

# St. Andrew's Church



St. Andrew's in Roker

## The structure

The church may justly be considered worthy of its description as a 'Cathedral of the Arts and Crafts Movement' and is therefore of national and international importance.

Architect Edward Prior was hired to design the new £6,000 church, with Priestman – a man of "radical taste and strong individualism" – working alongside him. The result is a handsome building constructed of grey magnesian limestone quarried locally at Marsden, which is 165 feet long with a tower over 80 feet high.

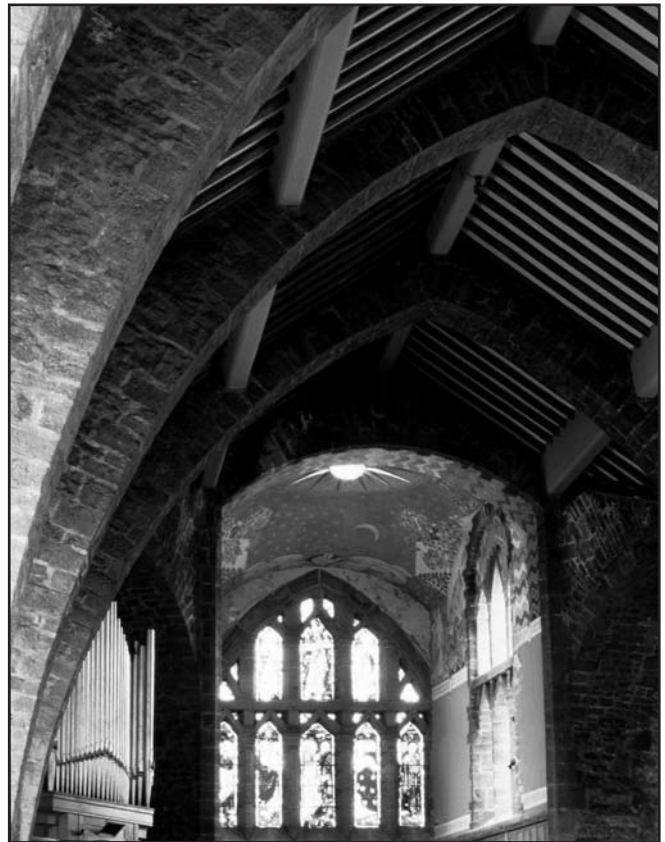
Within the tower and over the sanctuary dome there is a belfry and bell loft containing ten bells that were commissioned after World War II. It featured simple, yet stunning architecture designed to ensure worshippers saw and heard everything that happened, plus a nave shaped like the upturned hull of a ship.

An Arts and Crafts-style Lych Gate was built as a War Memorial in 1920 after the 1914-18 war. A large church hall, named after Priestman, was added to the west end of the church in 1927-1928.

## A brief history

In the early 20th century as the Edwardian seaside resort of Roker grew, the need for a new church soon followed. When a public appeal was launched in 1903, it failed to bring in enough money, but wealthy shipyard owner John Priestman eventually stepped in as the principal benefactor the following year. He and his family had been considering a memorial to their late mother, Jane Priestman in whose memory the church is dedicated. Near the North West doorway is a stone tablet, with its inscription cut by the hand of Eric Gill, which commemorates Jane Priestman.

Finally after several years of planning St. Andrew's was commenced in 1906 and was completed and consecrated in July 1907.



Interior of the church

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## Fittings and furnishings

William Morris carpets and Ernest Grimson furniture are just two of the Arts and Crafts movement gems on show at the church.

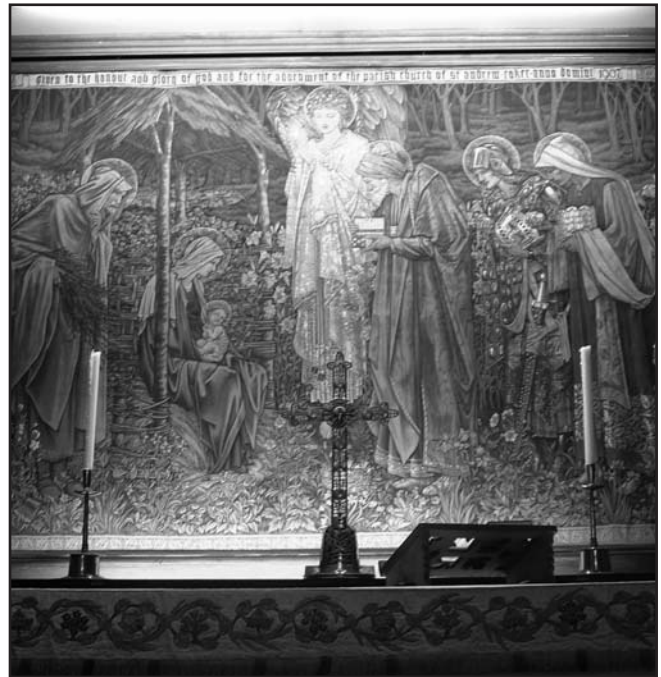
There are two magnificent windows to be seen in the church. The east window has stained glass, by A H Payne of Birmingham, depicting the Ascension of Christ. The Lady Chapel window, also by Payne, is based on the text 'Come unto me all who are heavy laden and I will give you rest,' and also includes people of all classes of Edwardian society.

The Pulpit with its sounding board over, is Jacobean in style but without the decoration associated with that period. It has a simple 'wine glass' stem and wooden hexagonal top with finely carved baluster rail and newel post.

The Font is a circular stone bowl carried on four legs standing upon a raised plinth and is large enough to totally immerse an infant. It is Celtic in appearance but Pre-Raphaelite in style. The dome cover is a later addition given as a gift and is a product of Thompson of Kilburn – his famous 'mouse' trade mark is carved upon the rim. Architect Randall Wells acted as clerk of works responsible for the building work and construction and his skill in bas-relief carving can be seen on the font.

Commissioned by the architect Edward Prior, the Lectern is the crowning glory of Ernest Grimson's work. Modelled on a mediaeval cantors lectern it is made of ebony inlaid with ivory, mother-of-pearl and silver, with a double sided swivelling top and candle brackets of polished wrought iron. It was designed to turn for the reading of Old and New Testament readings.

Of all the furnishings in the Sanctuary the most eye-catching is the Tapestry – by Burne-Jones. The subject is the 'Adoration of the Magi' based on the Cologne legend and is one of several copies produced.



'Adoration of the Magi' by Burne-Jones

The Cross and the Candlesticks on the High Altar Table are made of wrought iron and are the work of Ernest Grimson. The Processional Cross, though commissioned at a later date, is of a similar design.

Finally the Mural in the chancel, which extends from each side of the sanctuary walls and over the ceiling, can be seen in its entirety. The subject is 'The Creation' and is painted in an 'egg-tempera' on plaster in 1927 by Macdonald Gill, the brother of Eric Gill. Its rich imagery contrasts with the plain beauty of the nave.

## Find out more about St. Andrew's Church

For more information, visit the Local Studies Centre at Sunderland City Library and Arts Centre, which has books on St. Andrew's such as:

- 'St. Andrew's Church', Roker by Garnham, Trevor
- 'Tapestry of Tales', a book of memories, by the Parish of Monkwearmouth

More information and images can also be found on the following web site:  
[www.parishofmonkwearmouth.co.uk](http://www.parishofmonkwearmouth.co.uk)