

Dating an old photograph of the Church



Photograph enhanced to remove imperfections and rendered in grey-scale

The photograph above doesn't, at first glance, appear to be particularly remarkable; it's certainly old but, beyond that, maybe not of any particular interest. Found recently, in a cupboard in St. Andrew's, it shows a fairly standard view of the nave, from about two-thirds the way back, looking towards the large window at the east end.

But although the view may be fairly ordinary there are, on closer inspection, some features that suggest that this photograph might be quite special. It might be one of the earliest photographs of the church – one of the earliest of anywhere in Farnhill or Kildwick.

We can date it to between 1854 and 1868.

Fixing the earliest date (1854)

Two features of the photograph indicate that it cannot have been taken *before* 1854.

Stiverton memorial raised onto a plinth

For many years the memorial to Robert Stiverton, dating from the mid-1300s, was located on the floor of the north aisle under the fourth arch from the west end. In 1854, after the effigy had sustained many years of accidental damage, a public subscription allowed it to be raised onto a plinth.



Date plaque on Stiverton plinth

The monument, on its plinth can clearly be seen in the lower left-hand corner of our old photograph.

New east window

Also in 1854, the large window at the east end of the church was replaced. The new window commemorated the children of the local man William Wainman. It includes the following inscription:

This window was erected A.D. 1854, to the memory of their three children, Rosamund, born January 31st, 1837, died December 31st, 1846; Richard Francis Bradley, born December 19th, 1844, died February 17th, 1845; Alverey, born December 31st, 1850, died August 27th, 1853; by William Bradley Wainman and his wife Maria Wainman, of Carrhead, in this parish

This window is still in place today; and is the one shown in the old photograph.



Detail from the old photograph and a modern view (taken October 2022)
Part of the former obscured by a light-fitting

Fixing the latest date (1868)

Rev. Henry Salwey took charge at St. Andrew's on 3rd January 1868. He immediately instigated a number of changes to the interior of the church. None of these changes are visible in the photograph, providing 1868 as the year by which it must have been taken.

New pews

Before Salwey arrived at St. Andrew's there were two designs of pew used in nave. The front rows had carved backs and block-shaped finials; the rest had plain backs and ball-shaped finials.

Salwey had the latter type removed and replaced with pews that had with plain backs and flattened tops at the ends – still, for the most-part, continuing in use today.



A detail from the old photograph (left) and a modern photograph (right).
The ball-shaped finials can clearly be seen in the earlier picture

In his history of the church, published in 1909, E.W. Brereton lists the changes carried out by Salwey, including information about the new pews:

New seats were put in by Brown & Butterfield, contractors

Stiverton memorial and plinth – moved 1868

Another thing that Rev. Salwey took in hand was the moving of the vestry from its old location in the north-west corner of the building to what had previously been the Spencer chapel in the south-east. This rearrangement allowed the Stiverton monument to be moved to its current location in the north-west corner.

As Brereton wrote:

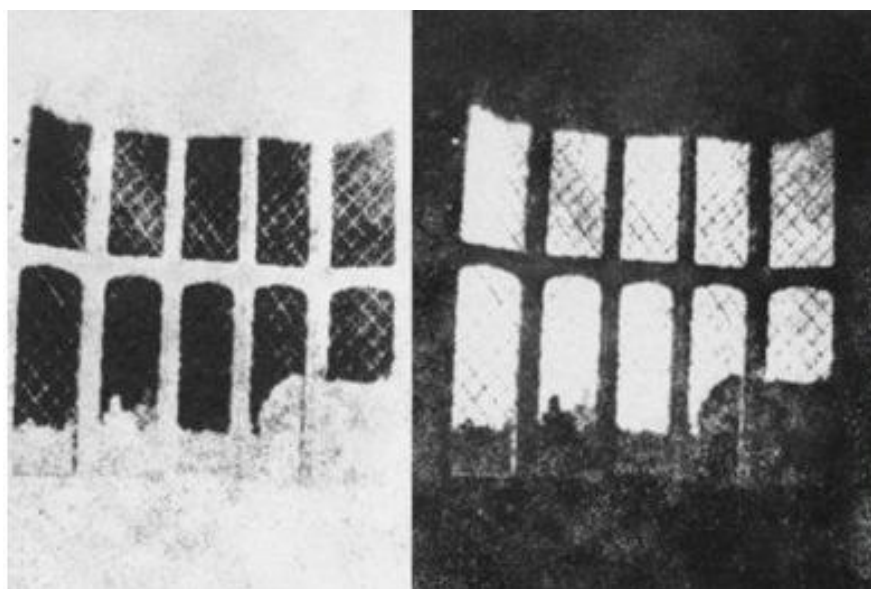
The old vestry which had so long disfigured the west end of the north aisle was removed and the aisle opened out, Mr. E. G. Spencer, of Lothersdale, having surrendered his rights in the Spencer vault at the east end of the south aisle, which has since served as a vestry.

and:

The Templar's effigy was removed to the site of the old vestry

So how does this compare with other old photographs ?

The oldest surviving photograph with a paper negative, was taken by William Fox-Talbot in 1835 and shows a window of his home in Lacock Abbey, Wiltshire.



Fox-Talbot's original 1835 negative image (left) and a positive image developed from it
(From the website of the British Academy of Photography)

This means that the St. Andrew's photograph could have been taken as little as 20 after Fox-Talbot's pioneering work.

An email exchange with researchers at the Bradford Museum of Photography (now called the “National Science and Media Museum”) confirms that it is one of the earliest photographs taken anywhere in Yorkshire. The earliest in their collection being an image of Lightcliffe railway station (dated 1855): <https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/objects/co8228789/lightcliffe-railway-station-photograph>