

St Nicholas' Church, Boldon

St Nicholas' Church stands in the village of West Boldon, 4 km south of Jarrow and 7 km north-west of Sunderland. The church is a prominent object in the landscape, standing on the crest of the Magnesian Limestone escarpment and commanding extensive views to north, east and west.

Note; this assessment was originally compiled in 1996; it has been extended and revised in the light of an archaeological watching brief carried out in 1998 during repair and repointing work to the external walls of aisles and chancel.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Exterior

The church consists of a three-bay nave with its aisles extending west to engage the western tower, a south porch, and a quite an elongate three-bay chancel with an organ chamber built in the re-entrant angle between chancel and north aisle.

The **West Tower and Spire** form a prominent object in the landscape, and have often been illustrated in antiquarian and architectural works. Both tower and the contemporary spire are of stone. The plinth is of grey sandstone; the walls above are largely of buff sandstone, with considerable areas of re-facing; on either side of the second-stage window on the west an odd pair of symmetrical sunk 'panels' each appear to expose one block of a much more weathered sandstone beneath the facing. The upper two thirds of the spire are of much darker stone, marking a rebuilding also evident internally.

The tower is of two stages, with large stepped clasping buttresses at the angles. There is a triple chamfered plinth, with a projecting moulding above. The west face of the lower stage of the tower, between the buttresses, is entirely of late 19th-century squared sandstone, and contains a single lancet window, with a moulded string that rises over the lancet to form a hoodmould. A roll moulding, extending round the buttresses, marks the base of the second stage. This has lancet windows, with dog-tooth ornament in their hoodmoulds, to west and south. The former has its hoodmould stops broken away, the latter (unrestored) has a foliate cross and a head as hood stops; the lower part of its opening has been enlarged by the cutting away of its chamfer, to provide a doorway onto the adjacent aisle roof. On the east of the tower the tabling of a former steeply-pitched nave roof survives, its apex broken by the oversailing course at the base of the spire but its eaves line some distance below the present one.

A hollow-chamfered oversailing course marks the base of the spire; at this level the buttresses have caps with a gable at the head of each external face, which have roll-moulded to their ridges, uniting at the base of each angle of the spire proper. The belfry openings are set in similarly-gabled dormers; each is a single lancet, that on the west being distinguished by having a double-chamfered surround, the others a single chamfer. The spire is of broach form, becoming an octagon in plan above the belfry dormers; it is capped by a globular finial.

Little of the walling of the **Nave** is exposed externally, except above the aisle and chancel roofs, at which level its masonry seems to be all neatly-squared sandstone of 19th century date. However the few cm of the south-east angle quoin, seen in the re-entrant angle between chancel

and south aisle, is of considerable structural significance, as it shows a series of massive gritstone blocks which would be out of place in anything other than an Anglo-Saxon context; one smaller block (quite low in the wall) projects, as if it might be the end of a string-course.

The **South Aisle** shows a variety of fabric types. The lower walls are of cream Magnesian Limestone, squared and laid in regular courses; the upper sections of the walls and parapet are of rather larger blocks, also neatly coursed, of a rather browner stone, either a sandstone or a sandy limestone. There is a chamfered plinth (stepping up in level slightly to the east of the porch), stepped buttresses (at the east end of the south wall, one bay further west, and a third, set diagonally, at the south-west corner) and a parapet, set on an oversailing chamfered course, with a moulded coping.

In the west wall of the aisle the plinth is stepped up for a short central section, and then cut away short of the north end. Above this is a single lancet window with a hoodmould enriched with dog-tooth, and carved stops. Although some of the dressings of the lancet looks of some age, there is disturbed fabric all around it, and it would appear to be an insertion (of the early 19th century?). The south-western buttress has some recent ashlar in its lower section; it appears to be coeval with the upper section of the wall, but added to the lower.

The south aisle wall is divided into four bays, with the south porch projecting from the second; there is a stepped diagonal buttress at the south-west corner, and stepped buttresses between the two eastern bays and at the east end of the wall. There are 19th-century two-light windows in the two eastern bays, and set above the porch. The lower part of the wall (to a height of c 2 m in the westernmost bay, and rather higher further east) is of creamy Magnesian Limestone laid in fairly small courses and blocks of variable size, whilst above are regular courses of browner stone, apparently a sandstone, in larger blocks. There is no opening in the westernmost bay (west of the porch), although there are a number of infilled sockets, of uncertain purpose, in the upper (sandstone) part of the wall. Above the porch the chamfered roof tabling of earlier more steeply-pitched porch roof is visible, its apex cut away by the 19th-century two-light window. The masonry within the old roof line is much less regular, little more than rubble; this implies that this area was not intended to be seen as part of the external elevation, and a porch in this position must be contemporary with the present aisle wall rather than a later addition.

