer the new Fernside housing estate.