

St Andrew's Church, Winston

The parish church of St Andrew stands at the north-east end of the village of Winston, just beyond the summit of a narrow ridge running parallel with the Tees; to the south of the churchyard the land falls steeply towards the river.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The church consists of a nave with a three-bay south aisle, having a small tower-cum-bellcote at its west end, and a south porch, and an aisleless chancel with a small northern vestry.

The Exterior

The 19th-century parts of the church - the west end of the nave, the tower, porch and south aisle - are all built of squared and coursed roughly-tooled stone, with tooled-and-margined ashlar quoins and dressings.

The west end of the **Nave** has a pair of lancet windows, under hoodmoulds with small discoidal stops, with a vesica in a moulded surround above and between them. The stepped clasping buttress at the north-west corner is capped by a circular pinnacle like a tiny bellcote, with four lancet openings set diagonally, and a conical spirelet. The gable is coped, with a foliate cross finial.

The north wall of the nave presents an admixture of fabric types. The majority of it is of coursed squared stone, quite worn, and heavily mortared. To the west of the blocked north door there are larger squared blocks in the lower courses. The upper parts of the wall are much patched with areas of squared and roughly-tooled stone, in courses varying in height, probably of 19th-century date. There are three 19th-century lancets, of the same type as those in the west gable; a straight joint a short distance to the west of the eastern lancet probably marks the position of an earlier window, as may a large area of 19th-century patching above the blocked north door, which is set to the west of the western lancet. The jambs of the doorway are visible, along with the moulded imposts, and one voussoir of the archway (apparently bearing a single chamfer), and a remnant of the hoodmould; the form of the arch - pointed or semicircular - is not clear.

At the east end of the wall is a large stepped buttress, patched in 19th-century masonry; above it one heavy quoin of the original north-east corner of the nave is visible, indicating that the present chancel (which is in fact marginally wider than the nave) is secondary.

The **Tower** has stepped clasping buttresses at the angles, rising to the second stage, and a chamfered plinth between them. The lower two stages, undivided externally, each have small lancets to the west and south, the lower with a hoodmould extended as a

short string to abut against the buttresses on either side. Halfway up the second stage, above the buttresses, the angles of the tower are splayed back to convert in into an octagon in plan. The third or belfry stage has a moulded string at its base, and a narrow lancet in each face, with attached shafts at the angles between, and a moulded course above, with a shaped bracket above each lancet; above this is a pyramidal stone spire or cap.

The **South Aisle** has a chamfered plinth and stepped buttresses at the east end of the south wall, and between the eastern and central bays. Each of these bays has a pair of short lancets, with the same details as those in the nave; there is another similar window in the east wall. The western bay of the south wall is covered by the **South Porch** which has a chamfered plinth and a short single-stepped buttress at the south end of each side wall. The outer archway is pointed and of three orders, the inner with a continuous chamfer rising from broach stops, and the outer two moulded, and carried on jambs shafts with moulded capitals and bases; there is a moulded hood with foliage stops. The gable is coped, on moulded kneelers, and has a fleur-de-lys terminals.

The **Chancel** is the most substantial survival of the medieval building; it is constructed of coursed roughly-squared stone, including some blocks with distinctive Roman diagonal broaching. There are stepped clasping buttresses at the eastern angles and midway along each side wall, and a short buttress beneath the central lancet of the east end. The chamfered plinth is virtually all of 19th-century ashlar, as are the buttresses (except perhaps that on the north). There is a moulded string just below the window sills, and an oversailing parapet of squared and roughly-tooled 19th-century masonry.

At the west end of the western bay of the south wall is a blocked shoulder-arched priest's door, with a chamfered surround; its sill is 0.90 m above the present external ground level. The string-course is stepped up over the door head, and above it is a round-arched light with dressings of diagonally-tooled greenish stone (unlike anything else in the church), clearly ancient but less eroded than the gritstone dressings of the other medieval windows. The opening has a continuous roll-moulding to jambs and arch. East of this is a lancet, tall and quite broad, with rough alternating-block jambs and a monolithic head; the surround is a simple chamfer. East of the buttress are two more similar lancets (except that their sills have been renewed).

The east end has a triplet of similar large lancets, the central very slightly higher than the others; all have 19th-century sills; the small buttress below the central lancet is clearly an addition. The parapet follows the line of the low-pitched gable, and has a foliate cross finial at the apex.