The third bay, to the east of the porch, has an odd blocked arch of segmental form, low down, which clearly relates to the internal tomb recess at this point, which has 13th-century style mouldings and may be an earlier feature re-sited. Detailed examination of the arch during re-pointing showed no sign of any plaster on its soffit, suggesting that it is a constructional feature rather than an opening that was intended to pierce the full thickness of the wall. The cutting of the opening appears to have broken through the lower part of an earlier buttress; only the sloping cap of this remains in situ (with a scar beneath). This is set just below the level of the change in fabric type, suggesting that this buttress might have been contemporary with the first build of the aisle wall, before the heightening implied by the fabric change.

The two-light window east of porch shows ragged breaks in the masonry c 30 cm out from both its jambs, hacked into the earlier wall masonry, implying that the present window occupies the position of an earlier and wider opening, which itself seems to have been an insertion or enlargement of an original window.

The stepped buttress between the third and fourth bays is of neatly cut close-jointed limestone, and may be a 19th-century reconstruction. The lower wall of the fourth bay has some very elongate limestone blocks. The window in this bay, alone amongst the present windows in the body of the church, seems to incorporate part of a predecessor in the upper part of each jamb; the sill and lower two blocks of each jamb., along with the head, are clearly of mid-19th century date. Very clear roughly-hacked breaks in the fabric c 30-40 cm to the west and rather closer on east show the earlier window (18th/early 19th century?) was again an insertion.

The buttress at the east end of the wall looks medieval, although its mid-section has been patched during 19th-century restoration works..

The east wall of the aisle again shows two quite separate fabric types, creamy limestone below and larger blocks of browner stone above, and again the present two-light window is of mid-19th century date, with ragged breaks outside its jambs suggesting that it replaces an earlier and rather wider opening. In the lowest most courses are some quite massive squarish blocks, some of them gritstone, which have probably been re-used from the Pre-Conquest church; at the base of the wall a patch of intense reddening an decay c 1.5 m short of south end seems to indicate burning. The chamfered plinth does not extended all the way to the north end of the wall, but ends in a square unchamfered block.

The **South Porch** is constructed of roughly-coursed and roughly-squared stone (the east wall having courses of considerably-smaller stones than the west); each side wall has a very worn chamfered plinth and a small buttress at the south end; the buttresses are largely 19th-century reconstruction. The south wall has a 19th-century plinth, but the two-centred archway of two chamfered orders (the inner with the broader chamfer) is older. The voussoirs of the outer order are very short, as if a hoodmould might have been removed when the roof was lowered. The roof is formed by overlapping stone slabs, with old shaped blocks forming the coping.

The west wall of the **North Aisle** is all of limestone, and apparently contemporary with the angle buttress. There does seem to be evidence of a wider window that predates the present lancet; the dressings of lancet jambs are gritstone blocks (older work recycled?) but the 19th-century head is in brown gritstone.

The north wall of the aisle is of four bays, the eastern three with 19th-century two-light windows; there is a stepped buttress between the two eastern bays, and a stepped diagonal buttress at the north-west angle. The windows are all of the same type as seen in the south aisle, the only variation being that the central has large head stops to its hoodmould rather than the usual turned-back ends. As in the case of the south aisle there are two distinct fabric types, but in this case the lower walling is largely of brown gritstone (the blocks often squarish and in places taller than wide, and in general not well jointed - the joints between them or 'perps' are often almost in line with each other) and the upper of larger and more elongate blocks of yellow Magnesian Limestone, well bonded. In the westernmost bay the upper limit of the gritstone walling is marked by a course of 'upright' blocks.

Beneath the east end of the sill of the window in the easternmost bay is a short straight joint, and to the west of it three courses of limestone blocks, possibly indicating a former doorway

position, although the plinth below seems unbroken.

