

St James Church, Castle Eden

St John's Church stands on the south of Castle Eden Dene, on the edge of a tributary gully that drops away north-eastward to join the main dene, and c 0.5 km south of the 'Castle', the mansion of the Burdon family, with which it is closely associated. The church consists of a three-bay aisled nave with a western tower, and a chancel flanked by a vestry extending for virtually its full length on the north, and a shorter organ chamber on the south.

The Exterior

The **West Tower** is square in plan, and rises in four stages divided by chamfered set backs, with a chamfered plinth. The lower three stages are built of coursed roughly-squared stone, with some patches of smaller rubble, with larger cut quoins, at least two of which are portions of medieval cross slab grave covers (see Sepulchral Monuments section). Most of the stone seems to have been re-used from the medieval church: the west face of the sixth quoin from the base of the north-west angle still retains remains of medieval plaster bearing a pattern of red painted lines.

On the north of the third stage, c 1 m to the west of the quatrefoil window are two sections of a moulded or grooved jamb. The top stage is built of more recent regularly-squared and coursed stone, without quoins; there is a string course at the base of the embattled parapet which has a plain flat coping.

The lower stage has four steps up to a doorway on the west, which has a sharply two-centred Gothick arch and a plain surround of tooled ashlar with square imposts and a raised keystone. On the north and south there are small quatrefoil windows, now blocked. On the south an external stair, with an iron handrail, rises eastward to a small open porch with a two-centred arch over the stair and a square-headed opening on the south, carried on a plain square pier and square pilasters, under a pent leaded roof. Both stair and porch are of brick, rendered over. The upper part of the square-headed doorway under the porch cuts through the first-stage set-back.

The upper stages of the tower each Gothick windows, with projecting sills and raised stone surrounds, on the west, and small quatrefoil openings (some blocked) on north and south; in addition the belfry has a second Gothick window on the east. The west window of the second stage has early-20th century leaded glazing and that of the third stage now frames the clock, whilst the belfry openings are all louvred. The tower is capped by an octagonal leaded spire with a weather vane.

The only external walls of the **Nave** are a small portion of the west wall on either side of the tower, and the upper part of the east wall above the chancel roof. Nave and aisles share a common low-pitched gabled roof; the east gable has a slab coping and a small spike finial.

The west walls of the **Aisles** both have coursed squared stone, including many blocks with a diagonal tooling, up to a height of around 3 m; this would appear to be medieval material, as in the tower, but here recycled a second time from the side walls of the 1764 nave. Above this level the walls are of darker stone, abutting with a ragged join against whiter fabric which represents the west wall of the aisleless 1764 nave. The western windows of the aisles, set high to light the gallery, are in this section of browner stone; and like all the windows of the church these are of Gothick-arched form with tooled stone surrounds and projecting sills. The topmost section of both walls, above the windows, returns to more regularly-coursed whiter stone, in more elongate blocks; the walls have a plain square-section coping carried on

moulded kneelers. The north aisle, but not the south, has a chamfered plinth on the same level as that of the tower.

The three-bay south wall of the south aisle is of coursed limestone ashlar; the large Gothick windows have slightly-raised surround of horizontally-tooled ashlar. The north wall of the north aisle has similar windows, but its fabric is more like that of the west walls of the aisles, with recycled medieval masonry in the lower part, browner stone above that, and upper sections of coursed limestone, apart from some brick in the western bay. The lower section of the eastern two-thirds of the wall is concealed by a pent-roofed boiler house of rendered brick, with plain boarded doors in its north wall and west end. Close to the east end of the wall an irregular vertical line of whiter stones marks the line of the boiler house flue; the wall is capped by an ashlar gable-topped stack probably of 20th century date.

The east walls of the aisles are largely concealed behind the vestry and organ chamber flanking the chancel; that of the south aisle, above the organ chamber roof, shows some older rubblier masonry, again probably re-used, with coursed limestone above.

