

## ALL SAINTS CHURCH, LANCHESTER

All Saints Church stands on the east side of the A691 road, at the south-east corner of Lanchester village green. The church consists of a four-bay aisled nave with a west tower and south porch, and a chancel with north organ chamber and north-east vestry.

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

#### Exterior

The West Tower is constructed of coursed roughly-squared stones; the lower part is largely of almost square stones, presumably re-used from C12 fabric. The lower stage rises unbroken to the base of the belfry; there is a chamfered plinth (partly buried) and slender two-stepped diagonal buttresses at the western angles which rise only to the level of the head of the west window. At the east end of the south wall the tower stair is contained in a broad buttress-like projection with a chamfered set-back at two-thirds height and a pent slab roof. The west window, its dressings much decayed, is of two cinquefoil-headed lights with a quatrefoil in the spandrel, within a four-centred arch with a rough relieving arch above. The ringing chamber is lit by a chamfered square-headed window on the south; the clock chamber (with the clock face in a late C19 or early C20 ashlar surround on the west) has a similar chamfered window on the north; the stair turret is lit by four similar but smaller loops, two on the east and two on the south. A set-back marks the base of the belfry, which has octagonal shafts or buttresses at the corners; the belfry openings are very similar to the west window in character, although all their dressings have been renewed. A moulded string, broken by projecting stone corbels on the east and west, marks the base of the parapet. This has probably been rebuilt; the octagonal shafts die awkwardly into the wall just above the string, whilst the parapet is topped by conventional crenellations and crocketed angle pinnacles; all the pinnacles except that at the south-eastern corner were renewed in 1960.

Only the north-western angle quoin of the nave is exposed externally; this is of massive blocks, neatly squared but not laid in any particular regular fashion. The side walls of the nave each have four clerestory windows, each of two four-centred arched lights within a square frame, both lights and frame having hollow-chamfered surrounds. Their stonework looks relatively fresh, and may be restoration. Immediately below the northern clerestory windows is a course of upright stones which may mark an earlier wall-head associated with a lower range of clerestory windows of quatrefoil form, similar to the window now re-set in the north wall of the vestry. The lower halves of the eastern three of these windows remain in situ. On the south the wall below the present clerestory is not visible from ground level, due to the south aisle being a little taller than the north; it is reported that there is no evidence of an earlier clerestory on this side (Q6,3). The clerestory is topped by a slightly-oversailing parapet of ashlar blocks, with crenellations and a moulded coping. The upper part of the east gable of the nave, above the chancel roof, was partially rebuilt in the late 1960s (Q3,1)

The south aisle is constructed of coursed squared stones, with some areas of rubble. The west wall contains a single lancet-like window with a trefoiled ogee head. The south wall of the aisle has three stepped buttresses, one at the west end with its lower section apparently incorporated into the west wall of the porch (although the structural sequence here is unclear, as the lower sections of porch and aisle west walls appear to course in together), and two to the east of the porch. The south face of the westernmost buttress, above the porch roof, has a projecting feature

like a window jamb, and is presumably a re-used piece. To the east of the porch are three square-headed windows, each of two elliptical-arched lights, under hoodmoulds with turned-back ends. The sills and lower 1.0 m of the jambs of these windows are of machine-cut tooled stone (earlier C19?). Beneath the eastern of these windows the wall fabric appears to have been disturbed; there are projecting footings (absent further west) including a re-used stone with a dog-tooth or nutmeg moulding on its lower edge, daubed with a cement patch inscribed 'October 5 1895'. The east wall of the aisle has a window of three trefoil-headed lights and simple geometrical tracery, under an almost round arch with a hoodmould that has lost its terminals; its head is cut from a single megalithic block. The aisle has a parapet similar to that of the clerestory.

The north aisle has similar fabric to the south, with many almost square stones; re-used material includes the sill or head of a small window beneath the present window in the central bay, and what may be part of a cross slab (with a stopped marginal chamfer) above and to the east of the north door. As with the south aisle there is no plinth; the multi-stepped buttresses which divide it into three bays are more massive than those on the south. The west wall has a square-headed window of two trefoil-headed lights, with the spandrels pierced; the central and eastern bays of the north walls have similar windows. Each of these windows has its head cut from a single slab, which in the cases of the west window and the western of the two north windows can be seen to be medieval re-used cross slabs. The western bay of the north wall has a doorway with a pointed head of two orders, each with a continuous narrow chamfer. The embattled parapet is like that of the south aisle and clerestory.

