

St Mary, Helmsley

High Street, Helmsley, York, North Yorkshire



Part 1: Core data

1.1 Listed grade: *Not listed*

1.2 Conservation area: *Helmsley Conservation Area*

1.3 Architect: *Not established, possibly Bernard Smith*

1.4 Date(s): *1894*

1.5 Date of visit: *16 October 2006*

1.6 Name of report author: *Andrew Derrick*

1.7 Name of parish priest and/or contact(s) made on site: *Fr Alberic Stacpoole OSB*

1.8 Associated buildings: *None*

1.9 Bibliographic references:

Middlesbrough Diocesan Yearbook 2007
Helmsley Conservation Area Appraisal, Ryedale District Council and North York
Moors National Park Authority, not dated

Part 2: Analysis

2.1 Statement of Importance

Attractive late-19th century stone built Gothic chapel, its gable, roof and picturesque bellcote prominent in the northern approach to this historic town.

2.2 Historical background

Built in 1894; there is a memorial in the church to its founder, Austin Bateman (died 1917), who is buried at Ampleforth. The architect has not been established, but similarities with Bernard Smith's church at Kirkbymoorside, and the association of both buildings with Ampleforth, suggest that this too might be a design of Smith's.

2.3 Setting

The church lies at the northern end of the town, not far from the Anglican parish church, in a cul-de-sac offshoot of the High Street lined with two storey vernacular stone cottages. The church is set back from the frontage of these cottages. It is highly prominent in views approaching the town from the north (B1257). The Borough Breck lies close by, 'its bank creating an idyllic green thread running through the conservation area' (Conservation Area Appraisal).

2.4 Description of the building and its principal fittings and furnishings

Small single-cell Gothic chapel, built of local stone with ashlar dressings. The frontage is set back behind the building line of the adjoining cottages. The church is reached via two flights of stone steps leading up to a central porch. This is built of timber and glass and has a lean-to pantile roof. Gabled front elevation with a single light trefoil window on either side of the porch, a niche with a statue over the porch and a quatrefoil and datestone tablet in the gable. Above this, an openwork bellcote, its pyramidal roof covered with fishscale tiles.

The other sides of the church are hemmed in by neighbouring buildings, and are not visible in public views. There is a 3-light Decorated window with trefoils at the ritual east end. A small sacristy gives off the sanctuary area.

The interior is a plain single space, with white painted walls and a king-post roof with double purlins. The only furnishings of note are the modern series of 8 Stations of the Cross disposed around the Sanctuary walls, carved in 1980 by Rosamund Fletcher for St Benet's Hall, the Ampleforth hall of studies at Oxford (brought to Helmsley in 1990).