

## St Mary, Staindrop

### Architectural Description

This large and impressive parish church is situated at the extreme east end of the village of Staindrop, close to the southern entry to the grounds of Raby Castle. The building consists of a four-bay nave with aisles (the south aisle having both a south porch and a small projecting sacristy at its south-east corner), an engaged western tower, and a north transept; the three-bay chancel has a two-storeyed vestry to the north-east.

### The Exterior

As the **Tower** is engaged by the aisles, only its western wall has a full-height external elevation. It is largely constructed of roughly-shaped stone/rubble, laid in irregular courses, with cut sandstone quoins (laid in alternate fashion, but of no great size or particular style) and dressings; it rises in four stages, with a two-part chamfered plinth at the base, a chamfered set-back between the second and third stages, and an oversailing course at the base of the fourth (belfry) stage. A rectangular full-height stair turret adjoins the northern part of the west wall, and there is a stepped buttress at the south end, which rises to around the height of the adjacent south aisle. The tower plinth is continued round both turret and buttress. There is a chamfered set-back on the west wall of the tower only, around 2 m above ground level. Above this, and set centrally to the west wall of the tower (and thus close to the south side of the turret) is a lancet window with a chamfered surround; a patch of masonry below, together with a renewed section of the set-back, shows that its sill has clearly been lowered at some time and then raised again; the sill of the enlarged window actually remains in situ.

The chamfered set back at the base of the third stage extends round the tower and stair turret.

The stair turret has an external doorway in its west wall, reached by three steps with 19<sup>th</sup>-century brickwork below them; the doorway, only c 1.6 m high, is clearly a late insertion, although its dressings are now deeply eroded. It has a hollow-chamfered pointed arch, and jambs each formed from a single upright block. The turret is lit by a series of chamfered square-headed loops; in the west wall, some distance above the doorway, is an ashlar tablet inscribed 'Watch therefore: for you know not what hour your Lord doth come. Matthew 24.42 October 31<sup>st</sup> MDCCCXCVI'.

The second stage of the tower has tall square-headed windows, in chamfered surrounds, to north and south, opening above the aisle roofs. Above the southern window, and directly below the set-back above, is a semicircular patch of smaller masonry, probably relating to an earlier clock-face position. The quoining of the eastern angles of the tower at this level (which has been claimed as Pre-Conquest) is in fact little different in character from that of the remainder of the tower, only at the north-east angle are there some larger blocks, including a long block of gritstone, reddened (by fire?), just below the third stage.

The third stage of the tower (now the clock chamber) is lit by a pair of lancets in the centre of each wall, with the spandrel unpierced; the window on the west is rather smaller than the others, and set a little higher in the wall. The south window is set within a hollow-chamfered two-centred arch, with a hoodmould chamfered on its lower angle, but the others are set flush with the face of the wall, and only enclosed by the arched hoodmould. The northern jamb of that in the west wall

looks as if it has been over-built by the adjacent stair turret, which may originally have had a sloping roof directly above the chamfered set-back; on the north, there is a straight joint, with quoins, between tower and turret only for the upper half of the third stage.

On the east of the tower at this level, the apex of the raised roof-tabling of the earlier steep-pitched nave roof just appears above the present roof, immediately below the two-light window of the clock chamber.

At the base of the present belfry is a chamfered over-sailing course carried on large quadrant-section corbels, chamfered on their outer angles. This is continued along the north face of the stair turret, but not on the west or south, which rise unbroken except for a small chamfered-set back on the latter at around the level of the springing of the arch of the adjacent belfry opening. Directly above the oversailing course are late 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century clock faces on south, east and west. All four walls of the belfry show a few courses of larger and more elongate blocks in their lower metre or so, which are probably re-used material (at least one seems to have a chamfered edge); above these the wall reverts to the usual coursed rubble. The four belfry openings are each of two cinquefoil-headed lights with a quatrefoil in the spandrel, under a hollow-chamfered four-centre arch. There is a chamfered oversailing course, interrupted by stone spouts on south, east and west, at the base of the ashlar parapet, which has an embattled and roll-moulded coping; at the angles are the bases for small square pinnacles or finials.

The only walls of the **Nave** to have external faces are the clerestories above the aisle roofs, and the upper part of the east wall, above the chancel roof. Both clerestory walls are of roughly-coursed rubble, and each has four square-headed windows, each of three cinquefoil-headed lights within a chamfered frame. There is a chamfered oversailing course at the base of the parapet, which has a simple chamfered coping.

The east wall of the nave now has a very shallow-pitched gable; below this, both the steeply-pitched roof-line of the pre-clerestory nave, and, close to but slightly off-centre from this, the projecting roof tabling of a former chancel roof of the same steep pitch. The north-east angle of the clerestory has a peculiarity in that the corner is actually stepped in plan, ie there are two sets of quoins, with a re-entrant angle between; the parapet above is carried diagonally across this angle by a sort of squinch. The whole arrangement seems contemporary with the clerestory, and is difficult to explain, unless its construction relates to the small flight of steps dropping from chancel to north transept roof, that are accommodated within the angle.

The **South Aisle** is built of good-quality squared stone, of near ashlar quality, laid in courses that do vary somewhat in height; unusually large blocks in the south wall of the easternmost bay, beneath the window are necessitated by the thin wall at this point, at the rear of the sedilia. There is a two-part plinth, rather taller than that of adjacent tower, the lower section chamfered and the upper with a concave moulding; there is an oversailing parapet with a hollow-chamfered course at its base and a moulded coping. A stub of the rubble west wall of the earlier narrower aisle is incorporated in its successor, the earlier masonry commencing c 2 m above ground level, and extending southwards for up to c 0.60 m. The west window of the aisle is thought to be a re-set late-13<sup>th</sup> century piece (which may have been the south window of the former south transept) and some of its jamb stones do not relate well to the adjacent coursing. It is of three stepped lancet lights under a two-centred arch, the frame having a hollow-chamfered surround, under a hollow-chamfered hood with carved stops. The aisle has originally had a shallow gable, and when its roof

has been converted to a monopitch one the raising of the inner section has been carried out in quite different masonry, laid in thin courses. A large stone spout at the north end of the wall, now redundant, used to drain the gully between aisle and nave roofs.

The south wall of the aisle is divided into five bays. At the south-west angle are a pair of stepped buttresses, and there are large stepped buttresses between the third, fourth and fifth bays. In the first, fourth and fifth bays are large gargoyles, springing from just below the parapet; that in the fourth bay (now partly broken away) rather awkwardly seems to overlap the head of the buttress to the west.. The first bay only has a small rectangular light, which has been classed as a 'low side window' (although in an unconventional position). This has a chamfered surround, and is set quite low down; its relation to the coursing of the wall shows that it is clearly an insertion, although the small stones chocked in alongside it, shown in Hodgson's drawing ((1902, 228) are now largely concealed by pointing.

The third, fourth and fifth bays each have a segmental-arched window of three trefoiled ogee-arched lights with reticulated tracery above, within a chamfered frame and beneath a chamfered hood. The frames and hoodmoulds are medieval work, but the mullions and tracery all restoration.

At the south-east angle of the aisle is a projection, rather in the form of a massive clasping buttress, that houses a small sacristy, clearly contemporary with the aisle. The sloping slab roof, rather like that of the porch, is oddly truncated to the west. On the south is a small chamfered loop, square-headed, with a heavy central iron bar, and on the east a broader, almost square, loop; only its head is old, the jambs, sill, and the section of wall and plinth beneath all being recent masonry (1908).

The east window of the aisle is of the same general form as the three in the south wall, but in this case of five lights; once again frame and hoodmould are old, but tracery and mullions restoration. The raising of the original gable-line, in smaller coursed masonry, is again; here there is a cut for the spout that drained the gully between aisle and nave roofs, but the spout itself does not survive.

The **South Porch**, projecting from the second bay, is clearly of one build with the aisle, as is shown by the continuous plinth. It has a steeply-pitched stone slab roof and a small rectangular loop, with a broad chamfered surround (very like the 'low side'), now blocked, at the north end of each side wall. The south wall has a broad two-centred archway of two chamfered orders; the inner chamfer is continued down the jambs, but the outer chamfer is stopped at the springing. Above the archway is a sundial of 18<sup>th</sup> century character with the inscription 'Man Fleeth as a Shadow'; it appears to be a recent replica.. The gable has large triangular coping stones, and is topped by a foliate cross finial, of no great age.

