

**QUINQUENNIAL SURVEY OF FABRIC 2010**

**ST NICHOLAS CHURCH  
Market Place  
DURHAM**

**Archdeaconry of Durham**

**INSPECTION NO 5**

**Date of Inspection: 22 March 2010**

**Inspecting Architect  
Dennis H Jones Dip Arch RIBA**

**Stringer + Jones  
Architects  
The Old School  
STANTON, Middlesbrough  
TS8 9AZ**

## **1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

- 1.1 The Church is situated to the north of the Market Place, with its adjoining two storey Hall. It is bounded on the north by the inner city link road and has no surrounding ground other than a small paved area above a retaining wall to the west of the Hall. The original churchyard was to the south and is now incorporated within the paved Market Place.
- 1.2 The present building, of sandstone grit and Westmorland slate roof, was built in 1857/58, designed by J F Pritchett of Darlington, following a successful public competition, and replaces an earlier building on the same site. The building consists of a nave and chancel with north and south aisles, and a tower standing at the west end of the south aisle.

## **2.0 SUMMARY OF WORKS CARRIED OUT SINCE LAST INSPECTION**

- 2.1 The church does not hold a formal log book, but the following works are recorded electronically;
- a) May 2005 – boiler pump replaced
  - b) September 2005 – renovation of kitchen
  - c) November 2005 – annual boiler service
  - d) November 2005 – paving to north side of church
  - e) February 2006 – repairs to downpipe and hopper at south west corner of nave
  - f) February 2006 – replacement of damaged light fittings
  - g) March 2006 – annual maintenance of organ
  - h) April 2006 – repair to boiler pump
  - i) April 2006 – repair to organ
  - j) March to December 2006 – repair and repointing of tower and steeple, and replacement of weather vane
  - k) September 2006 – refurbishment of disabled toilet
  - l) May to June 2007 – electrical rewiring and new fittings in porch
  - m) July 2007 - installation of AV system
  - n) August 2007 – installation of glass safety film on internal windows

- o) March 2008 – inner doorway in lower hall widened- fire escape
- p) April 2008 – installation of fire safety detection system
- q) April 2008 – new carpet to rear stairway
- r) October 2008 – replace fire control panel
- s) October 2008 – repairs to wheelchair lift
- t) January 2009 – new 'Welcome Desk' provided
- u) February/March 2009 - carpet replaced in vestry and stair - vestry decorated
- v) March 2009 – high level lamps and obsolete light fitting replaced
- w) May/October 2009 – refurbishment of bells and new frame etc.
- x) May 2009 – new cupboard for 'Gateway' below stairs
- y) June 2009 – Toilet replacement
- z) August/September – Window repairs, porch and lower hall
- ai) January 2010 – external notice boards supplied and fitted.
- bi) February 2010 – services to lights, heating and fire alarm systems

### **3.0 STRUCTURAL CONDITION**

- 3.1 The building is in a good order with only minor structural defects which are monitored and do not appear to have changed since the last quinquennial inspection.

### **4.0 WALLS**

#### Interior

- 4.1 The walls of the interior are painted plaster, and there are no signs of the previous surface cracking reappearing; however there are signs of damage at high level on the south wall where surface cracks are noted. This item requires further investigation. (see appendix ii)
- 4.3 The wall surfaces within the Hall are fair with only a small area, high on the east wall showing signs of damage. This is only a minor defect and requires no immediate attention but should be kept under observation for any further movement.

## Exterior

- 4.4 Generally the stonework is in very good condition following the completion of the programme of fabric repair. Ivy remains on the north wall of the Hall, cut back by the Local Authority attending to their planting area,(see general photograph appendix viii) This should now be removed. There is also some water damage to surface stone noted under items in 7.0 "Rainwater disposal"
- 4.5 The Tower is indicated under Section 5.7.