The south porch is again constructed of a mix of re-used squarish stones and rubble. Its outer arch has re-used C12 jambs, each consisting of a pair of attached shafts with a fillet between (a smaller-scale version of the jambs of the inner order of the chancel arch), carrying plain cushion capitals. The arch above is pointed, of three chamfered orders, and has a hoodmould. The kneelers of the porch gable have a line of indented ornament, but the coping above has been renewed at some time; the gable was rebuilt and the present sundial provided in 1964 (Q2,3). In each side of the porch is a chamfered square-headed loop.

The south wall of the chancel has a few courses of squarish stones at its base, with coursed rubble above; the top two or three courses of the eastern bays are of C19 squared stone. The south face of the western bay is set forward from the others, and has neatly-cut quoins; this section has a narrow chamfered plinth, terminating 1.85m short of the west end of the wall; the eastern bays have a more substantial chamfered plinth at a lower level, apparently overbuilt by the stepped buttress between them. The western bay has a large three-light window in a deep double-chamfered surround; the central light is a plain lancet whilst the outer ones have trefoiled cusping, with pierced trefoils in the spandrels; the hoodmould has carved head stops. The central bay has a window in the same style, but of two trefoiled lights, in a much shallower surround. The head of this window breaks into a chamfered oversailing course which decreases in width from west to east, and is absent in the eastern bay, which has a window of two cinquefoil-headed lights with a quatrefoil in the spandrel, under a four-centred arch; the surround carries a complex moulding, and there is a projecting moulded sill.

The east wall of the chancel has a chamfered plinth and a chamfered set-back at the level of the sills of its three lancet lights; below the set-back the wall is of good-quality squarish stones, whilst above there is more rubble except for the gable, which is of C19 squared stone. The taller central

lancet has an almost round head; all three lancets have hoodmoulds.

The organ chamber is structurally a one-bay extension of the north aisle; it is built of squared stones, but not of the almost square shape seen elsewhere in the church. There is a chamfered plinth; in the north wall are a blocked doorway to the former boiler room, a small trefoil-headed window that may be relatively recent and, higher in the wall, a square-headed window in a chamfered surround. This surround is of tooled ashlar of C18 or early C19 type. To either side of it is a large shaped stone, suggesting that the insertion of the window broke into an earlier feature; above and to the east is a re-used roll-moulded voussoir. The walls are topped by a crenellated parapet continuous with that of the aisle.

The vestry, to the east of the organ chamber, is constructed of squared rubble. Both of its external walls have chamfered plinths, although that on the east is at a lower level to, and apparently overbuilt by, that on the north. The north wall contains, from west to east, a square-headed doorway with a narrow chamfer to heads and jambs, a quatrefoil window of the same type as those in the first clerestory, a window of two elliptical-arched lights, and traces of a blocked window now lacking any stone dressings. In the east wall is what appears to be a broad lancet window, now blocked and with its lower section replaced by a window of two elliptical-arched lights like that in the north wall; these windows, and the north door, all have tooled dressings of the same type as those of the upper window in the organ chamber. The south jamb and head of the 'lancet' survive, with a continuous roll mould; the blocking of the upper part of the opening is set back, showing that the present external face is in fact the original rere arch of the opening; its head, close to the internal face of the wall but visible in the recess, has been cut to a rough trefoiled form.

## **Interior**

The interior of the church is plastered, with the exception of some exposed dressings, notably in the chancel.

