

St Oswald's Church, Filey

'I was really bowled over by your church on the coast – such power, such presence, such character, such defiance against the elements, a coastal cathedral on the cliff top. You have to admire the community that built it there. AND GOD REALLY SPOKE TO THE ARCHITECT WITH HIS DEMANDS!!! I was really moved by the building' Byron Howard, Sculptor

Filey Parish Church is situated on top of the cliff overlooking Filey Bay, and near the Country Park. The weather vane mounted on the tower is in the shape of a fish which is an ancient Christian symbol, but could also be symbolic of the fishing trade in Filey. Fishermen used to use the Church to guide them safely into port as they came home with their catch.

The Parish Church has many centuries of history behind it, it was being built during the reigns of Henry II, Richard I, John and Henry III, and was probably founded by the Augustinian Friars of Bridlington. The land came into the ownership of Walter de Gant of Hunmanby who founded Bridlington Priory between 1114 and 1124. The earliest work dates from 1180 and the Church was substantially complete by 1230. It is dedicated to St. Oswald, he was King of Northumbria and one of the founders of Christianity in the north, and was killed in battle in 641. The tower was originally to have been built at the West end of the church, but the supporting pillar is out of perpendicular and that is probably the reason that the scheme was aborted and the tower was built in the middle.

The Church went through several periods of restoration, and in the 19th Century many of the ancient features were obliterated, and the walls were white washed. In 1885 the plaster was removed revealing the original stonework for the first time in 700 years.

Early in the 20th Century a stone altar was found in the stone floor in the centre of the church & is probably pre reformation, a small cross can be seen on each of the four corners which are thought to represent where the nails pierced Christ's hands and feet when he was nailed to the cross, and a large one in the centre of the altar is thought to represent where the sword pierced His side.

In 1908 a fire at the West end of the church destroyed the organ, this was replaced by the present organ which was built on the side of the chancel.

In the year 2000 a meeting room at the West end of the church was completed, it has a separately controlled heating system and incorporates a kitchen and toilet.

There are many historical artefacts to be seen, including fine specimens of Sedilia and the Reredos. The front panels of the altar where Angels were painted by Miss Wheelhouse of Scarborough (known to exhibit at the Royal Pulpit, and on the wall is a crudely carved figure of a Boy Bishop, which was saved from destruction when someone offered to buy a workman a pint of ale if he would desist from smashing it up. There are also beautiful stained glass windows.

Due to historical interest volunteers welcome visitors from near and far most days from 10.30a.m. to 12.30p.m. and school parties are welcome to come for guided tours. The church is a popular venue for joyful family celebrations such as weddings and baptisms, but also where families come to mourn as they commemorate the lives of loved ones at funerals. The church is surrounded by a massive graveyard, which is located in a very peaceful and picturesque setting, where Filey people have buried their loved ones for centuries, and where they still tend their graves.

Generations of Filey people have worshipped in St. Oswald's and on Sunday mornings the six bells in the bell chamber peal out, calling people to worship still, God's word continues to be read and preached here and the Sacraments are celebrated.

written by Anne Platt