A small 19th-century vestry is built onto the north wall of the

chancel, its west wall adjoining the central buttress. There are two more lancets, with renewed sills, one east of the vestry and one west of the central buttress; at the west end of the wall is another smaller window, with a monolithic pointed head and worn gritstone dressings like the lancets.

The **Vestry** is a small flat-roofed structure built of coursed roughly-squared rubble, with a chamfered plinth and a chamfered oversailing course carrying the parapet. In its east wall is a shoulder-arched doorway, with a chamfered surround and broach stops, and on the west is a short lancet window.

The Interior

The interior walls of nave, aisle and tower are whitewashed, except for exposed dressings; the internal walls of the chancel are of roughly-squared stone laid in irregular courses, almost of a 'snecked' appearance (although of medieval rather than 19th-century date); heavy ribbon pointing to some extent disguises the character of the masonry.

The **Nave** has a south arcade of three bays, a short length of undisturbed walling separating the eastern pair of arches and the western. All three arches are pointed, and of two chamfered orders, with a hoodmould towards the nave, springing from responds with keeled half-shafts rising from semi-octagonal bases (set on plinths 0.45 m high); the two-bay section has a circular pier, with an octagonal roll-moulded base and chamfered plinth. The pier and respond capitals have simple mouldings, which differ slightly (perhaps the result of re-cutting). The only stylistic difference between the two sections of the arcade is seen in the hoodmould; that over the pair of arches has a simple chamfer on its lower angle, whilst that over the western arch has a roll moulding.

All the lancet windows have segmental-pointed rear arches. The roof is of eight bays, with arch-braced collar-beam trusses carried on shaped stone corbels; there are additional braces forming pointed arches above the collars.

The **South Aisle** is entered from the porch by a pointed doorway with a keeled moulding to jambs and head, moulded imposts and a hoodmould. Internally it has a plain chamfered lintel. At the west end of the aisle is a shouldered doorway into the tower; the lancet windows in the aisle have rear arches of the same form as those in the nave.

The **Chancel** opens to the nave under a 19th-century pointed arch of two chamfered orders, with ashlar dressings of rather different character to those of the other rebuilt parts of the church. There is a moulded hood to both nave and chancel, and the arch rises from semi-octagonal responds with moulded capitals and chamfered bases.

The chancel walls have a heavy string-course of semicircular

section at window-sill level, stepped up over the position of the blocked priests' door; below is a panelled dado. The small 'high-side' window on the south has a roll-moulded internal surround, with dressings of the same character as its external opening. The rear arches of the lancets are of almost four-centred form. Near the east end of the south wall is a piscina with a trefoil-headed arch, with roll-mouldings on the cusps, and a chamfer studded with an ornament that looks like half-balls; there has been a projecting moulded bowl, now largely hacked away. The doorway to the vestry is a simple opening cut straight through the wall, with the internal string course forming its head. The northern 'high-side' window again has a roll-moulded surround; both of these windows have level sections to their sills.

The roof of the chancel is of four bays, with additional trusses set against the end walls; the trusses are of king-post form, with three vertical struts on each side of the king-post, and are carried on arch-braced wall posts rising from moulded 19th-century corbels.

FITTINGS AND FURNISHINGS

The **Font** stands at the west end of the nave, and has long attracted antiquarian curiosity. The circular bowl (which incidentally has a very peculiar asymmetric base) has a band of low-relief carving depicting four principal motifs, a pair of winged dragons locked in combat, an oak branch with acorns, a series of four trefoiled arches and a the head of a three-light window with intersecting tracery. Boyle (1892, 697) considers the bowl to be probably a 14th-century work but others see it as 'an early fake' or a piece of Elizabethan revivalism; Pevsner and Williamson (1983, 508) sees the carving as 'more likely C17' and compares the dragons to their near-relations on the bench ends of the choir stalls. The font base is of an odd almost Classical section, and the square plinth is clearly 19th-century.

The furnishings are mostly of 19th and 20th century dates, and of no especial interest, although the choir stalls incorporate eight 17th-century **Bench Ends** with poppyheads, and carving including dragons suspiciously like those that appear on the font.

The **Stained Glass** is all of 19th and 20th century date; that in the eastern lancets is 'generally accepted as the best example of Victorian grisaille in the diocese' (1984 Quinquennial report) and has been restored.

