

The Church of St Cuthbert, Darlington

Archaeological Assessment June 1997

Contents

Architectural Description

The Exterior	1-5
The Interior	5-10
Fittings and Furnishings	10-11
Sepulchral Monuments	11
Pre-Conquest Sculpture	11
Historical Notes	12
Faculties and other records of Structural Work w	12-14
The Structural History of the Church	14-18
The Churchyard	18
Archaeological Assessment	18-19
Bibliography	20
Phased Plan	at end

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St Cuthbert, Darlington

St Cuthbert's parish church, arguably the most impressive in the county (and according to Sir G.G.Scott "one of the most uniform and most beautiful parish churches he knew", stands on the east side of the large market place of the town, on level ground bounded to the east by the River Skerne.

The church is a cruciform structure, all four arms being of equal height. The five-bay nave is aisled, with a clerestory; the transepts and chancel both have two tiers of windows in the side walls and three in the gable ends. There is a central tower, capped by a lofty spire, and a pair of vestries on the south of the chancel.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Darlington church, although largely the product of one building campaign, seems relatively simple architecturally when viewed at a distance, but is in fact very complex in detail; any description will inevitably be somewhat long-winded. The common elements are the architectural style, somewhere between Transitional and Early English (although the two-centred Gothic arch has replaced the Romanesque semicircular one) and such features as clasping buttresses at the angles (carried up as turrets), pilaster buttresses articulating the walls between lancet windows which often, both internally and externally, occupy the alternate bays of continuous wall arcades, together with a variety of plinths and string courses.

The building material is squared stone, often of near ashlar quality, and generally brownish or purplish in colour; two major types have been identified and linked to the quarries at Cockfield Fell and Houghton Bank; both are Carboniferous sandstones; there is a little of the more local soft red Triassic sandstone, and considerable patches of 19th and 20th century refacing, apparent through its lighter colour and lesser degree of weathering.

The Exterior

The west front of the **Nave** has a two-stepped chamfered plinth, the lower step of which is carried across beneath the west doorway; its elevation is in three vertical divisions. The lowest is occupied by the west doorway, set in a shallow projection with a steep gable that rises to the first string course, which bears a running leaf ornament (largely restoration). The doorway is of four orders, within a moulded hood; the outer three orders have roll mouldings, and are carried on jamb shafts with moulded capitals, whilst the inner continuous order has a bowtel; all of the jambs are restoration. Above the doorway is a trefoiled niche, and the projection is topped by moulded coping and a recent finial cross.

Above the first string are a pair of lancets, set within a five-bay wall arcade, with a second moulded string course being carried round the jamb shafts of the arcade as shaft rings. Above the arcade is another moulded string, above which is a three-bay arcade with a central lancet. The top stages of flanking turrets rise clear of the gable, and have a blank arch on each face, and shafted angles with moulded caps, being topped by octagonal spirelets with crocketed pinnacles; these top stages look of late 18th or early 19th century character. The gable itself is capped by a foliate cross finial.'

The south wall of the nave, above the aisle roof, has a rather irregular clerestory; from west to east are a narrow blind 'lancet' beneath the angle turret, then three sections of three-bay wall arcades, each with a central lancet, separated by flat pilasters; the fourth arcade is of only two

bays, the second of which contains a rather distorted lancet. The arcades all have moulded arches on shafts with moulded capitals (some with nail-head); the lancets have chamfered surrounds. Above is a hollow-chamfered eaves cornice carried on moulded corbels.

The clerestory on the north is quite different. Here, beyond a very narrow pilaster buttress beneath the corner turret, is a continuous twelve-bay arcade (the individual bays being noticeably variable in width) without any dividing pilasters, with lancets in the third, sixth, ninth and final bays. The arcade capitals do not have nail-head, and the capitals of the three western shafts are c 0.30 m in level above the remainder.

Above both clerestories is a hollow-chamfered eaves cornice, carried on a series of moulded corbels. The blind bays of each clerestory show irregularly-spaced infilled sockets at approximately the level of the springing of the arches.

The **Aisles** have low-pitched roofs and (except at the west end) single-step chamfered plinths (of different character to the remainder of the church); the buttresses which articulate the bays are of different character too, not pilaster-like at all; they die into the wall at mid-height, where on the south there is a noticeable change in masonry to larger and squarer blocks (presumably marking the top of the original wall before its 14th-century heightening). On the north the coursing is of regular height throughout. The aisle parapets are set on an oversailing course, and have moulded copings.

The south doorway is set in the second bay of the aisle, in a shallow gabled projection rising well above the original eaves level; it has an arch of three chamfered orders, under a hollow-chamfered hood with flower stops; the two outer orders are carried on renewed shafts, and the inner is continued to the ground. Above the doorway is a trefoiled niche, with a filleted roll moulding; just below it are cuts for the shallow-pitched roof of a removed porch. Immediately to the west of the projection is a simple trefoiled niche at a lower level.

The windows in the side walls of the aisle are each square-headed and of two lights, with trefoiled ogee heads, and cusped reticulated tracery above; their frames have an outer wave moulding and an inner with a sunk quarter-round, and have hoodmoulds with mask stops. The windows on either side of the doorway show remains of earlier sills a course or two beneath the present ones; these have been interpreted as relating to the original fenestration of the aisle, although they are only marginally narrower than those of the present windows. On either side of the same windows, there are indications that the phase I fabric steps up in level, suggesting that the original windows were set in gablets rising above the eaves level, as the south doorway clearly was. The eastern of the three buttresses is all 19th-century restoration. At the extreme east end of the wall is the stub of a moulded string returning from the transept. The west window of the aisle is a smaller variant on those in the side wall, with the same mouldings, but with pierced and cusped spandrels rather than the tracery.

The north aisle is similar to the south; its inner order is all restoration. The shallow projection containing the doorway is flat-topped; this is probably a later alteration, as a little below are two projecting moulded blocks at the outer angles, from which the original gable may have sprung. Here the eastern two buttresses are all restoration, as is the window in the west wall; there is a similar stub of an original string course at the east end.

