

All Saints Parish Church

Sherburn-in-Elmet



A Short History and Guide

£2.00

FOREWORD

Welcome to this lovely church, built to the glory of God and in honour of all the saints. The church has been a focus for Christian worship for at least 1000 years and remains the house of the living God, where the people of Sherburn and the surrounding villages still assemble for regular prayer and worship, to hear the word of God and to take joy and comfort in the church's sacraments at key points in their lives.

People are often pleasantly surprised to find such a magnificent church at Sherburn. The historical reasons for its ecclesiastical importance are made clear in the following pages and it remains in the minds of many local people the 'mother church' for a large area. Woven into the fabric of this holy place you will discover a rich tapestry of colourful history. Those of all faiths and none can enjoy the church as a fine architectural and artistic creation, but it is also a living community, as you will see if you are able to return to join us for a service.

This new guide, based on the pamphlet by R E England of 1931, but now fully updated by Paul Reid and Ken Stott, will help you to appreciate the rich heritage of our church. As you explore the building and enjoy its peace and tranquillity, may the Lord touch you with his love and richly bless you.

Revd Chris Wilton, Pentecost 2019

When Athelstan (c. 895-939), first King of all England, defeated the Danes at Brunanburg in 938, he gave the manors of Sherburn and Cawood to the Archbishop of York as a thank-offering. The King had founded a manor house on a site immediately to the north of the church, and Sherburn became a seat of the archbishops of York from this time until the middle of the 14th century. This explains the ecclesiastical importance and relative wealth of the original church (see below) and the exceptional size of the present church for its period.



Archbishop Walter de Gray (1215-1255) seems to have showed most interest in Sherburn as village and residence. As well as granting the town a 'charter of liberties', he obtained from King Henry III the charter for a weekly market on Wednesdays (still market day) in 1223 and the grant of an annual two-day fair in September. Other archbishops tended to favour their fortified palace at Cawood, and the manor house at Sherburn fell into disrepair. In 1361 Archbishop John Thoresby (1352-1373) approved the demolition of the manor house, enabling the stone to be reused in the construction of the eastern choir of York Minster. The fine quality of the stone, from nearby Huddlestone, persuaded the York chapter to take an 80-year lease on the quarry in 1385.

Sherburn had been from earliest times a town of some significance, effectively the 'capital' of the area, with Sherburn providing the mother church for many smaller chapels. For travellers making their way to York, or soldiers on the march, Sherburn must have seemed a civilised oasis in the heavily wooded district, interrupted only by rough paths and tiny hamlets. In 1086 the Domesday commissioners established the rateable value of Sherburn at £34, while that of Leeds was only £7.

There is clear evidence that the Saxon church which preceded the present building was a building of exceptional significance for its time. A flyleaf appended to the York Gospels in about 1020 (dated by the style of script)

offers an inventory of the church's property in Anglo-Saxon. This is such a rare survival and such an impressive inventory that it is quoted in full here:

This syndon tha cyrican madmas on Scirburnan. Thær synd twa Cristes bec & ij rodan & j aspiciens & i ad te levavi & ij pistol bec & i maesse boc & i ymener & i salter & j calic & j disc & twa mæsse reaf & iii mæsse hakelan & ij weoved sceatas & ij over broedels & iiij handbellan & vj hangende bellan

These are the church treasures in Sherburn. There are two Christ books (gospels) & 2 roods & 1 Aspiciens & 1 Ad te levavi (service books which begin thus) & two books of epistles & 1 mass book & 1 hymnal & 1 psalter & 1 chalice & 1 paten & two mass vestments & 3 chasubles & 2 woven altarcloths & 2 upper coverings & 4 handbells & 6 hanging bells.

