



ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, HOYLANDSWAINE, NEAR PENISTONE.

The Church of St John the Evangelist, Hoylandswaine

The Church of St John the Evangelist at Hoylandswaine is a small, simple, Victorian parish church consecrated in 1869 to serve the needs of a parish of (then) c.900 souls living in this upland Pennine village, two miles from Penistone. Its congregation was employed mostly as agricultural workers, nailmakers and miners. With an adjacent vicarage and new village school, it was built on land donated by Francis W T V Wentworth of Wentworth Castle, Stainborough and the buildings were largely funded by the Stanhope family of nearby Cannon Hall. The church cost around £3,000 to build.

The architect commissioned by the Spencer Stanhopes to design the buildings, was William Henry Crossland, a well-known and highly successful architect who had been a pupil of George Gilbert Scott. By the end of his life, Crossland had built seventeen churches and restored at least another thirteen. He was the architect of a number of buildings including in his native Huddersfield as well as three very significant buildings of the Victorian era— Rochdale Town Hall, Holloway Sanitorium at Virginia Water and the Royal Holloway College at Egham.

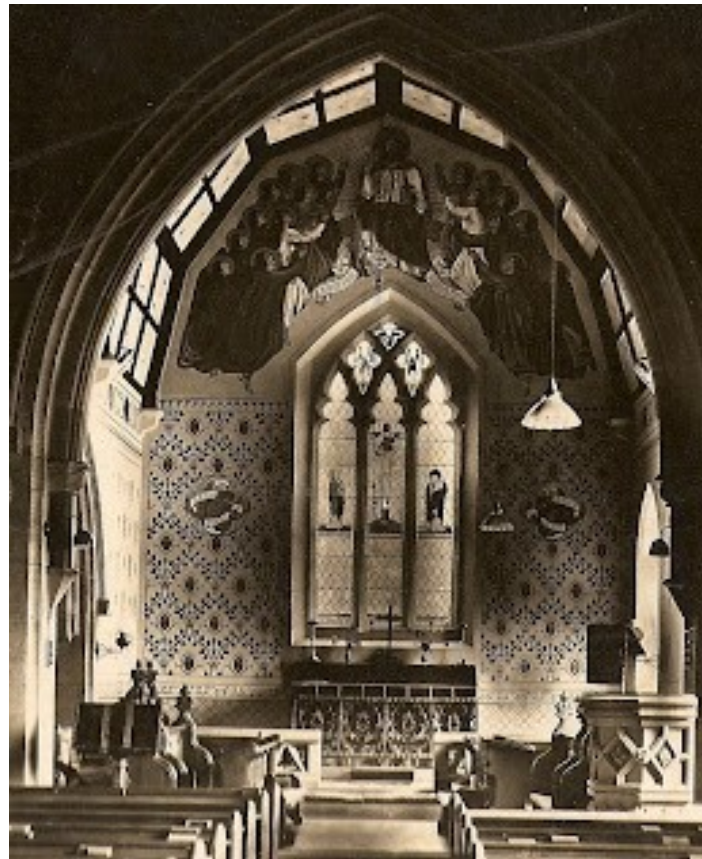
Built of local stone, the church is rectangular in shape with a large tower at the west end rising to seventy feet with battlements and pinnacles. However, although its design is simple, this solid place of worship has artistic connections which mark it out for special attention.



The Ascendancy of Christ Wall Painting by John Roddam Spencer Stanhope

The family of Spencer Stanhope of Cannon Hall included artists, ceramicists, sculptors. The most well-known was John Roddam Spencer (1829 – 1908), the second son of John Spencer Stanhope and Elizabeth Wilhelmina Coke. A member of the Pre-Raphaelite group of painters, he decorated the east wall of the new church above the window with a mural depicting the ascendancy of Christ with saints and angels

The mural adorned the east wall until, in 1961, with damp seeping into the wall and affecting the artwork, it was decided, by some parishioners, to paint over the mural and the wall painting disappeared from view. Happily, the determination of a group of locals supported by experts and arts and lottery funding, oversaw the careful restoration of the painting and in 2014, this little church proudly revealed to the village and the nation's followers of the Pre Raphaelite artists, the mural restored to glory on the east wall. It is highly likely that the design of the stained glass in the church's east window was by Edward Burne-Jones. It was commissioned by John Roddam Spencer for the Spencer Stanhopes in memory of Louisa, Roddam's sister who died in 1867 during the building of the church. It was made at the decorative arts firm of Morris, Marshall and Faulkner & Co at their premises at Queen Square, Bloomsbury, London.



The Ascendency of Christ by John Roddam Spencer above the east window prior to being painted over in 1961



The restored painting on the east wall (2014)



The Crucifixion-Stained Glass by Edward Burne-Jones

(The window by Morris and Co to a design by Edward Burne-Jones)

Decoration of churches was an important part of the business of this company founded by William Morris of the Arts and Crafts movement and Edward Burne Jones and other members of the Pre Raphaelite circle of artists. A great wave of church building and remodelling sweeping England, resulted in increased demand for ecclesiastical decoration and especially for stained glass.

Roddy, as Roddam Spencer was known, was closely associated with the work of the Pre Raphaelite artists who contributed to the decoration of the church. It is likely that he also knew the architect, W H Crossland. Because of the involvement of the Spencer Stanhopes over one hundred and fifty years ago, this small village church has reason to be proud of its very special artistic connections.