The **South Transept** is two bays in length, and its south wall is similarly divided by a pilaster buttress. At the south-eastern angle is a clasping buttress carried up as a square turret, but at the south-western is a broader turret containing a stair, which at mid-height steps back to a semioctagonal form; in the re-entrant angles between turrets and wall are smaller

pilaster-like buttresses. The south face of the stair turret has a square-headed doorway (an obvious insertion, with a recent lintel), and a series of square-headed loops; the topmost stage has quatrefoil lights to both south and west. Both bays of the south wall have string courses, at the levels of the sills of the four lancets, and at their heads; the lowermost string is chamfered above and below, whilst those above are moulded. All the lancets have moulded hoods and deeply moulded outer orders; in the lower these are carried on detached shafts with nail-head in the capitals, and in the upper on attached shafts, again with nail-head; the inner orders of the lower lancets have a continuous roll moulding, and a chamfer, and a single chamfer. The central pilaster buttress ends below a string at eaves level, above which there is a large circular light set centrally in the gable, with a moulded hood or label, and a triple-chamfered frame.

The west wall of the transept shows some puzzling features. The pilaster buttress between the bays is present (just outside the aisle wall) up to the first string course, and is then absent as far as the second, above which its upper section (carried on a corbel carved as a pair of human hands) is set a little north of the line of the lower pilaster. At the base of the wall are indistinct traces of a blocked doorway. The lower lancet (which impinges on the projected line of the lower part of the pilaster) has a hood with nail-head, an outer order with dog-tooth, on jamb shafts, a roll moulding to a middle order (continued round the sill), and a rebated inner. The upper lancets have moulded hoods, an outer order with a filleted roll between bands of nail-head, and a continuous chamfer to an inner order. The wall is topped by a n eaves course on corbels, like that of the nave.

The east wall of the transept again shows considerable detail variations. The lower lancet has a moulded hood, a bowtel-moulded outer order on shafts (with nail-head capitals and moulded shaft rings), a roll-moulded middle order and a rebated inner. The upper lancet (there is only one; that in the northern bay has been blocked up in antiquity when the tower was strengthened) has a much simpler surround of two chamfered orders.

The **North Transept** is rather plainer than the south, although generally similar in form. There is no stair turret; both clasping buttresses rise to plain square turrets. Here the lower two string courses are chamfered rather than moulded. In the north wall the four lower lancets have simple double-chamfered surrounds. The gable alone is rather more elaborate, with a three-bay arcade holding a central lancet; unusually its shafts are octagonal, with rather odd squarish caps.

The west wall of the transept has a continuous central pilaster, its lower section adjacent to the aisle wall (to the height of the original eaves; its upper part is narrower, with the result that when the aisle was heightened a narrow gap was left between the upper section of the aisle wall and the mid-section of the buttress). The lower lancet has shafted jambs, and an arch of three orders, the outer with a filleted roll, the central with a roll and the inner rebated. The two upper lancets have simpler surrounds of two chamfered orders.

The east elevation of the transept is very similar, although the central pilaster buttress is broader, stepping back in width in its uppermost section. The inner of the lower lancets is blocked; the outer has the roll moulding of its middle order continued across the sill.

The **Chancel** is of three bays. The two lower strings (at the sills and springing of the lower windows) are chamfered above and below, and the upper ones moulded. On the south the windows of the western bay have been blocked, and are partly concealed by a mass of masonry built into the angle between chancel and transept, to buttress the tower. The lower windows in the central and eastern bays have a keeled outer order, carried on shafts with

nailhead in their capitals, a middle order with a continuous roll moulding (continued across the sill), and a rebated inner. The upper windows are similar, except that there is no nailhead, and both inner orders are chamfered. In the blocking of the lower window in the western bay is a small trefoil-headed light.

The north elevation is very similar; the windows of the western bay are blocked (although the inserted buttress here is of much smaller dimensions, and carried on pendant arch). Within the blocking of the lower window a narrow single light has been inserted, with cinquefoiled heads above and below a transom at mid-height. The lower windows are like those on the south, but the upper have a roll-moulded outer order and chamfered inner ones. An area of renewed masonry below the central bay windows, which extends into the plinth, probably indicates the former position of a doorway.

The east end is flanked by square clasping buttresses capped by turrets with an arcaded top stage and spirelets, similar to those at the west end except that they are octagonal rather than square. There is old masonry below the lower string, where there is central pilaster buttress. Above are two tiers of stepped lancets; the lower have a keeled outer order, a roll to the middle and a rebated inner on shafts with nailhead in their capitals; the upper have a roll-moulded outer on shafts, and chamfers to both inner orders, except in the case of the centre light, which has a moulded inner. Although the wall at these levels is all of 19th century masonry, a number of the dressings and mouldings of these windows are old material re-used. Entirely 19th-century is the gable and its stepped five-bay arcade with a lancet at the centre, double-chamfered within a roll moulding; the gable is topped by a St Cuthbert's cross.

The **Tower** rises in two stages, although the apex of the adjacent roofs comes to the base of the upper (the belfry). Only on the east are there shallow stepped buttresses at each end of the wall, rising to mid-height on the belfry. The lower stage has no windows; on each side, just above the present roofs, are the remains of a raised roof tabling. This shows one peculiarity, in that some of the tablings - the western slope on the south, the southern slope on the east, and both on the north; show a 'hitch' or short horizontal section at mid-height. On the west the tabling of the northern slope is not complete, so there could have been a similar feature there.

The belfry stage of the tower has small clasping buttresses that rise to half-height at the angles, and between the bays of the five-bay arcade on each face. This arcade is made up of pointed arches containing a two-light belfry opening at the centre, with two trefoiled ogee lights and a pierced quatrefoil, and similar but blind openings in the other bays.

