

## The Parish Church of St Ebba, Ebchester

St Ebba's parish church stands in the centre of the village of Ebchester, on the south-east side of the Derwent valley; its well-wooded churchyard lies within the site of the northernmost of the series of Roman forts on Dere Street, the major Roman road running from York to Hadrian's Wall and beyond.

The church consists of quite a lengthy aisleless nave with a north-west porch/tower and a south-east vestry, and a chancel with an organ chamber to the south-west; there is a boiler room built into the angle between the nave and the west wall of the tower.

### Description

#### The Exterior

The **Tower** of 1910 is constructed of snecked horizontally-pecked stone with sandstone ashlar quoins and dressings. It is of three storeys (undifferentiated externally) with a chamfered plinth. At each corner a pair of buttresses, with set-backs at mid-height, rise to the level of the base of the belfry. The entrance on the north has three steps up to a round-arched triple-chamfered archway that has a hoodmould which is chamfered above and beneath, and turned-back at the ends. The pair of boarded doors have foliate hinges. Above is a round-arched single-light window, with a very narrow chamfer to its jambs and head; its dressings (apart from the diagonally-tooled upper block of each jamb) suggest that it is an older feature re-used, although its rather incongruous hoodmould is clearly more recent. Above is a circular clockface with an ashlar surround, with an outer label chamfered on both angles. The belfry has a single round-arched light in each wall with a hoodmould chamfered on its lower angle. There is a hollow-moulded string at the base of the ashlar parapet, which has a moulded parapet double-stepped upwards at each corner.

The west side of the tower has a small round-arched window to the ground floor that looks all of 1910, with above it a second clock face. The east side of the tower has a round-arched light at clock chamber level; its irregular dressings, like those of several other openings in the church, give the impression of its being an older feature re-set. The lower part of the south side of the tower is largely concealed by the adjacent nave; above the nave roof is a blind round-arched light, with roughly-shaped dressings, and a belfry opening as on the other sides.

At the base of the east face of the northern of the two buttress at the north-east corner of the tower is the incised inscription 'LAID BY JAMES KNOTT ESQ. MP. 24<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 1910' ; on the south face of the western of the pair at the north-west angle 'LAID BY JOHN G GIBSON HARRIETTE GIBSON T.W.G. SMITH TO THE MEMORY OF THEIR PARENTS 24<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 1910'.

The west end of the **Nave**, of 1892, is of roughly-pecked snecked stone, with much more purple coloration than in the tower. It has a plain square-edged plinth; low down is a large block that looks to be part of a Roman altar (?) with horizontal mouldings and a sunk triangular panel.

Towards each end of the wall is a small round-arched light, each with an irregular surround of large blocks. These seem to have been re-set twice, first when the west end of the nave was extended in 1876, and again with the second extension in 1892. There is a square socket cut into megalithic head of the southern, above the arch of the window. Apart from the large east and west windows, all the lights of the church are of this type. Above and between these is the large 1892 west window of three cinquefoil-headed lights under a segmental-pointed

head, with a hollow-chamfered surround and a hoodmould with turned-back ends. The gable above has no coping, and is capped by a bellcote with a worn string course, chamfered above and below, at its base, and above that two square-edged openings, each with a two-centred arch. The arches spring from a central pier (a monolithic block, roughly bevelled on its lower angles to produce a pseudo-capital) and impost, chamfered on their lower edges. The heads of the arches and coped gabled cap look of 19<sup>th</sup>-century date, but the lower part of the bellcote seems to be older stonework, like the small windows below twice re-set with the successive extensions of the nave.

The lower part of the south-west quoin of the nave is made up of four large blocks, presumably re-sited from the original south-west angle when the nave was extended; the upper part of the quoin is of tooled-and-margined blocks of 19<sup>th</sup>-century character.

The south wall of the nave, to the west of the added vestry, presents two quite different fabric types. To the right is the original walling of coursed roughly-squared stone, with a single course of very large almost square blocks around 0.50 m tall at the base; these are characteristic of the walls of the original Norman nave and chancel, and are clearly re-used Roman material. The westernmost block marks the south-west angle of the original nave. Beyond is an area of coursed squared stone marking the first nave extension of 1876, and beyond that the distinctive snecked and roughly-pecked stone of the 1892 fabric. There are two single-light windows of the usual type; the eastern probably a correct restoration (there was a narrow sash here before 1876, presumably a widening of an original loop) and the western, directly above the last of the big blocks in the basal course, of 1876. The head of each shows diagonal tooling and may be of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but the irregular jamb stones appear convincingly ancient, and must be re-used work.