## **5.0 TOWER**

- 5.1 The Tower stair is in good order. The crack previously noted remains and can be traced down the length of the staircase. This starts below the doorway leading to the 'clock floor' and is approximately at the junction with the main tower west wall. There appears to be no change from the last inspection except that window was repaired during the repointing of the external stonework and one cover to a light fitting is missing. The whole stairway is now clean following the completion of the bell restoration project.
- 5.2 The ringing chamber is clean and well decorated and is in very good condition, following reinstatement after the bell restoration, with new improved access stair. The room below remains in use as a part-store for 'Gateway Crafts'.
- 5.3 The room housing the clock mechanism is in fair condition with no defects in the walling. The stonework still retains the remains of old whitewash. The access door to the north is in working order and now fitted with a padlock.  
The floor remains covered, in part with lino, and the upper surface could not be inspected, although the structure, viewed from below appears sound. However the central trap was opened for the removal of the bells and the replacement boards have gaps which could allow debris to fall into the ringing chamber. A replacement covering would be helpful.
- 5.4 The clock mechanism has been reset following the stopping during the bell restoration and is now in working order. The cabling has been refitted except for the striking connection, which requires additional electrical mechanism.  
The clock remains the responsibility of the City Council.
- 5.4 The stone surfaces of the belfry remain damaged by wind erosion, but some repairs were carried out when the bells and frame were removed. The bird netting is now covered with white plastic sheeting. This is secure and helps to keep the chamber free of birds and prevent further wind erosion of the stonework. External tracery was repaired during the Tower repairs in 2006.

- 5.5 A new steel bell frame, and timber floor have been installed as part of the bell restoration project and the whole area is now in good condition.
- 5.6 The ladder access to the upper level and exterior parapet is now not possible because of the change in level of the floor. A new platform is proposed at mid height (see appendix iii) As the access is restricted an inspection of the parapet was not possible.
- 5.7 The external stonework of the Tower and spire was the final part of the fabric repointing and the whole is now in good order including the reinstatement of the weather vane with secure stainless steel fixings and gold leaf covering – fortunately the cockerel was not damaged in the collapse in 2005.
- 5.8 The parapet walkway is an item requiring further inspection, but was left in good condition at completion of the work on the spire in December 2006.

## **6.0 ROOFS, GUTTERS AND CEILINGS**

- 6.1 Internally the roof structure is exposed, and from ground floor level appears to be in good condition. The roof structure is painted with an infill of fibreboard between rafters. No redecoration is required at this stage. The water stains are still visible on the boarding, at the south side and are connected with the damage to the walling referred to in item 4.1 above.
- 6.2 The external covering is in Westmorland slate laid in diminishing courses, and remains in good condition except for some dislodged slates at on the Nave roof at the west end below the lead ridge. The condition of soakers and flashings remain unknown but as there are no visible signs of water penetration it can be assumed that they are intact.
- 6.3 The south aisle gutter is lead (not inspected) and there appears to be no problems although this item should be checked and any silting removed before the winter. The lead gutter between Church and Tower (viewed from the Tower doorway) is clear and appears in good order, but the internal staining (ref item 6.1) suggests that there is a problem. Further investigation is required.
- 6.4 The lead gutter between the Church and Hall (not inspected) was at one time suspected as rainwater leaks appeared in the Vestry following a heavy storm. The soil vent pipe was the cause and this has been repaired. At the time of the inspection it was noted that the walls and ceiling had been redecorated and there were no signs of further damage.

## **7.0 RAINWATER DISPOSAL, DRAINAGE AND EXTERNAL DECORATION**

- 7.1 Rainwater disposal is by cast iron downpipes from either lead gutters behind parapets or surface mounted cast iron gutters. The repair/replacement in line with the repointing programme has been completed.
- 7.2 The north side has half-round gutters to the Nave and Aisle and were replaced and repainted at the time of repointing, however the paintwork is now poor – the earlier cream paint is being exposed. These gutters appear to be clear and there are no signs of vegetation. The downpipes are intact but the eastern pipe of the aisle is possibly blocked as it discharges rainwater at the mid point damaging the stonework. (see appendix v)
- 7.3 The Hall gutters and downpipes were repaired when the repointing programme was carried out and are in good condition.
- 7.4 The south side, to the Market Place, has lead gutters discharging into cast iron hoppers and downpipe. All are now intact and in good condition, except one hopper at the chancel which is full of vegetation. (see appendix vii) They were repaired and repainted at the time of the stonework repointing.
- 7.5 Rainwater from Tower parapet was originally discharged via two gargoyles on the north side. These were replaced with new lead features during the stonework programme (see appendix vi)
- 7.6 The hopper and downpipe at the south west corner of the Nave previously blocked has been repaired and is now in good condition.

## **8.0 INTERNAL DECORATION**

- 8.1 The redecoration of the interior of the Church is in very good condition. The same colour scheme has been applied. The condition of the Hall is fair but redecoration is required.