The tower is topped by a low embattled parapet (of 18th or early 19th century date) with crude crocketed pinnacles at the angles. Set back slightly behind this is the lofty (27.56 m) octagonal spire; the lower section, to a height of c 12 m., has roll mouldings at the angles, and four blocked lucarnes to north, south., east and west; the total height of the tower is 25.07 m (from nave floor) and tower and spire together of the spire is c 52.63 m. (measurements after Pritchett, 86)

The **Vestry** stands on the south side of the chancel, and is constructed of squared stone, with red sandstone present, especially below the plinth; it is a single-storeyed flat-roofed structure of two bays, with a tall chamfered plinth, stepped gable-topped diagonal buttresses at the outer angles, and a stepped buttress between the bays; there is a heavy string course with concave and convex mouldings below the parapet, which has a moulded coping. Both bays of the south wall have a two-light mullioned window, in a broad raised surround with a roll-moulded edge, and old diamond-paned glazing. The east wall is plain, except for what may be an area of patching, possibly indicating a former window position.

Between the vestry and south transept is the late-19th century **Choir Vestry**; a similar low flat-roofed structure; it has a doorway with a pointed arch and, to the west, a window of three lancet-arched lights.

The Interior

The internal walls of the **Nave** are largely of coursed square stone, of good quality. The west wall is of unusual thickness (c 1.4 m.); the west doorway has a segmental rear arch, with cut outs to accommodate the doors; in the north jamb is a drawbar tunnel 2.30 m long; three steps lead down to the level of the nave floor. Above the doorway is a large sloping set back, reducing the thickness of the wall by c 0.30 m. Above this there is a moulded string at the level of the sill of the two lower lancets; these have linked internal hoodmoulds. There is an upper string at the level of the internal sill of the uppermost lancet.

The nave arcades are of four bays; the western three arches are of three chamfered orders, with a chamfered hood to both nave and aisle; the eastern bays have an elaborately-moulded central order between two chamfers; all the capitals are moulded. On the north the western two arches are roughly semicircular (perhaps through secondary movement) and the third only slightly pointed; the western respond is semicircular, the first pier octagonal and the second circular on a ten-sided base (and square plinth); on the south the arches are all pointed, the respond being semi-octagonal and first pier circular, whilst the second is octagonal. The third pier on each side is much more elaborate, with filleted rolls on the principal faces and keeled moulding to the angles; above the capitals slender moulded shafts are carried up to the string course above.

The north arcade has the additional peculiarity of the stub of an arch springing northwards from the westernmost pier, across the aisle; only one springer, and the tothing above, remains. This lines up with a moulded corbel on the aisle wall (see below) but in the opinion of H.D.Pritchett (who examined the tothing but found no traces of mortar on it) the arch was never completed.

The clerestory is fairly simple internally, with the upper string being carried over the lancets as a hoodmould (on the north both strings step up in level on the line of the west jamb of the westernmost window, a change in levels also reflected externally) except at the east end; here, on each side, the lower string steps down beyond the easternmost lancet, and there is a single bay of blind arcading.

The 14th-century windows in the aisle all have segmental rear arches, with a sunk chamfer to the head only; both side doorways have segmental-pointed rear arches. The side walls have 19th-century ashlar facing up to a little above the level of the window sills; in both cases the west wall is entirely of 19th-century fabric. The arches at the east ends of the aisles, opening into the transepts, are richly moulded, with moulded hoods; in each case only the outer respond, with keeled shafts and capitals with stylised foliage, is old. Above the arches the steep roof-line of the original 13th-century aisle is clearly visible on the transept wall.

In the south aisle, above the re-facing of the lower wall, some areas of quite rough rubble masonry seem to mark surviving 13th-century fabric; as on the exterior, this seems to reach a higher level on either side of the western two windows, suggesting that their predecessors were set in gablets. The better-quality squared stones of the upper wall (ie the 14th-century heightening) contains one block with two incised lines, perhaps part of a cross slab, above and to the left of the doorway.

The fabric of the interior of the north aisle poses some puzzles; there was clearly an intention to throw transverse arches across the aisle from the arcade piers; a semicircular moulded corbel remains in line with the first pier (along with the hint of a scar above, as if at least one springer was inserted), and a similar but semi-octagonal corbel in line with the third; the corbel corresponding to the second pier has been hacked back. Whilst the corbels and adjacent masonry are clearly medieval, much of the fabric of the upper wall (especially towards the west end), regular and quite thin courses of sandstone blocks, resembles the external wall face and may be a post-medieval rebuild.

The western piers of the **Crossing** were entirely replaced in the 1862-5 restoration, but are copies of their predecessors. Each responds has a keeled shaft flanked by rolls, with fine moulded bases and capitals with stylised foliage and multi-stepped square abaci. On the east the original responds have both been built round by the pulpitium, and partially encased as part of the strengthening measures for the tower. The north-eastern pier retains elaborate foliate capitals; on the south the capital is largely concealed although here there seem to have been some reconstruction before the encasing as, half way up the stair within the pulpitium, a moulded base (earlier 14th century?) is partially exposed.

The crossing arches are two-centred, and are richly moulded, with the nutmeg ornament in the outer order; there are no hoodmoulds. In the internal angles of the tower there is the odd feature of a small shaft, with its own moulded capital, rising from the principal capitals, supporting a small square pilaster within the angle, which only rises as far as the gallery floor.

The upper parts of the **Tower** are reached by an eaves-level gallery from the stair turret in the South Transept. At gallery level, above the crossing arches, each side of the tower has an open arch of segmental-pointed form, with rebated jambs of a single chamfered order, looking down into the church below. Those in the north, south and west walls have rebated heads as well, and rear arches of segmental-pointed form. The arch on the east is rather different, having a segmental rear arch, and being set, on the external face of the wall, beneath a broader arch that spans the whole width of the chancel; it also has pins for the hinges of an opening. The dressings of this arch look of some age, but those of the other three are relatively 'fresh' and may be 19th century.

A wooden newel stair in the south-west corner of the gallery rises to the low ringing chamber; this is lit by means of the eastern and western belfry openings having their internal sills cut down, and has a range of four large corbels at mid-height on each wall; these look as if they could be 19th century work; two plaster masks beneath the northern corbels are of no antiquity.