The north wall of the nave has a narrow square-edged plinth, like that reproduced on the west end, at a rather higher level than the broader chancel plinth; above runs the usual megalithic course above. The wall east of the boiler house seems to be genuine medieval fabric to its full height, and contains two more round-arched windows. The eastern is ancient (except perhaps for its sill) but the western replaces a narrow sash (itself probably a widening of a genuine loop) shown in an 1876 photograph (Gibson 1916). To the west, behind the boiler room, a plain square chimney stack, with a chamfered cornice, rises from the nave wall.

The east gable of the nave, above the chancel roof, has a plain cross finial.

The **Boiler Room** appears, from the evidence of the faculty plans, to have been built in 1892 as a vestry and converted to its present use perhaps in 1907. It is constructed of snecked and pecked stone, like that of the tower, and has tooled-and-margined quoins at its north-east corner; the round-headed light in its north wall is all in recent ashlar. Built into the north wall, low down and near the west end, is a Roman stone with a sunk square panel.

The **Vestry** of 1907 on the south of the nave is constructed of snecked pecked stone, very like the tower; the ashlar quoins are deliberately irregular in form, although clearly new work, as is the two-centred doorway in the centre of the south wall, which has a chamfered surround and a moulded hood with turned-back. The window in the west wall is all in new materials, as are the two in the eastern part of the south wall, whilst that in the western part of the wall looks like an older piece re-set.

The **Organ Chamber** is in very similar fabric to the adjacent vestry, although the blocks are generally larger; its only window is a small round-arched light in the east wall, which again looks like an ancient feature re-set.

The **Chancel** has a much broader plinth or footing than the nave, made up of large blocks that project c 0.20 m from the wall face above; at the eastern angles this plinth is roughly rounded off. The walls above have the usual basal course of megalithic blocks, with coursed squared stone above; the eastern angles have large and irregular quoins. On the south the upper part of the wall, roughly from the window sills upwards, is of smaller fabric and may be a 19<sup>th</sup>-century rebuild; a few stones show distinctive Roman broaching. There are two round-headed windows, the eastern slightly taller, looks wholly original but most of the blocks of the jambs of the western (which occupies the position of a pre-1876 sash window) are of 19<sup>th</sup>-century character, although the head could be an old piece re-set.

The east end (left) has a small offset around 1.0 m above the plinth, evident to the south of the window, and also, unusually, cut into one of the large blocks of the north-east angle quoin. The large Romanesque-style east window of 1876 (replacing a square-headed sash)



has an inner order with a continuous chamfer, and a moulded outer order that is carried on jamb shafts that have scalloped capitals and imposts chamfered on their lower edges, which also carry a hoodmould with chevron ornament. The gable above has a cross with a disc at its centre as a finial.

On the north of the chancel the ground level is a little higher, concealing the plinth. The easternmost of the three windows is set considerably higher in the wall than the

others; the central window is of 1876, replacing a sash, but the other two seem authentic. The upper part of the wall looks as if it may have been rebuilt in 1876.

The roof of the body of the church is of graduated stone flags, apart from 20<sup>th</sup>-century artificial tiles on the boiler room.

### The Interior

The entrance lobby is formed in the base of the 1910 **Tower**. On its south side is a large round-headed arch, with a broad chamfer to its head only, framed a smaller but similar archway containing boarded double doors giving access to the body of the church.. On the east is the doorway to the boiler room, which has a segmental arch of rough dressings set below a taller round arch which again has a broad chamfer only to its head. The window on the west has a megalithic semicircular rear arch like the nave windows; various Roman stones (see below) are exhibited in a square-headed recess below it, and built into the wall around its head.

Access to the upper floors of the tower is by a vertical metal ladder fixed against the east end of the north wall. In the clock chamber there is no internal sign of the blind window on the south, and the internal opening of the east window, unlike its outer, is all of obviously 'new' stone. In the belfry the girders that carry the bells rest in larger sockets in the north and south walls. At each level the ceilings are boarded.

