

# CHRISTOPHER DOWNS, B.ARCH., RIBA. CHARTERED ARCHITECT

CONSULTANT ARCHITECT TO  
DURHAM CATHEDRAL

ECCLESIASTICAL AND HISTORIC  
BUILDINGS CONSULTANT

THE CATHEDRAL ARCHITECT'S OFFICE, THE GREAT KITCHEN  
THE COLLEGE, DURHAM DH1 3EQ

TELEPHONE/FAX: (0191) 384 7010

## QUINQUENNIAL REPORT

INSPECTION OF CHURCHES MEASURE 1955

CARE OF CHURCHES AND ECCLESIASTICAL JURISDICTION MEASURE 1991

### CONTENTS:

PREAMBLE	to the Quinquennial Report on the Church: Introduction; Terms of Appointment; Scope of the Report; Form of the Report.	
THE REPORT	Brief Description of the Church.	Page 1
	Previous Inspections and recent repairs.	Page 2
	Limitations of the Survey.	Page 2
	<b>Appraisal and Recommendations.</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
	<b>Summary and Priorities :-</b>	<b>Page 12</b>
	i. Of Utmost Urgency.	
	ii. Essential within the next Six Months.	
	iii. Essential within the next Year.	
	iv. Necessary within the next Two Years.	
	v. Necessary within the Quinquennium.	
	vi. Future, i.e. desirable repairs or improvements.	
APPENDIX	Architect's Inspection Notes.	
APPENDIX 'B'	General and Technical Notes.	

NOTE: This report can be read at three levels of detail:

The SUMMARY AND PRIORITIES give a brief overview and checklist.

The APPRAISAL AND RECOMMENDATIONS give a fully reasoned report sufficient for most purposes.

The ARCHITECT'S INSPECTION NOTES give a finely detailed record of the inspection observations on which the report is based, for future reference.

# **PREAMBLE TO THE QUINQUENNIAL REPORT ON THE CHURCH**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Inspection of Churches Measure 1955 and the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991, both of which have statutory force, require each Diocese to establish a scheme for the inspection of every church at least once every five years. Over the years Commissions of General Synod and Working Parties of the Council for the Care of Churches have made recommendations on the establishment of Diocesan Schemes, the selection and terms of appointment of the inspectors, and the scope, form and content of the reports. The current recommendations are contained in 'A GUIDE TO CHURCH INSPECTION AND REPAIR', Second Edition, 1995, published for the Council for the Care of Churches by Church House Publishing, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ. The following is intended to conform with those recommendations.

## **TERMS OF APPOINTMENT**

Attention is drawn to the Terms of Appointment of the professional adviser included in Appendix B.

## **SCOPE OF THE REPORT**

A thorough inspection of the structural condition and state of repair of the Church has been made, covering all parts visible from ground and floor levels, readily accessible roofs, galleries or stagings, and where applicable from ladders provided by the PCC. Inaccessible and hidden roofs and valleys are excluded, and ceilings have been examined from floor level only unless otherwise stated.

IT IS EMPHASISED THAT THE INSPECTION HAS BEEN PURELY VISUAL, and parts of the structure which are inaccessible, enclosed or covered such as boarded floors, roof spaces or hidden timbers at the wall heads have not been opened up for inspection (unless otherwise stated in the report). Such woodwork or other parts of the structure which are covered unexposed or inaccessible have not been inspected and therefore it cannot be reported that any such part of the building is free from defect. It is possible that any concrete used in the construction, alteration or repair of the church between 1923 and 1975 contains High Alumina Cement and/or Calcium Chloride additives. No investigation has been carried out to determine whether these substances are actually present and therefore it cannot be reported that such parts of the building are entirely free of risk in this respect. Where concrete of that period is persistently damp the risk of failure becomes significant and the appropriate investigations should be carried out.

Chimney flues were not inspected, nor were inaccessible flat roofs. Manhole covers were not lifted and none of the services, including the drainage, were tested. Damp meters were not used. Unless otherwise stated the inspection was carried out in dry weather, when it was not possible to ascertain whether the rainwater goods or gullies or surface water drains were watertight.

