

St Hilda, Whitby

Victoria Square, Whitby, North Yorkshire



Part 1: Core data

1.1 Listed grade: *II*

1.2 Conservation area: *Whitby Conservation Area*

1.3 Architect: *M. E. Hadfield & Son*

1.4 Date(s): *1866-7*

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 Neil McNicholas*

1.8 Associated buildings: *Presbytery (1805) and parish centre*

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 good example of the work of the noted regional firm of Weightman & Hadfield, with a strong and individual character, the design taking its cue from the nearby ruins of Whitby Abbey.

2.2 Historical background

At the time of the first Relief Act (1778) there were known to be about a dozen Catholics in Whitby. The émigré priest, Father Gilber, arrived in 1790 and the foundation of the Mission can be dated to the first recorded baptism on 6th June 1794. By 1805 the number of Catholics had increased to 70 and in that year Fr Gilber was able to build a church which served until the present church was erected and opened on 27 November 1867. This is designed in 13th century Gothic style 'following a careful study of the ruins of the historic Abbey'.

2.3 Setting

A town church on the western edge of Whitby town centre. It stands at the foot of Brunswick Street in an elevated position overlooking Victoria Square (a square in name only). Although not aligned with Brunswick Street, St Hilda's has a side elevation towards it, with the main entrance elevation returning towards Victoria Square. Both these sides are set back behind a narrow area, with a steep flight of steps down from the entrance. To the west is a garden and the presbytery set further back. Facing the church in Brunswick Street is the slightly older Anglican church of St John Evangelist and a little further up the hill the former Methodist Church of 1891.

2.4 Description of the building and its principal fittings and furnishings

See list description, below.

St Hilda's faces north but here all references will be to liturgical compass points. The church is faced in coursed Aislaby stone with ashlar dressings and Welsh slate roofs, and comprises nave and sanctuary under one continuous roof; aisles, that to the north under a continuation of the main roof, that to the south under four transverse pitched roofs giving a bold outline of gables to Brunswick Street; gabled porch to Brunswick Street and a bold corner stair turret cutting into the main gabled front and rising to an octagon and short octagonal spire (truncated and replaced in fibreglass in 1987). The main front faces Victoria Square and is busily asymmetrical with the corner turret feature very much eating into it. Broad, shallowly projecting gabled porch, the arched entrance of three orders of columns. Five, closely set, lancet windows above and a wheel window in the gable. The aisle to the left has a single lancet. The south elevation has tall lancet windows beneath each of the four gables. The east window is of three lights with plate tracery.

The interior is lofty with broad and tall arcades (no clerestory) on alternately octagonal and circular columns. Single stepped and chamfered arches. Continuous pointed barrel vault with wooden ribs to the nave but divided into panels with bosses at the intersections to the sanctuary. Painted and stencil decoration. The sanctuary ceiling dates from 1892, restored in 1999. Transverse arches high up in the south

aisle. Most unusual and rather heavy rood beam of 1893 (designed and erected by John White at a cost of £130), painted and gilded (colouring added in the late 1930s), of gabled hammerbeam form with subcusping, trefoils and quatrefoils in the spandrels and winged angels on the hammers. The rood figures (carved by Mr Wall, of Cheltenham at a cost of £45), on pedestals. The sanctuary has two tiers of blind arcading with marble back and mosaic panels (installed circa 1950) in the upper register either side of the altar (brought forward). Stone altar on marble columns and richly crowned reredos of saints in canopied niches with crocketed gables and finials between on which are angels with outstretched wings. The High Altar was installed in 1876, from Mayer & Co. at a cost of £600. Sacred Heart chapel (northeast) opened in 1892.

Lady Chapel, opened in 1890, with timber pointed barrel vault divided into panels. Triptych painting on the east wall within the roof, depicting the gift of the Holy Rosary to St Dominic. Stone altar on heavy columns with a statue of the virgin above under a gabled canopy. Painted text along the top of the walls. Organ gallery at the west end (organ of 1892 by James J. Binns, of Leeds), the area below enclosed with a modern glazed screen forming an internal lobby. The former Baptistry (northwest) was converted to the Martyrs Chapel in 1987. Open-backed pine pews. Stations of the Cross (1892, cleaned 1978-9), quite large paintings on canvas in frames. In the south aisle an icon of Our Lady, a copy. Red and black chequer tiled floors except in the sanctuary which is carpeted. Small octagonal marble font near the entrance to the Lady Chapel. Victorian stained glass of various dates in most windows. The east window of 1879 and probably by Mayer & Co. In the south aisle a window to St Robert by Mayer & Co., as is the window to St Mark. Sacred Heart chapel windows by Hardman, as are the nave windows depicting St Hilda and St Elizabeth. Windows in the Martyrs Chapel of 1893 by Atkinson of Newcastle. Fragments of medieval glass from Whitby Abbey are placed in a small window behind the altar.

2.5 List description:

Building Name: ST HILDA ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Parish: WHITBY

District: SCARBOROUGH

County: NORTH YORKSHIRE

LBS Number: 468891

Grade: II

Date Listed: 20/10/1997

Date of Last Amendment: 20/10/1997

NGR: NZ8967710887

Listing Text:

WHITBY
NZ 89 10 VICTORIA SQUARE
(North side)
665/3/10012 Bagdale

St Hilda R.C. Church

II

Roman Catholic church. 1867. Designed by M E Hadfield. Dressed stone with ashlar dressings and slate roofs with ridge tiles and coped gables with kneelers and cross

finials. Nave and chancel; under single roof with narrow side aisles. Chamfered plinth. West front has central doorway approached up 4 steps. Central double doors in triple pointed arch with columns in slightly projecting gabled porch with patera and central niche. Above a row of five short lancet windows and above again a circular window with quatrefoil. Left side has single lancet and hipped slate roof. Right side has tower with narrow stair lights, topped with squat octagonal spire. North front has 3 lancet windows alternating with buttresses with set-offs, single priests doorway. East end has slightly narrower chancel, with single 3-light plate tracery window at east end. South front has later projecting gabled porch with deeply set round headed opening with moulded imposts. Slightly projecting south aisle has 4 chamfered lancets with buttresses between and finials to all 4 gables. To left single 2-light plate tracery window in pointed arch surround.

INTERIOR has alternating circular and octagonal arcade piers and responds with tall chamfered arches and plain capitals. Chancel defined by painted wooden rood screen and side walls decorated with double blind arcades, those to the east wall with painted scenes in the upper arcades. Original wooden pews. Minton tile floors. Elaborate carved reredos has seven canopies with painted figures. Stone altar supported on marble columns. Boarded roofs, that to chancel painted. Lady chapel has elaborately painted roof.

Listing NGR: NZ8967710887