The stepped buttress between the eastern bays is of limestone except for its lowest two courses, and rises from a heavy irregular footing that projects some distance to the west. On the face of buttress are the deeply-incised initials 'H R', of 17th or 18th century character. In the upper part of the wall westward of the buttress there are occasional re-used gritstone blocks (some reddened) re-used amongst the limestone; one or two of these upright blocks are clearly infilling earlier sockets, possibly putlock holes. Beneath and slightly to the west of the westernmost window (ie in the second bay from the west) are the remains of the former north door; its east jamb shows as a straight joint (without any chamfer or moulding visible) but the line of west jamb is less clear, with only one block surviving. The infill is of coursed blocks more elongate than those in the adjacent walling. On either side are areas of rubble indicating the cut-away side walls of a former north porch. A ragged break c 0.30 m to the west of the window above, with above it the rough outline of part of a pointed arch (infilled with smaller stones, and a distinctive whitish mortar), suggest that it replaced an earlier window displaced a little further to the west, ie positioned directly above the former north door, in the same manner as the high-level window on the south is set over the porch there. The easternmost jamb of the present window is, unusually for the Victorian windows of this church, cut directly into undisturbed medieval walling.

The diagonal buttress at the west end of the wall is all of limestone; there is an awkward vertical break between gritstone and limestone c 0.40 m short of the buttress in the lower wall, but the upper section of the wall is coursed in neatly with the buttress and clearly contemporary with it.

The south wall of the **Chancel** is of three quite broad bays, each with a two-light window of 19th-century date, each of two uncusped lancet lights with a quatrefoil in the spandrel, under a two-centred arch with a hoodmould that has turned-back ends. The easternmost window has its sill raised to a higher level, an irregular patch below showing that it was originally of similar proportions to the others. Although the overall character of these windows is broadly similar to those in the aisles, their dressings are of a different sandstone, and are rather more worn; the easternmost has a blocked priest's door immediately to the west of it. There is a chamfered plinth, but no buttresses; a string-course, chamfered above and below, runs across the east end and returns a metre or so along each side wall. At the head of the wall is a projecting ashlar eaves course of 19th-century date

The fabric of the lower part of the western two bays is of roughly-coursed and roughly-coursed stone, largely sandstone/grit, with the occasional very thin course of small stones, and others used as packing pieces. At the west end of the wall this type of walling extends only to a height of around 1 m, but rises a little higher further east. Above it are roughly-squared but carefully-coursed blocks of a dark (or stained) sandstone, with a rough pecked tooling. This may well be a post-medieval rebuild, the 19th-century windows generally appear to be insertions in this upper fabric, although there are places where the walling stones seem to course in quite well with the dressed blocks of the window jambs.

Set low at the west end of the wall are the remains of what seems to have been a 'low-side' window; a large square block here appears at first sight to be the blocking that defines the earlier opening, but closer inspection shows that the walling is very much disturbed, and that

only the western half of the sill of the original opening (which has a chamfered surround) may be in situ; another chamfered block further east may be re-used. Some of the stones in this area are fire-reddened.

Further east there are two ragged straight joints in the lower part of the wall, one midway between the western and central windows and another directly below the western jamb of the central window, with the area between being of more regularly coursed and larger stones. This feature, which corresponds with a length of plinth that is clearly 19th-century replacement, may well indicate an earlier priest's doorway. To the east of it the irregular masonry continues, extending a little higher in the wall, as far as the later priest's door (blocked) which has cut sandstone dressings and a chamfered segmental arch with a keystone bearing the incised text,

'F.T.
D.D
1767'.

To the east the lower walling is very different from that further west, being mostly well-coursed and well-squared limestone; the actual point of transition has probably been cut away by the insertion of the doorway. This well-squared masonry extends to almost the full-height of the wall; there being a rather ragged joint to the west of the head of the easternmost two-light window. There is also disturbed masonry below the sill of this window, which was probably raised in 1875 when the sedilia on the internal face of the wall were restored. The jamb stones of the window look to be of 1850-1852, although two blocks below the east jamb, of weathered gritstone, may survive from an earlier opening.

At the east end of the wall c 1 m of an old string-course, chamfered above and below, survives, of late 12th or 13th century character.

The east end of the chancel now has a 19th-century window, set in a disturbed area of masonry and cutting down through the string-course. The window is of three stepped lancets, sharing a common moulded hood that has foliate bosses as stop; the shallow-pitched gable above is capped by a decaying finial that echoes the form of these stops. There appears to be another disturbed area, possibly an entry to a vault, at the foot, in the centre.