Recommendations for further investigation are included where suspicions have been aroused during the inspection but problems of access or the need for special equipment or opening-up have prevented full exploration. Where it is suggested that some part of the building be kept under observation this is for the attention of a future professional adviser as well as of the Church Council.

## **FORM OF THE REPORT**

This is a general report only, as required by the Inspection of Churches Measure 1955, the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991 and the Diocesan Scheme. It follows, in broad terms, the form recommended in 'A GUIDE TO CHURCH INSPECTION AND REPAIR' 1995 (mentioned above) and the requirements of the current Diocesan Scheme.

This report is the COPYRIGHT OF THE PROFESSIONAL ADVISER and is provided to satisfy the statutory requirement for a quinquennial report ONLY. It is confidential to the Church Council, the Diocesan Authorities and their respective professional advisers. It describes defects observed, is NOT A SPECIFICATION for execution of any work and MUST NOT BE USED FOR OBTAINING BUILDERS' ESTIMATES. An indication of likely repairs costs is included, but it must be understood that the scope of repair work is undefined and no measurements have been taken, so the figures are no more than 'educated guesses' and should not be relied upon beyond the purpose of indicating the likely spending commitment to maintain the property to a high standard.

THE CHURCH COUNCIL IS REMINDED THAT IT MUST NOTIFY THE DIOCESAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND/OR OBTAIN A FACULTY BEFORE PUTTING ANY REPAIR WORK IN HAND. In most cases specifications, schedules and descriptions of the proposed repairs will be required. This report is not a substitute for such documents but it may be cited in support as identifying the need for repairs.

One copy of this Report should be kept with the Church Log Book and Records, for future reference. The Architect will send the requisite number of copies direct to the Diocesan Office.



**REPORT ON THE 2009 QUINQUENNIAL INSPECTION**  
**of the Parish Church of**  
**S A I N T M A R Y , C O X H O E**

Diocese of Durham

Archdeaconry of Durham

Deanery of Sedgefield

Historic Buildings Listing: Not listed

Conservation Area: None

Civil County and District: Co. Durham, Durham County

Ordnance Survey Map Reference: NZ 319 358

**Date of Inspection: 17th June & 1st October 2009**

**Date of Report: 8th May 2010**

**Report by CHRISTOPHER DOWNS, B.Arch. R.I.B.A.**

---

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

The church was constructed in 1868 to designs in a rather dull Early English style by Rowland J. Withers of London (two of his drawings for the building are displayed in the Vestry). It consists of Nave and Chancel, with Clergy Vestry (over basement Heating Chamber) on the north side of the Chancel and entrance Porch at the west end of the south side of the Nave. The Nave was provided with an arcade in preparation for a North Aisle, but this was never built and the temporary north wall of rendered brick remains. A large north-west Tower with broach spire was also intended originally, but instead a single-storey extension containing Meeting Room with Store, Kitchen, W.C., etc., was constructed at the west end of the north side of the Nave in 1983.

Walls are of local (Cassop) sandstone in snecked rock-faced rubble brought to courses, showing a variety of hues which the 1983 extension appears to have slightly overdone in its attempt to copy. Dressings are reputed to be of Whitby stone. Roofs are covered in Welsh slate, except for that to the extension which appears to be covered with an artificial substitute. Internally, exposed stone to the arcade, window surrounds, etc., is reputed to be Bath stone, walls are plastered and the timber roof structures are open to the church.

Copies of the original architect's design perspectives and of a sketch plan of the church are included on the buff-coloured sheets following the 'Summary and Priorities' section of this report.

## PREVIOUS INSPECTIONS AND RECENT REPAIRS

This is the third time the present writer has reported on this church. As well as those prepared in 1993 and 2003, the 1988 report by A.O. Lee was available for reference in compiling the present one. It is numbered 7, suggesting that a complete sequence exists from the inception of quinquennial inspections in the late 1950's. These previous reports, where they survive, will form a valuable record of the condition of the building and of the work carried out over the past fifty years and should be kept.

Repairs and works carried out since the last inspection have included:

Bringing down of loose board where Chancel ceiling meets west wall above Chancel arch.

Re-fixing of loose fragments of stone on responds of Chancel arch.

Re-pointing of east gable of Nave above north slope of Chancel roof and filling of joints between and under gable watertablings generally.