The **North Aisle** is of coursed roughly-squared stone, with some larger blocks in the lower courses; it has a two-part plinth which continues the section of that of tower and stair turret, and a parapet with an oversailing chamfered course at its base and a chamfered coping of no great age. The west wall of the aisle incorporates the west end of its much narrower predecessor, with a blocked lancet window. The very steep roof-line of the early aisle is apparent above this, although the actual position of its north-east angle is not obvious. The present west window of the aisle is of three trefoil-headed lights within an almost semicircular arch, under a chamfered

hoodmould with carved stops; above is a relieving arch. There appears to be a horizontal break in the masonry to the north of the window, roughly on the level of the springing of its head, with much more thinly-coursed fabric above; there is similar masonry south of the window head, above the steep roof-line of the earlier aisle.

The north wall is divided into three bays, with stepped buttresses between the bays and at the west end, which end around a metre below the parapet. The lower member of the two-part plinth disappears below ground level at the west end, leaving a single chamfered plinth to run the length of the wall. The north door, towards the east end of the westernmost bay, has a four-centred arch with a casement moulding and a hollow-chamfered hood with turned back ends; above the apex of the hood is a carved beast of some type, sitting upon its haunches, topped by what may have been a human mask, and above that, an empty moulded bracket.

The centre and eastern bays each have a window of two cinquefoil-headed lights under a square head, under a hoodmould with turned-back ends; their dressings are largely of 19<sup>th</sup>-century date, with older relieving arches above. Only the jambs of that in the centre bay, which include some tall upright blocks in contrast to the neat alternating blocks of the jambs of the eastern window, could be a little earlier; one large horizontal block at the bottom of the east jamb seems to have some incised lines on it, and may be a re-used section of cross slab. There are obvious patches of stonework beneath each of these windows, indicating that at some stage their sills were c 0.60 m lower.

The **North Transept** now projects only a little beyond the adjacent aisle; it is constructed of coursed roughly-shaped stone. There are stepped clasping buttresses at the northern angles, dying into the wall a little below the parapet; these have a chamfered plinth at their bases, although the transept itself has no visible plinth. The north wall has three simple chamfered lancets of equal height; traces of an earlier steeper gable (its apex truncated by the present wall head) are faintly visible above. On the east side of the transept are two three-light windows; the northern is of three cinquefoil-headed lights with trefoil-headed sub-lights above, under a Tudor arch, with a chamfered frame and a hoodmould, chamfered below, with turned-back ends. Only the jambs and hood are old, the tracery, mullions and sill being restoration. Immediately below its sill are two elongate blocks; interpreted by Hodgson (1889, 88) as the sills of a pair of lancets; the northern seems to have cuts on its upper surface that would confirm this, the southern is more uncertain. A rough break in the masonry c 0.60 m north of this window must relate to the remains of the lancet visible internally. The southern window is of three trefoiled ogee-headed lights with reticulated tracery above, under a segmental head, within a chamfered frame and a hoodmould chamfered beneath; all its dressings are of 19<sup>th</sup>-century date. There is an irregular set-back just above the heads of the two windows, probably marking the wall-head of the original transept; above this is an oversailing chamfered course at the base of the parapet.

The **Chancel** is constructed of rubble, in the main roughly coursed; the upper sections of the walls, above the window heads, are of rather better-coursed roughly-squared stone. There is no plinth, except to the buttresses; at the head of the wall is an oversailing parapet of squared stone, with a casement-moulded course at its base, the moulding being studded with various carved devices, many based on the Neville saltire, but including some masks which have once served drainage spouts; there is a moulded coping. At the west end of the wall, just below the parapet, is a projecting block which seems to relate to the provision of some form of access between the south aisle and chancel roofs.

Stepped buttresses of squared stone, rising to the parapet, divided the south wall into three bays, each containing a large three-light window having cinquefoil-headed lights with tracery above, under a four-centred head; the frames are hollow chamfered, and the hoodmoulds chamfered beneath, ending in stops with the Neville saltire. The tracery of the easternmost window is rather simpler than the other two; the dressings of all three windows are clearly of 19<sup>th</sup>-century date. Below the sills of the windows are lengths of string course, chamfered above and below; only in the eastern bay does this string extend for the full length of the bay.

Below the string course in the first bay is an area of disturbed rubble masonry, which might indicate the position of a former 'low side' window, just possibly that later removed to the west bay of the south aisle wall. The buttress between the first and second bays largely conceals the remains of a priest's door; its west jamb and the beginnings of its arched head, and hoodmould, are exposed immediately to the west of the buttress. Beneath the window in the second bay is an obvious patch of more yellow masonry, indicating the position of another doorway, shown on old prints but removed in the 1849 restoration. Above, three stone corbels carry a large rainwater header tank, dated '1947'.

The east end has old roughly-coursed rubble in its lowest metre or so (with an apparent disturbance at its centre, possibly related to a former opening into a vault beneath); above this is a change to squared stone, probably of 19<sup>th</sup>-century date; at both eastern angles are multi-stepped clasping buttresses of squared stone. The great east window is of five cinquefoiled ogee lights, with panel tracery above, under a Tudor arch with a big casement moulding, and a hoodmould with turned back ends. The ashlar parapet at the wall head is carried as a single gable, of very shallow pitch, spanning both chancel and vestry. Its stonework looks of 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century date, although the date '1615' is carved in its face; the ornaments studding the casement-moulded course are all shields, mostly with the Neville saltire

The western half of the north wall of the chancel, between the vestry and north transept, is of two bays. The lower part of the wall is largely concealed by the boiler house and other outbuildings; the short exposed section between these, exposed alongside the stair descending to the boiler, does show a chamfered plinth. Above is a continuous string course, rounded above and chamfered beneath, and then two large windows under four-centred arches, each of three cinquefoil-headed lights with tracery above. The hollow-chamfered frames are old, as are the hoodmoulds, hollow-chamfered beneath, with Neville saltires as stops. The parapet is as on the south; there is a large projecting block (of uncertain purpose) just below it, at the east end of this section of wall.

The **Vestry** adjoins the north wall of the chancel. Its east wall, in line with that of the chancel, is of coursed roughly-squared stone. There is a chamfered plinth, and on east and west a parapet of the same form as that of the chancel. At the northern angles are stepped clasping buttresses, rising the full height of the wall.

Hard up against the north-east corner of the chancel is a narrow doorway with a Tudor-arched head and a chamfered surround; this is clearly a late insertion, cutting into the dressings of the adjacent window, which is of three trefoil-headed lights with panel tracery above, under an almost semicircular hollow-chamfered arch and a hollow-chamfered hood with mask stops. All of

its stonework appears to be unrestored medieval work; this is the only multi-light window on the eastern arm of the church to have survived the 19<sup>th</sup>-century restoration. Below its sill is a string course, apparently rounded above and chamfered below. Above the window the first floor is lit by a single-light window with a rather strange multi-cusped head with carved foliage in the spandrels. The parapet moulding has more shields with saltires, but only in its northern half; the southern is blank.

On the north of the vestry the string course is cut away in two parts, as if monuments have been set against the wall there; there are two more multi-cusped windows, like that on the east, but here lighting the ground floor, and above them two simple lancets to the upper room, under hoods that are hollow-chamfered beneath. On this wall the oversailing parapet has a simple chamfer at its base

The lower part of the west wall is partly concealed by the adjacent boiler house. There are traces of a possible blocked opening at mid-height close to the north end of the wall; at the south end, higher up, are two chamfered square-headed loops lighting the newel stair. The casement-moulded course at the base of the parapet has a variety of carved bosses like those on the south of the chancel; above and behind the centre of the parapet rises a chimney stack that looks to be of 19<sup>th</sup>-century date.

## **The Interior**

The walls of the interior of the church are now bare of any plaster, except within the chancel.

The east wall of the **Tower**, ie the west wall of the nave, is of coursed roughly-squared stone with some quite large blocks. The tower arch is two-centred, and of two chamfered orders, with on each face a hoodmould chamfered on its lower angle. The inner order springs from attached half-shafts, with fillets, and moulded capitals. The outer order has a broach stop at its base; the impost moulding is extended round the jambs, and along the face of the wall. The arch dressings all look to have been re-tooled (presumably in 1849) and the impost mouldings may be restoration. The base of the northern jamb, with 'hold water' style mouldings, look more authentic; the base of the southern is badly mutilated. Above the tower arch, and set north of centre, is a blocked doorway with a shoulder-arched head; its jambs are laid in the usual alternating fashion, all the blocks being of approximately the same height. Higher up is the roof tabling of a steeply-pitched pre-clestory roof, its apex hidden by the tie-beam of the present roof.

