

All Saints Church Slingsby



The Nave

Visitors entering the church will probably agree that there is an immediate feeling of light and spaciousness which is most attractive, the high clerestory windows providing a very bright interior. All the windows are in Perpendicular style, as of the 15th century, and the Victorian restorers were careful to preserve the original size and plan of the old building, incorporating a number of features of the earlier church.

The two great pillars on the north side are the original Norman ones (11th century) and are whiter and more damaged than their opposites. One of them has crosses deeply carved into the stone; the arch between the north-side pillars and the corbel to westward (with two holes in it) is composed of original stones re-used. The Victorians – not always praised for their restorations – thus left us with a fair idea of what the mediaeval building would have looked like.

Each carving on the ends of the oak bench-seats is unique. The use of an open design for seating contributes to our sense of space much more than had enclosed pews been provided. Various furnishings and memorials are to be seen around the walls. A beautifully crafted board records the names of 101 men of Slingsby who served in the Great War of 1914 to 1918. Fifteen of these gave their lives and are commemorated in a tablet on the north wall. A later memorial names the four who died on active service in the Second World War of 1939 to 1945. There is also a memorial of Thomas Snowball, bearing the little mouse of Thompson's of Kilburn; Thomas sang in the choir here for seventy-two of his eighty-two years.

The screen beneath the tower was erected in memory of the Reverend Arthur St.Clair Brooke, Rector of Slingsby for forty-six years, and his wife. Mr. Brooke was a learned historian of this part of North Yorkshire, a keen observer of its wildlife and countryside matters and author of a comprehensive history of Slingsby and the castle.

The marble and mosaic tablet on the pillar near the lectern is by one Salviati, and commemorates Doctor Lascelles who died in 1884, the much loved local physician for forty-six years.

The Ceiling

Following the discovery of a massive attack of dry rot in the 1965, much of the roof of the church was replaced, the enormous cost of £8000 being raised by the villagers and other friends of Slingsby. The full effect of the bright painting in bold colours can be seen best with the choir lighting switched on.

The Chancel

The Early English-style arch rests on foliated capitals above a colourful example of Victorian "Gothic Revival" in the shafts of Devonshire marble, typical of the elaborate design and careful craftsmanship everywhere evident, but especially in this part of the building. The floor is of richly-patterned tilework and there are superbly carved end-pieces on the choir-stalls: notice the monk, nun, queen and king, and the intricate work on pulpit, lectern and priests' stalls, all the work of one "Mr. Bodice, of Birmingham."

The Organ

A fine instrument of 1868 built by Harrison and Harrison of Durham and enlarged with a second manual and pedal organ in 1924. It was completely overhauled and re-voiced in 1989.

The Sanctuary

The Altar was made in the 17th century for the pre-1867 church. Under the East window carvings in the alabaster reredos depict the instruments of Our Lord's Passion – whips, thirty pieces of silver, joiners' tools, dice, the Cross, spear, Crown of Thorns and the Shroud.

The window in the south wall commemorates the Reverend William Walker, Rector from 1834 to 1855 and another very valuable historian of the area.

The East and West Windows

The Jesse window in the Sanctuary is by Clayton and Bell, in memory of George, 6th Earl of Carlisle (1773-1848.) This was the earl who planted the avenue of trees on the Balk (= edge), the road leading south up to the crossroads on the Street. By the same makers is the window in the vestry under the tower in memory of Reverend Charles Hardwick, later to be appointed Archdeacon of Ely. Charles had a boyhood friend John Close, to whom he had joked at the time of their parting to make their separate ways in the world, that “when next we meet, you’ll be Lord Mayor and I a Bishop.” John Close was indeed – three times – Lord Mayor of York, and it seems likely that only his early death at age 37, just after moving to Ely, prevented Charles’ later preferment as he had foretold.

The Lady Chapel

Sometimes known as the South Chapel, or the Wyville Chapel. The Norman knight buried here can be dated from the style of his armour to around 1250 (reign of Henry III.) A famous 17th century historian and antiquarian, Roger Dodsworth, noted on a visit here in 1619 there was “ a talbot (= dog) couchant at his feet”, but alas today dog – and feet – are no longer there. The Arms on the knight’s shield (now shown on a plaque above the effigy) were those of the Wyville family, Lords of the Manor in those times, and descendants of Humphrey d’Wyville who came over from Normandy with the Conqueror. There is a tradition that this knight took part in the ninth, and final, Crusade of the French king Louis IX, which expedition was supported by Prince Edward and 150 English knights after the Battle of Evesham. Tradition surrounds him further, that he “finally killed the Serpent which devoured travellers on the Malton Road”.

The family name is preserved today in Wyville Hall at the corner of Greendyke Lane, by the farm shop. The descendants of the old Slingsby Wyvilles now have their seat at Constable Burton in the Dales, but still maintain links with the village here.

The tomb-slab next to the knight’s is that of the Reverend Sir John Fons, Rector of Slingsby from 1479 to 1508; as rector he would have wished to exercise his right to be buried in the chancel of his parish church. His funerary brass tablet is displayed in the south aisle.

The little oval window high up on the east wall is in memory of Bridget Spenceley. John Close and his wife are commemorated in the windows ‘Justice’ and ‘Charity’ in the south wall.

The Tower

The tower contains three bells cast in 1803 and a clock by James Harrison of Hull of 1838. The clock is hand-wound every week and keeps remarkably good time. Some of the lower courses of the tower contain stones with carvings on them, broken-up mediaeval grave-slabs apparently used by the 15th century builders and carefully put back by the Victorian restorers in their original positions. The two gargoyles on the north side of the tower are also originals.

Tower, bells, clock-face and weathervane were all overhauled and restored in 1984.

The Churchyard

Outside the vestry door (north-east corner of the church) is the path leading to the Old Rectory, built in 1740 and now a private house. The boiler house is immediately underneath the priests' vestry, notwithstanding which " for the Rector's comfort a fine fire-place is provided" separately from the central heating system; notice the double chimney-stack above.

The oldest gravestones are close to the porch, and many are unfortunately no longer legible. There is a Celtic-type cross near the main gate on the left of the path in memory of Captain Robert Ward RN, who was a midshipman on Admiral Nelson's flagship at Trafalgar. The Lange family of Slingsby is directly descended from the Captain.

This information is taken from 'The Parish Church of All Saints Slingsby' compiled by Philip Roberts, 1990.

More details on the building can be found in the Church.