A ladder gives access to the belfry itself; where there are further corbels at the angles, presumably related to a previous generation of bell frames. The belfry openings have chamfered segmental-pointed rear arches; just below ceiling level each angle is spanned by a squinch, of shallow segmental-pointed form, carrying the angles of the spire.

A further ladder rises to the 19th-century timber floor at the base of the octagonal **Spire**; a small square-headed doorway in the south-east side gives access onto the narrow leaded parapet. Within the spire is a timber platform, carried by four posts, of some antiquity.

Both **Transepts** have moulded string-courses (largely renewed) at the levels of the sills of the windows, which are set in internal arcades, although there is considerable variety in the width

of their bays, and in features such as capital form and mouldings. The lower walls (ie below the lower string) of each transept have been largely refaced in 19th-century ashlar.

The **South Transept** has two piscinae, one towards the centre of the east wall and one at the east end of the south; both have moulded trefoiled heads, and projecting moulded bowls which have been roughly cut back; on the west side of the southern is a rectangular aumbry with a chamfered surround, broken by several holes where door fittings have been cut away. At the north end of the east wall, set about 2 m off the floor, is a shallow recess with a plain pointed head; it was probably an image niche, old accounts referring to it as having an ogee-topped canopy. The stair turret forms a rectangular projection in the south-west angle, and is entered by a plain square-headed door (with a 19th-century lintel). In the west wall are traces of the blocked doorway traceable externally; here parts of its south jamb, and the springing of its rear arch (of segmental form?) are visible.

At the level of the lower windows there is a five-bay arcade on the east, although northern two bays have been blocked. The remaining bays have moulded arches and hoodmoulds, with carved paterae in the spandrels; the shafts have foliate capitals and shaft rings. The upper arcade seems to have been of six bays, two narrow acutely-pointed arches replacing the broad central single bay below; once again there are paterae above, and here the blind bays have a moulded string linking the shaft rings.

On the south the lower windows occupy the outer bays of a simple three-bay arcade, with richly-moulded arches and nail-head in the hood, and foliate capitals; there are particularly elaborate paterae. At capital level a moulded string, with nail-head, continues around the stair projection. The upper arcade has an additional very narrow bay at the east end, and lacks paterae. The gable itself is largely of 19th-century stone internally; old masonry remains at either side, showing a cut for a steep roof line just below the present one (on the east) and a restored doorway from the stair turret to the gallery (on the west).

The lower arcade on the west is set higher in the wall than the others, to clear the blocked doorway below; it has moulded arches with nailhead, and one patera above (the second seems to have been destroyed by erosion). The upper arcade has two narrow bays at the centre, as on the east. The newel stair is relatively broad, and not over steep. The outer doorway is clearly secondary, its insertion having necessitated the removal of one step and the truncation of a second. Part-way up there is a deep cupboard, rebated for a door, on the east side. At the top the stair continues for around ten steps beyond the doorway into the roof gallery, ending beneath a flat timber roof of no great age.

The **North Transept** is considerably plainer than the south, lacking such architectural detailing as the paterae, although there is again considerable variety, notably in the form of the capitals of the wall arcades. At the upper level the arcade capitals are either octagonal or square; in some cases abacus and capital do not seem a good match.

Below the lower string the only features of interest are a square-headed aumbry near the east end of the north wall, with a chamfered surround that has broach stops (although all but one stone is 19th-century restoration). At the south end of the east wall, in the area of masonry strengthened to buttress the tower, is what looks like a blocked segmental-headed opening, just breaking the first string, although it might simply be a relieving arch.

On the east the lower arcade has a double narrow-bays at its centre (south of which the arcade is blocked); there is one foliated capital, with a square abacus. The arcade arches and hoodmoulds are moulded, although the lancets themselves simply have double-chamfered

surrounds. The upper arcade has three bays of normal width, with chamfered arches and a moulded hood, and a fourth much narrower bay, with a moulded arch, squeezed in at the south end. This has the additional peculiarity of its respond capital carrying a tiny upper shaft, with its own moulded capital, supporting the moulding of the outer order.

The end wall has three bay arcades, the lower arches moulded and the upper chamfered; there is an upper string below the single lancet in the gable.

On the west the lower arcade is of course truncated by the arch to the aisle; it is of four bays, the two narrow ones south of the window mirroring those opposite. At the upper level is a fairly regular four-bay arcade, with simpler chamfers to both arches, hood and window surrounds.

The **Chancel** is entered beneath the rood loft or pulpitium, a bridge-like structure now serving as an organ loft, and set beneath the eastern arch of the crossing; the evidence of heraldry, now removed, has led to it being dated between 1381 and 1408. It is of squared ashlar, and has a central segmental-pointed arch, again very like a bridge, carried on three hollow-chamfered ribs. On the west face there is a shallow projection south of the arch, its stonework all renewed, containing a segmental-pointed doorway giving access to a steep but cleverly-contrived stair in which height is gained at the expense of depth by angling two or three steps one way, and then the other.

The interior of the chancel resembles the transepts in having two tiers of wall arcades, again showing considerable variety in detail. Below the lower string the walls are largely concealed by panelling (and a 19th-century reredos mosaic on the east). On the south of the sanctuary are the sedilia, with three stepped seats under trefoiled ogee arches, within a moulded square frame. Within the cusped spandrels are a series of shields; only one bears any device, the six-pointed star or estoile of Ingleby, from which the sedilia have been dated to the time of Prebendary Henry de Ingleby (c 1350). Immediately west of the sedilia is the doorway to the vestry, a 19th-century segmental-pointed arch with a hollow chamfer only to its head.

A cinquefoil-headed piscina and a square-headed aumbry, set close to the south end of the east wall, are reported to be concealed behind the end panel of the mosaic reredos; this was hinged to allow their inspection, but later panelling on the adjacent south wall now prevents the panel being opened.

