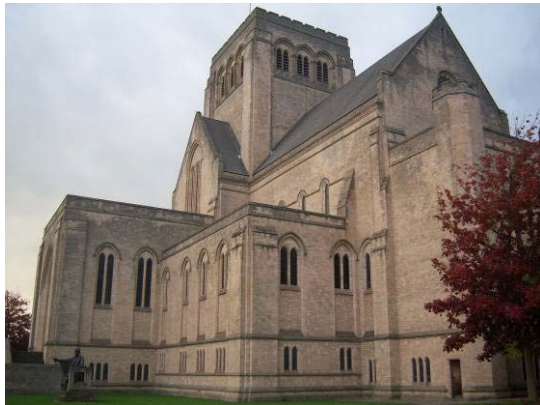


St Laurence's Abbey Church, Ampleforth

*Ampleforth, York, North Yorkshire*



## **Part 1: Core data**

1.1 Listed grade: *II*

1.2 Conservation area: *No*

1.3 Architect: *Sir Giles Gilbert Scott OM*

1.4 Date(s): *1922; completed 1961*

1.5 Date of visit: *16 October 2007*

1.6 Name of report author: *Andrew Derrick*

1.7 Name of parish priest and/or contact(s) made on site: *Rt Rev Cuthbert Madden OSB (Abbot) and the Very Rev Colin Batell (Prior)*

1.8 Associated buildings: *Abbey and School buildings*

1.9 Bibliographic references:

*Middlesbrough Diocesan Yearbook 2007*

*Ampleforth Abbey Visitors' Guide 4, 2004*

Corbould, Fr E.: *Ampleforth Abbey Church*, *Ampleforth Journal* 66 (1961), 163-181

## **Part 2: Analysis**

### **2.1 Statement of Importance**

***The Abbey church of Ampleforth is a major work by the distinguished 20<sup>th</sup> century church architect, Sir Giles Gilbert Scott OM. Replacing a mid-19th century church by Charles Hansom, it was built in two phases. The earlier phase consisted of the retrochoir and high altar, built over a crypt and completed in 1922. This is in the Romanesque style of Aquitaine, and is richly carved with blue Hornton stone dressings. The crossing, transepts and nave were completed in 1961, to a simplified design, also by Scott. The church therefore illustrates both his early and mature work, achieving unity despite the contrasting character of the two phases. The building is roughly Greek cross in plan; Scott was keen to ensure proximity to and visibility towards his High Altar. While the detail is medievalising, the planning is in some respects classical, having resonances with Wren's Greek Cross scheme for St Paul's. Notable furnishings designed by Scott include the High Altar and the reredos in the Memorial Chapel. There is also much other later enrichment, notably a series of windows on a Marian theme by Patrick and John Reyntiens.***

## **2.2 Historical background**

For its first 50 years the Benedictine community at Ampleforth worshipped in a chapel in the west wing of the Old House, given by Anne Fairfax in 1803 (latterly St Oswald's, demolished in 1985 to make way for the present main reception building). However, in 1855 work began on a new chapel, built at a cost of £3000 to the designs of Charles Hansom. This was a two-cell Gothic revival church built from stone quarried from behind the monastery.

The community and school soon outgrew Hansom's chapel, and its replacement was being discussed as early as 1903. However, it was not until 1919 that Giles Gilbert Scott, architect of Liverpool Anglican Cathedral and a Catholic, was asked to prepare plans. The foundation stones for Scott's replacement were laid on 1 August 1922 and the first part of his design, consisting of a retrochoir and High Altar over a crypt with four chapels was completed by 1924. This was built against the west end of Hansom's church, which was retained as the nave of the new church pending the completion of Scott's design. This required a reversal of the conventional orientation, so that the 'ritual' east end of Scott's church lies to the geographical west.

Hansom's church was finally pulled down in 1957 and the foundations laid for Scott's nave, also built over a crypt. The church was completed in September 1961 (Scott had died in February 1960).

## **2.3 Setting**

The church lies at the centre of the monastery and school, on a beautiful valley setting looking towards the estate of Gilling Castle, and on the edge of the North Yorkshire Moors National Park.

## **2.4 Description of the building and its principal fittings and furnishings**

See list description, below.

Additional information:

The interior of the church has a pronounced southwest French Romanesque character, deriving from the domed churches of Aquitaine. The external character is more English, early Gothic in character. While the 1922 work has rich sculptural adornment, the later work is stripped and unadorned. The same distinction applies in the crypt, which has a more pronounced Romanesque character.

The early work is externally faced with Bramley Fall stone (near Leeds), and inside with rough plaster. Oxfordshire blue Hornton stone is used for the arches, piers, string courses, windows and door frames (photo middle right). The later work is of brick, externally faced with Dunhouse stone from Staindrop, County Durham (the original stone no longer being available in sufficient quantities). The internal walls are faced with rough plaster; Hornton stone was omitted for reasons of economy and simplicity.