The tower opens to the nave by a segmental-pointed arch of two chamfered orders, the inner springing from corbels; towards the tower the outer order dies into the side walls whilst towards the nave it is continued down the jambs. The west window has a chamfered segmental-pointed rear arch and the doorway to the stair, at the east end of the south wall, has an acutely-pointed chamfered arch. The lower stage is roofed by an eight-ribbed vault with a central circular opening. The newel stair cuts into the external face of the original west wall of the nave, and exposes the ends of the massive squared blocks of the original south-western quoin. The ringing chamber is entered by a doorway with a flattened four-centred arch and a continuous broad chamfer. The chamber has a small opening, its lintel and sill both formed by medieval grave slabs, high in the east wall, looking into the nave. When the floor of the chamber was inspected in 1986 it was observed that 'the irregularity of the offsets between the ground floor stage and ringing chamber stages of the tower leads one to speculate whether part of an earlier tower was incorporated into the mass of masonry during the 15th century rebuild' (Q7, appended report). The timbers of the clock chamber floor are carried by corbels on both east and west walls. The stair continues to end in a rough square-headed doorway into the clock chamber; this has a crudely-arched opening giving access to the nave roof, and a chamfered oversailing course on north and south walls carrying the timbers of the belfry floor; access to the belfry is by ladder.

The belfry has a 2-bay roof with ridge and purlins resting on heavy cambered tie-beams; the roof timbers are now in poor condition.

The nave has four-bay arcades of pointed arches resting on round piers and half-round responds. On the north the greater part of each pier is made up of a single monolith; on the south their construction is more conventional. The piers and responds have moulded bases resting on octagonal plinths (somewhat damaged), and moulded capitals with broad concave bells. The arches are of two orders, the inner chamfered and the outer with a keeled moulding to the nave and a chamfer to the aisle; towards the nave there is a hoodmould with a nutmeg moulding.

A drawing signed 'A.M.H. 1939' (copy with Canon Chase) shows the base of the second pier from the west in the south arcade; in the section of the plinth now concealed by the floor is a stone with chevron ornament, presumably re-used.

The south aisle has segmental chamfered rear arches to all of its windows. Beneath the sill of the eastern window in the south wall is a round-arched recess of a single order carrying chevron moulding on both face and soffit; the sill of the window cuts into the tops of the voussoirs. Immediately to the east of the recess, just above floor level, is a piscina-like feature consisting of a circular bowl (with drain) on a square plinth, with a small and shallow recess, plastered over, above. The south door, now opening inside the porch, has an almost segmental arch with continuous mouldings of a wave and a chamfer; the hoodmould is a re-set C12 piece, with shallow chevron ornament. The doorway has a flattened elliptical rear arch. The door itself is of considerable age, with some medieval ironwork; some of the ironwork is said to have been made by George Jackson, a local blacksmith, in the early C19 (Gibby, 8). The angle between the west jamb of the door and the west wall of the aisle is infilled by a triangle of masonry which, completely plastered over, remains mute as to its function.

All the openings in the north aisle have segmental rear arches, without chamfers; the east end of the aisle now opens straight into the organ chamber.

The nave retains a late medieval roof structure of seven bays, consisting of cambered tie-beams (with narrow chamfers) supporting both ridge and purlins. Above this is a C19 roof with scissor braces. The roofs of the aisles are of very simple form; that of the south aisle looks C19 but that of the north aisle may be late medieval.

The interior of the south porch is unplastered; the windows in the side walls have shouldered rear arches. The porch now houses a collection of carved stones (see below).

The chancel arch is the most striking feature of the interior of the church. The arch is semicircular, with three chevron-moulded orders to the nave and two orders, the inner with chevron and the outer plain, towards the chancel; the soffit of the inner order is plain. The inner order is carried on a pair of attached shafts with a fillet between, and towards the nave the second order rests of westward-facing half shafts with moulded bases. All the shafts have cushion capitals, carrying an impost band chamfered on its lower angle. On the north this has sunk stair ornament, and on the south a running frieze of raised lozenges. The bases of the jamb shafts are 2.1 m above the floor of the nave, and below them is another band, chamfered on its lower angle. The jambs below this band, the band itself (except for a block at its north end, where it runs back along the east wall of the nave) and the lower portions of the shafts of the inner orders are all

recent restoration.

At the east end of the south wall of the chancel is a trefoiled piscina, with a fluted bowl set off-centre. The sill of the adjacent window has been lowered (possibly after its insertion; the mouldings of its inner jambs terminate at the level of the base of the lights) to form either a credence shelf, or, more likely, a sedile. West of the window is a round-arched recess, rather more than half of which remains, before it is blocked up just within the line of the altar rails; this has a roll-moulded arch that seems to sit unhappily on a plain square jamb. The western bay of the wall is set back beneath a tall pointed arch, of four chamfered orders, springing from multi-chamfered squinches.