Redecoration of selected walls or rooms.

Replacement of some of the cast iron rainwater goods with grey plastic.

Re-covering of roof of extension following vandalism.

Provision of new iron gates, railings and stone gate piers at eastern entrance to the churchyard, and (recently completed) general landscaping of churchyard (by Local Authority).

At the time of the inspection the sound system was about to be upgraded, with addition of an induction loop under consideration.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE SURVEY

a) Attention is drawn to the recommendations of the **Preamble** to this report, and to the **General and Technical notes** given in **Appendix 'B'**.

b) The following inaccessible parts were not included in the inspection:-

- i) Voids below the suspended timber floor areas.
- ii) Roof voids above Meeting Room and Vestry ceilings.
- iii) Interior of the Organ.
- iv) Roofs were examined internally from floor levels and externally from ground levels.

c) The Architect's detailed inspection notes are given in the following appendix, with descriptions of various parts of the building where appropriate, and comments on the condition of the fabric. These notes are an important part of the report, and should be read by the Parish (PCC officers, etc.), for the appraisal, recommendations and priorities in this report have been prepared

from them. They are not a specification for repairs, and are unsuitable for obtaining builders' estimates. When the PCC is ready to proceed with any part of the recommended repairs, it is advised to contact the professional adviser for recommendations as to the appropriate course of action and ask him to prepare any necessary specifications and schedules.

## APPRAISAL AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following remarks inevitably concentrate on the defects noted during the inspection but it must be emphasised that the church is in reasonable condition generally, and this report is intended to help direct the efforts of those responsible towards an orderly programme for the work needed in the foreseeable future.

### A) STRUCTURAL CONDITION OF THE FABRIC:

The original 19th century building appears to remain structurally sound overall, with only very minor movement in the various old crackings and distortions noted in previous inspections in various parts of the building. The splitting of some of the stones forming the south respond of the Chancel archway, apparently the result of long-term movement in the archway as a whole (associated with the outward lean of the south walls of Nave and Chancel at this point), indicates that this movement is continuing but it too is only very gradual and no cause for concern. The loose pieces of stone resulting from the splitting have been re-fixed since the last inspection and there is no evidence of further damage. All these long-term crackings should merely be reviewed at the next inspection. The gap between the Chancel roof and the walling above the arch may be another symptom of the same overall movement. The length of board where the north slope of the roof abuts this wall which appeared to be loose at the time of the last inspection has been brought down for safety since. As recommended in the last two reports, it would be worth having a timber moulding applied over this gap to prevent the frequent falls of dust and occasional lumps of plaster from this junction. The visible plaster should be checked for soundness at the same time and any loose areas renewed. Fixing such a moulding and noting the date when this is done in the Church Log Book will give a base date for future monitoring of any widening of the gap.

There has been no worsening of the signs of damp damage in the boarding where the south slope of the Nave roof abuts its west gable. If access is provided for other purposes it would be sensible to check this from close quarters in case of decay, but there is no urgency about this.

More worrying is the continuing cracking of the walls and dropping of the floor of the 1983 extension, where some of the cracks have widened considerably - albeit still relatively gradually - since the last inspection. This suggests some form of foundation failure. Things have a long way to go yet before this represents any real risk but, as commented in 2003, the degree of movement is quite serious for such a recent structure so the crackings should be kept under observation over the next five years and reviewed at the next inspection. They are recorded in detail in the appended inspection notes (along with those in the rest of the building) for this purpose.

Rising damp is damaging some of the internal finishes and accelerating erosion of the external stonework at low levels but except where re-pointing and stone renewal has become necessary externally (see 'Walls and Masonry' below), all that need be done is periodic brushing down to remove the loose surface material and the efflorescing salts.