CARVED STONES

There are now two Saxon carved stones in the church, although a plate, 'Antiquities at Winston', in Walbran (1846) - unaccompanied by any text - shows a further small piece of Saxon interlace which cannot now be located.

- (i) Part of a cross-head, originally found lying in the churchyard, by 1865 (Longstaffe, 26) 'placed for safety in the entrance hall of the Rectory-house'; it now lies at the west end of the south aisle. On one face a seated figure on a chair (sometimes identified as St Lawrence on his gridiron), between two horizontally-placed figures; all three may be clerics. On the opposite face two stags. 10th or 11th century (Cramp 1984, 145)
- (2) A small (0.25 by 0.08 m) stone with a single band of interlace, built into the external face of the east end underneath the southern of the three lancets. It appears to be slightly curved, as if it might be part of the stripwork surrounding a large arch.

Lying just inside the south door is a fluted **piscina bowl**, said to have been brought from the former chapel at Heighley Hall, in the parish. Beneath the tower is what appears to be a small **millstone**. Lying loose in the porch is a **headstone** to Alice Breaks d.1724.

SEPULCHRAL MONUMENTS

There is one medieval **Cross Slab**, now standing at the west end of the aisle, although until around the beginning of this century it was set into the external face of the south wall of the chancel. It bears a round-leaf bracelet cross accompanied by a sword with a five-lobed pommel, with the cross shaft ornamented by shoots of foliage and five perching birds; the design is carved in relief, within a border with roll mouldings and dog-tooth ornament. Early 13th century (Ryder 1985, 119-120 & plate 54). Walbran (op.cit) illustrates a second smaller cross slab, with an indecipherable emblem, which has since been lost.

There are several **Brasses** of some minor interest:

- (1) Near the centre of the chancel floor, just below the sanctuary steps, a blue limestone slab with a plate bearing a latin inscription to John Purlles, chaplain, d.1498.
- (2) In the floor at the east end of the south aisle, now partly hidden by a wooden platform. There is a matrix for a figure, and an inscribed plate, in English, to Richard Mason, d.1535.
- (3) In the floor at the east end of the nave, inscription to Mary Dowthwaite of Westholme, d.1606.

In the floor immediately west of (1) is another slab with a matrix for a plate, and north of this a slab with the matrix of a plate and a later brass inscription to Rev. John Emerson, d.1774.

HISTORICAL NOTES

1794The first of the major Durham historians, Hutchinson (III, 226), provides a brief description of the church: 'The church at Winston stands on elevated ground, at the east end of the village; the whole edifice is about twelve paces in length, and eight in width, lighted to the east by three narrow windows, and to the south by three windows, and a small additional one: the chancel is divided from the nave by a circular arch; there is an aisle to the south, formed by a round column and a broad one, supporting circular arches: it is decently stalled, and kept clean.

1834Mackenzie & Ross (II, 216) add a little further information; after describing the chancel they state 'the other windows are irregular', then go on to refer to the pulpit of carved oak, the font 'curiously sculptured with fighting dragons, festoons of roses etc', and a painted coat of arms over the chancel, dated '1661'.

c1840An old drawing of the church before the 1840s restoration, seen from the south-east, has been found in Lambeth Palace Library, and a copy is kept in the church. This shows the south aisle as having two square-headed windows on the south, the eastern of two lights, and a small lancet in the east end; there is a small gabled porch at the west end of the south wall, and a broad gabled bell-cote on the west end.

1846Restoration of the church commenced after the Rev W Turner became Rector (Fordyce, 122-3). The chancel was repaired under the supervision of Mr Thompson, the bishop's architect

1848The remainder of the church was restored by John Dobson, the Newcastle architect, the west end and south aisle being rebuilt. Fordyce considered 'the whole of the restorations of the body of the church have been executed in harmony and strict historical accuracy....and the sacred edifice, which contains sittings for about 170 persons, is now in a most perfect state, presenting an admirable model of a country church'

1888Boyle (Proc.Soc.Antiq.Newcastle III, 378) differed in his judgement from Fordyce; after dating the chancel to 1210-1220, he states 'the remainder of the church is modern work, and very bad indeed as modern work'.

