

# Story that began in the Domesday Book

A LARGE grassed and tree-lined churchyard, now a municipal park, surrounds All Saints' Church in Batley, an oasis of quiet in the centre of this former medium-sized mill town, just up the road from Dewsbury.

It is an ancient place – there is mention of a church here in the Domesday Book – and this is the third pre-Reformation edifice on the site.

A Perpendicular building of the 1480s, it also incorporates something of these earlier churches, including the 14th Century chancel arch.

Externally, the most noticeable structure is the west tower with its distinctive, jutting-out parapet, similar to but more pronounced than that at neighbouring Birstall – giving it the flavour of a medieval castle.

In the churchyard are several very interesting grave slabs and a recumbent effigy, probably from the 13th Century and, according to legend, a school-master murdered by his students!

I have to confess that although I have lived only a few miles away for nearly 20 years I had not been inside the church until I visited it for this article. This has been very remiss of me, because there is much to see in what must be one of the most interesting churches in this part of our Diocese.

Standing at the west end of the nave, by the stone font of 1662, you look east and notice first the interesting chancel arch with its original rood staircase intact.

Moving into the chancel it is the two side chapels that most deserve our attention. The Mirfield Chapel on the north side houses the late medieval tomb effigy of Sir William and Lady Anne Mirfield – related to the Savile family – who founded the chapel in about 1485, the year Henry VII came to the throne.

There are Mirfield shields around the tomb itself, but these are sadly very worn. The alabaster figures on top are very fine: their unusual brownish

## Sights of the Diocese



Medieval castle: The jutting parapet of the west tower gives the flavour to this Perpendicular building .



Fine interior: Chancel arch and two side chapels deserve a visit.

colour may be the result of preservative treatment at some time. The windows here contain two fragments of heraldic glass, also relating to the Mirfields.

The Copley Chapel on the opposite side of the chancel is bordered on two sides by a fine 16th Century oak Parclose screen, its cornice band decorated with shields relating to the Copley family of Batley Hall.

Before leaving the church be sure to notice a composition of 14th Century glass in one of the north aisle windows. I wonder if the figure of a man is part of a Crucifixion scene, and depicts one of the two thieves crucified alongside Our Lord?

This church is well worth a visit. A detailed colour brochure has recently been published. Look out for it at local tourist information points.