## B) WALLS AND MASONRY:

The external walls are of sandstone: The general walling of rock-faced rubble brought to sneaked courses is reported to be of Cassop stone quarried nearby at Quarrington Hill, whilst the finely tooled dressings to window surrounds, etc. are believed to be of Whitby stone. As commented in previous reports, the stone itself appears to be weathering reasonably well overall, though there are some limited areas and isolated stones affected by quite severe erosion caused by saturation from leaks in rainwater systems or by rising damp. None of these warrant replacement of more than occasional isolated stones at this stage, but most need careful re-pointing to try and prolong the life of the masonry as much as possible. None of the pointing recommended in the last report appears to have been carried out, so the same schedule of areas applies, with one or two additions:

West wall of Nave: Plinth courses generally (possibly involving renewing one or two small blocks of stone); southern part of main panel of wall, from corner to the window, up to meet the sounder pointing which rises from about halfway up the window, and including replacement of the poor pointing which appears to be relatively recent; upper part of gable and down to northern footstone or even window sill level.

West wall of Porch: Open joints in plinth courses.

South wall of Nave: Triangle above west slope of Porch roof; patch at extreme east end of wall, level with springing of adjacent window arch.

East gable of Nave (above Chancel roof): A few open joints in the apex just south of the Chancel ridge and isolated open joints further down on this south side.

South wall of Chancel: Open joints in plinth, especially around base of rainwater pipe.

East wall of Chancel: Open joints generally in lower parts of the wall (where some limited renewals are also required).

North wall of Chancel: A few open joints at the base of the wall, especially behind the downpipe.

East wall of Vestry: Open joints at base of wall and where electrical supply enters building.

North wall of Vestry: Open joints at base of wall and just to west of window head.

The need for further re-pointing and isolated stone renewals should be borne in mind as likely to become necessary in the foreseeable future.

As commented in previous reports, the pointing carried out on the south side of the church before the 1988 quinquennial inspection seems to have been done reasonably well as far as appearance is concerned, but the raking-out appears to have been inadequate and the mortar mix too hard. As a result, the erosion of the softer stones is probably being accelerated and the weather is beginning to get behind and loosen the pointing itself. In the circumstances this may actually help to minimise the damage to the stone, but care will have to be taken not

to repeat this poor standard of work when carrying out the pointing recommended in this report.

Between 1993 and 2001 the watertabling of the south slope of the west gable of the Nave had to be re-bedded, along with its footstone, after it slid off down the slope. The builder who undertook the reinstatement was reportedly unable to get the footstone right back in its original position and left it projecting from the corner, with a corresponding kick in the line of the copings - which is rather haphazard in any case. This footstone needs re-setting properly in the course of the next round of masonry repairs. As commented in the 2003 report, there are signs of minor slippage of several of the other gable watertablings and footstones. Open joints between and under most of these seem to have been re-pointed since the last inspection and presumably they were checked for security of their fixings as recommended in the last report but they should be kept under observation just in case. It would help show further movement if the cracked joints around the backs of the footstones were filled. The sapling growing from the topmost joint of the north slope of the Chancel east gable watertabling should be removed.

The disused chimney stack rising through the Vestry roof was reduced by removing the upper (rendered brick) portion prior to the last report, but the retained stone section still needs consolidation and re-pointing.

The rendering to the north wall of the Nave seems to be lasting remarkably well, with only small areas becoming detached at the base of the wall. Some minor filling and pointing of open joints in the brickwork thus exposed around the feet of the buttresses is desirable.

#### C) ROOF COVERINGS AND RAINWATER DISPOSAL:

The main roofs are covered with Welsh slates, and these seem to remain in serviceable condition generally although as suggested in 2003 some slopes show evidence of extensive patching over the years - particularly the west slope of the Porch roof, which has suffered from persistent vandalism. At the time of the inspection a few slipped, broken or missing slates on various slopes needed attending to and periodic maintenance will continue to be needed, particularly after high winds. As commented in previous reports, it is reasonable to assume that this is the original slating, now some 135 years old, and the likelihood is that the roofs will need stripping and re-slating in the not-too-distant future, though they could be kept going by repeated patching for a considerable time. Whilst it remains unlikely that any major re-slating will be needed within the next five years the prospect of a phased programme should be borne in mind for the future.

Although it appears that remedial work has been carried out to eliminate the persistent leakage reported at the abutment of the Chancel roof with the east gable of the Nave, the mortar fillet down the south slope appears to be cracking away from the stonework and might account for continuing problems so the crack should be sealed. The top rolls of the red clay ridge tiles are disintegrating in some instances but little can or need be done about this and their pointing appears satisfactory.