In the body of the church the walls are bare of plaster, which together with the small openings gives the church a very gloomy interior. The wall fabric thus exposed is very similar to that of the external wall faces, ie roughly-squared stone in the Norman parts and snecked stone in the 19<sup>th</sup> century sections..

In the **Nave** the internal face of entrance doorway has plain square jambs of walling stone, and a semicircular ashlar head, with a broad chamfer to the head only. The single-light windows in the nave are all of the same form, with megalithic semicircular rear arches and two-stepped sills. The two in the west end seem to have old stonework in their jambs, but their rear arches are of 1876 ashlar. The three-light window above and between them has a segmental-pointed rear arch carried on a rib which is chamfered on both its lower angles back.

Of the two windows in the south wall, the internal surround of the western is of 1876, but the eastern has old jambs, which may have survived the widening of the 'lancet' mentioned by Surtees, to hold a sash. To the east of these is an obvious patch of secondary masonry, marking the position of the pre-1892 south door, then at the east end of the wall is the doorway into the 1907 vestry. Its external face (ie towards the vestry) has a two-centred arch with continuous broad chamfer; its head and west jamb are of 19<sup>th</sup>-century ashlar, but there seems to be older stonework (perhaps re-tooled) re-set in the east jamb; similarly the segmental-pointed head of the rear arch is 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the lower parts of the internal jambs look much older. This is probably the old south door, which has survived (at least in part) a whole series of moves, from south wall to west end c1840, then back to the south wall in 1892, and finally eastward for a metre or so in 1907.

There is a projecting off-set course or internal plinth, c 0.15 m wide, at the foot of the north wall, which has three windows, the westernmost (of 1876) being covered externally by the 1910 boiler room. The easternmost of the three is the only one in the whole church that appears to be unaltered Norman work inside and out, retaining its original semicircular rear arch cut into a megalithic block, its rough edges contrasting to the cut ashlar of the others which copy it. The internal opening of the central window seems to have old jambs and sill, which, like that more or less opposite, may have survived the widening of the external opening to take a 19<sup>th</sup>-century sash.

The nave roof is of trussed rafters, with boarding between; the rafters rise from stub ties, the chamfered ends of which overhang the wall-plate.

The **Chancel** opens under a semicircular arch of very plain character (see photo p.5). The jambs are of simple square section (the western angle of the south jamb being patched in 19<sup>th</sup>-century ashlar) and have various sockets for screens etc, somewhat obscured by cement. They carry impost blocks, chamfered on their lower angle, that only project on the line of the arch. The arch is of a single plain square order; its voussoirs do not include any 'through' stones. The distorted form of the arch seen in the 1876 photographs in the Mitchinson album<sup>1</sup> suggests that it was taken down and re-erected at that time, although all its dressings look old.

The internal openings of the windows in the side walls of the chancel are quite different in character from those in the nave. They are much more broadly splayed, a consequence both of their being wider (c1.25 m as opposed to 0.85m) and of the chancel walls being markedly thinner (0.68m as opposed to 0.85 m); rather than rear arches they all now have tooled ashlar

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<sup>1</sup>Dean and Chapter Library, Durham

lintels of 1876, replacing timber ones (Boyle 1892, 600) .

The western part of the original south wall of the chancel has been removed by a broad opening to the organ chamber of 1907, spanned only by a timber plate; its chamfered east jamb includes some tooled-and-margined blocks. The internal lintel of the western of the two windows in the eastern part of the wall is set a little lower than that of eastern. The internal jambs and sills of both windows, and of all three in the north wall, look ancient., although some stonework has clearly been re-set; the western window on the south and the central one the north replace pre-1876 sashes<sup>2</sup>. The only old feature in the east wall is an aumbry, set towards the north end, but its original form and fabric is now completely concealed by new oak doors and a concreted-in wall-safe, which is unfortunate as it is reported to have had



fittings for a door ‘unusually hinged at the top so that it opened upwards’ (Downie 2002, 26). There is no sign of any other of the usual ritual arrangements (other than cuts for previous altar rails) or of the stone benches said to have been found in the chancel walls in 1876. The east window is of similar form internally as externally, except that its outer order has a form of billet moulding, probably modelled on that around the font, rather than chevron; the wall on either side is hidden by the creed and commandments boards, whilst that above it is of 1876 snecked stone.