The eastern quoins of the chancel are large gritstone blocks; some at least are probably Roman in origin (the lowest block at the south-east corner retains a lead clamp, a good indicant of Roman work) ; they were almost certainly re-used in the Anglo-Saxon church, and have been recycled a second time in their present position - or even a third time, as there is good evidence to suggest that the chancel was rebuilt in the 12th (?) century and then extended by an extra bay.

The string course has continued across the east end, although its central section has been cut away c 1 m from the corner - a rough straight joint at this point presumably mark the south jamb of an earlier east window, wider than at present but nevertheless an insertion; the early-19th century print of the church in Fordyce's History of Durham shows a broad square-headed sash window here. There is no such straight joint north of the present window, but the string has been cut away at a corresponding point; the wall above may have been rebuilt. The wall below the string, and the sill of the present east window, looks to be undisturbed; the

chamfered plinth is not seen, but probably lies beneath the present ground level.

Externally the north wall of the chancel is of two bays, the western bay being concealed by the Organ Chamber of 1875; each bay has a two-light window of 19th-century date, each under a two-centred arch; above the head of each appears the line of a rather taller arch of similar form, which may relate to their replacing earlier openings. The windows are both 19th-century, but of different dates; there are differences in detail (the eastern is of two lancet lights with a quatrefoil over, under a hoodmould with carved floral stops, and the western has trefoiled lights, a trefoiled circle over, and a hoodmould with big head stops) and in the size and type of tooling on their dressings. There is some variation in the fabric of the eastern bay of the wall, but the well-squared limestone blocks seen on the south are absent; possibly older materials were recycled on this side when the chancel was extended. There are a number of reddened blocks; at about two-thirds in height there is a change to well-squared stone with some elongate blocks, almost certainly post-medieval work.

The double-chamfered string course of the east end extends only for c 1 m from the eastern angle, then abruptly ends; a ragged joint below this point may be the result of structural movement rather than any change of build, although just to the west of this point the chamfered plinth abruptly commences, to terminate at a little over 5 m from the east end in what looks like a mitred angle, as if it had returned northwards. A few cm beyond this is a straight joint in the lower courses of the wall; this, together with an upright block in the wall just over 1 m further west, at first sight look to indicate the position of a blocked doorway but in fact seem more likely to define the position of the east wall of a former vestry or sacristy. Further west, beneath the western of the two two-light windows, are the jambs of what is clearly a blocked doorway.

The **Organ Chamber** is set at right angles to the axis of the church, projecting slightly beyond the line of the north aisle, which it adjoins.

The Interior

Some of the internal walls of the church are plastered; those of the nave and tower, and the west wall of the south aisle, are left bare.

The **Tower** is now engaged by the aisles, so that the side walls of its lower stage are now internal. These appear to have the same plinth as is seen externally on the west wall, although in the vestry (the west end of the north aisle) this is now largely concealed by modern fitted cupboards; each wall has a single lancet window, with a moulded string carried up over the window head as a hoodmould.

The tower opens to the nave by a pointed arch that has three chamfered orders towards the nave and two to the tower; the jambs are of the same section as the arch (except that towards the tower the outer order simply dies into the side walls) with moulded impost and a moulded hood. The inner order has a holdwater moulding at its base, but the chamfers of the outer two orders simply have broach stops just above the floor. Set centrally above the arch is a blocked opening, probably a doorway; its head is concealed by the westernmost tie-beam of the roof. The jambs are of alternating-block construction, and, along with the sill, look suspiciously ‘neat’ and well-

squared for this to be a feature of great antiquity. Immediately below the sill are a pair of square sockets, as if for timbers supporting some form of platform or balcony .

Inside the tower, a moulded string is stepped up over the rear arches of the lancet windows, in exactly the same manner as that on the external wall faces; on the west, all the stonework below the string is of later 19th-century date.

A ladder gives access to the chamber in the second stage of the tower, the floor of which is carried by three heavy east-west beams. The walls of the chamber are partly obscured by heavy pointing, but have several sockets (perhaps relating to a former clock mechanism). On the east the opening seen from the nave has a semicircular rear arch, but any further details are concealed by boarding nailed over it.