On the north of the sanctuary is the Easter Sepulchre, with a flattened segmental-pointed arch with carved foliage in the spandrels of the square frame formed by a moulded hood with turned-back ends and a brattished top. The sill is formed by a polished Frosterley marble slab inserted in 1887.

The lower arcades on the side walls (originally of five bays, but the western have been destroyed by the 14th-century works) have keeled mouldings to the arches and a moulded hood, except in the centre bay where there it is replaced by a bold and distinctive moulding of chevrons set on a curve, enclosing a series of lozenges with four-petalled flowers; the lancet beneath has a surround of two moulded orders. The moulded surrounds of the lancets in the eastern bays include a distinctive moulding that has been termed 'ballflower' (although a century earlier than the usual 14th-century form) or 'rosettes' by Pritchett, carried round the sill; the ornament is in the form of double four-petalled flowers, and is cemented or dowelled onto the stone rather than worked from the solid. The capitals are all richly foliate. The upper arcade has been of five conventional bays (with moulded arches and hoodmoulds) with a sixth much narrower one at the west end. This remains intact on the north, but on the south

has been partly destroyed by the alterations. At this level the lancet windows have simpler double-chamfered surrounds.

On the south the 14th-century stonework replacing the western bay of the lower arcade has a small window with a trefoiled head, and an asymmetric splay (angled to light the rood loft to the west); on either side of the window are large corbels with dog-tooth on their splays, to carry the some sort of loft or gallery.

On the north the transomed window in the western bay has a segmental rear arch; immediately to the west of it a disturbance may indicate the position of a corbel like that opposite.

The east wall of the chancel is virtually all 19th-century work. The lower of the stepped triplets of lancets have moulded surrounds with ballflower; the upper is simpler, with chamfered surrounds beneath a moulded arcade, whilst the topmost lancet has a tall stilted arch above short jamb shafts.

Access to the Vestries from the chancel is by means of a small rectangular lobby cut in the thickness of the south wall. From this a square-headed doorway with a hollow-chamfered surround opens into the old vestry; a second doorway of similar form, accommodated in a shallow projection from the original wall face, gives access from the 19th-century choir vestry into the lobby. This doorway was formerly external; lobby and doorways are presumably contemporary with the old vestry, ie 15th century.

The **Roofs** are of considerable interest. Those of nave and transepts are thought to be coeval with the building, although the nave roof has been reconstructed, the old timbers having been re-used when it was altered to a lower pitch in 1707.

In their original form, these roofs were of collared rafter form, each pair of rafters having collars with, halved across them, a pair of long scissor braces which intersect a little above the collar; the joints are of notched-lap type, a typologically early form. The different roofs have been individually strengthened in the 19th century. The south transept roof has been converted to a crown post form by the insertion of two trusses with their tie-beams at eaves level, from which posts rise to support a collar purlin; curving braces rise from the post to the rafters. The ashlar posts that rise to the rafters from a plate on the internal face of the wall all seem to be 19th-century work; all the rafters have been scarfed and extended. A cut for a roof-line on the south face of the tower and transept gable, indicates a rather lower roof-line, perhaps indicating that the roof had been lowered at some stage before restoration to its original position (as indicated by the roof tabling on the tower wall above the roof) in 1862-5.

The north transept roof has been strengthened as well, but in this case the central crown-post type truss has its tie-beam at a higher level, carried by a plate supported by posts on the line of the internal wall face, close to the positions of the ashlar pieces in the south transept. There are spandrel pieces (ie 'solid' braces) between tie and posts.

The four-bay roof of the nave is of precisely similar form to that of the north transept, although here it is thought that the entire roof has twice been reconstructed, using the old rafters, braces and collars. The aisles have panelled ceilings of 19th-century date.

The two-bay chancel roof is entirely of 19th-century timber, but copies the present form of the north transept and nave roof structures.

FITTINGS AND FURNISHINGS

The **Font** in the south transept has an octagonal bowl of sandstone, thought to be of late 14th or early 15th century date, but the circular shaft and splayed base are of Frosterley marble are considerably earlier, and might be of the 12th century. The Font Cover, 'a spectacular piece of Cosin-Gothic' (Pevsner & Williamson 1983, 143) is of 17th century date; it is supported by a metal frame of 1972.

The **Chancel Stalls** near the badge of Bishop Langley (1406-1457), and probably date from early in his episcopate, perhaps being contemporary with the pulpitium; H.D.Pritchett (1924, 101-111) gives a detailed description. Three of the original 18 were destroyed c 1840, being replaced in 1864-5. The misericords are of especial interest.

There are fragmentary remains of **Wall Paintings**, possibly contemporary with the building, and mostly in the form of ornamental borders to panels, on the walls of both transepts.

The other fittings and furnishings all post-date the 1862-5 restoration: The Pulpit, an ornate carved piece of 1865 with marble shafting, was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott. Other Victorian fittings are the mosaic Reredos of the Last Supper, by John Dobbins, of 1875-8, and the Mosaic Floor to the chancel of 1897, installed to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee

The Stained Glass is all of 19th century date, 'an unusually complete show of mid- and later Victorian workmanship' (Pevsner & Williamson 1983, 143).

The eight Bells are of 18th and 19th century dates; full details are given by H.D.Pritchett (1924, 154-155); the Bell Frames are of cast iron, and of 19th century date.

SEPULCHRAL MONUMENTS

Set against the south wall of the south transept is a Female **Effigy**, which has been of good quality but is rather badly damaged; it has been ascribed a 13th century date.

At the south-east corner of the south transept is a small group of medieval **Cross Slab Grave Covers**; these are described and illustrated by Ryder (1985, 69-70 and plate 15); two other slabs, which lay outside the south transept in 1963, have since 'gone missing'.

When the top of the tower was re-lead in 1899, it was found to be paved with eleven cross slabs (Pritchett, H.D. 1924, 92-93); sketches of some of these survive in the collection of Pritchett material in the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries' Library.