The south and east walls of the **Chancel** are of fresh-looking limestone ashlar, except for the lowest course which is of more roughly-finished stone. The east gable of the chancel and the east ends of organ chamber and vestry have a square-section coping and moulded kneelers (possibly re-used?); the chancel gable has a spike finial like that on the east end of the nave. There are a pair of windows in the south wall, and an interesting variant on a Venetian window in the east end, a tripartite opening with a Gothick- rather than a round-arched centre light; its mullions are clearly recent restoration. The north wall of the chancel, above the vestry roof, is of similar ashlar; it carries the stack for the vestry fireplace, which has a gabled cap and, like that of the boiler house, is of relatively-recent ashlar.

On the south of the chancel the **Organ Chamber** is of the same limestone ashlar (but without the roughly-finished base course); it has a window of the usual type in its east wall. On the north the east end of the **Vestry** is of the same fabric type as the chancel, and has one window. The north wall is quite different, and has a chamfered plinth and a buttress at its east end. The western part of the wall, probably of 1795, is of coursed rubble and the eastern extension of 1895 of snecked roughly-squared stone; some of the angle quoins of the 1795 part survive. Near the west end of the wall is a square-headed doorway inserted in 1895; this has a tooled ashlar surround. To the east of it is an older window of the usual form.

The roofs of the church are of Lakeland slate.

The Interior

The church is entered through the base of the **West Tower**, where a pair of half-glazed double doors open into a panelled lobby, with on the east a large door of six fielded panels; all this is probably of 1908. The lobby is not central to the tower, a boxed-in area behind the panelling on the south accommodating at a higher level the stair that gives access from the external steps (again of 1908) to the first floor.

These steps rise to the doorway at the east end of the south wall, from which a length of internal stair rises westwards; the stair-head balustrade is of late 19th century character, with stick balusters and posts with stop-chamfered angles and moulded caps.

The first stage of the tower has plastered walls; on the east the doorway into the gallery has a

six-panelled door set under a larger elliptical arch. The west window has a two-centred rear arch and the quatrefoil window on the south a plain lintel.

The internal walls of the Ringing Chamber are heavily whitewashed; the west window, now containing the clock, has a two-centred rear arch and the small quatrefoil windows on north and south rough stone lintels. On the east is a small square hatch opening into the roof space over the nave. A ladder at the south-east corner gives access to the belfry.

The internal walls of the belfry are of brick, with timber lintels to the bell openings. Due to the unsafe condition of the ladder the interior of the belfry and bell frames could not be closely examined.

The body of the church is entirely plastered and painted internally, without any exposed stonework; all the windows have plain two-centred rear arches, of the same form as the external openings, and there are panelled dados to all the walls and the piers and responds of the arcades. At the west end of the nave is a shallow gallery, its front with open trefoil-headed panels; in the centre of its rear wall a six-panelled door, set within a larger elliptical arch, opens into the tower.

The **Nave** (left) is divided from the aisle by three-bay arcades of 1895; these have circular piers, and square-section pilaster responds at the east end only, with tall square panelled bases and gilt Corinthian capitals, carrying a moulded arcade plate rather than arches. The nave has a six-bay roof with boxed-in tie-beams with king-posts and smaller posts just within the lines of the arcade plate, ceiled over at mid-height of the trusses and coved at either side. The aisles have a level plaster ceiling, with a heavy moulded plaster cornice.

The **Chancel** is entered under a large semicircular arch with moulded imposts and a classical archivolt; on either side, at the east ends of the aisle, are smaller plain round-headed arches

opening into the organ chamber (on the south) and vestry (on the north).

At the west end of the south wall of the chancel is a plain round arch to the organ chamber; on the north there is a doorway to the vestry, of six fielded panels, under a moulded timber cornice, set within a taller chamfered round-arched opening. The chancel has a moulded cornice and a painted ceiling, coved at the sides, in which square panels with the Sacred Monograms XPC and IHC alternate with floral patterns.