The arches between the tower and aisles are of precisely the same type as that between tower and nave; except that they have hoodmoulds towards the tower only. Once again their capitals may have seen some restoration but the more heavily-damaged bases do not seem to have been touched. The outer face of the south wall, seen from the aisle, has a corbel (square, but for its lower angle chamfered off) on either side of the head of the arch, just below its apex, with above them a square-section string course (or roof tabling?), which does not continue along the adjacent nave wall. The corresponding section of the north wall has three quadrant shaped corbels, with cut-outs to take a plate running alongside the wall face, and a similar but rather more slight string course.

On the west of the tower, the lancet window has a trefoiled rear arch; its dressings seem to course in well with the adjacent walling, suggesting that they are contemporary. The internal recess comes down to a 19<sup>th</sup>-century sill only 0.60 m above the floor; the large ashlar blocks of the

original internal jambs end in line with the window sill, showing that the lower section of the recess is secondary. On the north of the lancet is a doorway formerly opening into the stair turret (but now simply into a recess serving as a cupboard); its elliptical-arched head and a chamfered surround seem to have been re-cut, but the internal jambs and lintel are older. Above its head is the outline of a blocked pointed arch, without any real cut dressings; it is not clear whether this represents an earlier opening, or simply a relieving arch. Above again is what appears to be a blocked doorway, with its sill c 3.5 m above the floor; this is round-headed, and has a surround of cut blocks; none are bonded back into the adjacent wall, suggesting that the opening is an insertion.

The second stage of the tower now has no floor, and indeed there is little clear evidence of the floor position. Towards the north end of the west wall is a blocked shoulder-arched doorway (into the stair turret) very like that on the east at the same level; it does have some quite long jamb stones bonded in with the adjacent walling. The square-headed windows in the north and south walls at this level both have shouldered rear arches; on the east is the blocked doorway already described.

The second stage has a ceiling carried by two massive east-west beams, each with heavy braces or struts at each end; the main beams carry a series of north-south timbers; in the centre of the ceiling is a roughly circular opening through which bells could be raised, its sides cut back into the central pair of north-south beams and a pair of east-west trimmers.

The upper parts of the tower are reached by the newel stair within the north-eastern turret; the present doorway into the stair opens four steps above the base. The internal walls of the stair well are whitewashed. The two blocked doorways already described form recesses; the lower, with a pointed arch, looks like an insertion whilst the upper, with its shouldered head, seems contemporary with the stair. Access into what is now the clock chamber is gained by a separate flight of four steps rising through another shoulder-headed doorway.

Within the clock chamber the walls are plastered. The three windows all have shouldered rear arches; the lower part of the west jamb of that in the south wall has been cut back at some stage, probably in connection with an earlier clock face. The internal sill of the eastern window has been lowered, and two stone steps provided, probably in the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century, to give easier access to the opening which now serves as a doorway out onto the flat roof of the nave.

On either side of the north and south windows, c 1.5 m above floor level, are large quadrant-shaped corbels, which presumably relate to the bell frames when this was the belfry.

Above the clock chamber, the walls of the newel stair are no longer whitewashed, but remain heavily mortared; there are some larger patches of thinly-coursed rubble which may represent repairs at some time, below the square-headed doorway into the belfry. Within the belfry the walls are again heavily mortared, and the four belfry openings have plain square-edged semicircular rear arches; above that of the southern is a rough corbel that no longer has any function. The low-pitched tower roof is carried by a pair of north-south cambered tie-beams, chamfered on their lower angles. Structural considerations have prompted the insertion of an additional king-post truss set at a lower level, to the west of the western tie-beam.

The final section of the newel stair continues to a trapdoor onto the tower roof. Adjacent to the

trapdoor is a block, perhaps out of position, of a rebated door jamb. At roof level it is clear that the parapet above the turret is later than that of the remainder of the tower; it would appear that the turret was originally carried up higher than the roof of the remainder of the tower.

The **Nave**, notably tall and narrow, with side walls 0.88 - 0.91 m in thickness, is of four bays; as both fabric and features of the nave walls are so crucial to the interpretation of the structural history of the church, they are described in some detail here, the arcades first, and then the fabric and features of the walls above.

The arcades are in two sections, a three-bay east part, then, beyond a short block of solid walling, a western pair of arches. The three-bay parts have semicircular arches of two chamfered orders, with hoodmoulds towards the nave, and are carried on circular piers and responds with full-height keeled half-shafts (except for the eastern of the south arcade, which has its half shaft carried by a bracket with stiff-leaf foliage.. The capitals, all somewhat mutilated, are ornamented with stylised leaf forms, all differing, and rather more developed on the north; the western capital of the north arcade is the best-preserved, and has well-developed volute-like foliage. The bases, some very much mutilated, all seem to have had hold water mouldings; those of the piers have been set on circular plinths, although that of the eastern pier of the south arcade has had a square extension to the south made when a respond (removed in 1849) was added, in connection with the 13<sup>th</sup>-century addition of a south transept. Hodgson claimed to have found ‘unmistakable fragments of interlaced Saxon knot-work... worked into the foundation of the easternmost 12<sup>th</sup>-century pier on the south side of the nave’ (1889. 75, footnote 2) but no trace of these can now be found. The hoodmould of the south arcade has an indented ornament (sometimes termed ‘nutmeg’) seen again at St Helen Auckland. The hoodmould of the north arcade has been cut away at the east end (presumably to accommodate the rood beam); above the second pier it has a stop in the form of a stylised human head, possibly wearing a gag.

The western arch of each arcade is of a rather awkward stilted semicircular shape, due to the fact that whilst the eastern respond is at the same level as those of the main part of the arcade, the western, at the level of those of the tower arches, is set considerably. The arches themselves are again of two chamfered orders, the outer order ending in broach stops above the western respond only; there is a hoodmould chamfered on its lower angle; the responds have filleted half shafts, very like those of the tower arches. Whilst the three-bay arcades seem to have been untouched (except perhaps for a superficial tooling-over) by 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration, these western arches look rather more suspicious. The dressings of the eastern third of each arch seem in better condition than the remainder, and, especially on the south, are lighter in colour. The mouldings of the respond capitals also seem in suspiciously good condition, although the mutilated bases look.

The walls above the arcades are of coursed roughly-squared stone, although a number of changes are visible. On both internal and external wall faces show added clerestory walling is plainly distinguishable. In the spandrels above the easternmost pier of each arcade are the remains of an earlier window, discovered and partially opened out in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. That on the south is the more intact; the rear arch shows a series of neatly-cut splayed voussoirs, the curve of the extrados following that of the arch; the splay of the head retains old white plaster. The outer opening, which has the narrowest of chamfers, has its semicircular head cut into a single elongate block of whitish stone; a single block that survives from the upper part of the east jamb. Less survives of the northern window; four curved blocks of the rear arch are visible and only the

head of the outer opening.

Both internal faces of the nave walls show, below the added clerestory, a clear vertical break above the elongate 'pier' between the third and fourth arches of the arcades, which has been interpreted as indicating the position of the west wall of the earliest nave. However, the fabric and features hereabouts are not at all easy to interpret in detail. On the south, the break aligns more or less with the respond of the main part of the arcade, and has a series of large quoin like blocks set against it. To the west of these is a wedge-shaped area of rather larger stonework, notably lighter in colour, before darker rather more thinly-coursed stonework, very like that above the main part of the arcade, resumes. It is interesting that this lighter-coloured stonework corresponds in position with the lighter-coloured and more recent-looking dressings of the eastern third of the fourth-bay arch directly below.

On the external face of the wall matters are less clear. The head of the pre-clerestory walling is marked by a slight set-back, accompanied by a linear feature which may be what Taylor & Taylor (1965, 265) describe as a 'hollow-moulded string course' but in fact looks much more like a timber incorporated in the wall face, and is at precisely the level one would expect for a wall-plate for the pitched pre-1849 south aisle roof; above it are a series of infilled sockets which would presumably have taken the ends of the tie beams of the roof. The only real semblance of a break in the walling beneath comes on the same line as the western side of the 'wedge' visible on the opposite face, and again has much lighter stone to the east and darker to the west. However, this colour change is continued above the set-back/beam feature into the clerestory walling. With the eye of faith there may be a second break immediately to the left of the wall-post of the roof (ie above the eastern respond of the fourth-bay arch) but this is less certain.