A second ladder gives access to the belfry, the floor of which is carried by three massive north-south beams. The **Bellframes** are of type 1.D (Pickford 1993, 18); the bell bearings are carried on a series of horizontal beams, the outermost of, which have been both set in sockets in the belfry walls, and supported by a second pair of beams below set at right angles, similarly socketed into the walls. The whole structure has been altered, with additional supports introduced, and corbels of recent tile constructed to strengthen beam ends; two further cross-beams at a higher level now have no functional role, and it is difficult to reconstruct the original arrangement of the structure.

There are simple stepped squinches at each corner of the belfry, carrying the angles of the spire; around 1.5 m above the heads of the belfry openings is an internal set-back, above which the spire has clearly been reconstructed.

The nave measures c 10.4 by 4.7 m internally, and is more of a parallelogram in plan than a rectangle. The side walls are c 0.65 m thick but the west wall 0.93 m. The masonry of the side walls, visible above the arcades, is of roughly-shaped and roughly-coursed sandstone blocks; there is a rough set-back on the internal face of the north wall towards its west end, at the level of the heads of the arcade arches. There is no sign of the 19th-century refacing seen externally on the upper parts of the walls; at the east end of the external face of each side wall, just beneath the aisle roof, is a projecting block that looks like the stub end of a cut-away string-course. Above the western arch of the south arcade, in the external face of the wall is a small blocked square-headed opening, which may relate to an apparent patch of masonry, somewhat larger, on the internal face. It is not clear whether this has been a small window (or the head of a taller window) or simply a socket for a medieval or post-medieval beam. There is also an apparent feature in the external face of the north wall, above the eastern pier of the arcade; this is difficult to inspect closely, but does not seem to show on the opposite face.

The arcades are each of three bays; the arches are pointed, and closer to a four-centred than a two-centred form; they are each of two chamfered orders, with a chamfered hood towards the nave; on the north this has carved stops above the piers, but on the south these have been broken away. The piers are octagonal, with moulded capitals; the western capital on the north has a line of nail-head ornament. The bases on the south are moulded with two chamfers and a groove, while on the north they have 'holdwater' mouldings; in each case the base of the eastern pier is somewhat mutilated. The responds are all corbels; that at the west end of the south arcade is very decayed, whilst that at the east, with a line of nail-head in its capital, has had its base cut away.

The western corbel of the north arcade also has nail-head, and springs from a mask; the eastern is entirely 19th-century restoration.

At the west end of the **South Aisle** the lancet window has a deep casement moulding to its internal jambs and head; this appears to be of 19th-century date. At the level of its head are a row of small sockets in the wall, probably relating to the ceiling of the vestry which formerly occupied the west end of the aisle.

The south doorway, now within the south porch, has a pointed arch of two chamfered orders; the inner is continued down the jambs to broach stops just above the floor, but the outer is carried on jamb shafts with moulded caps and bases; there is a simple moulded hood. The rear arch of the door, plastered over, is segmental.

The two windows in the south wall of the aisle, and that at its east end, have pointed rear arches with a narrow chamfer. At the east end of the south wall is a piscina with a cusped trefoiled arch and a 19th-century moulded hood; it has a circular petalled bowl, its outer section restoration. West of the piscina is a tomb recess was a four-centred arch of two continuous hollow-chamfered orders, and a 19th-century hood like the piscina; a second tomb recess immediately to the west has a lower segmental arch and a more complex moulding consisting of an outer order with a hollow between two rolls and an inner with a pair of sunk quarter-rounds; again there is a 19th-century hood.

Below the sill of the window at the east end of the aisle is a bold string course with bold dog-tooth ornament beneath; it is not clear how much of this is genuine medieval work and how much 19th-century restoration.

The internal walls of the **North Aisle** are all plastered; the three windows in the north wall have a narrow chamfer to their rear arches, like their counterparts on the south. At the east end of the aisle is a late-19th century arch to the organ chamber, of two chamfered orders; the inner is carried on moulded capitals, the outer chamfer continues down the jambs.

The **Chancel** is entered under a two-centred arch of two chamfered orders, with a chamfered hoodmould to the nave which has an old carved stop to the south and a 19th-century head terminal to the north. The inner order of the arch is carried on moulded corbels with simple foliage, whilst the outer chamfer continues down to the jambs to be simply stopped 1.5 m above the floor.

The internal walls of the chancel are all plastered. The northward deviation of the eastern bay is apparent, roughly from the line of the altar rails. At the west end of the north wall is an arch to the organ chamber, a larger-scale version of that between organ chamber and north aisle. At the east end of the wall is a low segmental-arched recess, with a continuous hollow chamfer to jambs and head, now containing a medieval effigy. The dressings have a superficial appearance of age (through saltation causing decay of the stone) but appear to be entirely 19th-century.