The **Vestry** ceiling has moulded rafters, purlin and wall-plate; the door to the chancel is set inside a taller chamfered square-headed opening, to the east of which is a fireplace with a stop-chamfered stone surround and mantelpiece on moulded brackets. There are two mural recesses in the south wall, one now inside a cupboard. The west wall is formed by a boarded partition with a six-panelled door at its south end, opening into a small chamber between the vestry and the east end of the north aisle of the nave; this has a chamfered square-headed doorway at its north end.

Fittings and Furnishings

The fittings and furnishings of the church are largely of late 19th or early 20th century character. The **Chancel Screen**, presumably of c1902 (see faculty index) is of openwork type, and well-crafted in the Jacobean style. The mosaic floors of chancel and sanctuary are presumably of 1895. One earlier feature of some note is the Classical marble **Font**, with an oval bowl set on a moulded circular shaft; is probably contemporary with the initial rebuilding of the church in 1764.

In the vestry, above the door into the chancel, is a stone tablet with a coat of arms and beneath it the inscription:

ANNO DOMINI MDCCLXIV THIS SACRED FABRIC WCH CONSUMING TIME HAD NOW REDUCD TO RUINOUS DECAY, WAS WTH THE ADDITION OF A STEEPLE REBUILT..FROM IT'S OLD FOUNDATION, BY ROWLAND BURDON ESQUIRE, AT HIS OWN FREE CHARGE WHO THUS MOST HUMBLY DEDICATES TO THE SERVICE OF ALL MIGHTY GOD A PORTION OF THAT WEALTH HIS BLESSING HAD CONFER'D THE TENANTS BEARING THEIR PART OF THE LABOUR OF LEADING THE MATERIALS. I TODD, CURATE W LAINE, CHURCHWARDEN

The Burdon arms on the tablet are described by Hunter Blair (1935, 8) as '(azure) crusilly and three 'bourdons' (gold); the 'bourdons', an obvious rebus on Burdon, are pilgrim's staves; all colour had gone from the arms when Hunter Blair wrote.

The mid-19th century **Stained Glass** in the east window is now badly faded. The two south windows have figures of St James and St George, in memory of rector Frederick Godwin Johnson Robinson rector (1917; see brass plate on south wall of nave) and John Burdon killed in Mosop 1916. On the south of the nave, from east to west, the windows are an Ascension (dedicated by Rowland and Mary Arundell Burdon in memory of their son Rowland Burdon killed 1917), the Good Shepherd (in memory of Anne Nimmo d.1913) and a window in memory of Flight Lieutenant Guy Trevor, (1949) signed by James Paterson. On the north the westernmost window has plain leaded glazing; the central one, in memory of Lieutenant John Hutchinson Tristram (killed in 1915) is signed Heaton Butler Bayne of London and the eastern in memory of Rowland Burdon (d 1944) 'sixth and last surviving of his name, and of other members of the Burdon family who were also lords of the manor of Castle Eden from 1758'. This depicts Christ in Majesty with the four evangelists above military subjects, and is presumably the window by L.C.Evetts, an early (1949) example of his work, described by Pevsner & Williamson (1983, 123).

The clock mechanism is by Reid and Sons of Newcastle.

The bell frames are of traditional timber form but seem of no great age, and carry a single bell; another bell, uninscribed and of quite archaic appearance, lies loose in the ringing chamber.

Sepulchral Monuments

The earliest sepulchral monuments in the church are a pair of medieval grave slabs, (left) set upright against the internal face of the east wall of the organ chamber, and a little difficult to examine.

They were found during the 1895 works (Hodgson Fowler 1897). These and a third slab built into the external wall of the tower are described and illustrated by Ryder (1985, 64 , pl 11):

- (1) A semi-coped slab bearing a rather stylised four-circle cross; the near-abstract pattern of sunk rings, circles and triangles is typical of the 'Early Geometric' style and could well indicate a late 11th or early 12th century date.
- (1) A fully coped slab with an incised pattern of an expanded- arm cross flanked by 'basketwork' panels. This is another early piece, and could even be Pre-Conquest.
- (1) The lower part of a slab now forming one of the south-western angle quoins of the tower, facing south a metre above ground level; incised cross shaft with the top of a splayed (ogee arched?) Base, perhaps 14th century.