On the internal face of the north wall there is a line of blocks sharing a common vertical face to the east, just west of the western respond of the third-bay arch. The rough faces of these project slightly from the wall-face, as if they have been cut back. The third block (above the level of the arcade impost) has a concave cut or break to its lower left angle which must be what Romans and Radford 1954, 215) saw as part of a hollow-chamfered string course. To the left of these blocks is a wedge-shaped area of lighter-coloured masonry with noticeably larger stones (almost exactly as on the south); above the blocks this area extends a little beyond them to the east. This area of lighter masonry again corresponds with what look like renewed dressings in the arch below.

On the external face of the north wall the wedge-shaped area of lighter stonework is again visible, although it appears to roughly course in with that to either side.. There is no feature that might lend itself to interpretation as a string course (other than that already described with the tower, which overlaps the tower proper to continue some way along the nave wall); high up, a few cm short of the present roof-plate, are a series of seven quadrant-shaped corbels that must relate to an earlier version of the north aisle roof, at a higher level than the three at the west end of the wall already described.

The four clerestory openings on each side have shallow segmental rear arches, each made up of two large slabs set on their sides; behind these arches, the opening is considerably taller, and roofed by a series of north-south slabs. The form of the clerestory openings, both externally and internally, echoes those at Brancepeth, where the rear arches are made up of re-used medieval grave slabs.

The nave roof is of seven bays, with cambered tie-beams, a ridge and one level of purlins; there are tie-beams set against both end walls. On either side of the intermediate tie-beams are shaped brackets which descend below the tie as pendant blocks, clasping a separate carved block, usually with the Neville saltire, below the tie soffit, and at the head are morticed into short axial timbers which run parallel to and immediately beneath the ridge. The rafters are of plain square section; quite a number have mortices and pegholes in them, and have clearly been re-used from some other structure. There is a diagonal timber, rather like a dragon beam, spanning the north-east corner of the roof; it seems to be slightly curved, and is probably another re-used piece utilised as a late repair..

The internal walls of the **South Aisle** are of orange-yellow sandstone ashlar. The west window has a rear arch of rather irregular pointed form, with hollow chamfer to the head only. The small window near the west end of the wall has virtually no splay at all internally; its sill is level, as is often the case with 'low sides'. The south door has a segmental rear arch with a chamfer to its head; in the jambs are infilled drawbar tunnels. The three large windows in the rear arch have segmental rear arches, again with their chamfers restricted to the head. At the east end of the wall is a pointed-arched doorway, in part restoration, to the small sacristy, followed by three sedilia. These have had trefoiled pointed arches, but almost all of their detail has been hacked away; there have been sunk panels in the spandrels, and the seat of the easternmost is set at a higher level to the other two. A string course, hollow chamfered on its lower angle, runs from the east end of the wall, beneath the easternmost window, to abut on the pediment above the eastern of a pair of tomb recesses to the west of the sedilia. These share a projecting plinth or platform with a slabbed top that overhangs the sides; the top slabs of the eastern part have been replaced. The eastern recess has a segmental chamfered arch, with a triangular pediment above containing blank flowing tracery with cusped mouchettes; the frame has crockets running up the sides and quite an elaborate finial topped by a bracket. The western recess is much simpler, with a moulded segmental arch, but all its head is 19<sup>th</sup>-century restoration.

At the south end of the east wall of the aisle is a piscina, its petalled bowl partly cut back, with a trefoiled arch within a moulded frame. The east window has a segmental rear arch with a chamfer to its head.

The six-bay roof of the aisle is of 19<sup>th</sup>-century date; the principal rafters are carried by wall-posts at either end, supported by shield-shaped corbels, some of which look old. There is a brattished wall-plate.

The tiny **Sacristy** at the south-east corner of the aisle has a plain east-west vault carried on two ribs, chamfered on their lower angles. The only feature inside is a simple cupboard or aumbry low in the north wall.

The internal stonework of the **South Porch** is suffering badly from erosion. There a stone bench on each side, the tops of which at least are of 19<sup>th</sup>-century date, and the roof is carried on three transverse ribs, chamfered on the lower angles. The inner doorway is round-headed, with a continuous broad chamfer. The inner splays of the blocked windows in the side walls now form recesses.

The internal walls of the **North Aisle** are of coursed roughly-squared stone. The west window has

a segmental rear arch with a chamfer to its head; to the south only the internal south jamb of the earlier lancet is visible. The north door has a plain square lintel internally, with a rough relieving arch above; the two windows further east both have similar lintels (that of the eastern a re-used cross slab) with similar relieving arches. Both have steeply-sloped sills, with evidence of earlier sill levels c 0.30 m below these. The internal jambs of the eastern window have clearly been re-cut at some stage, when the opening would appear to have been widened, leaving only the outermost 10 cm or so of the original splay.

Around 0.7 m to the east of this window is a roughly-cut recess of segmental plan, c 1.5 m high, c 0.3 m wide but only c 0.10 m deep, with its sill c 2.5 m above the floor. East of this again are a vertical pair of square-headed recesses. The lower is an aumbry with chamfered jambs but a plain lintel; immediately above is a broader recess with a chamfered west jamb and square east one; the lintel is a re-used medieval grave slab. At the east end of the wall the angle with the west wall of the north transept is chamfered, up to a corbel which carries a wall-post for the eastern roof truss of the aisle.

The roof of the north aisle may be post-medieval (18<sup>th</sup> century?). It is of six bays, having horizontal tie-beams chamfered on their lower angles and three levels of purlins, supported by blocks and short posts above the purlins; there is also a plate set against the nave wall, supported by a series of posts rising from the ties. The easternmost tie has wall-posts beneath it, with arch braces, carried on corbels.

The **North Transept** retains its original fenestration, a range of three lancets, in the north wall; these have slightly-shouldered rear arches. There are remains of similar lancets in both side walls, the north jamb of one in the short west wall, and the outermost jambs of what Hodgson (1889, 88) suggests were two pairs in the east wall. At the east end of the north wall and the north end of the east wall are plain square-headed aumbries; in the centre of the east wall is a trefoil-arched piscina which has lost no more than the projecting front edge of its bowl, with a plain aumbry to its south., At the south end of the wall is a peculiar recess that seems to have begun as a chamfered doorway with a pointed arch, opening to the south-east (as if to serve an intended rood loft stair?) which was then abandoned and a section of window tracery with the trefoil-arched head of a light set across it, to serve as the recess for another piscina, part of the bowl of which survives.

The two present windows in the east wall have segmental rear arches with chamfered heads in the form of a raised rib (rather like the clerestory windows). Below and between the windows are indications of a cut-back string course.

The north transept has a low-pitched roof of four bays, which chamfered tie-beams with carved bosses at the centres; the southern is carried by a simple quadrant-shaped corbel at the head of the east wall.

The arch into the **Chancel** is of segmental-pointed form, and of two chamfered orders; towards the nave the hoodmould has been completely cut back, but towards the chancel it bears nail-head ornament, and has a fleur-de-lys ornament carved in relief at its apex. The inner order is carried on half shafts with fillets, their capitals and the impost moulding virtually destroyed; there are much mutilated hold water mouldings to the bases. The east wall of the nave above the chancel arch is of coursed squared stone; at the north end, c 2.5 m above the springing of the arch, is a re-

used block bearing what appears to be an early sundial. Higher up is a cut in the wall face (in contrast to the projecting tabling at the west end) for a steeply-pitched roof. This wall is only c 0.75 m thick

The internal walls of the chancel are all plastered and white-washed; the stalls and a panelled dado cover most of the lower walls. The internal dressings of the windows in the side walls are visible through the whitewash, and appear to be medieval; the windows have segmental-pointed rear arches with casement mouldings to their heads. Between the eastern two windows are a fine set of three sedilia, with richly-moulded trefoil arches under a moulded label. The three seats are stepped; the outer jambs have attached shafts with square-ended fillets, whilst between the arches spring from corbels, the eastern the head of a priest and the western with foliage. The capital of the eastern shaft has more stiff-leaf foliage, whilst the western is moulded. To the east is a piscina with a mutilated trefoiled arch with a cut for a small shelf in the top of the trefoil; its fluted bowl has been largely cut away.