At the east end of the south wall are a set of three sedilia with a piscina to the east; all four recesses have four-centred arches, with chamfered surrounds and moulded hoods. The only medieval stonework appears to be the outer jambs of the sedilia, and the lower part of the piscina, which has a pair of circular bowls.

The east wall has a stepped wall arcade with moulded arches and shafts with moulded capitals and bases, and a moulded hood with carved stops at each end. The wider central arch forms the rear-arch for the east window; a moulded string forms the sill of the whole arrangement.

The **Roofs** of the church appear to be all of 19th-century date. That of the nave is low-pitched and of five bays, with massive tie-beams. The ties are supported by short wall-posts carried on simple corbels; similar corbels support the wall-plate of the aisle roof. The roof of the chancel, of slightly steeper pitch, is of six bays, with arch-braced collar-beam trusses.

FITTINGS AND FURNISHINGS

The **Font** stands beneath the tower. It has a circular bowl, probably of 19th-century date, on an older circular shaft, quite broad, with simple mouldings at top and bottom, resting on a large base with a quarter-round moulding and a later stepped plinth. Shaft and base may be of 13th century date, although re-tooled.

The fittings and furnishings within the church are almost entirely of 19th-century date. The only earlier pieces are a pair of benches with open balustraded panels in their backs, now set in front of the choir stalls, and two 'Jacobean' chairs, one currently in the sanctuary and the other at the east end of the north aisle,

SEPULCHRAL MONUMENTS

Medieval Monuments

There are two medieval effigies of priests:

- (I) In the eastern tomb recess in the south aisle. Generally well-preserved, although the head seems to be a relatively recent replacement or reworking. At the foot are two beasts sharing a common head.
- (ii) In the tomb recess on the north side of the sanctuary, carved in rather flatter relief, but again quite well preserved.

Built into the external face of the south wall of the south aisle, beneath the arch of the tomb recess (immediately east of the porch) is a portion of a tapering slab (A) with roll-moulded edges, almost certainly part of a medieval grave slab. In the external face of the east end, to the north of the window, is a fragment with what looks to the remains of a carved cross head, with sunk panels between the arms; this is possibly part of another grave cover (B)

Post Medieval

There are relatively few later monuments of any interest. On the south wall of the chancel is a mural slab to the former rector Edmund Tew (d.1770) and his family; the inscription states that it

is a copy of an earlier slab 'hereunder' injured by fire on January 8th 1906. On the north wall of the chancel is a marble tablet with an urn, with a Latin inscription to John Andrews M.D., d.1790.

Several wall tablets, mostly of 19th century date, are gathered at the west end of the south aisle. The most interesting is a marble slab, with arms and a winged skull at the base, to Sarah, daughter of Zachary Whittingham, d.1715 (Hunter Blair 1935, 7)

HISTORICAL NOTES

- 1787 The earliest antiquarian account of the church traced is that by the historian Hutchinson (1787, 496): 'The church of Boldon is placed on an elevated situation: It has undergone many modern repairs; the windows are sashed, and the ceilings of stucco-work, are neat. The nave is regular, having side aisles; formed by two octagonal pillars on each side, supporting pointed arches. The tower is ornamented with a short spire of stone.'
- 1816 A stone coffin 'of the usual form' was found a foot below the surface, 'immediately without the East chancel wall' (Surtees 1820, 60)
- 1820 Surtees account (op.cit) describes the church as 'a neat regular fabric of ancient date and architecture, but almost entirely modernised'; he refers to stucco ceilings over nave and chancel, and saw the spire as an addition to the tower, going on to state 'a small pointed arch, with some remains of a sort of zigzag ornament, is still visible on the South of the tower; another piece of old ornament is inserted in the East chancel wall'.
- 1834 Mackenzie & Ross (1834, 68-69) refer to the ceiling of the chancel being covered by stucco, but 'in the nave, the old, oak-ribbed roof is still displayed'. There were galleries on the north and west, and an additional gallery on the south was being erected.
- 1851 On September 16th a bazaar at Boldon School raised £115.10s towards the restoration of the chancel windows, and the Rev John Collinson reported on the progress of the works. (Fordyce 1857)
- 1857 Fordyce (II, 737) reports the replacement of the sash windows in the chancel and west end in the chancel (see records of structural work, below); restoration works were proceeding.,
- 1875/6 Restoration works commenced 1st November 1875, with the church being re-opened July 17th 1876.

