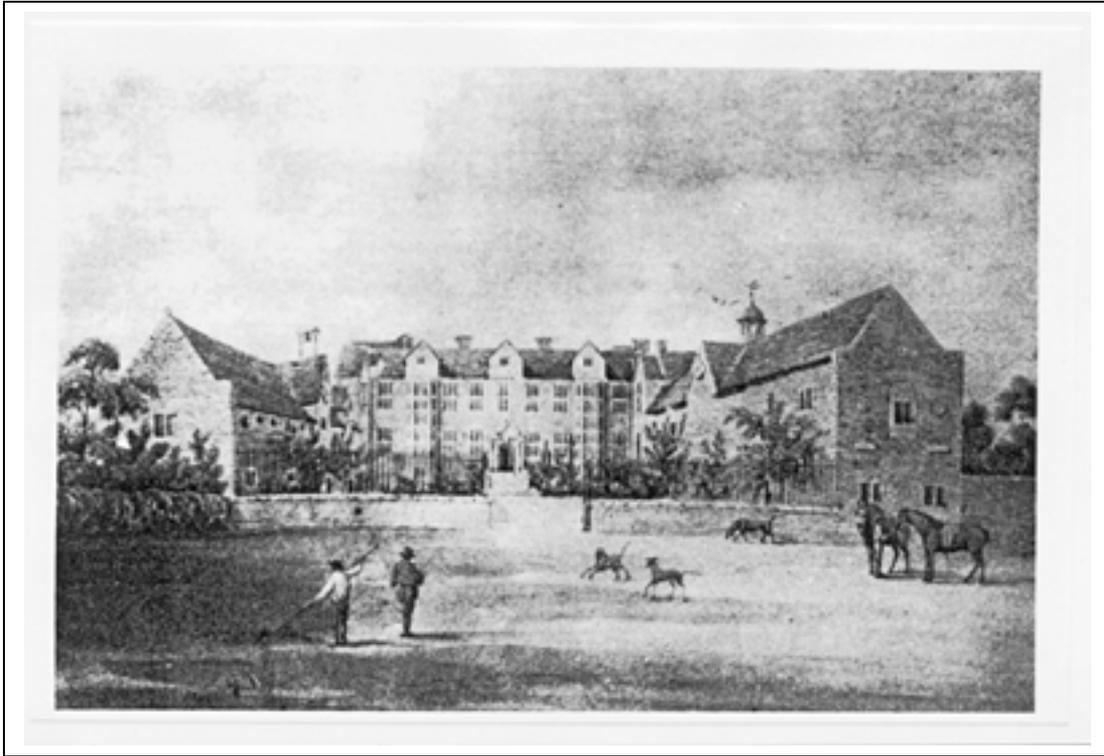


HESLINGTON HALL
near the city of York
A Yarborough home for over two centuries

Peter Yerburgh



Heslington Hall about 1820

Heslington Hall's past

Heslington Hall is now the University of York's principal administrative building but its history goes back to the time of Elizabeth I. The house was built for Thomas and Elizabeth **Eymes** in 1568. Eymes was Secretary and Keeper of the Seal to the Council of the North. He was occupied largely in the distribution of ecclesiastical lands, which had been confiscated at the time of the Reformation. As a result, he acquired much wealth and property for himself.

Thomas Eymes died in 1578 without a male heir. His nephews eventually inherited the Hall and they, in 1601, sold the house to **Sir Thomas Hesketh**.

In 1637, Sir Thomas Hesketh married Mary Bethell and they had two daughters. The elder one, Ann, married Colonel James Yarborough* in 1692.

In 1708, the last male Hesketh died and Heslington Hall became the property of Ann Yarborough (nee Hesketh). So the Yarborough family began its move from Snaith Hall to Heslington Hall, with its impressive bays and porch in the central section. Here the descendants stayed for 231 years. The Yarborough line passed into the female line in 1782, but the family continued to live at Heslington until 1940, by which time the Hall had been enlarged to 109 rooms but still had no electricity!