There are few post-medieval monuments of great importance; there are 18th century wall tablets in the north aisle, and 18th and 19th century monuments to the Allan family (some quite elaborate) on the east walls of both transepts. Several 18th-century ledger stones have been preserved at the west end, re-set as the floor of the internal wooden porch.

PRE-CONQUEST SCULPTURE

Six pieces of Pre-Conquest sculpture are listed by Cramp (1984, 62-3). Of these one cross head, with the top of the shaft, dated to the late 10th or early 11th century, and an incomplete cross head of the early 11th century, are displayed in the nave, against the second pier of the south arcade; in a corresponding position on the opposite side of the nave is a supposedly Saxon sundial. In the north transept aumbry is part of a hogback, seen as a 'crude copying of a type more elegantly represented at Brompton, Yorkshire', and dated to the second quarter of

the 10th century. Another fragment, seen as part of a large recumbent slab of the second half of the 10th century, lies in the south transept along with the medieval cross slabs. A fifth stone which formerly lay outside the south transept, seen as possibly part of a dedication or 'station' slab from within the church, is now lost.

HISTORICAL NOTES

- c1000 Darlington was given to the Community of St Cuthbert by Styr, son of Ulphus, soon after establishment of See of Durham in 995.
- 1083 Under reforms by Bishop St Calais, secular canons were displaced from Durham to a number of other churches; Darlington was probably one of these, as implied by Galfrid de Coldingham writing in 1192.
- 1192 Galfrid of Coldingham, in writing of the works of Bishop Hugh of le Puiset (or 'Pudsey'), states that 'amid the vicissitudes of so many storms he did not desist from the erection of the Church of Dernington...' The 'many storms' refers to the financial constraints imposed by the necessity to raise a ransom for King Richard. There has been antiquarian controversy whether the 1292 date refers to the commencement of building activities, or simply some point in the campaign.
- Le Puiset also refounded the community of secular canons established a century before; the college consisted of a vicar and four prebends (of Darlington, Blackwell, Cockerton and Newton)
- 1439 Bishop Neville altered the constitution of the church from a vicarage with four prebendal stalls to a deanery
- 1794 The Durham historian Hutchinson (Vol III, 186-7) prints the first detailed description of the church, which he saw as 'kept in good order', although 'the inward appearance is greatly hurt by irregular pews and galleries'.
He refers to there having been four chantry chapels in the church, three dedicated to St James, All Saints, the Blessed Mary, and one founded by Robert Marshall.

A large number of minor historical notices are provided by H.D.Pritchett (1924).

FACULTIES AND OTHER RECORDS OF STRUCTURAL WORK

Note; faculties recorded are those which deal with structural matters; those dealing with stained glass, memorial tablets and moveable furnishings are not included.

Date and Faculty No.	Works.
18th century (n.d.)	Gallery
35. 1804	For altering parish church.
36. 1862	Improvements (the Sir George Gilbert Scott Restoration). Works included the removal of galleries, the roof being altered and repaired, new stalls, pulpit and reading desk, a new floor 'laid down sufficiently low to shew the Base of the Pillars', the foundations being 'placed in a state of security', the west end being secured by additional buttresses, the north aisle wall in a great part rebuilt, the heating and lighting apparatus being renewed, and proper drains laid around the church.
239. 1879.	Plans and specifications for erecting a new organ.
316. 1890.	Additional vestry.
396/7. 28.1.1898.	Works including alteration of pavement and approach to Holy Table.
444/33. 19.8.1904	Oak panelling.
2636. 30.11.1936.	Improvements etc. to the bell frame. (Bells apparently re-cast at this time - 1995 QQ) :
2757. 11.7.39	Renovation of the Organ.
3017. 12.8.47	Installation of the electric lighting system.
3599. 2.3.53.	AC (archdeacon's Certificate). Restoration and re-decoration.
4209. 18.2.60	Installation of oil-firing unit and tank.
4330. 14.2.61.	Removal of four pews and installation of new table and board.
5072. 23.8.63.	Agreement over perpetual right of use over two portions of the churchyard as an access road and car park.
5231. 29.1.71.	Agreement re. laying out, maintenance and landscaping of churchyard.
5314. 21.2.72:	New font canopy, removal of pews and reflooring.

5572.	16.9.75.	Removal of pews etc.
5702.	10.11.77.	Installation of new electric light system. ;
5867.	4.11.80.	Construction of footpath, planting of trees.
6198.	4.7.84.	Repairs to tower.
7127.	16.8.90.	Construction of music cupboard and removal of one short pew.
7236.	4.1.91.	Re-bedding of paving.
7282.	19.3.91.	Repairs to stonework of west front.
7283.	19.3.91.	Repairs to lead roof.
7418.	15.11.91.	Repair of pinnacle.
7642.	9.12.92.	Repair of north-east pinnacle.
7860.	25.5.94.	Repair of churchyard railings.
8048.	30.10.95.	Improvements to west boundary wall.

THE STRUCTURAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Darlington church, by virtue of its size and architectural importance, has attracted a considerable amount of antiquarian attention; interest has focused on the principal constructional phase (late 12th/early 13th century). The section of this account dealing with that period is simply a summary of the views of the principal protagonists. Some new suggestions are offered however, in the consideration of the survival of earlier fabric, a possibility which does not appear to have been raised before:

Pre-1180 fabric

Documentary evidence - in particular the transfer of secular canons from Durham to Darlington c1083 - points to the existence of an earlier church, and this is also implied by the survival of Pre-Conquest sculptural pieces. Foundations of a 'Saxon' building were seen (but unfortunately not recorded) during the 1862-5 restoration.

More recently, excavations in the Market Place have demonstrated the existence of a separate cemetery, which it is surmised surrounded an earlier church; implying that Le Puiset may have chosen a new site for his late-12th century building.

