

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Cross in the churchyard of All Saints' Church, Darfield

PARISH: BARNSELEY

DISTRICT: BARNSELEY

COUNTY: SOUTH YORKSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 23397

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): SE41870429

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument is located in All Saints' churchyard c.10m south of the church porch. The remains include the socle or socket stone of a medieval standing cross and the shaft of a later sundial which has replaced the medieval cross shaft and cross head which are now missing.

The socle is an octagonal sandstone block with triangular stops on alternate faces making the bottom half square. It has a diameter of c.75cm and is c.40cm high. The corners of the stops are chamfered. The socket hole measures c.25cm square and indicates that the original shaft had a bevelled square cross-section. The current shaft is an octagonal gritstone column measuring c.1.5m high. In the top are the pegholes for the missing sundial and gnomon. The surface of the modern path passing through the area of the scheduling on the east side is excluded from the scheduling though the ground underneath is included.

The cross is Listed Grade II.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

A standing cross is a free standing upright structure, usually of stone, mostly erected during the medieval period (mid 10th to mid 16th centuries AD). Standing crosses served a variety of functions. In churchyards they served as stations for outdoor processions, particularly in the observance of Palm Sunday. Elsewhere, standing crosses were used within settlements as places for preaching, public proclamation and penance, as well as defining rights of sanctuary. Standing crosses were also employed to mark boundaries between parishes, property, or settlements. A few crosses were erected to commemorate battles. Some crosses were linked to particular saints, whose support and protection their presence would have helped to invoke. Crosses in market places may have helped to validate transactions. After the Reformation, some crosses continued in use as foci for municipal or borough ceremonies, for example as places for official proclamations and announcements; some were the scenes of games or recreational activity.

Standing crosses were distributed throughout England and are thought to have numbered in excess of 12,000. However, their survival since the Reformation has been variable, being much affected by local conditions, attitudes and religious sentiment. In particular, many cross-heads were destroyed by iconoclasts during the 16th and 17th centuries. Less than 2,000 medieval standing crosses, with or without cross-heads, are now thought to exist. The

oldest and most basic form of standing cross is the monolith, a stone shaft often set directly in the ground without a base. The most common form is the stepped cross, in which the shaft is set in a socket stone and raised upon a flight of steps; this type of cross remained current from the 11th to 12th centuries until after the Reformation. Where the cross-head survives it may take a variety of forms, from a lantern-like structure to a crucifix; the more elaborate examples date from the 15th century. Much less common than stepped crosses are spire-shaped crosses, often composed of three or four receding stages with elaborate architectural decoration and/or sculptured figures; the most famous of these include the Eleanor crosses, erected by Edward I at the stopping places of the funeral cortege of his wife, who died in 1290. Also uncommon are the preaching crosses which were built in public places from the 13th century, typically in the cemeteries of religious communities and cathedrals, market places and wide thoroughfares; they include a stepped base, buttresses supporting a vaulted canopy, in turn carrying either a shaft and head or a pinnacled spire. Standing crosses contribute significantly to our understanding of medieval customs, both secular and religious, and to our knowledge of medieval parishes and settlement patterns. All crosses which survive as standing monuments, especially those which stand in or near their original location, are considered worthy of protection.

Though in somewhat poor repair and missing its original shaft and cross head, the cross in All Saints' churchyard is a good example of a simple churchyard cross which appears to be in its original location. Its proximity to the parish church suggests that it played an important role in religious festivals during the Middle Ages though it may alternatively have had a sepulchral function.

MONUMENT INCLUDED IN THE SCHEDULE ON 18th October 1995