In addition to these, there are other minor cross slab fragments, re-used at the base of the north-west quoin of the tower, and at various levels in the north-west quoin of the north aisle; all simply show sections of incised cross shaft, or a single incised line. A medieval effigy of an ecclesiastic (right), thought to be of 13th century date, now lies in the churchyard in the angle of the tower and the west end of the south aisle. Although briefly mentioned in several antiquarian sources, it is inexplicably omitted from Hunter Blair's survey of medieval effigies in the county (1929). The effigy was found in the adjacent Dene and brought to the churchyard, then moved inside early in the 20th century. It lay in the chancel for some time; in 1957 a faculty was granted for its removal to the nave aisle. At some date, probably shortly after this, it was in fact moved out into the churchyard; since then thieves have made at least one attempt to remove it (see comment in 'Recommendations' section).

There is a memorial tablet on the north wall of the chancel which bears the inscription:

'Sacred to the memory of Rowland Burdon from the year 1790 to 1806 MP for the County of Durham he designed and built the iron bridge of Wearmouth a performance alike remarkable for originality of invention and for public spirit he caused the making of high roads from Thirsk to Newcastle he devoted a long life and unwearied energies to the service of those around him labouring when in retirement as earnestly for the welfare of his poorer neighbours as when in public life for that of his country. His character was peculiarly marked by firmness self denial and unpretending benevolence. He closed a life spent in the practice of Christian duties with pious resignation and humble confidence in the merits of a Saviour on the 17th day of September 1838 aged 81 years'

There is a second tablet alongside in memory of Rowland Burdon d 1875 and his wife Ann Mallet .

At the east end of the south aisle, above the arch into the Organ Chamber, is a marble tablet, surmounted by an urn, to John Maclean d.1824.

Between the eastern and central windows in the north wall of the north aisle is a marble plaque stating that bells were placed in the church by Rowland Burdon and Mary Arundell his wife in memory of three 'sons of the parish' killed in the 1914-1918 war.

Historical Notes

12th century Robert de Brus granted the chapel to the monks of St Cuthbert, upon the condition that the Prior of Durham should build a chapel within the vill. William de Thorpe made seven donations of land in Eden to Durham, in one of

which the Chapel of St James is mentioned.

- c1150 Bishop de St Barbara of Durham gave half the tithes of Castle Eden to Guisborough Priory.
- 1764 The medieval church was rebuilt by Rowland Burdon, on its old foundations.
- 1794 William Hutchinson, the first of the Durham historians (III) describes the church as ‘...a handsome edifice, erected by Mr Burdon in the year 1764. You enter it through a gateway and portico under the tower, adjoining to which is a gallery for the proprietor’s family. The nave and chancel are remarkably neat and well lighted; the forms, for there are no stalls, are covered with scarlet cloth. The font is of beautiful marble, the bason of which is oval; neatness and not ornament hath been attended to in this pious work; touching which a humble memorial is inscribed on a tablet of marble in the vestry room.
- 1816 Surtees (I, 45) states that the church had been rebuilt by Rowland Burdon the elder, and that ‘the present Patron enlarged it by the addition of two uniform ailes’. He also describes the ‘somewhat-mutilated figure of an ecclesiastic’ which lay in the churchyard near the east end, it had been ‘imagined to represent Ivo de Seaton (but) may possibly represent one of the ancient chaplains of St James, whilst the Chapel probably belonged to the Benedictine Monks of Durham

Faculties and Other Records of Structural Work

Date	Faculty No.	Works
1795	3/28	Enlarging church, new-pewing, slate roof for lead, enlarging gallery, selling clock.
28 Feb 1895	3/374	Enlargement of chancel with addition of organ chamber and extension of vestry, insertion of arcades to produce aisles, removal of font to west end, alterations to glazing.
26 June 1902	3/4256/20	Oak screen
18 May 1908	3/492	Alterations to porch; addition of gallery stair.
21 July 1913	3/656	Improvements in churchyard
6 Jan 1920	3/886	Tablet and a peal of tubular bells
2 Aug 1957	3/3954	Redecoration and restoration of exterior fabric, reduction of size of gallery and removal of stone effigy from sanctuary to aisle.
12 Dec 1962	3/4529	Installation of oil-fired central heating
14 May 1974	3/5506	Repairs to tower and steeple
11 Jan 1993	3/7652	Removal of pews

