

St Mary and St Romuald, Yarm

High Street, Yarm, North Yorkshire



Part 1: Core data

1.1 Listed grade: *Not listed*

1.2 Conservation area: *Yes*

1.3 Architect: *Hadfield & Goldie (thought to be the work of George Goldie)*

1.4 Date(s): *1859-60*

1.5 Date of visit: *7 November 2008*

1.6 Name of report author: *Geoff Brandwood*

1.7 Name of parish priest and/or contact(s) made on site: *Very Rev Canon Alan Sheridan*

1.8 Associated buildings: *Presbytery, parish hall*

1.9 Bibliographic references:

Middlesbrough Diocesan Yearbook 2007

Historic information displayed in the church

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

Part 2: Analysis

2.1 Statement of Importance

One of several in the diocese by George Goldie, the church is in a vigorous High Victorian style, built of brick and using structural polychromy which was so popular in Gothic Revival architecture at the time. The tall bellcote rising behind the north porch is a particularly distinctive and unusual feature, and the church occupies a prominent position in the otherwise mainly Georgian townscape of Yarm.

2.2 Historical background

There is a long history of Catholic witness in Yarm, a survival of which is the wooden altar panel housed in the Chantry at the church: this panel is said to date back to 1695 when Mass was being said in The Friary, the home of John Mayes. In 1795 the Meynell family, by then owners of The Friary, fitted out a chapel in the roof space and were served by Jesuit chaplains. By 1840 there was a parish priest who acted as chaplain to the Meynells. The present building owes its origin to Thomas Meynell as a gift to his wife, Jayne. The couple spent three months of their honeymoon in Florence where they came in contact with Camaldolese monks whose order had been founded by St Romuald of Ravenna – hence the saint's inclusion in the dedication. The church was opened on 3 May 1860. The Meynells built a school, opened in 1863, the same year that Thomas died. In 1937 the chapel, priest's house and school were transferred to the diocese.

2.3 Setting

At the southern end of the (mainly) Georgian High Street of Yarm, to which it makes a visual closure. Beyond the church is a heavily treed area and to the (geographic) east is the large Friary School whose various buildings are set among extensive green areas.

2.4 Description of the building and its principal fittings and furnishings

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

The church consists of an aisleless nave with continuous three-sided sanctuary; north porch, behind which rises a large, tiered bellcote; and at the southeast a vestry and the small Meynell Chantry. The church is built of red brick with buff sandstone dressings. The latter are used polychromatically, notably in the nave window heads and the arch to the porch. The roof is covered with grey slates and has an iron crest on the chancel ridge, and pierced ornamental tiles on the nave cresting. The nave windows are flush with the wall-plane as was popular in muscular High Victorian architecture: they are large, of two-lights and with a foiled circle in their heads. The sanctuary windows, by contrast, are small with three rectangular lights per bay. The most striking feature of the exterior, however, is the bellcote, placed behind the north porch and flush with the nave north wall: it rises from a broad base through a series of offsets to an octagonal cap surmounted by a cross. The west window is large and has five lights with early Decorated tracery.

Internally, the walls are plastered and they (and all the other surfaces) have been painted cream. There is no structural division between the nave and the sanctuary. In the sanctuary each of the windows lights is flanked by foliated shafts. Covering the whole is a panelled, seven-sided roof.

At the east end there is an ornate reredos with integral stone altar and which must date from 1860: it has a central tabernacle with painted decoration on the door: either side are square panels with censuring angels. The front of the altar has red and buff tiles. At the west end the window is filled with stained glass (possibly by Hardman) to the memory of Thomas Meynell (d. 1863) and given by his wife. The windows in the sanctuary are filled with attractive patterns of coloured and grisaille glass. In the Meynell Chantry is one of three wooden altar frontal panels (the other two are in the Bowes Museum) from a former altar in The Friary: it bears the IHS monogram. The benches are simple with chamfered-off corners on the eastern faces.