

St Joseph, Middlesbrough

Park Road South, Grove Hill, Middlesbrough TS4



Part 1: Core data

1.1 Listed grade: *Not listed*

1.2 Conservation area: *No*

1.3 Architect: *Attributed to Bishop Thomas Shine*

1.4 Date(s): *1933-4*

1.5 Date of visit: *7 November 2007*

1.6 Name of report author: *Geoff Brandwood*

1.7 Name of parish priest and/or contact(s) made on site: *Rev. Patrick Keogh*

1.8 Associated buildings: *Presbytery and school*

1.9 Bibliographic references:

Middlesbrough Diocesan Yearbook 2007

N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire, the North Riding* (Harmondsworth, 1966)

Diocesan archives (undated leaflet by Fr Dominique Minskip, 'St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, Middlesbrough')

Part 2: Analysis

2.1 Statement of Importance

Early Christian/Italianate church built in 1933-4, apparently to the designs of Bishop Thomas Shine. The building has a fine presence in this part of Middlesbrough and is a landmark on the Marton Road.

2.2 Historical background

In the 1920s the suburbs of Middlesbrough were expanding southwards and there was a need to provide for Catholics in the Acklam area. A temporary tin church was erected in 1925 and the school (architect Thomas Rodgers of Darlington) built in 1927. The present church followed on in 1933-4 (estimated cost £7,000): the builder was Mr Frank Spink of Bridlington (who also built St Francis of Assisi, Acklam). A report in the *Northern Echo* credits Bishop Shine with the design (repeated in the *Buildings of England* volume). Details of the building suggest it is by the same hand as the contemporary but cheaper and less distinguished St Francis of Assisi, Acklam (1935).

2.3 Setting

Mainly interwar semi-detached housing. The area to the north and west is a recreation ground.

2.4 Description of the building and its principal fittings and furnishings

The church is oriented west so directions given here are liturgical.

The church, designed in Early Christian style, consists of a tall, four-bay nave, north and south aisles, northwest campanile, a shorter southwest tower, south transeptal chapel, and an semi-circular apsidal sanctuary. It is built of brown brick laid in English garden wall bond (in this case three courses of stretchers to one of headers) with red brick dressings. It is roofed with modern grey imitation slates (replacing red tiles). The fenestration consists of a traceried oculus in the west façade, graded triple round-arched clerestory windows, single round-arches lights in the sanctuary and pairs of square-headed windows in the aisles. The campanile has two stages and has pairs of large open belfry lights in its top stage. Between the two towers is a five-bay columned portico. Over the doorway into the campanile is a mosaic tympanum bearing the arms of Pius XI (Pontiff when the church was built).

Inside the wide nave has four arches to the narrow, lean-to aisles. The piers are round, taper slightly upwards and have circular capitals with Byzantine-style foliage: the arch heads have three orders of brick very similar to those at St Francis of Assisi, Acklam. The aisles have an unusual treatment in the way the wall plaster is curved upwards without interruption on to the underside of the lean-to roofs: each bay is marked by shallow pilasters which are also curved upwards. The sanctuary arch is almost as wide as the nave and has a round-arched brick head.

The Lady Chapel lies in a transeptal projection on the south side and its walls and semi-circular ceiling are covered with mosaic. The walls of the sanctuary also have extensive mosaic work in the same style as that in the Lady Chapel: sadly the vault which appears to have had tesserae ornamentation of some kind has been painted over. Against the east wall of the sanctuary is a tall reredos with a mainly white marble canopy above a mosaic depiction of the Last Supper.