The leadwork at abutments and the linings of the raking valleys where the Vestry and Chancel roofs meet needs to be checked when a roofer is next working on the church; the flashing where the west slope meets the north gable of the Vestry needs dressing back down more tightly onto the slating, and the bottom length of the flashing where the east slope of the Porch roof abuts the Nave needs re-fixing and pointing back in.

The roof of the 1983 extension to the church is covered with artificial slates and is reported to have been re-slatted since the last inspection following vandalism. Extensive water staining down the fascia board may date from the time of this damage or could indicate a continuing problem - this should be checked during heavy rain and the cause investigated if spillage is seen to occur. A couple of broken or missing slates need replacement.

At the time of the inspection accumulated soil, debris, weeds and even a small tree needed clearing from the gutters, downpipes and gullies generally. This should be repeated on a regular basis, as the presence of deciduous trees will lead to a rapid build-up of leaf mould, etc. Care should be taken that the small back-gutters where the Vestry roof meets that of the Chancel and the east wall of the Nave are included.

The plastic guttering that has been installed in recent years in substitution for the original cast iron is distorted in places, as is not untypical of this material. It is unsuitable for an historic building of this scale and quality. The timber fascias which have been added to the eaves to facilitate fixing of the plastic gutters appear to have pushed the gutter line out beyond the tails of the eaves slates, so that the rainwater run-off is dribbling down the fascia instead of draining into the guttering - a common mistake. When the roofs are re-slatted the relationship between the slating and the guttering should be restored, and the plastic guttering should be replaced with something more durable - ideally, cast iron as before. The fascias will probably also need replacing by then in any case and would be best removed altogether.

At the time of the inspection the plastic eaves guttering on the north side of the Nave was broken in several places - possibly caught by sliding slates. That on the west side of the Porch was not connected to its downpipe. As noted in 2001, green staining down the Nave walling suggests a problem with the south end of the gutter on the west side of the Vestry which should be remedied, and the east end of the gutter on the north side of the Nave appears to droop away from the outlet so should be adjusted at the same time.

As with the guttering, plastic has been substituted for cast iron where several of the downpipes are concerned - including at least two such alterations since 2001. At the time of this inspection there were a number of defects and suspected defects with these downpipes which needed to be dealt with, including: Fixings of the plastic pipe on the west side of the Porch broken, with at least two new ones needed; easternmost downpipe on the north side of the Nave of too narrow a diameter and prone to blockage where it discharges into the gutter

of the Vestry - probably best replaced with a larger diameter pipe brought right down to ground; both downpipes on the 1983 extension broken off by vandals.

Where the surviving cast iron pipes are concerned, that on the east side of the Porch needed re-fixing and its bottom end cutting back (and ideally provided with a shoe) so as to leave a gap between it and the gully to minimise the risk of blockage; the bottom length of that on the south side of the Chancel was very loose, needing re-fixing urgently (as recommended in 2003); that on the north side of the Chancel is cracked at the joint about a metre above the plinth so needs bandaging or renewal before repainting; a couple of fixings are needed at plinth offset level for the pipe on the east side of the Vestry. That on the west side of the Vestry is of too narrow a diameter and goes straight into the ground, so should be replaced with a larger size and provided with an open shoe at its foot. Those on the north side of the Nave could do with having their feet exposed too.

At the time of the inspection the surviving cast iron downpipes needed overhaul and repainting urgently so this should be attended to as soon as the defects have been dealt with (as recommended in 2003).

The gully on the east side of the Porch was clogged at the time of the inspection and that on the west side had virtually disappeared - both should be cleared out. The surface water drainage generally should be checked to ensure that it is free-flowing and it would be worth establishing whether it goes to soakaways or to mains drainage as the new surface water drainage charges being levied by Northumbrian Water do not apply to soakaway systems.

#### D) WINDOWS AND DOORS:

Most of the windows in the main body of the church have uncoloured glass set in rectangular patterns of leading with tinted glass borders. This all appears to remain in fair condition, much of it having been restored in 1961. As recommended in previous reports, one star-cracked pane in the east-facing window of the Vestry could do with replacement.