FACULTIES AND OTHER RECORDS OF STRUCTURAL WORK

Faculty no. and date Works

17 1831 Petition for erecting a gallery on the south of the church,

		30 feet from east to west and 9'6" north-south, to be carried on two metal pillars; a new stair to give access to the gallery.
	1850-1852	Restoration work including renewal of all chancel windows and those in west end. The stonework of the new windows by Mr Allison, of Whitburn (Fordyce 1857, II, 737)
	1866	Lead on nave and south aisle roofs replaced by slates (File Ep/Bo 53, Durham County Record Office)
212	1875	Restoration and re-seating; Organ chamber (termed a 'transept' added on the north, but its proposed southern counterpart was not built). Faculty plans signed by Robert Johnson of Newcastle. The church was refloored throughout.
.	1903-4	Restoration work; much worn stone replaced, especially in buttresses at west end. Spire top renewed, and a complete new drainage system laid down. (File Ep/Bo 53, Durham County Record Office)
	1906	Repair work after fire (see historical notes); A.B.Plummer of Newcastle was the architect (File Ep/Bo 53, Durham County Record Office)..
2094	20 November 1924	Rood beam
2366	12th May 1931	Electric light and new clock in tower
3552	16th October 1952	Installation of an aumbry etc.
3902	15th December 1956	Removal of font etc. to new positions, and replastering of the walls.
4446	29th December 1961	Installation of gas-fired central heating boiler etc.
6041	4th November 1982	Archdeacon's Certificate for replastering of walls and works including re-siting of four memorial tablets at west end of nave
6344	7th February 1986	Works including removal of pews.
	1989 (from 1991 QQ)	Proposed floodlighting- archaeologist (Barbara Harbottle) was to be involved.,

THE STRUCTURAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

(1) The Saxon Church.

This is a church of greater interest and complexity than most published accounts suggest. There can be little doubt that the eastern angles of the nave, with their megalithic quoining, are of Anglo-Saxon date; the nave walls above the arcades are of typical 'Saxon' thickness (0.65m), and both their fabric, and the apparent remains of square-section string courses, would confirm their dating. One might have expected a Saxon nave, especially if it were of period A (7th or 8th century, before the Scandinavian invasions), to have had rather more elongate proportions than the present one. This is perhaps explained by the west end having been rebuilt, where there is no sign of massive quoining. The character of the western quoins, and the small chamfered plinth which rounds the western angles and is then cut away, looks of 12th century date; the thickness of the west wall (0.93 m) is also more typical of Norman rather than pre-Conquest work..

One can thus reconstruct a Saxon nave truncated at its west end in the 12th century. This truncation clearly took place before the addition of the western tower, which is usually dated to the first half of the 13th century

(2) The 12th century

The evidence for the 12th century truncation of the nave has been discussed; the lower parts of the walls of the western two bays of the chancel may be of this date (or perhaps of the early 13th century) as well, but retain no dateable features (see below).

(3) The 13th Century.

There was a major reconstruction of the church, three-bay aisles being added to the earlier nave, and the western tower and spire constructed. It is not clear whether the aisles are of the same date; there are some detail differences between the arcades. The aisles were probably considerably narrower than at present, and ended in line with west wall of the nave; it is possibly that they retained the side walls of Pre-Conquest porticus.

The chancel was probably extended at around the same time; its elongate form is typical of the 13th century, and the change in fabric type seen in the south wall, coupled with the distinct 'skewing' of the eastern bay, imply that it has been extended. What date then is the earlier western section? No original architectural features survive. It is possible that the addition of aisles and the rebuilding of the original Saxon chancel may have taken place at the same time, followed a few years later by the addition of the tower and chancel extension. The massive gritstone quoins in the lower part of the present east end may thus have been re-sited twice. A similar example of re-use of Saxon quoins in what is now an elongate 13th century chancel occurs at Bramham in West Yorkshire.

(4) 14th/15th century I

The aisles were rebuilt, wider than previously, and extending westwards to engage the west tower. The difference in building materials - limestone on the south, gritstone on the north, may indicate that there were rebuilt at different periods or possibly that re-used material was

used for one (probably the north) and newly-quarried stone for the other. The south door looks like a 13th-century feature re-set when the aisles were rebuilt; there would appear to have been a porch contemporary with the rebuilt south aisle.