There is documentary evidence that this church survived the harrying of the north by William I after the Norman Conquest, but it was not large enough to meet the needs of a place as important as Sherburn then was, and between about 1100 and 1120 a fine Norman church was erected on the



site. It consisted of an oblong nave and north and south aisles, all under a single, deeply pitched roof, with an apsidal sanctuary at the east end of the nave, and an apse at the end of each aisle (a balsa wood model in the south aisle illustrates how the church must have appeared externally). With its very low eaves it must have been rather like a huge tithe barn and very dark inside. This building is

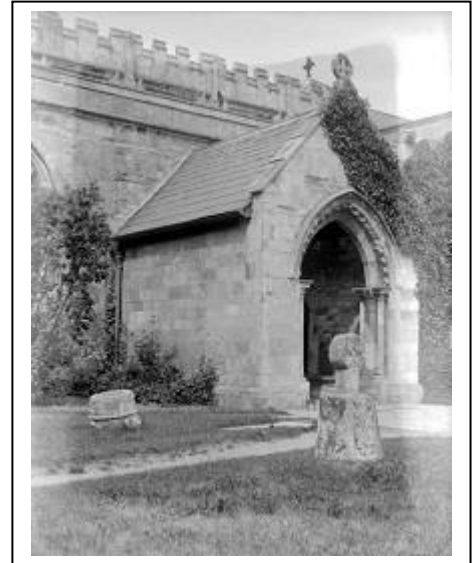
the direct ancestor of the present church, and although the church has been much modified and extended over the centuries, the oldest parts - the nave arcade and the lower part of the north aisle wall - have survived unaltered.

And now the tour of the church itself begins.....

The Church is entered through the PORCH on the south side. This porch may stand on medieval foundations and incorporates old stonework, but much of it dates from 1857 when Anthony Salvin undertook a very thorough restoration of the building. The outer arch may originally have been round, but was remodelled in transitional style, with a lightly pointed arch and waterleaf capitals below. On



the west jamb of this outer doorway are the arms of Reygate. The Reygate family owned Steeton Hall (near neighbouring South Milford) in the 14th century. On the east jamb are the arms of John Thoresby who, as Archbishop of York from 1352 to 1373, was feudal superior to the Reygates. The inner doorway has Norman mouldings which terminate in shields of arms.



Reygate reappears on the east side.

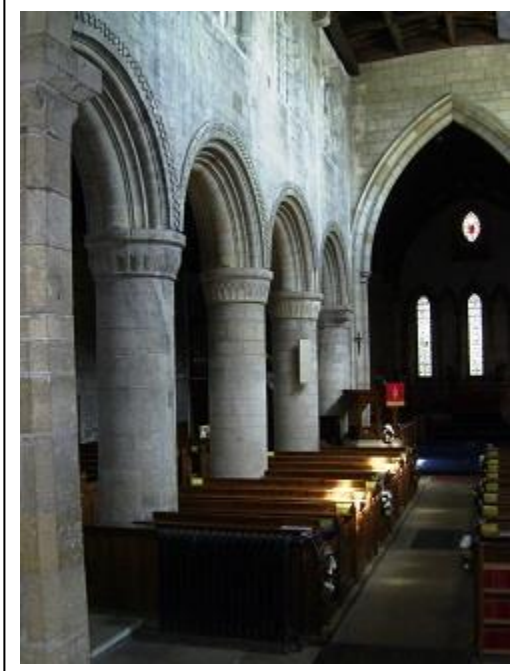
On the east side of the porch, an ogee-headed doorway gives access to the so-called CHANTRY CHAPEL. Until fairly recently it was possible to read an inscription above this door: "Robert Boswell" (vicar from 1506 to 1521), but the limestone of the porch has suffered badly from weathering. This was formerly a mortuary chapel. Authorities cannot agree on its date - some favour the end of the 15th century, while some think it was built c 1640, in the time of Laud.

Another idea is that it was built during the incumbency of Robert Boswell as a chantry for himself. The unusual and attractive shell piscina set in the south-eastern corner of the Chapel confirms that there was once an altar here. A



wooden communion table was set up some years ago, enabling the occasional use of the Chapel for weekday Eucharists.

