

St Clare of Assisi, Brookfield

Low Lane, Brookfield, Middlesbrough



Part 1: Core data

1.1 Listed grade: *Not listed*

1.2 Conservation area: *No*

1.3 Architect: *Thomas A. Crawford LRIBA*

1.4 Date(s): *1965*

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 John Paul Leonard*

1.8 Associated buildings: *Presbytery (linked to the church)*

1.9 Bibliographic references:

Middlesbrough Diocesan Yearbook 2007

Diocesan archive

Foundation stone

Part 2: Analysis

2.1 Statement of Importance

This is a church from towards the end of T.A. Crawford's career in designing churches for the Middlesbrough diocese. In contrast to his earlier work, the design is stripped back to very bare essentials. The sheer brick lines of the church give an almost industrial quality. The interior unfolds from the simplicity of the planning and the massing of the exterior: it is spacious, clean and light and, with its relatively large size, makes a dramatic impact.

2.2 Historical background

The church was founded from St Francis's parish and was built in 1964-5 (foundation stone 4 February 1964) at a cost of £35,000, to serve this expanding area of southern Middlesbrough.

2.3 Setting

This is a residential area: there was some interwar sprawl which was then infilled after the Second World War.

2.4 Description of the building and its principal fittings and furnishings

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

The church is built of brick, laid in header bond and consists of a tall western narthex, aisleless nave, north and south transepts, sanctuary and (north) vestries. The bricks are light red for the narthex and light brown for the rest.

The narthex, with north and south entrances, presents a tall, sheer face to the road. In the centre is a tall rectangle window at the base of which is a grooved concrete panel: either side of this are three-light rectangular windows. The western windows are filled with both clear and coloured dimpled glass arranged in grid-like patterns, popular in the 1960s. The grooving in the concrete below the west window is mirrored in the embrasures of the deeply-set north and south doorways. Behind the narthex lie the tall, sheer walls of the nave, broken up only by tall rectangular, one-light windows.

The interior is spacious and flooded with light from the large, high-set windows. The nave windows have clear dimpled glass with thin colour borders of red, blue and yellow glass. Those in the sanctuary have three lights, those in the transepts five (the south windows are taller than the north ones because of the existence of vestries on the north). The grid-like glass of the west window reappears in the transept and sanctuary windows. The ceiling is flat.

The focus at the east end is a tall, wooden reredos-like feature composed on plain, golden wood panels with strips of dark, painted wood. The style of the light-coloured panels is similar to that in the frontal of the west gallery.

Most of the furnishings were designed by Frank Delaney, an architect-parishioner. The ironwork is by Terrence Walker of Seamer, the statues of the Risen Christ, the Sacred Heart (south transept) and Our Lady (north transept) are by Maurice McPartland of South Shields (donated by the Ice Cream Manufacturers' Association

in 1969); the etched glass panels of St Francis and St Clare in the screen beneath the gallery are by Bill Palmer, parishioner, 1992. In 1992 the font was moved to the front of the church and the former baptistery made into a reconciliation room.