(5) 14th/15th century II.

Both aisles were heightened - again, in different materials, possibly indicating different building periods, although both were provided with diagonal buttresses at their western angles. The west end of the south aisle was heightened but that of the north aisle seems to have been completely rebuilt. A north porch may have been added at this time, but without excavation little more can be said of it.

(6) Post-Medieval

As often, there is evidence of considerable post-medieval changes, but Victorian restoration has meant that little dateable evidence of this period survives. The upper parts of the walls of the western two-thirds of the chancel seem to have been rebuilt, possibly in the 18th century, re-used reddened stone hints that rebuilding may have been necessitated by a fire.

Some light is shed by the condition of the building by antiquarian accounts and one or two old illustrations (the prints in Fordyce and Billings). There seem to have been extensive changes in the later 18th century. By the time Hutchinson wrote in 1787, referring to 'many modern repairs', the windows had been converted to sashes, in what appear to have been plain openings with pointed heads. The priest's door dated '1767' may have been part of a larger campaign of works. Fordyce's print shows plain arched windows (with a hint of alternating-block surrounds, such as is seen by the surviving jambs of the eastern of the two windows on the south side of the south aisle, east of the porch) except for a large square-headed window in the east wall of the chancel. It is not clear when the old north doorway was blocked and its porch demolished.

(7) 1831

The earliest recorded alteration is the insertion of a gallery 'on the south of the church'; there were already galleries on north and west. The high-level windows above north and south doorways may have been inserted specifically to light these galleries; the south porch seems to have been reconstructed, or at least its roof lowered, at the same time as the insertion of the southern window.

(8) 1850-1852

A campaign of restoration work under the Rev. John Collinson (who recorded his involvement with an inscription on the internal frame of the new east window); all the windows in the church were renewed in more correctly Gothic forms; the various historical records, coupled with some variation in detail suggests that the work was not all carried out at the same time. An amusing sidelight on these changes, and on 19th-century antiquarian attitudes, is cast by two notes in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle 2nd series VI (1895). In conjunction with the report on a visit to the church, an anecdote is related concerning a previous Antiquaries' visit 'twenty of more years since' when 'an amateur architect' had insisted that the east window was

genuine 13th-century work, and of a standard of workmanship impossible to contemporary craftsman, where upon a bystander had interrupted him with the information that he had worked on its insertion 'five years since'. The Rev J.F.Hodgson later reveals that he was the 'amateur architect' concerned, but argues that he was both viewing the window from the interior of the church, against the light, and that the 'new window' referred to only related to the renewal of the dressings of the actual opening, but that the wall arcade and other features of the east wall were all genuinely medieval, a fact upon which he, with much verbiage, insisted he would stake his reputation. Despite his protestations, it appears Hodgson was wrong; wall arcade and window are clearly all of one build, which must be of 1851.

(9) 1875/6.

Another period of restoration, the church being closed from 1st November 1875 until 17th July 1896. The organ chamber was added; a proposed southern counterpart was never constructed. Various medieval features - the piscina and sedilia in the chancel, and the tomb recesses in the south aisle, were rediscovered and restored.

In 1895 a piscina bowl, presumably found during these works, was presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle (Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle VI (1895) 54); it was later being stored in the Newcastle Keep.

(10) 1908

Repairs after a fire; there appears to have been little damage to stonework, although nave and chancel roofs were damaged.

THE CHURCHYARD

The churchyard may have originally been roughly of quadrant plan (bounded by a curving street on north and west), but a block of land seems to have been taken out from the south-west corner. The churchyard walls are generally of rubble, and of some age, but without any especial features of interest, other than the gateway to the west of the church, which has piers with attached jambs and worn moulded caps of 18th-century character.

The surviving graveyard monuments comprise both headstones and box and table tombs; a few are of pre-19th century date, but none appear to be of outstanding interest; many are in poor condition (eg a collapsed table tomb to the east of the chancel). The spacing of the monuments suggests that considerable numbers have been removed. In several places pieces of concretionary Magnesian Limestone (probably from the former quarries at Fulwell, Sunderland) have been used as an ornamental stone, eg around the 20th-century Calvary to the south of the chancel. Two medieval stone coffins lie outside the west end of the nave.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

The obvious antiquity of the building obviously makes the site of considerable archaeological importance.

Priorities

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