Structural History

This is an interesting post-medieval church, whose building and development is bound closely to the Burdon family and their relationship with the social and economic history of the area. The developmental history of the building is quite well documented; Pevsner & Williamson's account (1983, 122-3) unhappily conflates the 1795 and 1895 changes.

There is no doubt that a medieval chapel stood upon the present site, although it has been suggested that a still-earlier one stood about 100m to the north, on the site at which an internment with an Anglo-Saxon glass cup was found in 1775 (Fordyce 1857 II, 366). The tablet in the vestry records that the chapel on the present site was in 'ruinous decay' in the mid-18th century; there is a statement in Kelly's Directory of Durham (1925, 69) that its chancel alone was standing when Rowland Burdon bought the property in 1750. The tablet refers to the 1764 church being 'rebuilt from (upon?) its old foundation', and the 1795 faculty to its having been 'rebuilt...on its old foundations with the addition of a steeple'. This is slightly at variance with evidence seen in 1895, when it was found that the present chancel, which is considerably larger than its 18th century predecessor, was 'by a curious coincidence' of exactly the same dimensions as the medieval one (Robinson 1897).

A chancel of this size would make the medieval chapel a fairly substantial building, and possibly one of some architectural pretensions; fragments of window tracery found in 1895 'show there must have been a large and fine window in the old church' (Hodgson Fowler 1897). It is possible of course that the 1764 nave was raised on the foundations of the medieval nave.

The 1795 faculty is quite specific that the steeple (ie the tower) had been an addition to the rebuilt church, although Pevsner & Williamson suggest that it in fact medieval, except for its battlements and spire¹. Bearing in mind its proportions, relatively thin walls, and the amount of re-used medieval material that it contains, this seems highly unlikely.

The 1764 church consisted of west tower, nave, and chancel, perhaps with a northern vestry; Pevsner and Williamson (op.cit) suggest that it is 'probably the first complete Gothick Revival Church in the north' and that its architect may have been the well-known William Newton who erected the nearby house in the same style, works here commencing in 1758.

This church was enlarged at the end of the 18th century; the faculty is dated 1795 (although Pevsner & Williamson give 1800 as the date of the works) and cites the opening of Messrs Salvin's Cotton Manufactory in 1791, with the resultant increase in population in the parish from 175 to over 400, as the reason for the scheme. The side walls of the nave were thrown out to create a square structure, roofed in a single span. To further increase the accommodation an already-existing western gallery was to be enlarged and a clock to be removed from the tower to facilitate gallery access. It is not clear whether the vestry was added this time or was part of the 1764 church²

¹Presumably interpreting the 'steeple' reference to mean the spire, although in old documents the term is often used simply to refer to a tower, as seems likely to be the case here.

²The small rubble of its north wall is rather different in character to the fabric of the remainder of the church. But its chamfered plinth, continuous with that of the north aisle, would seem quite strong evidence for a 1795 date.

A second major scheme of remodelling took place a century later, in 1895, C Hodgson Fowler being the architect. This time the motivation seems to have been to adapt the building to contemporary standards of ecclesiastical dignity and propriety, rather than provide extra space. The old chancel was completely demolished and rebuilt both longer and slightly wider. Almost exactly upon the foundations of its medieval predecessor, which had to be removed to allow the construction of the new walls. The vestry on the north was extended to the east, its old north wall being retained. An organ chamber was constructed on the south of the chancel; what had previously been a blind arch being opened out into an arch into it from the nave. The two windows from the south wall of the old chancel were re-sited, set closely together, in the south wall of the new; the old east window 'of a disarming variety, pointed Venetian' (Pevsner & Williamson) was also simply re-located in the new east wall. The square 'preaching box' of the main body was remodelled on a more conventional nave-and-aisles layout, the arcades being inserted; its old roof structure was retained, but cleverly recast so that there was a higher space, with exposed timbers, over the nave whilst flat ceilings were retained over the aisles. With a new and larger chancel arch and all its windows reglazed; the church took on what is very much its present appearance. The total costs of the works was £1500 (Kelly 1925, 70)

A few years later, in 1908, came a further improvement; the rather restricted access to the gallery within the entrance lobby was replaced by an external stair and porch on the south.

