

Our Lady Star of the Sea, Staithes

Staithes, North Yorkshire



Part 1: Core data

1.1 Listed grade: *Not listed*

1.2 Conservation area: *No*

1.3 Architect: *Martin Carr*

1.4 Date(s): *1884-5*

1.5 Date of visit: *9 October 2007*

1.6 Name of report author: *Nicholas Antram*

1.7 Name of parish priest and/or contact(s) made on site: *Rev Peter Mulholland*

1.8 Associated buildings: *Presbytery, forming a group with the church but possibly built slightly later as there was no priest in residence until 1895*

1.9 Bibliographic references:

Middlesbrough Diocesan Yearbook 2007

Carson, Robert: *The First 100 Years – A History of the Diocese of Middlesbrough 1878-1978*

Pevsner, N.: *The Buildings of England, Yorkshire: The North Riding*, Penguin Books 1966

Part 2: Analysis

2.1 Statement of Importance

A modest Victorian church not without character, though this is really confined to the quirky design of the west front and bell turret.

2.2 Historical background

Catholics in Staithes for many years walked the five miles to Ugthorpe to Mass. In 1875 Father Sullivan who was sent to Loftus to found a mission urged the Bishop to build a church for Staithes. A building fund was set up and a substantial sum was donated by Monsignor Witham of Lartington Hall in the west of the county. The foundation stone was laid by Bishop Lacy on July 31, 1884 and the church was opened on June 9, 1885. The first parish priest, Father Dan Kiely, took up residence in 1895.

2.3 Setting

The church is located at the top of the town, an area of late Victorian and later terraced housing built after the arrival of the railway in 1883. The picturesque fishing settlement spills down the hill to the little harbour and is quite separate from this more workaday part of Staithes. Church and presbytery are set back from the main road into the town, forming an L composition with a grassed area in front enclosed by a low stone wall. Facing the church is a typical modest red brick Victorian terrace. The church itself stands at the corner of Cliff Road and is conventionally oriented.

2.4 Description of the building and its principal fittings and furnishings

The church is a simple begrimed rock-faced sandstone building with a pitched Welsh slate roof. Four quite broad lancet windows on each of the long sides, with painted timber frames and leaded lights. The pointed arches are quite crudely detailed with four shaped stones. The show is kept for the west front which has further lancet windows either side of a lean-to porch. Above this the wall is thickened, with paired blind arches over a circular window, and rises into a broad and tall bellcote of almost Victorian 'Rogue' form, reminiscent of architects such as Teulon or E.B. Lamb, though described by Pevsner as 'fussy'. Martin Carr was an architect of Redcar; his design for St Peter's, Middlesbrough was illustrated in *The Architect* of 9 February 1884. The presbytery appears to be of one build with the church and is engaged on the southeast side. It is a typical asymmetrical detached house of the period.

The interior of the church, apart from the small west porch is a single volume with nothing more than a hammerbeam roof truss, acting also as a rood beam, to demarcate the sanctuary. Boarded roof with simple exposed trusses with short wall posts. Pews contemporary with the church with open backs and open cast iron ends. Stations of the Cross in painted relief set into recesses in the walls. The sanctuary is dominated by the painted stone altar and reredos, the former brought forward. The altar has an open gothic arcade, whilst the reredos has saints set in a blind Gothic arcade with sub-cusped arches and quatrefoils in the spandrels. Tall pinnacled canopy in the centre. Carved Gothic timber pulpit. One stained glass window, circa 1973 and not artistically distinguished.