

St Joseph, Newby

Green Lane, Newby, Scarborough



Part 1: Core data

1.1 Listed grade: *II*

1.2 Conservation area: *No*

1.3 Architect: *Francis Johnson*

1.4 Date(s): *1960*

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: *Very Rev John Loughlin*

1.8 Associated buildings: *presbytery*

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 well-crafted and complete design by Francis Johnson, with fittings by Wilfred Dowson. Johnson is known mainly for his country house work, generally in a Classical idiom, but the style of St Joseph's however owes more to early 20th century Scandinavian and Italian precedents.

2.2 Historical background

Land for a church at Newby was bought as early as 1930 and money collected for its building. War intervened and a temporary Mass centre was built on the site (an ex army building) in 1949 to serve the expanding northern outskirts of Scarborough. This served until the parish became independent in 1960, when the present church was built at a cost of approximately £35,000.

2.3 Setting

Set at the junction of two Post-War suburban streets on the boundary between a leafy middle class district to the north and an area of poorer housing to the south. The area is flat and the church is set back from the roads behind grassed areas with post and chain fences and a car park in front of the entrance.

2.4 Description of the building and its principal fittings and furnishings

The church is well and fully described in the 2007 list description, below.

2.5 List description

NEWBY AND SCALBY

563/0/10009
16-NOV-07

GREEN LANE
(South side)

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church

II

Roman Catholic Church. 1958-60 by Francis Johnson, commissioned by Monsignor Lynn and Father Lovelady. Brown handmade bricks with Robin Hood stone dressings and sculpture in Douling stone, pantiled roof. Long narrow plan of nave with organ loft and chancel, the latter flanked by chapels to Our Lady and the English Martyrs, and by vestries. High west end with projecting staircase towers, having square windows in the returns, niches with statuary and topped by obelisks. Central bellcote with tall cross over round west window and Calvary. Double doors under segmental arch at centre of blind arcaded screen. Square windows are repeated in the side elevations, where the nave windows are large three-light windows under arched heads and with brick mullions and transoms.

The interior is rendered. Small sanctuary with niche behind reredos of riven Cumberland slate and gold quartzite set with Calvary figures by Esmond Burton; stone altar set on steps, with mensa of Derbyshire fossil marble ten feet long in one piece supported on Park Lane piers. Sanctuary tiled with English marbles raised behind curved iron altar rails incorporating motifs of the Cross, crossed palm leaves and passion flowers, made by Wilfred Dowson. The windows filled with handmade glass, some tinted. Side chapels in similar style, with delicate altarpieces. Lady Chapel contemporary, and incorporating gates from main altar rail; the other chapel added 1970. Contemporary pendant lights also by Dowson, with later shades; organ, and Stations of the Cross. Gates to former baptistry, now chapel of remembrance (1993), also by Dowson. All the fittings were designed by Johnson.

The most distinctive aspect of the design is the baroque west front, a real westwork as developed in central Europe, but whose design owes much to the influence of Enrico Del Debbio, whose work of the 1920s is a modern reinterpretation of the Baroque and which Johnson would have seen when in Italy in 1931. Johnson was also an admirer of P V Jensen Klint's Grundtvigs Church in Copenhagen, whose dramatic westwork he saw in 1934. Internally, the careful survival of Johnson's fittings make for an immaculately designed, delicate architectural ensemble, in a well-proportioned, high space noted for its excellent acoustics.

Francis Johnson (1911-95) was a prominent local architect who came to specialise in country houses, especially in Yorkshire, and who was a leading figure in the classical revival of the late 1980s. In his earlier career, however, and particularly in the 1950s, he designed a number of churches in the Scarborough area. St Joseph's was Johnson's largest new church and one of his most original designs, demonstrating an interest in continental sources from the 1920s not clearly evident in his subsequent specialism in country houses. The contractor was Sinclair of Scarborough,

who worked on several of his commissions, and the joinery was also made by workmen experienced in meeting Johnson's exacting standards. Robinson and Neave describe St Joseph's as 'a remarkably impressive and harmonious church' (p.131).

Sources

Catholic Building Review, Northern Edition, 1960, pp.137-140.

John Martin Robinson and David Neave, Francis Johnson Architect, Otley, Oblong, 2001, pp.127-131

F R Yerbury, Modern European Buildings, London, Victor Gollancz, 1928, pl.50L,
Information from Dr Gavin Stamp.