The chancel has a boarded wagon roof.

The **Vestry** of 1907 is divided into two by a wooden screen. The north wall of its eastern

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<sup>2</sup>The 1876 faculty papers include a reconstructed plan of the church in its medieval form which implies there were only two windows in each side of the chancel originally, although Surtees explicitly states that there were three lancets on each side of the chancel.

part<sup>3</sup> is the external face of the south wall of the nave; at its east end the original south-east quoin has been somewhat mutilated by the cutting of a rebate for the doorway between vestry and organ chamber, which has a two-centred arch; the doorway and the wall in which it is set are of grey brick. The window in the south wall to the west of the door, and that in the east wall of the organ chamber, may have some old blocks in their internal jambs.

The **Boiler Room** is reached from the doorway in the east wall of the entrance lobby beneath the tower, with three steps down to its floor. Its south wall is formed by the external face of the western part of the north wall of the nave, and the lower part of the western of the three windows is visible; this does not look convincingly ancient. Below it the off-set plinth or footing is exposed, with just above it a blocked opening where pipes enter the church. There is a low opening, a former coal chute, at the foot of the east wall of the chamber

### **Carved Stones**

A variety of Roman stones built into the fabric have already been mentioned.. The principal collection is in the internal west wall of the entrance lobby at the base of the tower. In the lower recess here is a large altar, apparently now devoid of any inscription, a small altar with remains of an inscription, and two fragments of shafts, one with a moulded base. Built into the wall to the left of the head of the window above are three stones, two with sunk panels with incised inscriptions and one with a fish carved in relief. Above the window head is a large stone with what looks to be the bust of a figure, with to the left a small inscribed altar.

There is a carved stone built into the external face of the churchyard wall c 20 m south-east of the lych gate; although worn, this appears to bear a cross carved in relief, its upper arm having a square end and concave sides; this could well be of Prew-Conquest date, and if so is important as the only concrete piece of evidence for occupation of the site between the Roman period and the church of c1100.

### **Sepulchral Monuments.**

Ebchester Church has very little in the way of sepulchral monuments inside the building; for the only medieval monuments, see churchyard description. On the north wall of the chancel are two marble tablets.

- (1) Near the centre of the wall, a tablet capped by a partly-shrouded urn, to Robert Surtees and his wife Anne (both d.1811), of Milk Well Burn; the monument is signed 'Jopling' (lower frame, r.), 'Davies' (lower bracket, l.) and 'Newcastle (lower bracket, r).
- (1) Near west end of wall, a tablet to Anthony Surtees of Hamsterley Hall and his wife Alice, d. 1838 and 1837 respectively.

Both refer to burials 'in the burial ground of this churchyard' rather than inside the building. Monuments.

### **Fittings and Furnishings**

Beneath the altar is a medieval **Altar Slab**, with incised crosses still visible at its centre, and

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<sup>3</sup>That of the western part is concealed behind cuopboards.

towards the north-east and south-west corners.

The **Font**, (left) at the south-west corner of the nave, is of considerable interest, and may be contemporary with the church. It has a circular shallow bowl with simple but heavy mouldings on the vertical face, including a line of large billet ornament ; the shaft, tapering slightly downwards, is of little less diameter than the bowl, and rises from a circular base which may be a former (Roman?) millstone.

The fittings and furnishings are largely of late 19<sup>th</sup> century date; the benches in the nave and stalls in the chancel are all relatively simple, and of pitch-pine construction. The four painted boards on the east wall, with Creed, Commandments and Lord's Prayer, were presented in 1901, and are thought to be by Thomas Pratt & Son (Downie 2002, 26)

The only **Stained Glass** in the church is in the east and west windows, both given in memory of members of the Surtees family who died in the 1860s and 1870s; both the Crucifixion (east window) and Ascension (west window) are of good quality,. Although the former especially is showing signs of decay.



The **Clock** in the tower is by W Potts and Sons, Leeds 1910. The six **Bells** are all inscribed (for inscriptions see Downie 2002, 19) and are now hung from three north-south girders, and struck by hammers. The fact that the girders are set in larger sockets in the side walls of the belfry suggests that a bell frame has been replaced.