1893The vestry was added (note in 1984 Quinquennial Report)

FACULTIES AND OTHER RECORDS OF STRUCTURAL WORK

Faculty no. and dateWorks

405 (25)10.7.1899To remove the plaster from the walls of the nave and aisle and to make other alterations and improvement to the church. (Works detailed include removal of unnecessary seating from east end of nave and aisle, restoration of font base, and 'proper treatment' of old doorway on north of nave - accompanying letter explains that rough blocked masonry is to be replaced by better-quality stonework, and 'any ancient mouldings exposed'.)

425 (21)28.6.1902To erect a new organ and make the necessary alterations in the seating accommodation.

312713.9.1948New organ blower

384817.5.1956Replacement of coke-fired boiler

49088.9.1966Installation of oil-fired central heating system and tank.

THE STRUCTURAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Evidence of two periods of medieval work survives in the church; the earlier is represented by the greater part of the nave north wall, and the later phase - or possibly two phases - by the chancel, the western extension to the nave, and the south arcade

A plan of the church in the National Monuments Record dates the nave to the early 12th century; it is not clear on what grounds the ascription to the earlier period is made, other than possibly Hutchinson's account of a semicircular chancel arch. There is nothing particularly diagnostic in its fabric, and no original architectural features now survive. That the nave pre-dates the chancel is clear from its junction with the chancel wall, which is set slightly outside it.

The chancel is a good example of the early 13th-century work characteristic of the Tees Valley (cf Gainford, Barforth, Staindrop, High Coniscliffe, Darlington and Sockburn). The original construction of the south aisle may be of the same date; the westward extension of the nave and aisle may be a little later, as there are minor design differences between the arches of the arcade (see description). Walbran's plate (op.cit) illustrates a plain trefoil-headed piscina, which was presumably in the aisle.

Dobson's partial rebuilding erased evidences of later medieval changes; the square-headed windows in the south aisle were probably late medieval or post-medieval work; there are traces of what may have been similar openings in the north wall of the nave. There is a 1641 reference to the church having a vestry, but it is not known where this was sited; prior to the 1899 alterations it did not possess one at all (Edleston 1895, 101 & 117).

The 19th-century works have already been noticed. The present chancel arch would appear to have been part of the first phase of the 1845-1846 programme, under Thompson, presumably replacing the round-headed arch recorded by Hutchinson.

THE CHURCHYARD

Winston church stands on a very striking ridge-top site. The churchyard is now irregular in plan; the original roughly-rectangular yard having been extended to the north in the present century. The actual location of the church within the churchyard is interesting; it lies a little beyond the highest point of the hill, and is set very close to the head of the scarp dropping to the Tees (so there is no real space for burials on the south), when there is adequate near-level ground immediately to the north. On the highest point of the ridge to the west of the church are slight earthworks including a slight curving feature; their significance is difficult to assess.

The area to the east of the church is crowded with 18th and 19th-century headstones; there is a single 18th-century box tomb on the limited level ground south of the chancel, and more scattered monuments, mostly of 19th-century date, to the west.

In front of the south porch is a small paved area of 19th or 20th century date, and an older stone coffin rest. The top stone of this, a slab 1.53 by 0.80 m, is chamfered on its lower edge on three sides, and much possibly be a former altar slab (although the material, a coarse sandstone, seems a little unlikely); there may have been deliberate damage to the corners, perhaps to remove consecration crosses.

Part of an old chamfered mullion lies just close to the south wall of the south aisle, possibly from the two-light window in this wall shown on the c 1840 drawing.

On the north side of the church, the earlier boundary of the churchyard is clearly visible both as a scarp and a line of old trees.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

As often, it is not easy to assess the survival of archaeological material beneath the floors of the church. The

entire interior is stone-flagged (except for plain tiles beneath the sanctuary carpet), with no visible evidence of an underfloor heating system, although one can be assumed as there is a boiler room beneath the vestry. Externally the ground level round the church appears to have been cut down, especially around the chancel which has a inserted 19th-century plinth.

However, this is a medieval church, presumed to lie on or near the site of a Saxon predecessor, and thus the site is of archaeological significance. Any disturbance of internal floors will require an archaeological watching brief.

The peculiarities of the positioning of the church relative to the topography, and the slight earthwork features to the west, indicate that there may be significant archaeological features within the churchyard as well.

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ST ANDREW'S CHURCH
WINSTON
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Photosurvey. May 1995

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