The chancel north wall preserves the recesses of the blocked lancet windows, each with a shouldered rear arch. The door into the vestry has a cinquefoiled head carrying some remarkable high-relief sculpture; small figures of a seated Christ and two angels appear in the tympanum, with carved beasts on the intrados of the jambs and foliage on the soffit of the lintel. The extrados of the door head is cut to a trefoiled form, and appears to break the line of the internal sill of the blocked lancet above. The western bay of the wall is recessed like that on the south, but the arch, also of four chamfered orders, is much lower and of segmental form, and now opens into the organ chamber; its jambs incline inwards in an odd manner, and have trefoiled chamfer stops. Towards the organ chamber there is a deep set-back immediately above the crown of the arch; a clear discontinuity between the tooling of the stonework of the greater part of the arch, and that of the soffit of its innermost order, seems to imply that the feature was originally a recess rather than an arch opening through the full thickness of the wall.

On each side of the sanctuary are three small head corbels that apparently functioned as candle brackets. On the north the heads are a bishop (the best preserved of the set, and frequently illustrated) and a king, and on the south a more damaged king and a possible bishop; the last two are mere fragments. The east wall of the chancel has a string course, chamfered above and below, immediately below the stepped sills of its three lancets.

The wooden barrel roof of the chancel appears to be entirely late C19 or early C20; there is no access to the roof structure above, but this was inspected in 1982 and reported to be largely contemporary with the barrel roof, except for the pairs of principal rafters, which appeared older (Q6, appended report).

In the west wall of the vestry is a doorway opening from the organ chamber; it has an almost round arch cut to a small ogee at its apex, with a continuous narrow chamfer. Higher in the wall is a doorway with a pointed arch opening into a small lobby and toilet within the organ chamber; the doorway, cut diagonally through the wall and completely plastered over, appears to be of relatively recent date. No other ancient features are visible within either vestry or organ chamber; the eastern third of the organ chamber has a 1.5 m deep pit in its floor, part of the former boiler chamber.

## **FITTINGS AND FURNISHINGS**

The font stands at the west end of the nave, in front of the tower arch. Although of C12/C13

form and of Frosterley marble, it is entirely a late C19 piece.

A range of six chancel stalls of later medieval date survives in the recess on the south side of the chancel; these have traceried backs and simple carved misericords with faces or foliage. The stall fronts or desks do not survive. Scale drawings were prepared by C.C.Hodges in the late C19 (Greenwell 1906, 394).

Standing in the chancel is the old parish chest, said to be of 16th century date.

The altar rails are of C17 date, although restored.

Three panels of C13 stained glass are now set in the westernmost window on the south side of the chancel; they probably originated in the central of the eastern lancets, and depict the Annunciation, the Adoration of the Magi and the Flight into Egypt. They were described by Fowler (1915); hanging in the vestry are Fowler's framed full-scale coloured drawings of the glass. Above the panels is a fourth smaller one made up of jumbled later medieval fragments, and on the sill of the adjacent window a leaded roundel, now damaged, with further small pieces. A roundel of C14 glass from the head of the eastern window on the south side of the chancel is currently with the York Glaziers Trust, awaiting restoration. In the west window of the south aisle are the arms of Tempest impaling Umfraville, the only other pre-C19 glass to survive.

The Royal arms, set above the tower arch, are of George III, dated 1767, and including the names of the churchwardens.

All six bells in the tower are of 1810, although four have been recast in the C20; their inscriptions are given by Gibby (11). The bell frames, partly pegged and partly nailed, may be early C19.

### SEPULCHRAL MONUMENTS

In the recess at the east end of the south wall of the south aisle is an early C14 effigy of a secular canon (traditionally Stephen Austell, the Dean of Lanchester who died in 1461).

A brass inscription on a slab near the west end of the chancel commemorates John Rudde, Dean of Lanchester, d.1454.