An examination of the west end of the present church suggests that earlier fabric may survive in the lower part of the west wall and the western responds of both arcades. The west wall, as far as a large internal set-back below the lower windows, is c 1.4 m thick, by far the thickest section of walling in the church. The walling adjacent to the arcade responds (seen from the aisles - the western walls of which are much thinner than that of the nave) is of a heavy rubble with some large blocks re-used from some previous structure; these are best seen on

the north, where some have a rough diagonal tooling that might even be Roman. The north side of the west respond of the north arcade also has a marked set-back at the level of the arcade capitals.

All these features would be difficult to explain if one sees the west end as part of a single building campaign, even one interrupted by a design change in which aisles were added. H.D. Pritchett (1924, 64-5) commented that 'the north-west end of the nave looks as if it were of earlier masonry', but implies that this was the result of the partial construction of the wall before the design change; he speaks of 'distinct signs of what was an outside pilaster buttress inside the building', presumably referring to the north face of the respond with its set-back, but ignores the fact that its masonry is quite unlike that of any of the other external elevations of the late 12th/early 13th century building.

Further evidence for the retention of earlier fabric may be implied from the irregularities in the ground plan. The individual bays of the nave arcades are very variable in length -from east to west, the south arcade 3.89 m, 4.82 m, 4.76 m and 4.58 m, and the north 3.93 m, 4.52 m, 4.85 m and 4.61 m (dimensions from Pritchett 1924, plan f. p. 64, metricated). Whilst some of this variation, and perhaps the almost round form of the arches of the westernmost bay, can be explained by later settlement, a more likely scenario might be that miscalculations were made in laying out nave arcades from the newly-built crossing to a pre-existing west end. Similar miscalculations in level rather than plan would explain the odd step-up in level at the west end of the northern clerestory.

All authorities seem to agree on a pause, of up to 30 years, between the construction of the crossing and eastern parts of the church and that of the nave; unless one invokes the recent hypothesis of a separate church in the Market Place, it would seem unlikely that the parish was left without a place of worship for that long. A more tenable solution might be that a pre-existing nave was retained during this period, and that, when it was finally replaced, its west end was retained, partially encased in new masonry.

The Late 12th/early 13th century works

A variety of interpretations have been put forward:

Sir G. G. Scott (1862).

Scott did not specify the date of the commencement of the Le Puiset work which he saw as being confined to the lower walls of the chancel and transepts; evidence of weathering at the level of the lower string course suggested a delay in building after the death of Le Puiset (1195), and completion, using architectural material prepared for the initial campaign, did not take place the second quarter of the 13th century. He cited the evident mismatching between arch mouldings and capitals, particularly as seen in the north transept, as evidence for this.

H.D.Pritchett (1886)

1180-83. Early church pulled down; foundations of present church, probably without aisles, put in, and walls of chancel and transept carried probably 6 or 8 feet high, by Richard, architect to Bishop Pudsey. Then a standstill until:

1192-1195. Work recommenced by William, successor to Richard, Pudsey's architect. Aisles added to design; east end altered from dual to triple arrangement of windows; chancel carried on first, north transept next, south transept last..

1195-1200. Work carried on, but plainer in the upper part of the transepts and the western part of the nave.

Rev J.F.Hodgson (1895).

The Rev J F Hodgson, antiquarian rector of Witton le Wear, launched a characteristically longwinded and vitriolic attack on Scott. His argument was that the entire church, apart from the nave, was constructed in the three years 1192-1195, and that the architectural discontinuities in the north transept were more apparent than real.

H.D.Pritchett (1924)

The younger Pritchett refined his father's suggested scheme a little, dismissing Hodgson as 'exceedingly controversial' and accepting Scott's hypothesis of a lengthy pause after Pudsey's death, with the building being completed only in the second quarter of the 13th century.

He also identified the stone types used in the church; Cockfield Fell stone (and some red sandstone) in the chancel and lower parts of the north, Houghton Bank stone in the south transept and nave.

Dufty (1954)

Dufty thought that on stylistic evidence works were unlikely to have begun before 1192, only the plan following earlier conventions. He thought that only the chancel and north transept had reached any height by the time of the death of Le Puiset, and that the change to an aisled nave, with the completion of its eastern bay, and the south transept, followed, with a pause before the nave was completed in the second quarter of the 13th century.

Cunningham (1980)

Cunningham, comparing architectural detailing at Darlington with other works by Le Puiset, returns to the view that building commenced in the mid-1180s. She simply accepts 'that the church was not necessarily built in a continuous campaign' and argues that the south transept was built before the north, and that the plainer nature of the western parts of the nave might reflect its parochial nature rather than a later building scheme.

Cunningham's article has some major errors; she cites Dufty as the first to suggest that the nave aisles were not part of the original plan, and seems unaware of the H.D.Pritchett's book, which, despite some flaws, must remain the prime source for the church.

Pevsner & Williamson (1983)

Here a protracted but continuous campaign of works is suggested; 'building proceeded, it seems steadily, and nothing can be later than 1250...'

Later Medieval Changes

The later medieval changes to the fabric have attracted less controversy. Various works took place in the 14th century; the tower was constructed (H.D. Pritchett (1924, 90) dates it to c 1315, Pevsner & Williamson to the 'early 14th century' and Scott and Dufty to the middle of the century, and the elder Pritchett to the third quarter of the century.

The aisle walls were raised, and the present windows inserted, in the period 1350-1375.

The spire is generally thought to be a little later in date than the tower below; it has been suggested that there was an earlier timber spire, before the construction of the present one took place, possibly towards the end of the century.

Either the construction of the tower, or the addition of the spire, caused severe structural problems in the crossing. In an attempt to remedy these a number of windows were built up, and buttresses constructed in the angles between chancel and transepts. The pulpitium or rood loft (which formerly carried heraldry indicating a date between 1381 and 1403 -Pritchett 1924, 96) may have been built to provide additional support. At some the south-east pier of the crossing was partially rebuilt; H.D.Pritchett (op.cit. 113) dates this reconstruction to the late 15th century, which is difficult to understand as its masonry is now encased in that of the pulpitium. .

The sedilia in the chancel carry the badge of Henry de Ingleby who was a prebend from c 1354, and died in 1375.