## Historical Notes

- c650 St Ebba, daughter of the Northumbrian king Aethelfrith and brother of the current king Oswiu (or Oswy) founded a monastery at Coldingham (Berwickshire) of which she became abbess. There is a tradition, that first appears in some medieval accounts, that she also founded a monastery at Ebchester (see Downie 2002, 1-12). The evidence of the place name - either 'Ebba's camp' or possible 'Ybcestre' or 'Ebcestre' ('high fort'), together with the unknown date of the church dedication is central to the historicity of links with Ebba.
- c1180 A charter of Bishop Le Puiset of Durham, granting lands here to Sherburn Hospital, refers to a community of anchoritic women.
- 1787 The Durham historian William Hutchinson (II, 430) is the first to give a brief description of the church...'Ebchester church is superior to those last visited (Muggleswick and Hunstanworth) but yet mean; the nave is thirty-two feet in length and twenty in width, and the chancel twenty-six feet by eighteen; in order to accommodate the parishioners, the chancel is obliged to be stalled up to the altar rails.
- 1820 Robert Surtees (II, 301) offers additional information: '....which retains its ancient dedication to St Ebbe, stands within the South-Western angle of the Roman station. The structure consists of a low nave and chancel, and a South porch. The old lights are narrow lancets, mixed with modern sash windows' (then, in a footnote) 'The Nave; two small lancet-lights on the North, one lancet and two sashes on the South. The Chancel: three lancet lights south, and three smaller on the North. The East window: a sash-light. I.S.1813.'
- 1857 Fordyce (II) adds that 'the south porch has been taken away to accommodate two or three additional pews; and the only entrance to the church is under the belfry, on the sides of which, as there is no vestry or other separated place, all the loose articles used in and about the edifice are piled up'...'the church-yard is narrow and over-crowded'.

## Faculties and Other Records of Structural Work

All faculties are in the Palace Green section of the Library of the University of Durham, and are coded DDR/EJ/FAC as a prefix to their reference number:

- 3/218 1876 Restoring and reseating church. How much this was a restoration and how much a rebuilding has aroused some controversy (see Structural History section). It would appear that the nave was extended to the west.
- 3/352 1892 Alterations and extensions; the nave was again extended westward, and a new north-west vestry built.
- 3/476 22 June 1907 Erection of organ chamber and vestry, and of a new north-western porch replacing the west part of the 1892 vestry. Lych gate.
- 3/559 7 June 1910 Alterations and additions; the construction of the tower replacing the porch built three years earlier.

- 3/3367 10 Nov 1950 Electric lighting system
- 3/4571 11 May 1963 New altar rails
- 3/5130 4 June 1969 New credence table in sanctuary.
- 3/5534 27 Nov 1974 New gas main. Gas-fired boiler etc.
- 3/7505 9 April 1992 Replacement organ
- 3/8745 26 Aug 1999 Rewiring etc.
- 3/8953 19 June 2000 Installation of replacement safe
- 3/9371 13 June 2002 Installation of aumbry and light.

### **The Structural History of the Church**

The periods of work traceable in the structure of Ebchester Church as it stands today are unusually polarised; apart from the supposedly 13<sup>th</sup>-century bellcote, there is nothing between the initial construction in the 11th/12th century and a rather complex and hard-to-unravel series of changes and ‘restoration’ in the late 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Turning to the early fabric, much of the walling survives of a simple two-cell church which has been dated to c1100, and is of the simplest Romanesque character. There are clear links with Pre-Conquest traditions in its large and irregular angle quoins, the monolithic rear arch of the one unaltered nave window, the plain square-edged plinths and the relatively thin walls of the chancel. However other features, such as the form of the chancel arch, are of typical early Norman form; the unusual size of the chancel in relation to the nave could also indicate a date well into the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, despite the ‘Saxo-Norman overlap’ characteristics, a date around or a little after 1100 seems likely.