Descriptions and illustrations of 11 medieval cross slabs are given by Ryder (1985, 102-3 & pl.43); in addition the following stones have now been located:

- (12) Slab re-used as the external head of the two-light window in the central bay of the north aisle north wall; the only design visible is an incised cross shaft and part of a stepped base.
- (13) Slab re-used as the external head of the two-light window in the west wall of the north aisle; the only feature visible is an incised circle, presumably part of a cross head; the size of the slab and off-centre position of the circle suggests that it may have been a double slab.

- (14) A small slab re-used as the internal lintel of the first loop in the tower stair; the only design appears to be an emblem, set centrally; only its top end is exposed, and could either be the loop of a pair of shears or the circular pommel of a dagger.
- (15) The sill of the small opening from the ringing chamber into the nave is formed by a slab with a plain cross, its head carved in relief within a sunk circle; traces of lettering l of the shaft may be secondary. C12?
- (16) The lintel of the same opening is formed by a slab with some incised motifs, difficult to interpret.

Surtees (1820, 324) refers to two slabs 'built up in the walls of the tower' which cannot be traced now; 'one has a sword suspended from a cross, another a cross flory with an ornamented shaft'. Charlton (1848, 257) mentions a slab in the belfry which cannot now be located.

There are a number of post-medieval monuments; these include a number of C17 and C18 slabs, some with armorial bearings, in the floor of the chancel, and a C18 slab to the Clavering family at the west end of the north aisle. This marks the position of a family vault, as do two or three other C17/18 slabs, with iron lifting rings, at the west end of the south aisle. Wall monuments include a pedimented marble tablet to the Claverings in the north aisle, and several late C18 and C19 tablets in the south aisle.

There are three hatchments; one with the arms of Tempest over the south door, and two to Pemberton and Clavering on the north and south walls of the tower respectively.

### **CARVED STONES IN THE SOUTH PORCH**

In addition to several of the cross slab grave covers already mentioned, in the south porch are:

- (1) A well-preserved Roman altar with an inscription to Egarmangabis, found in 1893 near the Roman fort.
- (2) The Frosterley marble moulded base and shaft of what appears to be a C12/13 font, now carrying an octagonal stone bowl with raised half-balls on alternate faces; this is probably a C17/18 creeing trough.
- (3) A small Roman altar, uninscribed.
- (4) A square pedestal-like block, 0.4 m square and 0.75 m high.
- (5) A small inscribed slab, probably C17. It is difficult to interpret, perhaps due to the illiteracy of the mason.

### **HISTORICAL NOTES**

There is no clear evidence of the date of the foundation of the church, although the names of four pre-1284 rectors are known ; surviving architectural features show that the present building had

been in existence for a century and a half before Bishop Anthony Bek elevated it to collegiate status in 1284. Bek substituted a college consisting of a dean and seven prebendary canons for the rectory.

In the C15 Cardinal Langley's Commission of Inquiry found both church, deanery and canons' houses in poor repair; the college was dissolved in 1540.

The earliest illustration of the church to survive is a miniature woodcut showing the church from the north-east (Bell 4/1); although undated (the collection from which it comes dates to between 1760 and 1819) the fact that the belfry openings are shown as retaining their mullions suggests that it pre-dates Hutchinson's 1782 view.

The first of the Durham county historians, William Hutchinson (1787, II, 352) reproduces an engraving of the church from the south-west, and prints a brief description of the building. The engraving shows that both nave and chancel have flat roofs and embattled parapets, that the belfry openings lack any mullions and tracery, and that a sundial was set just above the west window.

The accounts of the church published by Surtees (1820), Mackenzie and Ross (1834) and Fordyce (1857) are all heavily derivative of Hutchinson, and repeat some of the same errors; Surtees provides some extra detail on old glass and monuments, and an engraving of the church from the south-east showing the nave as having a high-pitched roof hipped at the east end (its present form), and a square-headed doorway in the east wall of the vestry (possibly an error). Billings (1846, pl. facing 51) gives another south-east view showing the belfry windows still without their tracery, along with several smaller illustrations of internal features.

More detailed descriptions of the church have appeared in the Proceedings of the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries following their visits to the church in 1889 (Hodgson 1890) and 1906 (Greenwell 1906); the latter account provides the most comprehensive descriptive and historical notes so far published.