The stained glass in the roundels of the tracery in the west window of the Nave dates from 1963. As noted in 2001, one small triangular piece of glass seems to have gone missing from the top six-leaved foil design and this still needs replacement. Older stained glass dating from the 1920's in the easternmost window of the south side of the Nave also seems to be in fair condition. However, the east window of the Chancel, which forms a war memorial, has a number of holes in its stained glass which should be repaired by a specialist, as recommended in the last two reports. This damage presumably pre-dates the erection of the present external wire guards, which seem to be intact.

Most of the windows of the church have external wire guards. Those to the main west window are set on the outside face of the wall, obscuring the architectural form of the window itself. These guards (and most of the others around the building) are beginning to rust and it would be worth painting or replacing them before the rust begins to stain the stone walling beneath. Any replacements should be cut and fitted within the actual glazing

apertures, not carried onto the wall face. The external ironwork on several of the windows also needs painting, which will necessitate temporary removal of the external wire guards so these could be painted at the same time.

The windows of the 1983 Meeting Room extension have hardwood frames, apparently remaining in good condition having been re-finished since the last inspection.

The external doors to the south Porch, Vestry and Heating Chamber have been repainted since 2001 and remain in good condition, but the steel gates securing the external doorways of the Vestry, Heating Chamber and Meeting Room doorways need re-painting within the next year or two to inhibit the rust that is taking hold.

Consideration should be given to eliminating the hazard presented by the drop off the external landing at the door in the west side of the extension, perhaps by simply building up the adjacent ground level to form a gradual slope away for the critical area on the west side, relying on the gate standing open at right angles to stop people falling off the south end.

The boiler house steps need to be kept clear for safety and it would be worth providing a handrail. The iron ventilation grille in the plinth of the north wall of the Vestry needs painting.

#### E) FLOORS AND INTERNAL FITTINGS AND FINISHES:

The flooring of the Nave and Chancel consists of softwood boarding in suspended timber construction to the pew areas and woodblock on a solid base to the passageways etc. The Clergy Vestry, South Porch and 1983 extension all have solid floors. All appear to remain in fair condition, although as recommended in the last two reports the loose blocks in the passageways could do with being stuck back down. Also as mentioned before, it is important to maintain ventilation to the voids under the suspended timber floors, and the possible lack of cross-ventilation due to the solid passageways, etc., could still leave these areas vulnerable to decay so any signs of trouble should be investigated immediately.

The exposed stonework inside the church is reputed to be Bath stone. As noted in previous inspections, certain areas are suffering superficial erosion - notably the easternmost capital, etc., of the north arcade in the Nave, the southern respond of the Chancel archway, the northern sweep of the Chancel arch together with the respond beneath, the lower parts of the walls around the inner doorway in the Entrance Porch, and window surrounds and especially sills generally. As commented in 2003, some of this erosion is the result of specific defects in rainwater systems or problems at roof abutments, which should be corrected as soon as possible before further damage results. However, little can be done to prevent the damage to window surrounds and sills or the effects of rising damp. It would be worth brushing the friable surfaces down with a stiff bristle brush and removing any larger plates or fragments of stone that have become loose. This would confine the mess to one major clean-up every now and then rather than having a continuous cleaning problem.

Rising and penetrating dampness has affected the plaster and decoration in various places, and in the Chancel the decoration is peeling due to incompatible paint layers. Although much dates from the comprehensive redecoration of 1999 some walls and rooms have been redone since the last inspection - notably the east wall of the Chancel and much of the interior of the 1983 extension. Further areas will need repainting over the next five years, including the Vestry and the rest of the Chancel as well as the damp-damaged patches. The patch on the south wall of the Nave will need re-plastering again before redecoration. The decoration in the Vestry is now rather tired and could do with repainting within the next five years.

The furnishings throughout the church remain in fair condition. As noted in previous inspections, some of the best items are those introduced at the west end of the Nave in relatively recent times, including those by Thompson's of Kilburn.

#### F) INSTALLATIONS:

The **electrical** installation dates from 1968 and is in M.I.C.C. wiring generally (though as commented in 2003 it is not clear whether this was continued into the 1983 extension). The system is reported to be checked annually but no test report was produced to substantiate this. It was noted during this inspection that the switch for the westernmost chandelier in the Nave sparks when turned off. The fluorescent light fittings mounted vertically behind the columns of the north arcade probably contravene health & safety legislation, in that their unprotected tubes can be touched by children. These fittings would be best removed altogether. The external light fitting over the door to the 1983 extension appears to have been turned by vandals to point upwards.