On entering the church, it is the magnificent NAVE which commands our attention. This is Norman work of the early 12th century and is in



remarkably good condition. On each side, as we look down the nave from the tower arch, are three massive cylindrical columns, each a good metre in diameter, from which spring round arches, heavily moulded and decorated with overlapping scallop ornaments. The capitals, in cushion form, all differ slightly from one another (note the attractive rope-twist on the first column on the north side). We see here the influence of Durham, which no doubt reached Sherburn through the medium of the Norman work at Selby Abbey.

The oak and deal pews were put in at the 1857 restoration, and the oak pulpit dates from the same period. Each pew is numbered. During the 19th century it was still common for people to rent pews, and the Incorporated Society for promoting the enlargement, building and repairing of Churches and Chapels granted £150 towards the restoration of the church in 1858 'upon condition that 228 seats, numbered 1 to 38 inclusive, be reserved for the use of the poorer inhabitants of the parish'. Now it is 'first come, first served', although people still have favourite seats, of course.

The CLERESTORY may have been added initially in the 15th century but was possibly rebuilt rather later. The arms of Sir William Hungate of Saxton, which appear on the most easterly corbel on the south side of the clerestory suggest that he may have supervised or financed the rebuilding. The arms of Sir William, who died in 1634, are impaled with those of his wife, Elizabeth Middleton. The clerestory is lit on each side by four square-headed windows of three lights, filled with plain glass, and bringing light into the church.



An unusual feature of the Norman church is that it had aisles of equal width; a Norman church planned with aisles from the outset is a rarity in Yorkshire. Not only this, but the aisles were unusually wide for a Norman church. Since then, however, the south aisle has been widened (probably in the 15th century) and is now half as wide again as the north aisle.



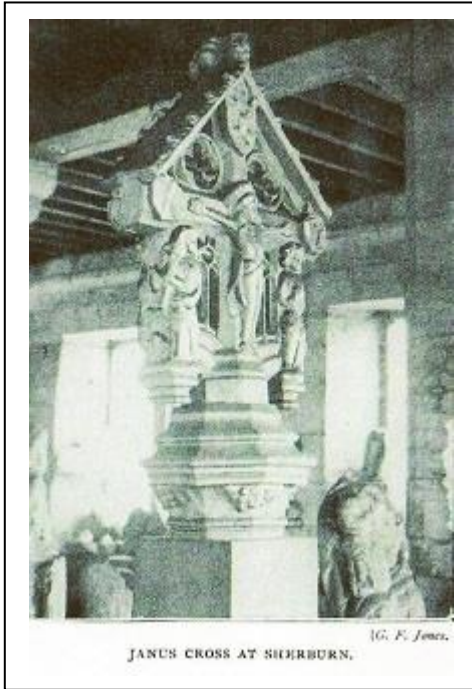
Immediately east of the south doorway, an unexpected double-ogee window looks into the Chantry Chapel. Masonry in the wall above shows clearly the blocked window in the perpendicular style which existed before the erection of the Chapel. A tablet on the wall records the restoration of the church in 1857, when the Revd James Matthews was vicar, at a cost of £2,386. The restoration work was undertaken by Thomas Hall

of Leeds to plans by the architect Anthony Salvin. Three services were held on the grand opening day, with Dr Hook, Vicar of Leeds, preaching ‘an excellent sermon’ at the morning service.

