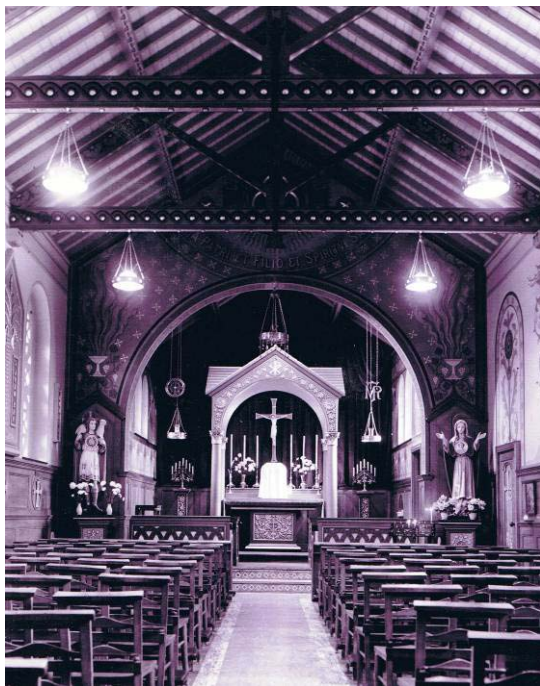


St Mary, Filey

*Brooklands, Filey, North Yorkshire*



## **Part 1: Core data**

1.1 Listed grade: *Not listed*

1.2 Conservation area: *No*

1.3 Architect: *A. N. Prentice, in collaboration with Fr. Roulin*

1.4 Date(s): *1905-06*

1.5 Date of visit: *15 November 2007*

1.6 Name of report author: *Andrew Derrick*

1.7 Name of parish priest and/or contact(s) made on site: *Rev. Sean O'Donnell*

1.8 Associated buildings: *Presbytery, parish room*

1.9 Bibliographic references:

*Middlesbrough Diocesan Yearbook 2007*

Carson, Robert: *The First 100 Years – A History of the Diocese of Middlesbrough 1878-1978*

Cramer, Anselm OSB: *A Filey Centenary; Reflections of St Mary's Parish 1904-2004, 2004*

## **Part 2: Analysis**

### **2.1 Statement of Importance**

***The unremarkable external appearance of this early 20<sup>th</sup> century church conceals an interior of rich polychromatic decoration, the fruit of pioneering studies in early Christian symbolism, art and liturgy carried out by the first parish priest, Fr Eugene Roulin.***

### **2.2 Historical background**

Filey developed as a resort in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the establishment of the vogue for sea bathing. The railway arrived in the 1840s, linking the town to Hull and York, and it became (and remains) a popular resort for Yorkshire people. Its heyday was in the years before the First World War, and it was at this time that St Mary's church was built.

Before the building of the church, the very few Catholics in the area depended on monthly visits by priests from Scarborough, and at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Mass was celebrated in a private house in Queen Street.

The building of St Mary's church was a consequence of events abroad. Driven from France in 1900 by anti-clerical legislation, the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Evron and one of their friends, Fr Eugene Roulin, looked to establish themselves in England. Fr Roulin had originally transferred himself to Solesmes in Belgium, but moved later to Farnborough Abbey in Hampshire before settling at Ampleforth. There he learnt that the Bishop of Middlesbrough was anxious to establish a parish at Filey, primarily to cope with the large number of summer visitors. It was decided that this would be served by Fr Roulin, although the Bishop stipulated that the parish

would only remain under the care of Ampleforth during Fr Roulin's time there, after which it would revert to the diocese.