The doorway to the vestry has a four-centred arch moulded with two continuous hollow chamfers, under a hollow-chamfered hood with turned-back ends; to the east is a blocked window of two trefoil-headed lights, with some slight irregularities; it may be made up of re-used material. Above the doorway is a window of three trefoil-headed lights from the stair-headed lobby, and to the east a single-light squint, also angled through the wall, from the upper room; its splayed east jamb is part of a medieval cross slab.

The roof of the chancel is of seven bays, with slightly-cambered moulded tie beams with central bosses, Neville saltires to the western four and a foliate boss and a coat of arms over the sanctuary. Over the western five bays the tie-beams have shaped brackets on either side, a simpler version of those in the nave, and the soffit of the ridge between them is cusped. The tie-beams are supported by wall-posts with solid arch braces, springing from corbels that are clearly 19<sup>th</sup>-century; at the east end the ridge and single level of purlins are also carried by 19<sup>th</sup>-century corbels, but the corbels which support the moulded and painted wall-plate, are less regular, and seem to be medieval work.

The internal walls of the **Vestry** are plastered and colour-washed. The doorway from the chancel has a plain internal lintel, with a chamfer. On the west of the doorway is the base of a newel stair rising to the upper room and roof. It would appear that there had originally been a wall running diagonally across the south-west corner of the vestry, dividing off an entrance lobby and the stair, but at some later date the lower part of this has been removed, leaving the upper carried by a broad segmental-pointed arch, throwing the former lobby and the first few steps of the stair into the vestry; a simple segmental-arched door closes off the upper portion of the stair.

In the centre of the west wall is a projection which probably once contained a fireplace; a wall-safe now occupies the recess. On the south an internal string course, chamfered above and below - probably once an external feature, and indicating that the vestry post-dates the chancel - extends over the eastern half of the wall. The two windows on the north have roughly segmental rear arches, with chamfers to the heads; the three-light east window has a rear arch that rises above the level of the ceiling, which is carried by two heavy north-south beams, supported by quadrant-shaped corbels; from the eastern two further trimmers extend to corbels on the east wall, either side of the head of the window, which also carry a further beam alongside the wall face.

The doorway at the south end of the east wall has a plain square lintel internally; its south jamb has a broad splay cut into the earlier clasping buttress at the north-east corner of the chancel.

The newel stair rises steeply and rather awkwardly to accommodate a lobby, in the south wall of which is the three-light window looking down into the chancel; both its jambs and its mullions are splayed eastward to align it with the position of the altar below. The upper section of the stair continues to a trapdoor onto the vestry roof.

From the lobby, a doorway with a segmental-pointed head and a continuous chamfer opens into the upper room; the door itself may be medieval, and is made up of three broad vertical boards on the outer face, and horizontal boarding on the inner. The room also has its walls plastered an colour-washed. In the centre of the west wall is a plain squared-headed fireplace, probably of mid-19th century date, with contemporary ironwork. The three windows all have rear arches of rough segmental-pointed form, with chamfers to the head only; in each case the rear arch forms a rib, with a taller recess behind.

The roof, sloping very slightly to the north, has two chamfered tie-beams, two levels of chamfered purlin, and plain square rafters. On the south, around 1 m below the ceiling, are two quadrant-shaped corbels carrying a plate adjacent the all-face, which in turn carries a short wall-post that gives additional support to the south end of the eastern tie-beam; plate and wall-post are neatly stop-chamfered. There is also a smaller stone corbel mid way along the east wall, at the wall head, which like the other two corbels may relate to an earlier roof.

The **Roofs** of the church are of lead, other than the south aisle, which is of modern stainless steel. This lead is of varying dates; the north transept has a number of incised drawings, presumably made by plumbers (in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries?); these include the usual outlines of shoes, with initials, but there are two more complex drawings, apparently showing tools. There are also shoe outlines on the north aisle roof, and one (with initials) on top of the tower.

### **Fittings & Furnishings**

Staindrop Church is unusually rich in fittings, furnishings and sepulchral monuments. The better-known items are not dealt with in great detail here; fuller descriptions are usually referenced.

The **Chancel Screen** is of 14th century date, and the only Pre-Reformation example surviving within the county. There are central paired opening doors, between four-light sections which depressed cinquefoiled ogee heads; there are similar closed panels beneath a mid-rail to the panels either side, closed beneath rail. Upper parts cinquefoil heads to lights.

The provision of the **Choir Stalls** - ten on each side, with two pairs backing onto the chancel screen, is usually linked to the foundation of the College in 1408; they have Perpendicular tracery and poppy heads. Some but not all have carved misericords; the dado behind is partly 19th-century restoration; Hodgson (1889, . 98) terms them 'an excellent example of north-country woodwork...all full of a rude vigour'

The **Altar Table** is of 17<sup>th</sup> century date, but the panelled dado and reredos, and altar rails, are all of the late 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Floors.** The chancel has a chequerboard floor of white and Frosterley marbles, of 1908. The nave, north transept and most of north aisle floored with Minton tiles (1849) and the south aisle with stone slabs.

The **Font**, beneath the tower, is of 'Tees marble' (limestone) and is octagonal form, each face having a shield; that facing east has a brass coat of arms, not mentioned in the description by Hodgson (1912, 59-61), who dates the font to the last years of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The plinth and steps are relatively recent.

Also beneath the tower is an iron-bound medieval **Chest**.

Antiquarian sources describe a large amount of late medieval heraldic **Stained Glass** in the church (Hodgson 1889, 102-105) but only the merest fragments now remain; a few pieces have been collected together into a roundel, now set in the central light of easternmost window in the south wall of the chancel. The majority of the other glass is of mid-19th century date; the two windows on the north of the chancel (the westernmost with a brass dedication plate to Caroline, Duchess of Cleveland d. 1883) are of better quality than the remainder.

There is a small pile of Architectural Fragments (along with two pieces of cross slabs; see 'sepulchral monuments' section)) in the north aisle, immediately to the east of the north door.

A brass plate in the north transept relates that the **Clock** was given by the parishioners and friends of the Rev H P Lipscomb, on his completing the fiftieth year of his ministry, in 1896.

### **Sepulchral Monuments**

Staindrop Church is celebrated for its collection of **Medieval Effigies**. These are not described in detail here; full accounts provided by Hunter Blain (1929) are included as an appendix.

- (1) In the canopied recess in the south wall of the south aisle, a relatively well-preserved effigy, in fine-grained sandstone, of a Neville (?) lady of c.1320-30 (Blair 1929, 41); a modern notice identifies it as 'Euphemia de Clavering, first wife of Ralph Lord Neville and the mother of the builder of this aisle' and dates it to 1343. .
- (2) In the plainer of the two recesses in the south wall of the south aisle, the sandstone effigy of a lady, probably of the Neville family, dated by Blair (1929, 40) to c.1290-1300, 'rather worn and details destroyed'. A modern notice identifies it as 'Lady Isabelle, the Neville heiress'.
- (3) Alongside (2), the effigy of a young boy, with the saltire of Neville carved at each end of his head-rest (Blair 1929, 51)
- (4) At the south end of the railed enclosure at the west end of the south aisle. The oak tomb of Henry Neville, Fifth Earl of Westmorland (d.1564); his effigy is flanked by those of his first two wives, Anne Manners and Jane Cholmley. The tomb has panels at the sides with figures of the earl's eight children (one missing) and a cartouches of arms at each end. (Blair 1929, 34-6, 46-7)

- (5) In the centre of the enclosure, between tombs (40 and (6), the rather worn sandstone effigy of a Neville lady of the late 14<sup>th</sup> century (Blair 1929, 42), identified on a modern notice as 'Margary second wife of Ralph Lord Neville c 1343'. Blair comments that 'it formerly lay upon a projecting slab against the wall of the south aisle'.
- (6) At the north end of the enclosure, what Leland termed a 'right stately tumbe of alabaster' of Ralph Neville, First Earl of Westmorland (d.1425); his effigy is accompanied by those of his two wives Margaret Stafford (d.1370) and Joan Beaufort (d.1440); Blair (1929, 30-31, 44) states that the tomb as constructed c.1400, after the earl's second marriage. The tomb has traceried panels around it, but has been considerably mutilated; the effigies themselves are in better condition, although they bear a considerable amount of graffiti, some quite early and of interest in themselves. A modern notice identifies Joan Beaufort as. 'daughter of John of Gaunt, from whose quarries at Tutbury came the alabaster'.