The unusual size of the chancel is not its only atypical feature; its walls are markedly thinner than those of the nave, and its windows much more widely splayed, with timber lintels rather than megalithic rear arches. This could either reflect that the chancel performed some unusual function, or it could also imply a difference in date. In favour of the latter is the much more massive plinth/footing of the chancel, but against it the fact that both nave and chancel demonstrate an identical constructional technique in the megalithic course of re-used Roman blocks at the foot of their walls. Another puzzle is the absence of a contemporary doorway in the conventional position towards the west end of the nave; the former west door (as shown in one of Mitchinson’s photographs) had a bluntly-pointed arch with a narrow chamfer, and looks of 13<sup>th</sup>-century character; it had almost certainly been moved c 1840 from an eccentric position to the east of the centre of the south wall of the nave.

The unusual aumbry in the east wall, its original form and features sadly concealed by recent alterations, may also be an original feature. 19<sup>th</sup>-century accounts variously refer also to ‘a stone bench along the walls of the chancel’ (Boyle 1892, 600) and the ‘projecting sill of the south window of the sacarium...(which) has served the purpose of a sedile or credence’ (Mitchinson), and one of the 1876 photographs seems to show box-like structures in the eastern angles.

The bellcote on the west gable of the old nave, which seems to have been repositioned each

time the nave was extended, is generally quoted as of 13<sup>th</sup> century date, presumably on the strength of the pointed arches of its openings, although these have clearly been renewed.

There is absolutely no evidence of any feature in the church, either recorded or extant, dating from between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> century. To the latter, or possibly the very beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup>, may be ascribed the earlier of the plain square-headed sash windows seen in the early photographs. By 1820, when Surtees writes, there were three of these, two on the south of the nave and one in the east end of the chancel; there was also a south porch, which Hutchinson does not mention, so this may also have been a recent addition. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century further sash windows were inserted including two on the south of the chancel; and one on the north of both nave and chancel.

Even by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when Hutchinson wrote, the church was obviously proving too small for its congregations, and the chancel had to be stalled right up to the altar rails. Fordyce relates that further room for pews in the nave was created by doing away with the south doorway and its porch (these being replaced by another sash window) and making an entrance in the west end. He also specifically states that there was no vestry or 'other separated place'. A photograph, claimed to be of 1848, in Gibson (1904.19), shows the church without any south porch. The 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS 6":1 mile map of c 1860 seems to show a small porch as then having been added to the west end, and within a few years as larger western vestry had been constructed, seen on several old photographs.

Then came the 1876 restoration, at a cost of £1,200 (Kelly 1914, 154). The church was returned to a 'Norman' appearance, losing its sash windows. The scheme outlined in the faculty, with its 'proposed' plans by John Smith & Son, Architects, of Shotley Bridge included the total rebuilding of the chancel (with a new north vestry) and the south side of the nave, with a new west porch. This was never carried out; the only extension appears to have been a westward prolongation of the nave, with the removal of the short-lived western vestry; the south door was re-opened and the south porch reinstated. The result is so different in character from the scheme proposed by Smith (who added much Romanesque detail) it seems likely to be the product of a different hand.<sup>4</sup>

The exact extent of rebuilding of the ancient fabric is difficult to ascertain, and near-contemporary antiquarian accounts are confusing. In Mitchinson's MS album a series of photographs of the roofless building are labelled 'Ebchester church previous to demolition' and his description ends with the comment that the church had been restored 'out of recognition'. Gibson (1904, 22) refers to the church as 'a small and interesting Norman building' which had been 'not unhappily restored' but later (1916) published two of Mitchinson's photographs stating that they represented the building 'in process of demolition to the foundations'. Hodgkin (1913, 121) comments that the church 'owes its ancient appearance rather to successive attempts at an imaginative restoration than to real remains of early work' whilst Pevsner (1953, 159) dismisses it as 'almost entirely modern'.

At first sight much of the fabric of nave and chancel, and virtually all of the single-light windows, look convincingly ancient. However, the evidence of the 1876 photographs, and of the 'as is' plan accompanying the faculty of that date, shows that they cannot all be genuine,

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<sup>4</sup>Pevsner & Williamson (1983, 260) only refer to two phases of restoration, by C.H. Fowler in 1892 and G.T. Wilson in 1910. As the 1892 faculty drawings - the only one of the four proposed schemes actually carried out - are by Aherne (?) and Crawford Hick it may be that C.H. Fowler, an architect with known antiquarian sympathies, may have been responsible for the 1876 work.

as several occupy the positions of former sash windows. As restored there were four windows in the south wall of the chancel (where Surtees only mentions three, suggesting one at least was quite new), three in the north, three in each side of the nave (the westernmost pair in the new extension) and two in the west end, so it is clear that some windows were cleverly crafted to resemble the surviving originals.