* Note. The spelling varied and later was usually Yarburgh. I have used the pronounced spelling.

Yarboroughs move to Yorkshire

The Yarboroughs, according to the charters, descended from Germund who had Norse origins. Germund settled (c.1030) in Lincolnshire, near the River Humber. After the Norman Conquest, Germund was given land near Yarburch and two churches (Alvingham and Grainthorpe [= Germundsthorpe] by Count Alan*. Five generations after Germund we find that the ‘surname’ of ‘de Yarburch’ added to the first names of the descendants.

* Duke of Richmond and Brittany. His father, Arthur, was father-in-law to William the Conqueror.

After 1550, the wealthiest part of the family moved by stages to the neighbouring County of Yorkshire. This was the branch of Edmund Y., the 3rd son of Charles Y Esquire, manor-lord of Yarburch and Kelstern. Future generations in this branch became wealthy partly because some of them were senior lawyers but mainly because they married heiresses:

Yarbrough	married	wife	lived at
Edmund Y	1566	Margaret Grantham	Lincoln
Francis Y	1584	Frances Wray	Balne Hall
Edmund Y ii	1611	Sarah Wormeley	Snaith Hall
Sir Nicholas Y	1630	Faith Dawney	Snaith Hall
Sir Thomas Y	1650	Henrietta Blagge	Snaith Hall
Col. James Y	1692	Ann Hesketh*	Heslington Hall

* See next.

Colonel James Yarborough

James Yarborough was the heir of Sir Thomas Y and was born in 1663. He was a godson of James, Duke of York (the future James II). He followed a career in the army and rose to be a Colonel in the Guards and an *Aide de Camp* to the Duke of Marlborough. (See YFQ Vol.16, No.1, pp 14-17).

I do not know how James met Ann Hesketh. However, as both families were in the top strata of Yorkshire’s social life, they might have met at a ball. Ann’s father, Sir Thomas Hesketh, would have been very careful before allowing anyone to marry his daughter for she was the heiress to the Heslington estates with over 2,800 acres of land and fourteen farms.

Colonel Yarborough must have won the approval of both father and daughter. Perhaps, while the father, Sir Thomas Hesketh, was impressed by James Yarborough’s royal connections, Ann may have been attracted to him for his loving nature. (They had 12 offspring!). Added to this there may have been the splendour of his officer’s uniform and the skill of his horsemanship. They were married in 1692.

Sixteen years later in 1708, Sir Thomas Hesketh died and Ann inherited the Heslington estate. Soon afterwards, Ann, her husband and their (by then) seven children moved to Heslington Hall. The Yarboroughs were to own this property for the next 231 years! The history of the family is too long and complicated to go into here but I give one memory.