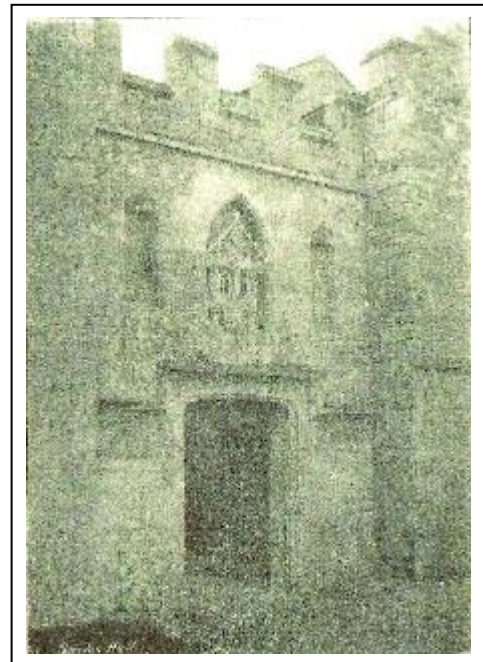
The south aisle has long been known as the STEETON CHAPEL, and the recesses beneath the windows no doubt contained effigies of the Reygates, early occupants of Steeton Hall. The three windows in the south wall are perpendicular in style. The centre window is glazed in memory of Eliza, who died in 1859, wife of the Revd James Matthews, who was vicar from 1831 to 1884. A close list of known incumbents will be found on a board at the back of the church.



Between the second and third windows is hung half of the JANUS CROSS head. The other half is fixed to the east wall of this aisle. This beautiful and extremely rare piece of 15th century sculpture was found in the ruins of the Chapel to St Mary and All Holy Angels, which once stood in the south-east corner of the churchyard and was by all accounts a sumptuously appointed shrine. Indeed it was no doubt the lavish contents of the chapel - such as the image of the Blessed Virgin bedecked with gold, silver, ruby and pearls which was bequeathed by Lady Eufemia Langton in 1463 - which encouraged the attention of iconoclasts and looters. We must be grateful that the Janus Cross survived with only the loss of its base and plinth.



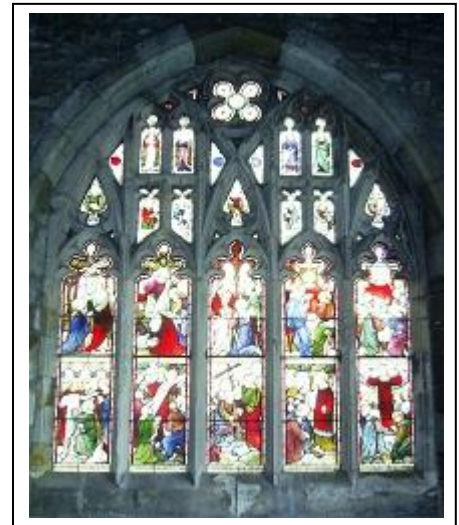
The Janus Cross is so called because, like the Roman god of doorways, it has near-identical images carved on each side, being originally carved as a single piece. An ownership dispute between vicar and churchwarden was settled by the cross being sawn vertically into two halves. The churchwarden took 'his' half away to Steeton Hall, where the niche where it hung is still clearly visible, while the other half remained in the church. A photograph by George Fowler Jones shows half of the Cross installed at Steeton Hall in 1886, but it must have been returned to the church a few years later. This half of the Cross has clearly suffered from exposure to the elements during its time at Steeton.



Both halves of the cross show Jesus crucified with the Virgin and St John, together with emblems of the Passion. On the 'Steeton' half, the shield above Jesus's head bears the emblem of the five wounds, in heart, hands and feet. The boss on the left shows the spear, reed and the sponge, while the right boss has the nails, hammer and pincers. The corresponding shield on the other half shows the seamless coat and the three dice. The left boss shows the lantern and sword, but the right boss is unclear. Even in its present state, the Janus Cross, with its wealth of pictorial and architectural details and its all-round symmetry, is a fascinating and moving artefact.



On the south wall, close to the easternmost windows of the aisle, is a tablet in memory of Peter Foljambe, who died in 1668 and was the only Foljambe actually to live at Steeton Hall. His arms are impaled with those of his wife, Jane Woodrove. The five-light east window of the south aisle is perpendicular in style and commemorates members of the Foljambe family. When Louise Blanche Foljambe (1842-1871) died at the young age of 29, her distraught husband placed over 60 memorials to his 'beloved wife' in all the churches with which the family had any connection, and her portrait appears within the quatrefoil at the top of the window.