Fr Roulin was an academic and a scholar, and was at the forefront of the liturgical and ecclesiological studies being pioneered at Solesmes at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He continued to write after his move to Yorkshire. His two main published works are *Linges, Insignes et Vetements Liturgiques* (1930) and *Nos Eglises: Liturgie, Architecture, Mobilier, Peinture et Sculpture* (1939). Both works were translated into English. He was a pioneer of the revival of early Christian forms, and his deep interest in art, architecture and symbolism is made very manifest in the church he built at Filey, intended by him as 'a miniature basilica' which moved away from 'a rather commonplace Gothic'. In particular they wanted to

Reproduce in their little church the venerable *ciborium* of those basilicas and the noble symbolism of early times: the ciborium to shelter the sacrificial altar with reverence, the symbolism to instruct the faithful, to aid their faith and piety, to elevate and rekindle their souls (quoted in Cramer, p.7)

All this is a long time before Sir Ninian Comper's comparable work in an Anglican context (e.g. at St Philip's Cosham, 1937). There seems little doubt that Comper would have read Roulin.

Roulin was not an architect, and to help him give physical expression to his ideas he enlisted the services of a little-known London architect called Andrew Prentice, an assistant to Thomas Colcutt. Roulin family money met most of the cost of the church, which was completed in 1906, and of the presbytery, built in 1910. Meanwhile, the Sisters of Evron had established a convent and Girls' High School in the town. They left Filey in 1967.

The small church was increasingly unable to accommodate the number of summer visitors and in 1961 a transept was added, giving off the sanctuary area.

In 2002 a parish hall was built on the north side of the church.

### **2.3 Setting**

The church is located in Brooklands, a suburban street of terraced houses dating from about 1900, quite close to the sea front and behind The Crescent, the stucco showpiece of the town.

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

The church is built in a Romanesque style, with some Italianate features. It is built of red Ruabon brick under a pantile roof. Nave with Italianate south tower/campanile and attached porch, shorter and lower, square ended chancel with red and white diapered brick treatment on east gable wall. The 1961 transept extends to the north from this, designed to harmonise with the original work. The most distinctive feature of the exterior, and a clue to the glories that lie within, is the unusual window tracery, reminiscent of Middle Eastern sun screens, but derived from early Christian sources (Cramer says a 4<sup>th</sup> century mosaic). Panels with monograms and symbols are set into the stout brick buttresses and campanile (both added later, says Cramer). The latter has an open belfry stage and a pyramidal top with a pineapple. The stone carving is by Milburn of York, who had worked at Ampleforth.

The interior has been altered but retains most of its original decoration and furnishings. As built the church consisted of a nave and short sanctuary, with an

elaborate ciborium over the high altar (see early photo bottom left). This has unfortunately been dismantled, but elements of it survive at the west end (martyrs shrine) and in the sacristy (altar to small weekday chapel, photo bottom right).

The polychromatic king post roof, the western gallery, the statues (by Zens of Ghent), the original altar candlesticks and sanctuary lamp were all derived from early Christian sources. The timber altar rails (now reused as frontals to the front row pews – originally the seating consisted of individual chairs) have an intersecting circular pattern of similar provenance.

The whole of the interior is painted. The artist(s) responsible for the figurative work has not been established, but the angels in the sanctuary are were apparently painted by two sisters from the Convent (Cramer, 10). On the nave walls between the windows are panels and paintings with carved and painted palm trees and representations of apostles and martyrs, males to the left and females to the right. The arch over the sanctuary is also painted with symbolic representations of the Trinity, the apostles, Mary and Joseph. Some of the detail here has been overpainted. Within the sanctuary, the wall to the left is lined with angels, with a frieze of lambs below. The east wall is painted a stark white, at variance with the prevailing character; early photographs show this hung with a curtain. The decoration on the north side has been lost with the opening up to form the transept, although curiously enough there is further painted decoration in this area, of similar character to the original. It seems unlikely that this should date from 1961, but there is no more credible explanation. More research is needed here. The 1961 work is hardly utilitarian; externally it is respectful to the original design, and inside it has a plaster ceiling, of Jacobean and secular rather than early Christian character.

The date of the reordering that involved the dismantling of the ciborium/baldacchino has not been established. A further reordering took place in 2002, with a new circular altar and other sanctuary fittings in keeping with the decorative scheme. The sanctuary has been arranged to face both towards the nave and the transept; a not wholly successful resolution of a difficult problem.