### **FACULTIES AND OTHER RECORDS OF STRUCTURAL WORK**

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| 1717 | Note in the Baptismal Register of the first stone of a new vestry being laid (information from Canon Chase)  |
| 1776 | Churchwardens' accounts show substantial outlay on lime, scaffolding etc (information from Canon Chase).   |
| 1805 | Faculty no.76. Petition relating to the roof of the chancel (actual faculty lost)  |
| 1890 | Faculty no.310. Plans etc for removal of gallery (gallery removed 1892 according to Gibby, 10)   |
| 1892 | Faculty no.351 for oak chancel screen.   |
| 1900 | Omnibus faculty no.13 for removal of chancel ceiling, relaying of floor within altar rails and opening out of organ chamber. Whilst work was being carried out |

on the chancel roof traces of colouring are said to have been seen on the walls (information Canon Chase)

- 1905 Faculty no.446 for erection of choir stalls
- 1936 Faculty no.2640 for improvements to the bells
- 1939 Faculty no.2745 for introduction of new seating; box pews, including Holmside family pew at the east end of the south aisle, removed (Gibby 10).
- 1951 Faculty no.3418 for repairs and restoration (brass plate on west wall of nave records 1952 repair of roof timbers and 'extensive renovation of the fabric')
- 1953 Faculty no.3655 for replacement of heating system
- 1960 Repairs to tower including renewal of three pinnacles
- 1964 Rebuilding of gable of south porch
- 1965 Faculty no.4784 for re-leading of ancient glass.
- 1967 Faculty no 4965 for extensive repairs to roofs, and reorganisation of levels and steps in sanctuary; floor lowered 1'6" (0.46m); new floor has 4" (0.1m) concrete foundation on bed of hardcore.
- 1981 Faculty no 5948 for installation of stainless steel roof.

All the above faculties are lodged in the Department of Palaeography and Diplomatic, University of Durham.

### **THE STRUCTURAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH**

Considering the size of the medieval parish, and the number of its dependant chapelries, it would seem reasonable to assume that there was a Pre-Conquest church at Lanchester, but there is no clear evidence, either documentary or archaeological, for this. Steer (1936, 213) quotes the early C19 historian Hodgson as having seen a Roman road 'in the brook opposite the church at Lanchester, and through the churchyard at more than three feet below the surface'; later antiquaries have not recorded this road, but if it does exist then the location of the church alongside it, 0.8 km east of the fort of Longovicium, could point to an early origin, possibly associated with a roadside cemetery or burial.

Pevsner & Williamson (1983,349, note) suggest that the north-western nave quoins may survive from a Pre-Conquest building; they are certainly not of typical Norman type. The contrast between their well-squared form and their variations in size implies that they are re-used blocks from some Roman structure; with such material at hand there is no need to invoke a pre-C12 date for the present fabric.

The medieval structural history of the church appears to commence with a substantial C12

church, of which the nave walls and chancel arch survive, along with a variety of re-used architectural pieces. The jambs of the outer archway of the south porch clearly come from an internal archway, on a smaller scale to the chancel arch. The same feature probably provided the present hoodmould of the inner door, and the voussoirs re-used in the arch over the recess at the east end of the south aisle. This might either have been a sanctuary arch, or a tower arch; the latter seems the more likely, as the C12 eastern arm had been rebuilt a century or so before the south porch was built.

Four-bay aisles were added to the nave c.1200; the nutmeg ornament of their hoodmoulds links them to other County Durham arcades as at Staindrop and St Helens Auckland.

The chancel was rebuilt in the earlier C13, with the western bay being altered after the church becoming collegiate in 1284, to provide accommodation for the dean and canons' stalls. The elaborate doorway, now opening from the chancel into the vestry, poses a problem. It is clearly re-set in its present position; neither its original location nor the phase (chancel construction or post-1284 remodelling) to which it belongs are clear. The situation is further complicated by the fact that what seems to be its original rear arch is now set, back to front, in the east wall of the early C18 vestry. This elaborate doorway must belong to a chapel or apartment of quite high status, possibly on the north side of the chancel on the site of the present vestry.

The newly-collegiate church also seems to have received its first nave clerestory, with unusual quatrefoil windows.