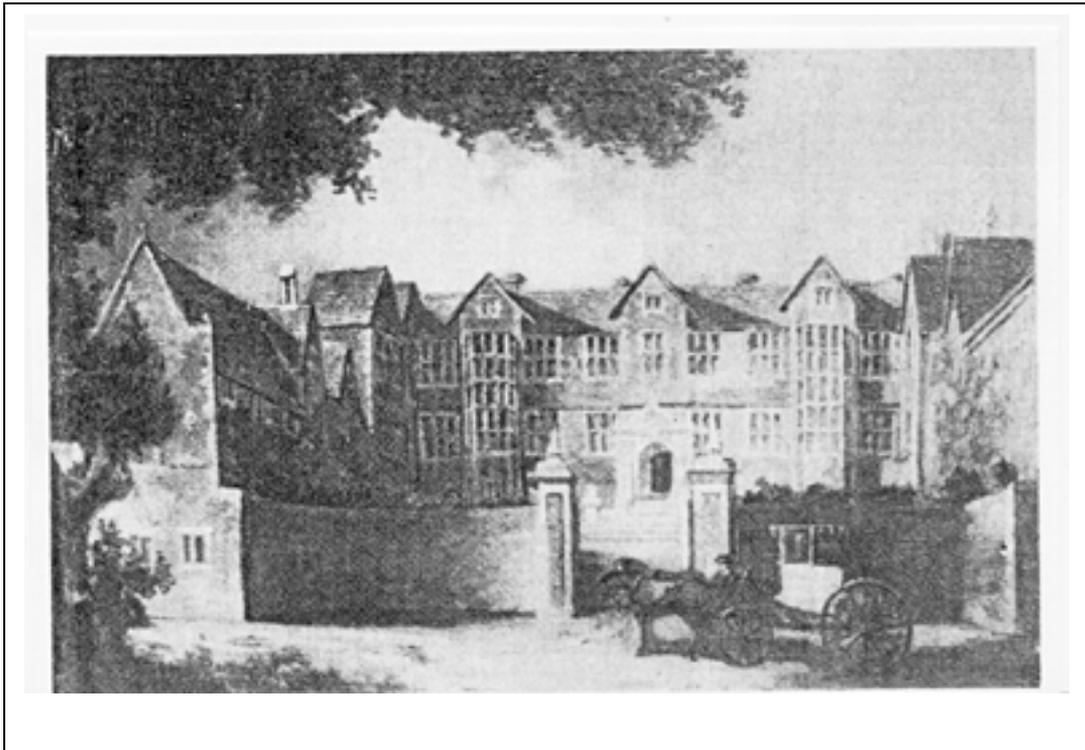
A hundred years later a famous clergyman comes to Heslington

In 1808, the Reverend Sidney Smith* visited the Major Henry Yarborough (the great grandson of Col. James Y.) at Heslington Hall, which he called ‘a fine old house of the time of Queen Elizabeth.’ He writes, “Here resided the last of the Squires with his Lady, who looked as if she had walked right out of the Ark, or had been the wife of Enoch.” (Note. Enoch lived 365 years according to Genesis 5.)

Of Major Henry Yarborough, he writes, “He was a perfect specimen of the Trullibers (?Troubadours) of old; he smoked, hunted, drank beer at his door with the grooms and dogs and spelt over the county paper on Sundays.”

“At first he heard that I was a Jacobin (French Revolutionary) and a dangerous fellow and turned aside as I passed but, at length, when he found the peace of the village undisturbed, harvest as usual, Juno and Ponte (his dogs) uninjured, he first bowed, then called, and at last reached such a pitch of confidence that he used to bring the papers that I might explain the difficult words to him; actually discovered that I had made a joke, laughed till I thought he would have died of convulsions, and ended by inviting me to see his dogs.”