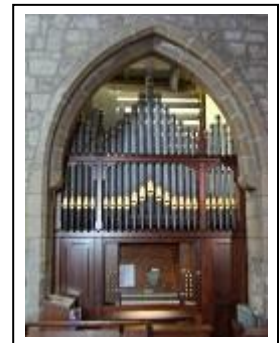
The piscina below the tablet to Peter Foljambe shows that there was once an altar here. Recently this square area has been cleared of its old pews and has been reinstated as a side chapel with a new communion table in place. A wide pointed arch to the left gives a clear view of the chancel.

The CHANCEL is as long as the nave and rather wider, which indicates the



original ecclesiastical importance of this church. The original apsidal sanctuary was enlarged into a square-ended chancel in the 13th century. In the 15th century, perpendicular windows were inserted. These were, for some reason, removed in 1857 and replaced by imitation Early English work. The east wall is pierced by three tall lancets, with a pointed 'vesica' (almond-shaped) window above. In the north wall one of the original lancets remains, immediately to the east of the organ chamber, and the outline of three others can be seen in this wall. The figures of the four evangelists can be seen in the windows on the south side, each with his emblem: St

Matthew (a man), St Mark (a lion), St Luke (an ox) and St John (an eagle). The ORGAN was made by Brindley and Foster of Sheffield and is dated 1875.



The NORTH AISLE is still the same width as when it was



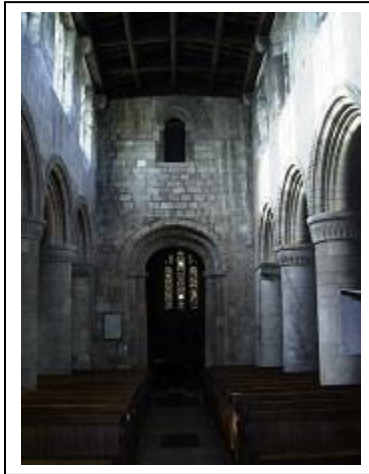
built in 1100-1120 and, at four metres, is unusually wide for a Norman aisle. Between the most easterly pillar of the nave arcade and the organ casing a portion of the wall is shaped like the arc of a circle. This is the springing of the Norman apse which formerly terminated this aisle. Between the first and second windows from the east is a blocked doorway and under the centre window is a Norman slit splayed inwardly. When the aisle was built, its north wall was only some two

metres high, with the eaves of the steeply pitched roof just above this slit and at the level of the present window sills.



In the 14th or 15th centuries, the wall was raised and the present windows inserted. The apse was replaced by a square-ended extension which formed a chantry chapel, thought to have belonged to Huddleston Hall. The Langtons were owners of Huddleston quarry at that time. Their arms appear on the southwest buttress of the tower and in the west window.

The lower stages of the TOWER date from 1180-1200 but, as extra weight

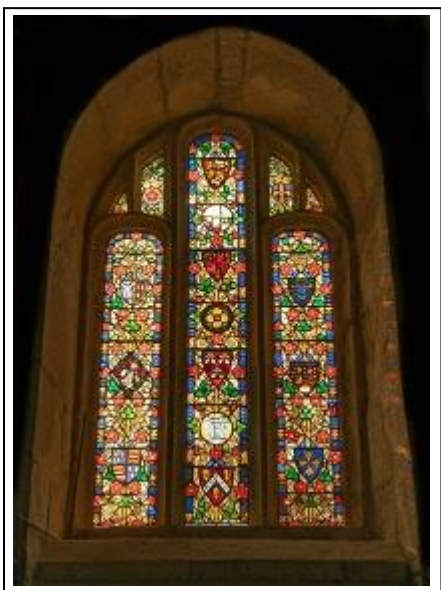


was added, it proved too much, and heavy buttressing was necessary, both outside and inside the church. Two massive Victorian buttresses the church. The tower opens into the nave and aisles by rounded arches, which enclose a cross vault carried on chamfered diagonal ribs. Directly under the tower arch is a fine 14th-century grave slab, carved with a



cross, chalice and missal - clearly the memorial to a priest. Above this arch is a round-headed window in Norman style which opens into the ringing chamber, enabling the ringers to follow the course of the services.