The **heating** installation consists of a gas-fired boiler (installed shortly before the 1993 inspection) serving the original cast iron pipework and radiators in the main body of the church and pressed steel radiators in the 1983 extension. At the time of this inspection it was reported to be in good working order, serviced annually and adequate to its task. Consideration should be given to insulating the pipework in the Heating Chamber.

As commented in the last report, the weatherproofing of the flue penetration through the west slope of the Vestry roof is deficient in that there is no collar on the flue pipe itself to stop water going down inside the lead sleeving. It is not clear whether leakage is continuing and it may be that reliance is being placed on sealant between the flue and the sleeving, but this is unlikely to prove durable.

The **plumbing** installation in the 1983 extension all appears to be in good order. Drainage has not been inspected.

The **organ** is a good quality instrument, made and serviced by Harrison & Harrison of Durham. It was installed in 1914 and received a major overhaul in 1958. It remains in regular use, is tuned twice a year and the servicing booklet records nothing more than routine repairs since the last inspection.

The bearings of the single **bell** are reported to have been lubricated when the rope had to be replaced in 1999, but no maintenance has been carried out since. It looks as though the ironwork of its clapper, supporting bar, etc., could do with painting to inhibit the rust that has taken hold. It is still striking the rather dull note mentioned in previous reports. This could conceivably mean that it is cracked, may be something to do with the way the clapper is operating, or the bell may simply be a poor casting.

The church has no **lightning conductor**, and though it is perhaps not the highest building in the vicinity it would be worth having an assessment made of the degree of risk, as defined in the British Standard for such installations.

Provision of **fire-fighting equipment** appears adequate, and is serviced annually.

Although the dampness prevalent in 2001 seems to have dissipated it would still be worth considering the provision of some limited passive or mechanical **ventilation** of the Store Room in the 1983 extension, and it would also be sensible to provide mechanical extract ventilation in the Kitchen.

At the time of this inspection the **sound reinforcement system** was about to be upgraded, and consideration was being given to adding an induction loop.

#### G) MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS:

The east window glazing is the only memorial needing attention. The reredos, wall tablets, etc., all remain in sound and stable condition.

## H) CHURCHYARD:

The churchyard remain in use for burials at its southern end but is maintained by the Parish Council and has been the subject of substantial improvements by the Local Authority since the last inspection, including a landscaping scheme completed very recently. This campaign has included provision of new gates, piers and railings along the eastern frontage, re-surfacing of the churchyard paths, installation of railings on the northern boundary and introduction of attractive features such as the circular paved area with surrounding dwarf wall just north of the church building. All this has been designed and executed to a commendably high standard. The only slight problem seems to be confusion as to where exactly the path should leave the site at the north-west corner of the churchyard.

As noted in previous inspections, many of the headstones have been laid down or pushed over, possibly by vandals rather than officially, there being quite a lot of evidence of malicious damage to the memorials in this graveyard. The vandals may in effect have carried out the topple-testing generally recommended to ensure safety, and whatever the case the headstones suspected in 2001 of being unstable appear to have been dealt with since.

Some work has been done on the boundary walls since 2001 - notably stitching of the structural crack through the corner where the boundary wall immediately south of the church building turns to run south. However, consolidation and pointing of the east-west run of this wall - particularly its top courses - remains desirable in the next five years.

The churchyard contains a number of mature trees and these should be checked by a specialist at least once every five years, particularly those that overhang the church itself.

## SUMMARY AND PRIORITIES

The church is basically sound and well looked after. A lot of good work has been done since the last inspection, particularly by the Local Authority in landscaping the churchyard.

The only cause for immediate concern now is the need to clear and repair gutters, downpipes and gullies to prevent further saturation of the walls. Within the next five years external painting is a high priority, glazing repairs need attending to, it would be good to improve on the window guards and the re-pointing of specified areas of stonework should be carried out. In the longer term the foundation settlement in the 1983 extension could become a serious issue and the main roofs will need re-slating in the foreseeable future.