A further improvement came with the heightening of the tower and provision of the present belfry and spire. The relatively fresh ashlar work of the external walls of the belfry, and the brick of its internal, suggest a date in the earlier 20th century, most likely within the time bracket provided by the gap in surviving faculty evidence between 1920 and the mid 1930s.

In 1957 the western gallery was reduced in size

Archaeological Assessment

This is an interesting post-medieval church rebuilt on a medieval site. Whilst it does not fall into the same category of archaeological importance as medieval building, it is likely that significant remains of the medieval structure, and of its associated stratigraphy, burials etc, survive beneath the floors of the present building. These will have been disturbed to some extent by the old underfloor heating system evidenced by grilles in the floors of nave and sanctuary; nevertheless, any works that entail substantial disturbance of the floors will require an archaeological watching brief. Similarly, any disturbance of above-ground fabric will need monitoring, as it clear that there is much re-used medieval material in the walls of nave and tower.

The Churchyard

The churchyard is of sub-rectangular form, with an old rubble boundary wall on the south. The ground falls quite steeply from the church to the road on the west. The southern portion of the yard has been largely cleared of its monuments; a few stubs of headstones remain and one fallen headstone with the 'memento mori' of skull and crossed bones. In the south-western section are an unusual form of memorial, probably of late 18th or early 19th century date, in the form of several continuous north-south lines of plinths, the individual blocks simply bearing imply incised numbers, eg '46'. This area seems to be an artificially-raised platform; the corresponding area on the north of the path is a regular slope. The northern section of the yard retains more monuments, mostly of later 19th and early 20th-century date. To the east of the chancel 19th century memorials survive, including some quite ornate Celtic-

style crosses. At the north east corner a short path leads to a virtually-detached extension to the burial ground, with monuments from the mid-20th century onwards.

Immediately to the west of the church, set on either side of the approach path are two octagonal carved blocks (left); although fairly roughly shaped, these appear to have formed the bosses at the apex of octopartite vaults, each having a central piercing (for a bell rope?) from which eight chamfered ribs radiate. It is difficult to see how they could derive from a small church without a tower, such as Castle Eden seems to have been before its 18th century rebuilding, unless possibly from the chancel, which may have been unusually elaborate, actually had a vault. Another possibility is that they are part of an antiquarian collection of stones and architectural fragments gathered by one of the earlier Burdons.

The medieval ecclesiastical effigy that currently lies on the south of the tower is described under 'Sepulchral Monuments'.

The entrance gate to the churchyard, due west of the church, has wrought iron box-section piers and gates with spear finals and a decorative overthrow.

Recommendations

The present situation as regards the medieval effigy lying outside the tower is not satisfactory; it has been moved out of the church, apparently without faculty jurisdiction, and is certainly 'at risk', both from the elements and from theft; there has been at least one recent attempt to steal it. For its own protection this valuable monument should be returned inside the building as soon as possible, its location within the building need to be discussed with a stone conservationist, and placing a stone monument like this which has lain outside for some years in close proximity to heating pipes could be disastrous.

It is tentatively suggested that this monument, together perhaps with the two early grave slabs now set behind the organ, in a very inconvenient position for visitor access, might be re-set in the entrance lobby beneath the tower.

The amount of medieval stonework re-used in the external walls of the west tower is of interest, and might merit a proper survey, using binoculars and telephoto lens. The re-used block with remains of wall painting should perhaps be properly examined and drawn.

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