The fabric however cannot have been demolished to the foundations, as a detailed comparison of one of Mitchinson's photographs (of the eastern lancet on the south of the chancel) with the existing fabric shows the rubble walling to be identical up to about half the height of the window, above which it would appear to have been rebuilt. The jambs at least of the chancel arch also look to be identical to those shown on the photographs, although it seems likely that the distorted arch was dismantled and re-erected.

By 1892 the church was again proving too small, and an extension scheme was carried out to add around 50 sittings, at a cost of £250 (Kelly 1914, 154). The west end of the nave was again extended and a vestry built to the north of it; the two Norman windows in the west wall were re-sited or reproduced a second time, as was the 13<sup>th</sup>-century bell-cote. The plans accompanying the faculty are by Aherne (?) & Crawford Hick, architects, of the Arcade, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. An 1895 photograph (Gibson 1916, 11) shows the west end as it is at present, with to the north the west wall of the 1892 vestry with a small Gothic-arched doorway; its eastern part survives as the present boiler room.

A further extension took place in 1907, when the present vestry and organ chamber on the south of the nave and chancel were constructed, replacing the old south porch, and a new north porch built to replace the western part of the 1892 vestry. The faculty plans, by George T. Wilson of Blackhill, show a transept-like structure with a cusped roundel in its gable; however the 1910 faculty plan shows the vestry as it now is; the 1907 faculty also includes drawings for a lych gate quite different to the one actually built, which seems to be shown on the 1910 plan.

The fourth and final phase of extension came in 1910, when the tower was built. It had been intended to simply raise the 1907 north porch into a tower, but in the end it was removed and a rather larger tower was constructed, projecting a little beyond the west end of the nave; Kelly (1914, 154) records this scheme as costing £1400<sup>5</sup>.

## **The Churchyard**

The churchyard is of irregular triangular plan, with a rectangular extension (of 1902?) at the south-east corner. The entrance, at the lowest point, is by means of a lych gate of 1911. The ground slopes quite steeply from south down to north; beyond a narrow walkway and retaining wall the ground rises steeply from the south and east sides of the building. This is a churchyard, quite heavily overgrown at the time of survey, that is arguably one of the most important in the county in terms of archaeological and historical interest. To the south of the church are upstanding earthwork remains of the south-west corner and southern rampart of the underlying Roman fort. To the south and west of the church are a variety of monuments of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century dates; south of the vestry is a cluster of Surtees family monuments; these include an 18<sup>th</sup> century box tomb and upstanding crosses of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but immediately to the east of them is an uninscribed medieval slab, with broad chamfered edges bounded by roll mouldings, of the same form as some seen in the Cathedral Yard at Durham (Ryder 1985, fig 11 and p.43) and also at nearby Medomsley. There are a

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<sup>5</sup>Which may include the 1907 works, which are not separately listed.

number of monuments, including some quite tall ones, mostly of 19<sup>th</sup> century date, that are on the point of collapse; bearing in mind the current tendency of dismantling and removal in the interests of safety, these at least need proper recording.

### **Archaeological Assessment**

This is a church of considerable interest which has not received the antiquarian attention that it deserves; archaeologically it is of the highest importance as it stands within a Roman fort, on a possible pre-Conquest monastic site. It is possible that sub-floor archaeological deposits may be relatively well preserved, as the heating pipes are above the floor, and floor levels are if anything a little above their medieval level. Parts of the floor are boarded and parts slabbed or concrete; fitted carpets preclude easy inspection.

Any works that entail disturbance of floor levels will require archaeological monitoring. Virtually the whole area of the churchyard lies within the Roman fort, and is similarly of a high archaeological priority.

### **Priorities**

The state of the churchyard and its monuments is probably the chief cause for concern; in view of current worries about the danger posed by decaying monuments, it would seem likely that a number may be under threat of removal or at least dismantling, and it is important that, if this takes place, they should be properly recorded. It needs to be checked whether a proper survey of the churchyard, with all monuments located, has been made. A simple transcription of an inscription does not constitute a proper record of a monument.

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