Most of the other recommendations of this report comprise little more than routine maintenance. The following order of priorities sets out, in broad terms, the relative urgency of foreseeable repairs over the next five years. However, it is not a definitive programme of work and items further down the list could be brought forward if desired.

An indication of the range of likely cost, at present-day prices, is shown for each priority category. However, in many cases the scope of repair work is undefined and no measurements have been taken. The figures are no more than 'educated guesses' and should not be relied upon beyond the purpose of indicating the likely spending commitment to maintain the property to a high standard. V.A.T. is not included but is likely to be incurred on all repair work. No allowance has been made for inflation or for any professional fees.

### I. OF UTMOST URGENCY:

None required.

### II. ESSENTIAL within the next SIX MONTHS:

- a) Clearing and checking of gutters, downpipes and gullies (to be repeated regularly); investigation and remedy of specific defects in rainwater disposal identified in the main text of this report; checking that drainage runs to soakaways rather than public sewer.
- b) Minor repairs to roof slating, abutment fillets and flashings, ridge pointing, etc.

(Range of likely cost: £1,000 - £2,000)

### III. ESSENTIAL within the next YEAR:

- c) Painting of remaining cast iron rainwater goods and of ironwork of bell fittings.
- d) Repair of stained glass by specialist; minor repair of plain leaded glazing.
- e) Making good of plaster and decoration where affected by damp.
- f) Consider installation of ventilation in Store and extract fan in Kitchen in extension.

- g) Safety check on Nave light switches; removal of hazardous fluorescent fittings on north side of Nave; re-testing of installation generally and issuing of test report.
- h) Provision of collar to boiler flue where it passes through lead sleeving in roof; consider insulating pipework in Heating Chamber.

(Range of likely cost: £3,000 - £5,000)

IV. NECESSARY within the next TWO YEARS:

- i) Addition of timber cover moulding to Chancel ceiling at abutment with wall above Chancel arch; checking and if necessary renewing the plaster in this vicinity.
- j) Painting of gates at external doorways, of external ironwork to windows, of window vent frames and of grille in plinth of north wall of Vestry; painting of window guards or (preferably) replacement with a better form of protection.
- k) Elimination of hazardous drop at edge of external landing to entrance to extension.
- l) Provision of handrail to Heating Chamber steps.

(Range of likely cost: £2,000 - £3,000)

V. NECESSARY within the next FIVE YEARS:

- m) Keeping signs of structural movement in extension under observation, as well as signs of slippage of gable watertablings and footstones generally.
- n) Re-pointing of specified areas of external masonry, including chimney stack, together with very limited renewal of eroded stones.
- o) Periodic brushing down of powdering/flaking stonework internally.
- p) Re-fixing of loose blocks of wood block flooring.
- q) Re-decoration of damp-damaged areas of internal walls and of Vestry.
- r) Assessment of need for lightning conductor system.
- s) Minor repairs to churchyard boundary walls.
- t) Checking of churchyard trees by specialist.

(Range of likely cost: £4,000 - £6,000 excluding churchyard work)

VI. FUTURE Repairs:

- u) Review of symptoms of structural movement.
- v) Phased programme of re-slating of roofs, replacement of guttering, etc.
- w) Further re-pointing together with limited stone replacement on external masonry.

CHRISTOPHER DOWNS, B.Arch., R.I.B.A.  
CHARTERED ARCHITECT

---

# QUINQUENNIAL REPORT

on the Parish Church of

## SAINT MARY, COXHOE

UNDER THE INSPECTION OF CHURCHES MEASURE 1955 AND  
THE CARE OF CHURCHES AND ECCLESIASTICAL JURISDICTION MEASURE 1991

<b>DATE OF REPORT</b>	<b>8TH MAY 2010</b>
DIOCESE	DURHAM
ARCHDEACONRY	DURHAM
DEANERY	SEDFIELD

**CHRISTOPHER DOWNS, B.ARCH., RIBA. CHARTERED ARCHITECT  
ECCLESIASTICAL AND HISTORIC BUILDINGS CONSULTANT**

THE CATHEDRAL ARCHITECT'S OFFICE, THE GREAT KITCHEN, THE COLLEGE, DURHAM DH1 3EQ

TELEPHONE/FAX (0191) 384 7010