

Old St Oswald, Fulford

Report by Eric Gee for RCHM

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St Oswald's

The church of St. Oswald at Fulford is a small structure consisting of a nave, chancel and tower. It is constructed mainly of stone, in places good ashlar but otherwise of rag & all the stone is magnesian limestone. The west tower however is built of brick and the roofs are of fish scale tiles.

The manor of Gate Fulford was given to St Mary's Abbey in York by Stephen, Earl of Brittany and in the first half of the 12th century a chapel was built here, oblong in plan and with no structural chancel.

Later in the same century the chancel was built, and at some time in the 13th century the E. wall of the chancel was rebuilt. In the first half of the 14th century a large window was inserted in the chancel E. wall and the upper part of it was again rebuilt, and on the 10th July 1319 a Commission was issued to Hugh, Bishop of Damascus, to dedicate the chapel of St Oswald, belonging to St. Mary's abbey in York, and the churchyard. Apparently the great plague had upset the normal working of the parish and there had not been any burials for some time owing to the pestilence (Lawton's Collections (1842), 4th quoting Torre's MSS). The nave and chancel were re-roofed in the 15th century.

In the 17th century windows were put in the south walls of the chancel and nave, replacing smaller ones, and at the same time the roofs were re-modelled.

The tower was probably built in 1795, for on the 19th June of that year a faculty was granted for a vestry and a gallery to be erected; the present plaster barrel vaults are of early 19th cent. date. A door in the S. wall of the chancel was perhaps rebuilt when a faculty was granted on the 13th Feb. 1819 to re-per the church and erect a new pulpit (Lawton, ibid).

Around 1870 the gallery at the west end of the nave was removed, the walls of chancel and nave were plastered and a dado of pale pine, some tall pine and the floor were fitted. (MSS notes by General SANDS). The outer roofs were retiled at this time also, but a new parish church, built to the designs of J. P. Pincheff, had already been dedicated in May 1865, and henceforth the old church has been kept in repair, but there have been no major works except the insertion or rebuilding of a window in the south wall of the nave and a general restoration.

In 1936 a restoration costing £126 was carried out by W. ARNOLD under the direction of F. PHENY, architect. Plaster was stripped from the walls, the dado removed, some stone-work renewed and wherever both doors & the E. window in the N. wall of the chancel were opened up. (MSS notes by General SANDS).

The noteworthy feature about the church is that originally it was one of a group of Norman chapels in the vicinity of York, which

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at the juncture of chancel and nave externally it can be seen that the rough masonry of the chancel is built against the better ashlar of the nave.

Externally the E. wall has a chamfered plinth for three quarters of its length and there is some diagonal tooling at the bottom (late 12th/early 13th century). The upper part is of 14th century date but there is much patching at the north end. Internally it is of three builds; the original thickness is shown at the bottom and two feet above the present plank floor it sets in and is probably of 13th century date; both these sections are of coursed rag-ashlar. Above again is a large 14th century window, modernised externally and of the same date as the good ashlar of the upper part of the wall.

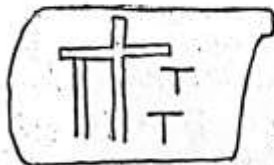


The E. window has a two-centred head, chamfered reveals & no label on either side; there are three bifurcated lights under geometrical tracery. The central light has mullions which have been cut away at the bottom. The reveals show red colouration under coats of whitewash and a dove near the bottom of the S. side shows course tooling of 14th century type. To the S. of the window & set in the lowest part of the wall is an oblong recess (cumbrey).

The north wall is of rubble and has a chamfered water table externally, under four courses of seventeenth century brick. Internally there is a straight joint at the N.E. corner representing the line of the original E. wall & corresponding to the lowest courses of it. In the wall are two small round headed windows with the heads in one piece, bold oplat & a round headed rib arch, the remains of which have good diagonal tooling (c. 1150). On the outer side can be seen holes for iron wind bars. To the E. of the easternmost window is a deep square cumbrey.

The south wall of the chancel has been patched, but a section of it to the east has a plinth, is of coursed rag ashlar, and the courses correspond with the first two builds of the east wall. There is no sign of a window and this walling is probably post 1200 but earlier than 1340. The remainder of the wall above a point five courses above the floor level mark does not course through and must be later despite the external water table, above which are the brick courses as before. A window in the W. half of the wall has a square head, two square headed lights, chamfered reveals externally & a plastered brick mullion. At the head of its oplat rib arch is a large beam of adged & roused oak. (17th century)

On a store under the window outside are graffiti consisting of a cross and some T's.



A doorway to the west has a two-centred head & chamfered surround, with early 19th century chiselling and a segmental headed rib arch of brick. The inner oplat of the doorway at the bottom are probably medieval.

There is no evidence that the first was a chancel arch and much of the E. wall of the nave is now modern, but there is still some 12th century walling in situ at the north end. Built in on the N. side of the chancel opening are

- ① The head of a small Norman window
- ② part of a round shaft
- ③ a small scalloped capital with flecking (all c. 1150)

The nave N. wall is of two construction; that to the E. is externally of large blocks of ashlar, with fine mortar joints, & diagonal tooling is visible at the bottom, where the work has protruded it. There are good quoins & at the top is a chamfered water table. Internally this part of the wall is of coarse large rubble, with bands of smaller rubble at intervals. A disturbance here almost certainly indicates the blocking of a window. The remainder of the wall has fallen at some time & shows at least three rebuilds. (Note that two lines in the masonry at the end are misleading as they are recessed jambs of a Norman window).

The S. wall of the nave is externally chiefly of early 12th century date, with ashlar & water table like the E. end of the N. wall. Two windows in the wall each have a square head, three square-headed lights, & played internal opening & oak beam at the head. The window to the east is of 17th century date & the other, which has brick splay & a sill formed of a 14th century coffin lid, is modern. The rebuilt doorway has a lofty round headed nave arch with well toolledvoussoirs and jambs & externally the continuous surround - much lower than the nave arch - is chamfered (12th century). Note that two sections of the water table of the S. wall to the E. still retain an incised chevron ornament & are quirked.

The W. wall of the nave has been rebuilt in medieval times and then almost entirely rebuilt again in brick in the 18th century, when the tower was added; it is pierced by a simple round headed lower arch.

The tower is of two stages internally & of one externally. It is of buff-red brick with red brick quoins and dressings. The E. elevation has no features; the N. wall is plain except for a simple oblong belfry-light and the S. wall is featured. In the W. wall is a large ogival-headed window at ground floor level with red brick arch & jambs. It is of three lights, with a high tracery & has a frame of oak, well pegged. (of early 18th century character). The W. wall has a plinth & some stone base courses. The pyramidal roof is of red fish scale tiles like all the other external roofs.

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In the chancel the wall plates are moulded & battlemented & of 15th century date although much repaired.

at the centre of each wall plate is the sawn-off end of a contemporary hammer beam. That to the N. has attached to it a head with flowing hair and long beard and the other is carved with a winged grotesque. There are remains of similar beams at the W. end.

at a later date - most probably in the 12th century the roof was heightened, and three large beams with chamfered lower edges were fitted. The whole roof was given a plaster lanel vault in the early 19th century.

The nave roof has two large cross beams of 17th century date & one modern one and otherwise has an early 19th century ceiling as before. The roof in the tower is of oak with chamfered joints and a trap door (18th cent).

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