Evidences of C14 alterations are seen in the window on the south of the sanctuary, and perhaps also in the ogee-headed doorway in the east wall of the organ chamber. It would appear that the organ chamber post-dates the late C13 chancel remodelling, as the northern of the recesses for the stalls would appear to have been designed as a recess rather than an archway; it is not clear whether the rather thin wall between recess and organ chamber, shown on the c1890 plan, was an original feature or not.

It is difficult to disentangle the various phases that have been claimed for the later medieval alterations to the church, and matters are made more complicated by the re-use of C12 features. The tower has been ascribed to 1419 (Greenwell 1906) and 'shortly before 1430' (Hodgson 1890) although its architectural features are relatively plain and simple, and might date to any time in the C15 or even the early C16. The proportions of the nave aisles indicate that they were rebuilt in the later medieval period, but it is difficult to ascertain their date as it is not clear which of their architectural features are re-set from earlier phases, and which are later insertions. The north door of the north aisle (early C13?) and east window of the south aisle (C14) may fall into the former category. The south porch is a puzzle as well, both in its odd relationship with the buttress at the west end of the aisle wall, and in its re-use of material (including not only its outer arch jambs, but perhaps the C13 gable kneelers). The phase II clerestory and nave ceiling are generally held to be of c1500-1520 (Hodgson 1890, 50) but the relationship between openings in the east wall of the tower and the present roof, coupled with the absence of earlier roof lines on what is visible of the east wall of the tower, hint that they may be contemporary. It is possible that tower, aisles, south porch and clerestory are all part of one building scheme, which may admittedly have extended over some years if not some decades.

Post-medieval changes are better documented, although still unclear in detail. Within the main

body of the church, the C18 saw the usual developments of family vaults, and insertion of galleries. The only major structural work seems to have been the construction of the present vestry in the early C18, possibly, as already suggested, replacing an earlier sacristy or chapel.

The C19 saw the usual campaigns of restoration and repair, although structurally the church suffered less than many. The low-pitched roofs of both nave and chancel had been replaced by the middle of the century (although in the case of the former the old structure was allowed to survive below the new); faculties and Quinquennial reports detail later changes, including the removal of the galleries and a new chancel roof c1902.

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

Lanchester parish church is a structurally-complex building spanning the entire medieval period. The external wall elevations are all of interest, although the chancel can perhaps be singled out as having some complexities not yet understood. Archaeological recording may be necessary prior to any large-scale repointing.

The internal wall faces are virtually all hidden by plaster, which doubtless conceals structural and architectural features of interest, but may also be of importance itself. It is not clear whether the wall faces have ever been stripped and replastered; regular limewashings began in the late 1940s or early 1950s, 'on top of old pre-war distempers' (Q7,6). Traces of colouring reported on the chancel walls early in the C20 suggest that medieval wall paintings may survive, although nothing was seen when the top of the west wall, above the chancel arch, was inspected in 1982 (Q6, appended report); remote sensing equipment may help to assess any such remains, without physical disturbance of the plaster.

Internally, some sub-surface archaeological deposits will have been destroyed by the usual vaults and burials, and by the construction of a C19 underfloor heating system including the boiler room beneath and to the north of the organ chamber; the positions of vaults at the west end of both aisles is quite clear, and there are also said to be extensive vaults or other cavities beneath the chancel (pers.comm Canon Chase). The unusually high bases from which the chancel arch springs may point to a high floor level (cf Barnard Castle), and the existence of a C12 crypt must remain a possibility. Unfortunately the present floor level seems to have been lowered to beneath its C13 position in 1967; no archaeological recording appears to have been carried out at this time. A 1939 plan of the church by A.M.Hedley (in frame on the vestry wall) shows the extent of the boiler room beneath the present organ chamber, and an adjacent cellar outside the church on the north; these will have destroyed or seriously damaged deposits in these areas.

Externally, a drainage trench seems to run round the full circumference of the church, which will have disturbed deposits adjacent to the wall faces; it is not clear how deep this disturbance extends.

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# ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, LANCHESTER; AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

SEPTEMBER 1991

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Peter F Ryder  
1 Ford Terrace  
Broomhaugh  
RIDING MILL  
Northumberland  
NE44 6EJ