**A short history of Wadsley Parish Church**

**Hannah Rawson’s Almshouses** (grade II listed building) were built in 1840 to be occupied by six poor widows of Wadsley Parish. The land, which Hannah Rawson chose, was known as ‘The Meadows’ and lay next to the church school. It cost £1000 13s 5d to build the six cottages.

Miss Rawson endowed the houses with an income to be used for repairs and also to provide a small income for the residents (there was no pension in those days). That money is long gone. hannah Rawson specified that at all times the Vicar of Wadsley should be one of the five trustees.

**Wadsley Parish Church** stands in 6.25 acres of land in what used to be the old village of Wadsley, but is now a suburb of the city of Sheffield.

Built during 1832-34 of stone with a slated roof the church was opened on the 21 May, 1834. Built in a field called the Fleester Close, later known in the village as ‘The Parson’s Field’. The School and Almshouses were built on land called The Lower Meadow. Previous to this the inhabitants had to go to Ecclesfield for divine service. It was consecrated on 25 August, 1835 by Edward Vernon Harcourt, the Archbishop of York. The cost of the church, the site and the burial ground was £3,500.

On easter day 1884 the church roof was gutted by fire and the interior furnishings of the church completely destroyed. The cost of repairs was £1,700 in addition to the gift of most of the interior furnishings by church people.

On Christmas Day the church was ready for services but was not officially opened until 12 February by the Archbishop of York William Thomson.

In 1834 In 1841 the Parish of Wadsley contained the districts of Burrowlee, Hillsborough, Wadsley Bridge, Birley Carr, Birley Edge, Middlewood, Oughtibridge, Hirst, Loxley, Wisewood, Malin Bridge and Wadsley itself.

The first burial to take place was that of Esther Ashforth on 3 September, 1835 and is commemorated by a stained glass window in the south aisle of the church.

In 1897 the choir vestry (now a prayer room) was built to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria.

The main east window was replaced in the 1940’s and now contains fragments from the earlier windows in the shape of lozenges and stars. The only other stained glass window is in the south wall and depicts the crucifixion: it is a memorial window to the first burial in the churchyard.

After being taken to consistory court by those who objected to our plans, we won our case and the church building was completely renovated in 2002-3 to make it warm, welcoming and versatile. Side balconies were removed and the back balcony extended over new facilities in the shape of an extended welcome area, quiet room and kitchen.

Box pews were replaced with chairs and the whole of the nave carpeted. On either side of the spire an office and a toilet block were built. Although the outside stonework is of identical type to the rest of the church building it looks a different colour because of its newness

Thanks to dedicated vollunteers the churchyard is one of the best cared for in Sheffield and it has some Interesting churchyard monumentsinclude the founder’s tomb, graves of Sheffield Flood Victims, war graves and what is known locally as the ‘Cricketers Grave’ (this is in fact a memorial stone to Benjamin Keeton, cricketer), which can be found next to the north side of the church building. This is the final resting place of Benjamin Keeton, a well known [cricket](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cricket) player in the area who played for the [Hallam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallamshire) Cricket Club.

When he died in 1871, aged 47, he requested that his grave should mark his devotion to cricket as well as his place of burial. His widow Fanny abided by his request and had a gravestone carved with cricket stumps, bat and ball on it. However the stone caused some controversy with the vicar and certain parishioners thinking it unsuitable for a graveyard. The stone was knocked down at one point, but replaced after a public meeting showed the majority to be in favour of it remaining in the churchyard and was reported in the Sheffield Independent (the forerunner of the Sheffield Star) on the 17th January.

There are several graves for victims of the Great Sheffield Flood of 1864, which include resting places for the Watson, Price and Atkinson families who perished in the Great Inundation. The inscription on the Atkinson grave reads: *“Ezra and Maurice, their son aged 15 and 9 months ... also William aged 13 and 4 months who perished by the bursting of the Bradfield reservoir, March 12 1864.”* The church's original benefactors Ann and Elizabeth Harrison are both buried in the churchyard with a gothic memorial over their graves.

The graveyard contains a large open area with no gravestones, this is the site of the burials from the nearby [South Yorkshire Asylum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middlewood_Hospital) (later to become Middlewood Hospital). Several hundred patients from the asylum were buried here in [Victorian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorian_era) times with no memorial as it was then considered a disgrace for a member of family to be in an asylum. Many ceremonies were carried out with just two people present, a minister and a grave digger

Wadsley Churchyard contains war burials of both wars. Almost half of the First World War burials are in a special plot made by the Wharncliffe War Hospital where the men died, and was furnished by the hospital with a stone kerb and central memorial. The rest of the 49 First World War and four Second World War burials are scattered throughout the churchyard. In Wadsley Churchyard are 49 Commonwealth war graves from World War I and 4 from World War II.

**The Church Hall** was built in 1838 as Wadsley Church School with the headmaster living on the premises. His quarters were demolished during renovations some years ago. In 1939 the premises became a Civil Defence Centre. In the late 1940’s early 1950‘s it became an annex of Marlcliffe School. Behind the building can be seen a concrete base, this was where air raid shelters were sited during the second world war.

**What is this church for?**

It’s open to anyone, whether they believe or not. It is there to bring the good news that God loves everyone, for God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. Jesus died in our place, taking all our wrong doing with him, then rose from the dead and lives in us by his Spirit, enabling us to live a good life to the full.

It is where people of all ages who believe in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit come together to worship as a way of thanking them for loving and guiding us all through our everyday lives.

It’s where people of all ages are baptised (Christened) and Married. Sometimes people get married at a Registry Office and afterwards come for a church blessing.

It’s a centre from which members of the church go out into the community to help people in many ways ie when they are in need, sick, hurt, worried, or just want a listening ear etc.

It’s where people from babes in arms through to the elderly have fun, find peace and learn to love and respect each other and so learn all about Jesus and what he teaches.