There are a number of medieval **Cross Slabs**, virtually all re-used in later fabric. They are fully described and illustrated by Ryder (1984, 114-116 and plate 51); they comprise

- (1) Upper part of a 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century slab with cross and shears built into east side of base of easternmost buttress on north of north aisle.
- (2) Section of slab with incised cross shaft re-used in external east jamb of western of the two windows on the north of the north aisle.
- (3) Part of base of slab, with cross shaft, stepped base and (?) shears, on east side of central buttress on north of north aisle.
- (4) Part of the head of a late 12<sup>th</sup> century slab in east side of western buttress on north side of north aisle; although worn, the cross head design is quite clear, and is of a type paralleled at Cockfield and elsewhere, nevertheless it has been mistakenly identified as an Anglo-Saxon piece, initially by Lipscomb (1888,3) and more recently by Cramp (1984, 145) who saw it as a 9<sup>th</sup>-century stone bearing a 'true tree scroll'.
- (5) Late 12<sup>th</sup> century slab with 'bracelet' cross re-used as an internal lintel of the eastern of the two windows in the north wall of the north aisle. The slab alongside seems to bear a similar cross.
- (6) Late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century slab with four-circle cross and the emblems of coulter and ploughshare, re-used as the lintel of the upper of the two recesses at the east end of the north wall of the north aisle.
- (7) Part of the head of a slab, with one cross arm, re-used as the east jamb of the squint from the upper room of the vestry into the chancel.
- (8) Part of the head of a slab with a late 13<sup>th</sup> century bracelet-derivative cross, re-used as the threshold of the doorway into the upper room of the vestry.
- (9) Upper part of a late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century slab re-used as the 15<sup>th</sup> tread from the bottom of the vestry stair. Four-circle or bracelet cross head, possibly with a chalice.

- (10) Part of a slab with a late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century bracelet cross, and a sword, re-used as a support for one of the treads of the vestry stair, on the north side just below the door into the upper room.
- (11) Slab re-used in the roof of the vestry stair, as the fourth lintel from the bottom. Cross shaft and stepped base.
- (12) Slab re-used as the inner lintel of the original doorway into the tower newel stair (now a cupboard); its only motif is a chalice.
- (13) Fragment of the head of a slab in the pile of architectural bits and pieces lying in the north aisle, just east of the door. Part of an early 14<sup>th</sup>-century interlaced-diamond cross carved in relief.
- (14) In same pile as (13), the upper part of a late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century slab with a round-leaf bracelet cross carved in relief.
- (15) A slab that bore 'a cross and a feathered arrow, and the word 'BRAS' described by Surtees (131); Hodgson (1889, 93, footnote) relates that during the 1849 restoration, when 'one day, when the havoc was at its height, I made anxious enquiry about this stone. I was told that it had just been broken up and used to build the dwarf walls for the pews with!' Perhaps one day its remains may be retrieved?
- (16) A 'large freestone', now lost, which before 1849 was placed as the outer step to the former priest's door on the south of the chancel, bore 'a rude sculpture of a cross' (Edleston 1936)

There are a considerable number of **Post-Medieval Monuments**. A railed enclosure at the west end of the north aisle contains in its centre a marble altar tomb of Harry Vane, First Duke of Cleveland, d.1842, with to its south an elaborate wall monument to Margaret, Countess of Darlington, eldest daughter of Robert Lowther, d.1800 (signed by R. Cooke of Portland Road, London) and on the north a wall monument with a reclining figure of Henry, Second Earl of Darlington d.1792, above a bas-relief of Raby castle below (for heraldry see Blair 1935, 74)

Other **Wall Monuments** include:

At west end of the north wall of the north aisle, monument to Sophia, Duchess of Cleveland, d.1859 with reclining effigy, slightly smaller than life; above is an impressive wall monument to Catherine Margaret, Countess of Darlington, d.1807, by Richard Cooke.

Between the north door and the first of the windows, two monuments, a Gothic tablet with a coat of arms (Blair 1935, 74) to Richard Sherwood d.1816 and a smaller one with a wreathed skull above, to Alice, daughter of John Blackett of Hoppyland, d.1722; coat of arms at base.

In the north transept, between the two windows in the east wall, a wall tablet to Frances, wife of George Davison, Vicar, d.1799, and lower down three 20<sup>th</sup> century marble tablets to members of the Trotter family. At south end of the wall is a marble tablet inscribed 'In the chancel of this church lies the remains of Thomas Scarth, Esq.,' d.1835.

In the south aisle, at north end of the east wall is a small Gothic tablet inscribed 'In the chancel of this church lie the remains of Mary Jenkin' d.1833. Between the western and central windows of the south wall is a brass tablet to Thomas Freshfield Scarth d 1872, and between the western window and the south door, a marble tablet to Mary Tabitha Lee, d.1851 'who gave £200 to repairing the church in 1849'.

Above south door is a fine tablet, with a bust, to John Lee d.1793 'Attorney General for the County palatine of Lancaster and sometime for this county also... and member of parliament for Higham Ferrers'. The tablet is signed by Nollekens, Ft.

On the north of the aisle, to the east of the arch into the tower, a marble monument to Mary Lee, d.1812, also by Nollekens.

On the south wall of the chancel are three 20<sup>th</sup>-century marble tablets to members of the Vane family.

There are **War Memorial** plaques, for World Wars I and II, set on the west wall of the tower.

There are also a number of **Hatchments** with coats of arms; one on the south of the chancel (with motto 'Honi soit qui mal y pense'), one over the north door, one between the two windows in the north aisle (Coat of arms with three daggers, and no motto; the supporters are a griffon and an antelope), one at the east end of the same wall (with lion and hound supporters and motto 'Honi soit qui mal y pense nec temere nec timide') and one on the north wall of south aisle, to east of arch into tower, in large wooden frame and having a coat of arms with crowns and cherub above.

There are a number of **Floor Slabs and Ledgers** at the west end of the church:

Just inside the south door, to the east of the railed enclosure, a series of five blue limestone slabs, three with indents for brass plates; the central one has an inscription to the wife of John Elliot d.1761. Within the enclosure; between the two main monuments is a ledger slab to Christopher... (partly overlain by wooden tomb), d.1752. North of this are two limestone slabs set end-to-end, the eastern dated 1799 (partly overlain by alabaster monument). On north of alabaster tomb is a large limestone floor slab with various cuts and an inscription to Jeremiah Hutchinson d. 1786.

In the baptistry is a large blue limestone slab with indents for brasses of knight and lady, an inscription below and shields in the corners, and a secondary inscription to Thomas Hutchinson d.1766. Under the north arch of the tower is a limestone slab, with chamfered edges, to Christopher Blackett d.1712.

Inside the railed enclosure at the west end of the north aisle, in front of the southern wall monument is an elaborate marble slab with a foliate cross inlaid in brass to Frederick William, Third Duke of Cleveland, d.1864. Near the north-west corner of enclosure are several slabs including one with indents for the brasses of a civilian, with an inscription and shields at the corners, and an uninscribed slab of Frosterley limestone. Two further limestone slabs, one with an indent for a brass plate, lie a little further east.

The **Bell Frames** are of cast iron, and of the long-headed type; there are eight pits, a central range of four aligned east-west, with pairs of north-south pits to each side (the plan type classed 8..3, see Pickford 1993).

The oldest of the **Bells**, at the north-west corner, is inscribed 'Excelsis Deo 1685' and five others have inscriptions by Lester, Pack and Chapman of London, 'fecit 1787' but all have plates stating that they were re-cast by Taylor of Loughborough in 1925 , when the treble and second bells were added.