The choir stalls bear the badge of Bishop Laughingly (1406-1439); heir construction seems to have sealed off the door to an earlier vestry on the north of the chancel, which may have been replaced at this time by the present one on the south, which is presumably the 'tresor house' mentioned in 1509 (Pritchett 1924, 111). The Easter Sepulchre is also probably of late 15th century date.

Post-Reformation

Between 1547 and 1553 the roof of the chancel was reconstructed to a lower pitch, and in 1707 the remaining roofs were lowered, although their basic structures were retained; at the same time embattled parapets were built all round the church, except on the south aisle.

At some time in the 17th or 18th century a porch was built in front of the south door; it was removed between 1823 and 1847 (Pritchett 1924, 136).

In 1748 the old east end (which presumably lost its gable when the roof was altered) was taken down and rebuilt, above the first string course. Two years later the spire was struck by lightning, and the upper 15 m rebuilt (a little lower than previously); the present tower battlements and pinnacles were constructed at the time; it is thought that the fall of the spire damaged the vestry, the windows, cornice and parapet of which are of mid- 18th century date.

In 1756 an eastern gallery was erected, after which, as J.P.Pritchett (1887, 235) put it, 'the usual abominations of the period rapidly succeed each other'.

Other 18th and 19th century works are relatively well documented (see 'Faculties and other records of structural work' and H.D.Pritchett 1924)

THE CHURCHYARD

St Cuthbert's Church stands at the centre of a large rectangular churchyard, bounded on the east by the River Skerne, on the west by the Market Place, on the north by Tubwell Row (a frontage that has been partly built up) and on the south by the modern town hall and its car park. The north-west corner of the yard is now occupied by the Parish Centre of c1970, with a paved memorial garden to the east. There is a paved car park area outside the west end of the nave, and a series of floodlights around the building.

The west boundary of the churchyard has an ashlar wall, gateway and piers of 1791; prior to their construction the yard had been unenclosed.

The churchyard was closed for burial in 1856, and the majority of its monuments have been cleared of its monuments in the present century; a number survive near the west side (including several 18th-century headstone of quite vernacular style), and a smaller group of 19th-century monuments near the south-east corner. A plan of the whole churchyard at a scale of 20':1" was prepared in 1911, and a framed copy presented to the churchwardens, along with a record of all inscriptions (Pritchett, 1924, 30)

A broken medieval stone coffin lies in the drainage channel adjacent to the south transept; outside the east end of the chancel is an early 19th century inscribed slab from the formal National School. Built into a modern dwarf wall at the south-east corner of the churchyard (beside a modern footbridge across the Skerne) is another slab, inscribed 'ROYAL G SCHOOL ENLARGED A.D.1846'.

Prior to the construction of paved car park around the west end of the church, c 1970, a medieval slab with an indent for an inscription and a chalice brass lay '28 feet north west of the north aisle' (H.D.Pritchett 1924, 141); it cannot now be traced. Several 18th and 19th century slabs have been incorporated in the paving of the memorial garden on the east side of the Centre.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

As one might expect from the importance of the church, and the extent of the recorded 19th and 20th century works, archaeological deposits both inside and outside the building will have been considerably disturbed.

During the 1862-5 works the floors were lowered and a thick layer of concrete laid throughout the church, effectively destroying at least any post-medieval deposits; major underpinning works were carried out at the west end of the nave, and around the western crossing piers., and an underfloor heating system installed (replacing stoves). It is known that there are Allan family vaults beneath the north transept; these 'were lowered six feet, and covered by two feet of concrete' (H.D.Pritchett 1924, 147). Nevertheless, it is possible that archaeological deposits and structural remains survive, at least in some parts of the church; any disturbance of floors that extends below the 19th century concrete layer will require archaeological monitoring.

The exterior of the church has a sunk channel c 1 m deep and 1.5 m wide, running round the whole perimeter, another product of the 1862-5 restoration. This will also have disturbed archaeological deposits adjacent to the wall faces; however, it is possible that some remains of two demolished structures, the putative early vestry on the north of the chancel, and the presumably post-medieval south porch, may survive outside it.

Away from the church itself, the churchyard has seen extensive disturbance and landscaping, within recent years. It should be borne in mind that the church formed only part of an extensive complex of medieval buildings - Bishop's Palace, Tithe Barn, the former vicarage, the Deanery etc - most of which were pulled down in the late 18th and 19th centuries.

The medieval vicarage apparently stood within the south-west corner of the churchyard (H.D.Pritchett 1924, 21), and it is possible that sub-surface remains survive here; it had been

abandoned by 1712 when the vicar is recorded as living in what later became the Nag's Head Inn on Tubwell Row (a rear wall of 17th-century brickwork survives adjacent to Church Wynd). The Bishop's Palace site to the south of the churchyard has been largely destroyed by the present town hall of 1967-70.

Priorities

Darlington, in common with a number of other churches which have long been recognised as being of architectural importance, received a considerable amount of attention in the later 19th and early 20th centuries, but less in more recent years. Whilst the church remains relatively well preserved, the complete loss of the other medieval buildings in the area in the later 19th century, and the destruction of their sites in the last twenty or thirty years, constitutes a major archaeological loss; the recent (1995) excavation in the Market Place, prior to repaving, was the first proper archaeological investigation ever made in the town.

The most detailed records of the fabric are those made by the architects J.P. and H.D.Pritchett; the majority of these are now in the Library of the Newcastle upon Tyne Society of Antiquaries, and include a fine series of elevations and sections through the church. Impressive as these are, they are almost a century old, and not accurate in every detail; the building merits full recording using modern technology, either by rectified photography or photogrammetry.

Detailed records should also be made of the fragmentary remains of wall paintings in the transepts, which received little attention from the previous generations of antiquaries.

A church as important historically and architecturally as this really merits the setting up of its own archive of historic and contemporary records; these should include copies of the Pritchett collection of drawings now held in Newcastle, and of all published sources.

Peter F Ryder June 199

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