Eight Million Bricks part two

In the second part of his feature, Leeds Met Archivist, Keith Rowntree continues to delve into the history of our Headingley Campus. Having looked at the James Graham building in the first part of the series, Keith now turns his attention to the other buildings that surround the Acre.

A 1910 plan for the proposed Leeds Training College illustrates the layout of main college, hostels and ancillary buildings. At this time the names of the hostels were numbered, but minutes of the Leeds Education Committee record a resolution in August 1912 confirming the more familiar hostel names; chosen to inspire students with qualities and values most admired at that time. A definitive official list has not been located but the following brief descriptions give some context to the Yorkshire-centric choices.

Hostel No. 1 was named for Caedmon (657-684) an early English poet. According to Bede he was an illiterate cowherd but in a vision was given the power of translating scripture into verse. His divine gift allegedly left him unable to write any secular poems, his only known surviving work is Caedmon's Hymn. As an old man he became a monk at Whitby.

Hostel No. 2 was named for Joseph Priestley (1733-1804). Priestley was a polymath, Unitarian cleric and scientist. In 1767 became Minister at Mill Hill Chapel in Leeds. Later he was responsible for identifying oxygen and several other gases. He also invented soda water. While living in Birmingham in 1791 his house including his books and papers were burnt by a mob because of his sympathies toward the American and French Revolutions. He left England for New York in 1794 and later settled and died in Pennsylvania.

Hostel No. 3 was named for Frederick Leighton, Baron Leighton of Streton, (1830-96). Born in Scarborough, Leighton was a renowned Victorian painter and sculptor. Studied at Frankfurt, Florence, Paris and Rome & later journeyed throughout the East; these travels provided subject matter for his many Oriental paintings. Elected a Royal Academician in 1869 he was President from 1878 to 1896, he was knighted in 1878. His style was typical of late Victorian classicism, showing the influence of ancient Greek art and artefact. Buried in St Paul's Cathedral.

Hostel No. 4 named for Thomas Babington Macaulay, First Baron Macaulay of Rothley, (1800-59). Historian, poet and essayist. Studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, later a barrister at Lincoln's Inn. Macaulay began his literary career contributing to the Edinburgh Review. Became MP for Calne in 1830 and Leeds in 1832. Between 1834 and 1838 he was a member of the Supreme Council of India. On his return to England he continued his work in literature and politics. In 1839 he was Secretary of War in Melbourne's government; became M.P. for Edinburgh in 1839-41 and 1852-56. The first volumes of his History of England were published in 1848, the final volumes by 1861. Buried in Westminster Abbey.

Hostel No. 5 named for the Bronte Sisters; Charlotte, Emily and Anne children of the perpetual curate Patrick Bronte at Haworth. The sisters first published a book of verse, Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell in 1846. Retained these pseudonyms when publishing their most famous works which included; Charlotte (Currer Bell), Jane Eyre (1847); Emily (Ellis Bell), Wuthering Heights (1847); Anne (Acton Bell), Agnes Grey (1848). It is doubtful that Leeds Education Committee had Patrick Branwell Bronte, their errant brother, in mind when selecting the names for the hostels. He is best remembered for his triple portrait of his sisters as well as his addiction to alcohol and opium. Patrick died in 1848 of consumption; he was followed the same year by Emily and Anne the following year. Charlotte married the Rev. A. B. Nicholls in 1854 and died a year later.

Hostel No. 6 named for Thomas Fairfax, 3rd Baron Fairfax of Cameron, (1612-1671). During the English Civil War, Fairfax was a General of the Parliamentary Army; responsible for the recapture of Leeds in 1643 a battle which took place around Leeds Bridge, Briggate and the Headrow. Became commander-in-chief and helped Cromwell form the New Model Army. Defeated Charles I forces at Naseby in 1645. He was against the 1850 invasion of Scotland and resigned in protest. Fairfax also opposed the execution of Charles I. Later he led the commission sent to Charles II in The Hague to arrange his return to Britain.

Hostel No. 7, Cavendish ostensibly named for William Cavendish, Marquis of Newcastle who clashed with Fairfax throughout the North of England during the English Civil War. Their engagements included the Battle of Adwalton Moor in 1643 leading to the Royalist defeat at Marston Moor in 1644. An alternative name was widely believed to be due to Cavendish House on Woodhouse Cliff near Delph Lane. This was a temporary hostel for the Training College prior to the move to Beckett Park, the Cavendish name preserved by one of the newly built hostels.

Hostel No. 8 was The Grange, the existing eighteenth-century mansion Kirkstall Grange; originally New Grange, a farm of Kirkstall Abbey. After the Dissolution it was bought by the well-heeled Foxcroft and subsequently the Wades. New Grange was rebuilt at least twice; a Caroline mansion by Benjamin Wade in 1626 and by Walter Wade in 1752, the Palladian mansion we see today. During the nineteenth-century further remodelling was done by the Becketts. It was sold to Leeds Corporation with surrounding estate by Ernest Beckett in 1910. It survived demolition, due to death watch beetle infestation, in 1907.