### **Historical Notes**

- c1031 King Canute, on his pilgrimage to Durham, gave to St Cuthbert (ie the Durham Community) Staindrop with its 'mansio' and its 'appurtenances' (a long list of villages).
- 1131 The Prior and Convent of Durham grant Staindrop and Staindropshire to Dolphin, a descendant of the old Earls of Northumberland. His grandson, Robert Fitz Maldred, married the Neville Heiress. The later medieval history of Staindrop is largely tied up with that of the family, whose seat was at Raby Castle, in the park to the north of the village.
- 1343 The Prior and Convent of Durham granted Ralph, Lord Neville, the right to found and endow three chantries within the church, each to be served by one chaplain.
- 1408 Bishop Langley granted Ralph Neville, First Earl of Westmoreland, a licence to found a college attached to the church The College was dedicated to St Mary; the church itself appears to have been dedicated to St Gregory, but at some time after the Reformation the dedication of the college seems to have passed to the church.
- 1788 The first of the accounts of the church by the great Durham historians, Hutchinson (313-317) concentrates largely on the monuments and does not provide any significant detail as regards the structure
- 1840 Surtees' description includes a comment that the east gable of the chancel bore the date '15..', surmising that this related to the lowering and repair of the gable. He comments that 'the place of the ancient rood loft is occupied by a seat for Raby' (ie a pew/gallery for the Vale family) although his statement that 'the flight of stone steps leading to the rood loft is still preserved' has been thought to be an error, referring to the stair in the vestry.

### **Faculties and Other Records of Structural Work**

- 1849 A major restoration of the church, carried out under the architect John A. Cory. Fordyce (1857, II, 86) chronicles some of the major works: 'a new roof was placed over the south aisle...the stonework was cleansed from whitewash and repaired; the

northern and western galleries were taken down, and the organ placed on the floor..' Pewing, pulpit and reading desk were all renewed, and the floor tiled. Some features of this work, notably the replacement of the chancel windows by new ones copied from those of the Henry VI Chapel at Westminster Abbey, aroused antiquarian censure. Lipscomb (1888, 17) defending Cory's work, states that they had been 'quite beyond restoring'; Hodgson (1889, 96-97) insists that they 'were neither weathered nor decayed' and saw Cory's work as 'pure wanton self-assertiveness'.

- 125 1851 Petition to remove certain bodies from the family vault of the Duke of Cleveland
- 1868 Removal of plaster exposed the remains of the 'Saxon'; windows above the nave arcades (Lipscomb 1888,3)
- 491 29 April 1908 Staindrop Alterations. These include moving several monuments. Two tombs at west end of the south aisle ( the larger until the 1849 restoration had been in centre of chancel), were now at extreme south-west corner of the aisle, where they were perishing from damp. Planned to move these two and the wooden tomb (then at the west end of the north aisle) to place them in a railed enclosure at west end of the south aisle. Duke William Henry effigy, then in the centre of chancel, and five other monuments in the chancel were to be moved to a second railed enclosure at the west end of the north aisle. Two tablets to be moved from the west wall of the north aisle to the north all. The south-east window of the chancel, which had been blocked since 1792 by the monument to Henry, Second earl of Darlington, was to be reopened Chancel to be refloored with Frosterley and white marble. Stalls restored, and east window glass rearranged. Chancel to be panelled, Organ to be moved from tower to beneath eastern arch of south, new choir seats just west of chancel screen, and new pulpit close to easternmost pier of the south arcade. Font to be moved further west (when organ has gone). Commandments boards to be moved from the east end of the chancel to the east end of the south aisle. The accompanying plan also shows new masonry in the internal east jamb of the door of the south aisle sacristy, and around its east window.
- 2047 28 12 1923 Lowering walls in churchyard
- 2112 28 3 1925 Restoration of the bells etc
- 2287 10 6 29 Side Chapel

2487	14 12 33	Electric light
3326	20 7 50	Extensions to heating system
3709	7 5 54	A/C Repairs & repointing
5937	9 7 81	A/C Extensive general repairs
5980	8 1 82	Restoration of Vane family funeral hatchments
6130	14 9 83	Re-wiring of church for new lighting system
6271	4 6 85	Re-covering of chancel roof in lead & ancillary work
6378	2 6 86	A/C Limewashing of chancel walls and painting ceiling A/C
7491	27 3 92	Tomb protection
7542	2 7 92	Introduction of electronic organ (replacing a 1909 Brindley & Foster organ which it was 'uneconomic to restore'.
7697	23 3 93	Tomb protection
7777	9 9 93	Conservation of monuments
8049	30 10 95	Introduction of (various furnishings) to create a side chapel
8136	15 7 96	To convert the clock to auto-wind and to refurbish the clock.
	1998	New heating boiler & radiator in lower vestry

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

Staindrop is a classic case of a village church that has been enlarged in a number of stages throughout the medieval period; the details of its development have attracted the attention of successive generations of antiquaries and archaeologists. The general outline of its structural history was set out in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Lipscomb (1852 & 1888) and refined by Hodges who saw the earliest fabric, the walls of the eastern three bays of the nave (along with the 'early' windows) as 11<sup>th</sup> century work 'which might quite possibly lie on either side the Conquest border line' ) (1889, 81, footnote 10).

However, since the mid-20th century the structural history of the earliest parts of the church has been re-interpreted by Romans & Radford (1954, 214-216), and their conclusions backed up (and added to) by the Taylors (1965, 564-7) and Pevsner & Williamson (1983). The findings of these authorities are summarised below: the individual features that they describe and arguments cited are numbered, to relate them to the following section in which their observations and

interpretations are re-assessed.

In the mid-20th century Romans and Radford (1954, 214-216) , writing a description of the church in connection with a visit by the Royal Archaeological Institute, described the west wall of the original nave, seen in section on the present north wall, as 2'4" thick (1), and having a hollow-moulded string on its outer face (2) ; on the basis of a comparison of this string, and of the monolithic heads of the early windows, with features at Monkwearmouth, they dated the first nave to the 8<sup>th</sup> or early 9<sup>th</sup> century. They also saw the added western bay and the lower two stages of the tower as an extension of late Saxon date (early 11<sup>th</sup> century?). They argued that the masonry of these parts must pre-date the cutting of the late 12<sup>th</sup> century arcades as 'the old west wall could not have remained standing after the cutting of these openings' (3); they saw the blocked doorway high in the west wall of the nave as having detail of 'pre-Conquest type'(4) , and interpreted the eastern quoins of the lower stages of the tower, visible above the aisle roofs, as original as well (5) , although they thought the western side of the tower had been largely re-faced. (6)

The Taylors in their major work Anglo Saxon Architecture assessed the Romans & Radford interpretation as a 'very good critical account' (1965, 567). They too stressed the comparisons between the nave windows and string course with those at Monkwearmouth (7), but whereas Romans & Radford described a string course seen in section in the cut-away west wall of the nave, 12 feet above the floor, they describe one running along the outer faces of the nave walls 22 feet above the floor (8). They added to the list of Pre-Conquest features 'vestiges' of the original quoining of the tower at its western angles (9); they did modify Romans & Radford's ascription of a Saxon date to the shouldered doorway high in the west wall of the nave by saying that it, together with the two blocked doorways in the interior wall face of the western wall of the tower of which 'all trace ....has disappeared from outside,' (10) had no feature that had 'any very definite character which would serve to date it with certainty in the Anglo-Saxon period as distinct from the Norman'. They saw 'much' of the exterior of the tower as having been re-faced (6).

Pevsner & Williamson (1983, 486-7) again described the hollow-chamfered string course on the south face of the south wall of the nave as a feature comparable with Monkwearmouth, but saw the proportions of the earliest nave as suggesting a 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century date; they saw the western bay of the nave and lower parts of the tower as 'later, but still pre-Conquest) and cited as original features the south-east quoins of the tower (5), shoulder-headed doorways high in both east and west walls of the tower, and the round-headed opening lower down in the west wall of the tower. They also describe the stair turret as 'blocking a round-headed window' (11)

To comment on the above:

- (1) The straight joint visible more or less above the western responds of the three-bay parts of the arcades seems to mark the internal western angles of the early nave. Nowhere is there any indication of the external wall face, so how Romans and Radford produced their thickness of 2'4" is unclear.
- (2) This seems to be an illusion. The apparent hollow chamfer seems to be simply a concave break at one corner of a partially-cut away block; it seems highly unlikely that the western sides of the cut-back blocks here could represent the west face of a wall.

