

St Joseph, Stokesley

Tanton Road, Stokesley, North Yorkshire



Part 1: Core data

1.1 Listed grade: *Not listed*

1.2 Conservation area: *No*

1.3 Architect: *George Goldie*

1.4 Date(s): *1872-3*

1.5 Date of visit: *6 February 2008*

1.6 Name of report author: *Geoff Brandwood*

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

1.8 Associated buildings: *Presbytery and parish hall*

1.9 Bibliographic references:

Middlesbrough Diocesan Yearbook 2007

Allen, D.: *St Joseph's, Stokesley: The Story of a Catholic Parish* (Stokesley, 1972)

Part 2: Analysis

2.1 Statement of Importance

The church is a work by the noted Catholic architect, George Goldie. At Stokesley the budget was very tight and the building was cheaply built in brick with little architectural embellishment beyond some basic polychromy and a tall bellcote. The building was much altered after a fire in the 1970s.

2.2 Historical background

A Mass house had been established by 1743 by Bradshaw Pierson in an outbuilding at Stokesley Manor, but it was destroyed during anti-Catholic rioting in 1746 and never rebuilt. Over a century later a mission of St Philip Neri was established at Stokesley, when on 24 February 1860 and during 1861 a chapel was established in a converted granary loft at the Angel Inn. In 1870 land for a permanent church was purchased on the present site on the northern edge of the town. The means to erect the church came from Miss Apollonia Bland of Chideock, Dorset. She originally came from Yorkshire and wanted to found a church near to her native Castleford. Her offer of £1,000 for the purpose was deflected by Bishop Cornthwaite on the grounds that the funds to build in Castleford parish were likely to be raised anyway and the money was thus directed to Stokesley. George Goldie supplied an initial sketch in April 1872, estimating the cost of the church at £872, to accommodate 252 people. In May a contract was signed with John F. Craggs, builder of Stockton. Building began that summer and the opening and consecration took place on 13 May 1873.

2.3 Setting

When built in the 1870s the church was on the outskirts of Stokesley and none of the surrounding buildings are contemporary. It has now been surrounded by modest housing dating from the early 20th century onwards.

2.4 Description of the building and its principal fittings and furnishings

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

The church is built of coarse red bricks with touches of black brick (i.e. over the windows and between them) to create a simple polychrome effect. It is roofed with modern concrete tiles and consists of a nave, western double bellcote, small sanctuary and a modern north aisle which replicates the materials of the Victorian church. The nave windows are single lights and at the east end is a large circular east window. The buttresses on the south side were inserted after it was found that the heavy roof installed after a fire in the 1970s fire was causing the walls to spread.

The footprint of the 1870s nave and sanctuary remains but the original arches at the northeast end of the nave have been taken out after the 1970s fire and replaced by a wide rectangular opening under a lintel. The nave roof also post-dates the 1970s fire. The latter presented the opportunity to reorder the church. The new altar takes the form of three huge blocks of rough sandstone and the font is a single unhewn block of the same material. The modern bench seating is focused upon the altar which is placed in the southeast part of the Victorian nave.

The stained glass survived the fire. The nave windows are by G.S. Walsh of Dublin, the northwest one being dated 1948. The east window may be from the same source.