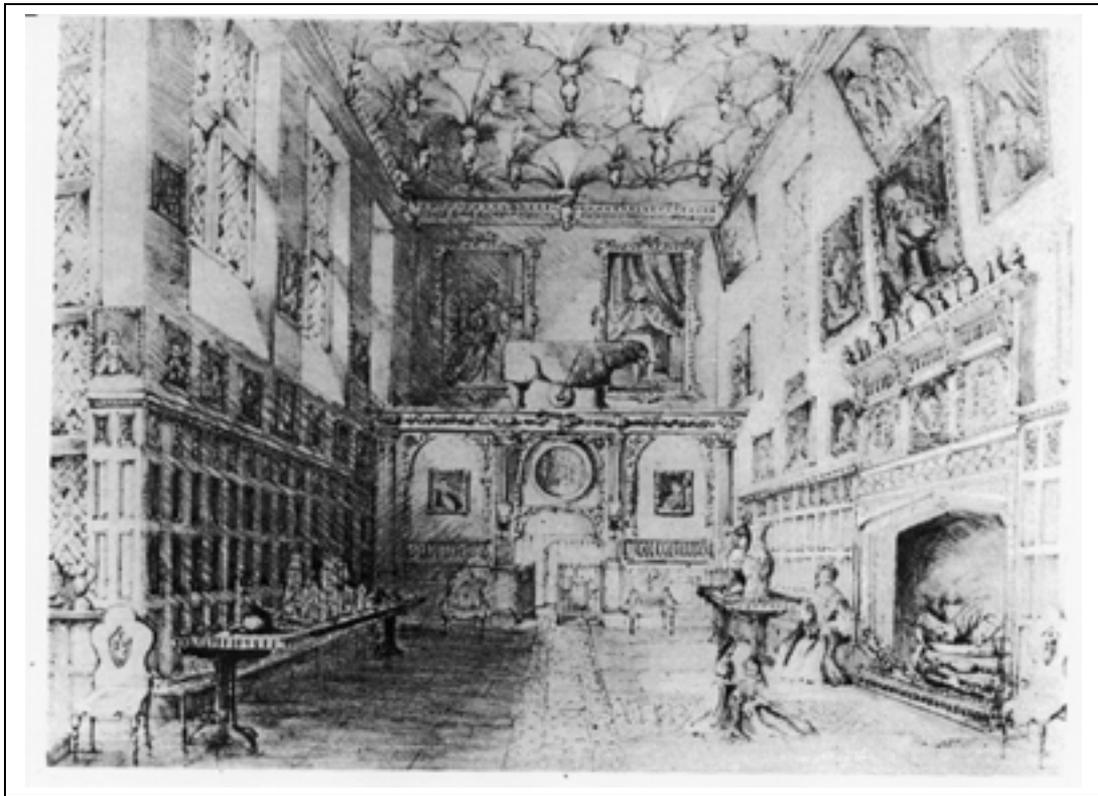
* The Revd. Sidney Smith was a famous London wit and preacher who had been moved to Yorkshire by the Archbishop to give him a less comfortable life. The first time Sydney Smith preached in his new parish he declared, “When I began to thump the cushion of my pulpit.... as is my wont when I preach, the accumulated dust of a hundred and fifty years made such a cloud that for some minutes I lost sight of my congregation!”



Heslington Hall as at the time of Revd. Sidney Smith’s visit in 1808

Great Hall of Heslington, circa 1962

The statue is of the Yarborough horse, Charles XII, who won the St. Leger in 1839.



Some parts of the original manor house are still remaining including two staircase towers, the courtyard and the pendant stucco ceiling over the great hall.

Thanks to A. J. Farra, a teacher at Fulford School in 1953, there is a description prior to 1962:

"The interior of the hall is profusely decorated with shields of arms, the most important and interesting collection being that contained in the Baronial or Great Hall. See picture above.

The floor measurements of this room are: approximately:

North to South - 34ft. 6ins.,

East to West - 20ft. with an additional 4ft. 4ins. into the bay window.

It is wainscotted in five heights with oak 'run through' panelling of early 17th century date but much restored. The arms painted on the upper panels number 57 and, in addition, there are three over the fireplace and one over each of the two doors.

Practically all the shields are numbered, the exceptions in two cases being these:

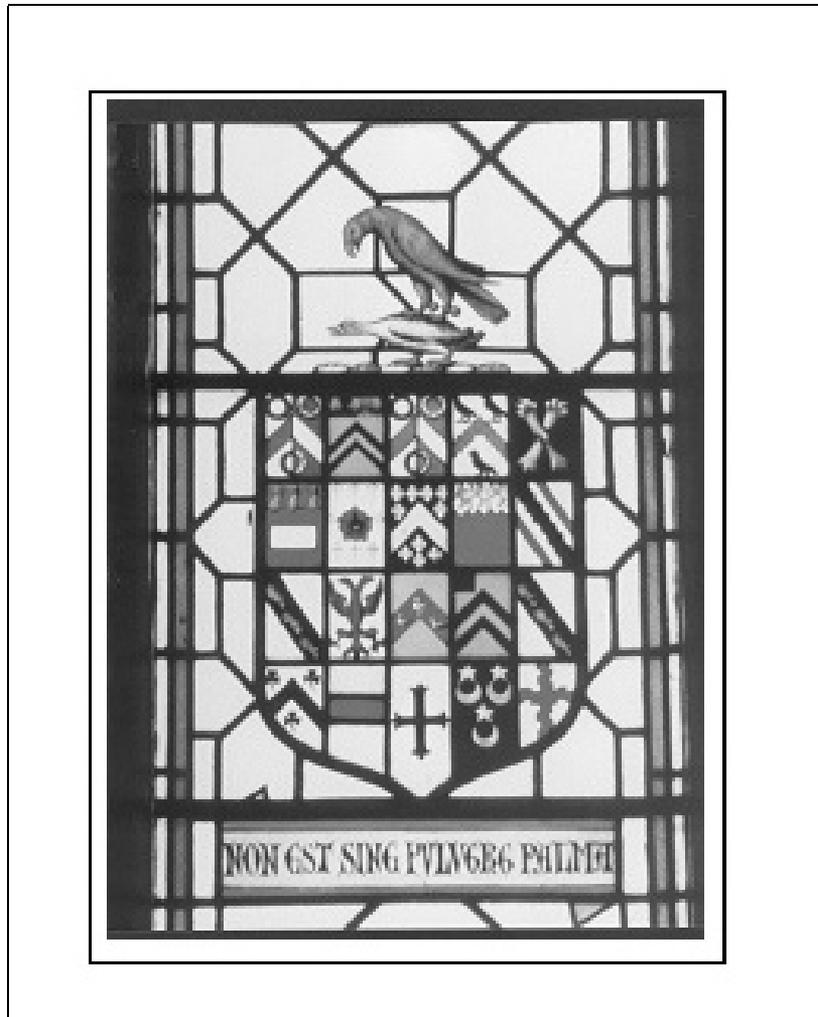
No. 1 over the side door being attributed to William the Conqueror.

The family arms commence at No. 2,

Eustachius, Lord of Yarburgh in the County of Lincoln, A.D. 1066."

[This page is from Alfred Colley's booklet *Heslington* ISBN 0 9520449 0 0]

This centre shield in the main hall's window



Yarborough	Greame	Yarborough	Atwell	Legbourne
Andipan	Billing	Teyes	Wormeley	Waller
Hesketh	Hesketh	Stafford	Fitton	Hesketh
Rufford	Twenge	Banister	Mynshull	Lawrence

The window is to commemorate the marriage of Sarah Yarborough to John Greame in 1782. Sarah was the last direct descendant of the Col. James Yarborough who had married Ann Hesketh.

The marriage to John Greame could have meant the loss of the Yarborough surname, so there was an understanding that the Yarborough surname would be preserved.

Apart from shields 1 & 3 (Yarborough), the top two rows are the shields of Yarborough wives from 1410 onwards. The bottom two rows are the shields of families connected by marriage to the Hesketh family.

Pictures



This is a painting of Sir Thomas Yarborough Kt. - the father of Colonel James Yarborough. He was born in 1637 and married Henrietta Blagge around 1662. Until her marriage, Henrietta had been maid of honour to the Duchess of York.

In 1673, Thomas Yarborough was appointed by the Crown to be High Sheriff of Yorkshire. In the original picture, his robe is deep red and the fur is ermine. These were probably his Sheriff's robes. In the picture he looks to be aged between 40 to 50, so the picture might have been painted to commemorate this appointment. He died at Snaith in 1716.

Heslington Hall during World War II and after

At the outbreak of the Second World War, the house was vacated by the Yarborough family, leaving it to be taken over by the Royal Air Force for the headquarters of 4 Group Bomber Command.

After the end of World War II, Heslington Hall was sold. Some of the Yarborough portraits in the Hall went to Ampleforth College. This is a Roman Catholic private School and some pictures are in the dining room. Others are in the private rooms.

One of them, shown next, is of Lady Henrietta Vanburgh (nee Yarborough). She was the eldest daughter of Colonel James Yarborough and she married Sir John Vanburgh in 1719. (See YFQ Vol. 16, No.4)



Today you can visit the Hall, which is the central building of York University. You can see the magnificent windows placed there in 1852 with all the Yarborough/Hesketh/Greame heraldic shields.

Heslington Hall in recent times