The church is centrally planned on an east-west axis. It is 175 feet long and 140 feet across the transepts. The height of the tower is 122 feet. Inside, the height of the central dome above the floor of the sanctuary is 72 feet, and that of the nave dome from the floor of the nave is 61 feet. The nave floor is lowered a few feet below that of the aisles (photo top right). This was a device also used by Scott at Liverpool Cathedral, in both cases possibly to create a semi-independent space for less formal

gatherings. It also allows a better view of the High Altar for people at the back of the church and has the effect of accentuating the height of the nave arcades.

The church seats 800 people and has choir stalls for 87 monks.

The focus of the interior is Scott's High Altar (photo middle left), moved 11 feet eastwards in August 1960, to give a better view from the new transepts. It was designed by Scott and built in 1925; the carvings and statuary are by W.D. Gough.

The large number of altars required for the community (before the days of liturgical concelebration) are located primarily in the crypt – here there are two large chapels and 23 smaller ones.

In addition to the main altar, the following fittings are particularly worthy of mention:

*Stained glass:*

- The church contains much glass by Patrick Reyntiens (a former pupil of the school) and his son John - in the Lady Chapel (an *Annunciation* of 1961), south transept (2002), Holy Cross chapel (2004, see *Pentecost*, photo bottom right) and Memorial Chapel.
- Glass by James Powell and Sons in the north transept and over the stairs to the crypt, originally in the Memorial Chapel (1925-35)
- West window (in choir), on the theme of Christ the King, by Herbert Hendrie of Edinburgh (1928)
- Windows by Geoffrey Webb in St Benet's chapel, on a Benedictine theme – Webb's two sons became monks
- End windows, south aisle, St Martin and St Bernard, by Hendrie
- Some medieval glass over the doors to the sacristy in the north aisle
- Further glass by Geoffrey Webb in the main crypt chapels

*Sculpture:*

- Choir stalls, designed by Scott and carved by Robert Thompson of Kilburn (known for his trademark mouse 'signature');
- Reredos in Memorial chapel (photo bottom left), carved in wood by Stuflessers, painted by Harpers of London, from designs by Scott;
- Reredos, St Benet's chapel by William Milburn of York, in memory of his son Leonard (d.1922)
- 14<sup>th</sup> century statue of Our Lady, from the Rhineland, in the Lady Chapel
- Italian crucifix circa 1500, in the Holy Cross chapel
- Medieval alabaster carving of the Trinity in St Benet's chapel
- In the crypt, a series of Welsh slate Stations of the Cross and a large Madonna and Child in blue Hornton stone, by Jonah Jones, a disciple of Eric Gill
- Bronze crucifix and candlesticks in St Alban Roe's chapel, by Leon Underwood (1961)

*The organ:* in the north transept, by J. W. Walker & Sons, from a design by Scott (completed 1961).

## **2.5 List description:**

**Building Name:** THE ABBEY CHURCH

**Parish:** AMPLEFORTH

**District:** RYEDALE

**County:** NORTH YORKSHIRE

**Postcode:**

**Details:**

**LBS Number:** 329560

**Grade:** II

**Date Listed:** 09/09/1985

**Date of Last Amendment:** 17/10/2005

**Date Delisted:**

**NGR:** SE5980678828

Listing Text:

NORTH YORKSHIRE

RYEDALE

5340

SE 57 NE AMPLEFORTH AMPLEFORTH ABBEY

5/1 The Abbey Church

9.9.85

GV II

Church. Begun in 1922, completed in 1961. By Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. Rock-face limestone with ashlar dressings, Westmorland slate roof. Cruciform plan with 4-bay chancel and nave, crossing tower, 3-bay south transept with chapels to east and west and single bay north transept incorporated into school buildings. West front: chamfered triple plinth and 2 bands beneath tall pointed recess flanked by flat buttresses, containing 3 tall lancets with roundel above. To left: linking passage to the Monastery with pair of lancets beneath hoodmould and square-headed 2-light window above. To right: flat-roofed chapel with 2 sets of paired lancets beneath hoodmoulds. South facade: flat-roofed transept has double-flight staircase with 9 lancets beneath entrance, leading to square-headed doorway with 3 stepped lancets in pointed recess above, flanked by chapels with 4 sets of paired lancets beneath hoodmoulds. Tall gable end against tower with 3 lancets in pointed recess flanked by lancets to clerestory of chancel and nave. Tower: 3 paired belfry openings to each face separated by triple responds and flanked by flat buttresses. Embattled parapet. West end: flat-roofed end bays of nave flanked by semi-octagonal embattled turrets. Double chamfered plinth carries 2 sets of 4 lancets, with band above carrying 3 tall lancets flanked by pilaster strips. Tall gable end against tower with single roundel. Interior: shallow domes over crossing; nave and choir, with tunnel-vaulting over transept and end bays of nave. Altar canopy by Scott, erected 1930. Sculpture: a northern French Virgin and 2 crucifixes, one C14, the other C15, all of wood. Pevsner N. "Yorkshire: The North Riding" 1966.

**Listing NGR: SE5980678828**