- (3) If the comment in (1) is correct, than the three-bay parts of the arcades could have been inserted as the west wall remained standing. This is in fact confirmed by the fact that the hoodmould of the north arcade is ended just short of one of the slightly-projecting blocks representing the cut-back return of the west wall.
- (4) The shouldered arch of the high-level doorway is certainly not of Anglo-Saxon type; door heads of this type seem to occur most commonly in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Had Romans and Radford ascended to the Clock Chamber, they would have seen that the rear arches of all the clearly-13th century windows here are of precisely this form.
- (5) The south-east quoins of the tower are of precisely the same type as the western ones of tower (and stair turret), and course in with the rubble of the wall and the dressings of the south window of the second stage. The north-east quoins are slightly different in character, but this may be no more than their re-using one or two older blocks.
- (6) The almost total re-facing of the exterior of a tower in rubble (the rubble masonry of the lower three stages is quite homogenous) would seem a very unlikely procedure!
- (7) The Taylors' own drawing of the internal face of the west wall at Monkwearmouth shows the rear arches of the windows as being constructed of three slabs, whereas those at Staindrop comprise at least nine voussoirs; there is in fact very little similarity, the Staindrop windows having rear arches of a common Norman type.
- (8) As already mentioned, there is no string course on the north of the nave, and on the south only what appears to be a wall-plate related to the former roof of the south aisle. The hollow-chamfered string courses on the nave walls are, sadly, a total invention.
- (9) The western angles of the tower are concealed by stair turret and a buttress, which would conceal any indication that might exist even of 'vestiges' of early quoining.
- (10) No trace of these openings is visible externally, on the grounds that they are clearly doorways that have opened into the adjacent stair turret; both are clearly visible within the turret! It would appear that the Taylors simply did not look outside (or at the plan of the church, which they reproduce) as this would have shown that this section of wall is covered by the stair turret.
- (11) This is difficult to understand, unless the round-headed window is the opening already described, quite separately, on the interior (see 10).

In addition the side walls of the nave (measured above the arcade responds are 0.88 - 0.91 m in thickness, quite typical of Norman work; the Taylors give the wall thickness as 2'8" (0.81 m).

All this argument may seem rather uncharitable, but it is disquieting that 'established authorities', normally trustworthy, can be led so far astray.

Sadly, it has to be admitted that there is no clear evidence for any Saxon work at all at Staindrop, either in the standing fabric or in the re-used carved stones which have been claimed to be of

early date, except perhaps for the sundial re-used in the east wall of the nave. The proportions of the early nave are certainly not of the early (7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century) date that has been claimed for them, whilst the wall thicknesses are more Norman than Saxon. The early windows are quite closely paralleled in early Norman work at St Giles, Durham, and Pitlington, and may be of c 1100.

Turning (with relief) to the later history of the building, there seems little to occasion dissent from the structural history as set out by Hodgson. He sees the nave as receiving aisles c 1190 (Pevsner & Williamson put the arcades a little earlier, at c 1170-80), with the chancel arch a few years later. A major remodelling came c 1250-1260 when the nave was extended a further bay to the west. As one might expect, the tower was constructed before the old west end was taken down; a quite understandable surveying error here resulted in the arches linking tower and the older arcades as having their springing at different levels. The aisles were extended west to flank the new tower, the north transept added, and the chancel rebuilt on its present dimensions. There may also have been a south transept, although nothing of it now remains in situ. Both Lipscomb and Hodgson see the present west window of the south aisle as having been transferred from the former south transept; its style suggests a date a little later than that of the main remodelling. The clustered shaft that formerly stood against the south face of the easternmost pier of the south arcade (removed in 1849) obviously carried an arch springing southwards. This shows that the south transept was of a different form to that on the north; if the arch was on the line of its west wall it must have been very narrow. The vestry would also seem to be a later addition, perhaps of the end of the 13th century.

The 1343 licence for the foundation of three chantries probably gives a date for the next major works, when the south aisle, together with any transept that existed on this side, were taken down and replaced by the present broad aisle with its south porch and south-east sacristy.

Hodgson and Lipscomb differ on the date of the rebuilding of the north aisle; in this case, some 13th-century work was retained both at the west end, and in the north and east walls of the transept. Lipscomb (1888, 21), followed by Romans & Radford, saw the aisle as of c 1500 but Hodgson (followed by Pevsner) as of c 1370.

The 1408 foundation of Staindrop College is quite reasonably correlated with the complete remodelling of the chancel. The walls being raised, a new low-pitched roof constructed, the priest's door moved eastward (to allow for the installation of the new stalls) and large traceried windows in the Perpendicular style were inserted. Ralph Neville's tomb was placed in the centre of the chancel, where it remained until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The vestry was also remodelled. At around the same time the nave walls were raised and the clerestory constructed, and the tower heightened by the addition of the present belfry stage.

As often, the Post-Reformation period was not marked by any major changes to the fabric of the church, but by periodic remodelling of the fittings and furnishings to suit liturgical developments. Changes and minor alterations and repairs to the structure were made as they became necessary. The '1615' date on the east gable may relate to some repairs, although in its present form the stonework here seems recent, and Surtees read the date as 15.....

Pewing 'constructed shortly after the Restoration of Charles II' (Fordyce 1857, II, 86) survived until 1849; various galleries were introduced, at both ends of the nave, and later along the north wall (Lipscomb 1852, 21). The two windows in the north aisle had their sills lowered by 3' to

admit light below the gallery. Lipscomb (1888, 11 & 21) refers to the churchwardens as having restored the south windows of the south aisle 'as poor copies of the originals' and altering the east windows of the north transept, both 'about eighty years ago'.

The pulpit and reading desk were placed against the easternmost piers of the nave arcades (Lipscomb 1852, 23- 24). At some uncertain period the top of the stair turret seems to have been reconstructed, and cut down to the same level as that of the adjacent tower.

In 1849 came the major restoration defended by Lipscomb and lamented by Hodgson; the changes made have already been described (see 'Faculties' section, together with the antiquarian controversy aroused, in particular by Cory's replacement of the chancel windows in a quite different style; further restoration works in 1908 were much less destructive.

## **The Churchyard**

The churchyard at Staindrop is an irregular trapezium in plan, with rounded corners; there has been a 20<sup>th</sup>-century extension or annexe across the road to the east. The entrance to the churchyard, at the south end of the west side, is flanked by small rusticated gate piers, with caps that have lost their finials, of 18<sup>th</sup>-century character. A second gateway to the north-east has 19<sup>th</sup>-century piers with domed tops and a simple wrought-iron overthrow. The boundary walls on south and east are low, with an arched coping.

In the centre of the north side of the yard is a railed section, fronting the Vane Mausoleum, a Gothic L-plan structure designed by Burn for the Second Duke of Cleveland in 1850. Somewhere in this area stood the buildings of the medieval College; 19<sup>th</sup>-century sources refer to the older inhabitants of the village recalling foundations of buildings around here. In the walled areas of woodland to the west of the Mausoleum a small cistern-like structure was partially cleared out a few years ago, but it appears of no great age.

The monuments within the churchyard are not of particular interest; there are a scatter of 18<sup>th</sup>-century headstones, notably to the west of the church, and some box tombs on the south

## **Archaeological Assessment**

Whether or not the earliest parts of the present fabric are of Saxon date, the church clearly stands on an important site, with documentary evidence pointing to an 11<sup>th</sup>-century *mansio* somewhere in the area. As usual, archaeological deposits within and around the building will have been disturbed by features such as underfloor heating, and a perimeter drain, as well as generations of burial within the building. It is clear that there are a number of vaults beneath the chancel

Any disturbance of floor levels should of course be accompanied by archaeological monitoring, as should any removal of plaster from the chancel walls, which may well conceal features of archaeological interest. Hodgson (1889, 78, footnote 6) found 'rich and abundant traces' of wall-paintings when the plaster was stripped from the nave walls in 1849. It is not clear whether the chancel walls were ever stripped; they may well retain remains of medieval and post-medieval mural decoration.

## **Summary and Archaeological Priorities**

As often with Durham churches there does not seem to be an adequate ground plan of the building available; those printed in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century sources are at too small a scale, and inaccurate in parts and that reproduced by Romans & Radford in 1954 (from which the plan here is taken) is little better than a schematic sketch; the building deserves a proper survey; in view of its size, this would probably be best carried out with the aid of a Total Station or EDM.

In view of the controversy over the date of the earliest phases of the church, a more detailed examination of the fabric of the nave walls is also desirable; these might be best understood with the aid of rectified photography, and perhaps stone-by-stone drawings, although these would obviously entail some expense.

Peter F Ryder. July/August 1999

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# ST MARY STAINDROP

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT  
AUGUST 1999

**South-east view after Billings (1846) showing the  
15<sup>th</sup> century chancel windows and south door.**

PETER F RYDER

# ST MARY, STAINDROP AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

AUGUST 1999

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