The WEST WINDOW contains the oldest stained glass in the church. In the



left light are the arms of John Kemp, Archbishop of York (1426-1452) and subsequently Archbishop of Canterbury. with the figure of a saint and the Royal Arms below; the middle light shows the arms of England, of Vipont and of Langton, as well as the familiar Trinity symbol (God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but none is the other); the right light has the arms of Ryther, Thomas Earl of Lancaster and Warde. Thomas of Lancaster led the rebellion of the nobles against Edward II and became something of a local saint and martyr after his execution at Pontefract castle in 1322. There was once a

chantry to him in the church, along with chantries to St Mary Magdalene, St Roque, St Catherine and St Anthony.

The church has eight bells and an enthusiastic complement of bellringers. It is also popular with visiting ringers. Bell numbers 1 and 2 were cast in 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Number 3 was cast in 1878, the gift of William Day of Eversley Garth; it is inscribed: 'The Lord to praise/My voice I'll raise', The remaining bells have Latin inscriptions and are dated 1750. Two at least are by E Sellar of York.



The work of maintaining this fine building continues. The glass of the west window was restored in the 1960s, and the roof-lead, much of which had been stolen, has been gradually replaced with substitute materials. The Chantry Chapel has been re-floored and carpeted. The church lighting has been overhauled and redesigned, including external floodlighting, and gates installed to the porch. In 1987 a Community Programme team built our Church Hall, with the Revd David Post involved at every stage, from initial fundraising to carving the foundation stone. The Church Hall is attractively faced with identical stone to the church, obtained when two cottages at Newthorpe (adjacent to the old Huddlestone quarry) were demolished.

Work has continued apace in the new millennium. In 2003 the new Bellringers Window glass was installed in the westernmost window of the south aisle. The brilliant stained glass in this window, celebrating bellringing through the ages, was commissioned and paid for by the ringers of this church. It was designed and made by Ann Sotheran of York, and installed by her on 15 December 2003. The window was dedicated by His Grace the Archbishop of York in a special service on 22 June 2004.



More recently a small window of abstract design was inserted in the bellringing chamber in 2013 memory of two ringers, Derek and Margaret Bottomley. This window can be glimpsed from the sanctuary through the window in the tower.



In 2009 the organ was completely restored by Andrew Carter of Wakefield, with a new pedalboard added and the external pipework expertly repainted. The organ was reopened with a recital by Simon Lindley on 7 February 2010 and rededicated by the Bishop of Selby on 25 March 2010.

Between 2013 and 2019 the window glass of the east and west windows and the chancel south windows has been cleaned and re-leaded and the masonry of the west window restored. 2014 saw the repainting of the clock face, the repair of the crumbling tower steps to the ringing chamber and the repair of the south clerestory. Repairs to the north clerestory have just been completed.



Recently some pews have been removed at the front of the nave. The area has been levelled and stone flagged, this will provide a flexible space for services and events. The newly installed lighting in the church is both more economical and brighter. A glass draught lobby has replaced the previous rather forbidding pine structure and offer a more welcoming aspect to visitors.

All this work has been financed through various fundraising events, legacies and (not least) through donations from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the All Churches Fund.

Another ongoing project, of course, is the regular updating and reprinting of this church guidebook, supplemented by a separate guide to the windows. We hope that you have found it helpful in your visit to the church and that it has given you an overview of the continuity of worship in this building for some 900 years.

It is our confident hope that future generations will value and preserve our heritage, as past generations have done for so many years, and will continue to be inspired in their worship and celebrations by this fine building in its proud hilltop setting.

Written and Printed by All Saints' Church, Sherburn in Elmet
With the support of The Heritage Lottery Fund