## **9.0 FLOORS AND GALLERIES**

- 9.1 The floor to the church is a concrete slab with under floor hot water heating pipes. The floor covering is a new carpet and there are no visible signs of the old defects in the concrete.
- 9.2 The floor to the lower Hall is hardwood strip and in sound condition but with some slight springing and a poor surface finish. This floor replaces an original pine t+g board
- 9.3 The floor to the upper floor has been fitted with carpet and now appears to be in poor condition (details of underlay, if any, and repairs

to previous defects are unknown). The carpet to the staircase has been replaced and is in good condition.

## **10.0 GLAZING & VENTILATION**

- 10.1 All glazing is in good condition including the stained glass to the south aisle . Only one opening hopper is noted on the central window of the north aisle.  
Security bars are fitted to the south/west window and also to the north aisle.

## **11.0 ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION, LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR**

- 11.1 The lighting, installed at reordering, is well designed and regularly maintained and replacement fitting installed as required and noted in item 2.1 above.

## **12.0 HEATING**

- 12.1 The heating installation is by gas fired boiler with hot water under floor pipes to the main church area and traditional radiators to other areas.

The boiler was installed (December 1999) Ideal 'Concord GX40-100'. The secondary boiler remains. The installation is regularly serviced as noted in item 2.1 above.

- 12.2 The boiler room has stone walls, a brick vaulted ceiling and a brick floor, all in reasonable order. However there is considerable deterioration of the stone at the base of the east wall and some stone replacement is required for additional support. Entrance is via external door and three steps from the north side public footpath/ramp.

- 12.3 The entrance door is a framed, ledged and battened door in good condition.

## **13.0 FIRE PREVENTION**

- 13.1 One 9ltr water extinguisher stands in the lobby to the Hall – tested April 2009.  
One powder extinguisher is situated in the boiler room – tested April.2009.  
A small extinguisher should be installed at the organ.  
(see also item 21.4)

## **14.0 FURNITURE AND FITTINGS**

- 14.1 Most of the furnishings are 'new' designed within the reordering scheme and are good. The furnishings include; a portable organ and

piano, raised platforms, lectern and font. There are no notable defects.

- 14.2 There are only 2 monuments – both war memorials – placed each side of the original entrance.  
1914/18 marble and mosaic  
1939/45 bronze
- 14.3 The original stone 17<sup>th</sup> century font stands adjacent to the entrance door in the south/west corner of the south aisle.

## **15.0 CHURCH GROUNDS**

- 15.1 All previous church grounds have been incorporated into the public spaces except for a small paved area to the north/west. At the time of the inspection it was noted that stone paving was in good condition but some weeds were growing at the base of the church wall.

## **16.0 BOUNDARY WALLS**

- 16.1 There are no boundary walls except the “retaining” wall to the paved area at the north/west. At the base of the wall there is a planting area, part of the public access pathway, maintained by the Local Authority. Recently the laurel bushes have been cut down exposing the condition of the retaining wall. The wall is in a poor state of repair with some stones missing and general defective pointing. However it does not appear to be structurally unsound, but further investigation is required. (see appendix viii)
- 16.2 Railings and gate placed at the west end by the City Council are intact but the supports are now loose and it requires attention.

## **17.0 ENVIRONMENT SITUATION**

- 17.1 The Church is situated at the ‘heart’ of the City and is the dominant building in the Market Place.

## **18.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS**

- 18.1 The following are noted for further investigation and/or monitoring –
- i) general condition of Tower parapet walkway – (5.8)
  - ii) lead gutter between Church and Hall – (6.4)
  - iii) retaining wall to north – (16.1)

**19.0 PRIORITY OF ADVISED REPAIRS**

**19.1 Of utmost urgency**

- i) Check and clean all gutters of vegetation with particular attention to south chancel hopper – (7.0)

**19.2 Essential within next 6-18 months**

- i) Remove ivy from north wall of Hall – (4.4)
- ii) Installation of platform and access to tower parapet to allow safe inspections – (5.6) .....**£2,000**
- iii) First-aid repairs to north retaining wall – (16.1).....**£ 450**

**19.3 Necessary within the Quinquennium**

- i) External decoration – north aisle and nave gutters – (7.2)
- ii) Carry out full repair to north retaining wall after detailed investigation – (16.1) .....**£9,500**

**19.4 Ultimately desirable**

- i) Place additional stone to boiler house east wall – (12.2)

This report is presented in the form recommended under Inspection of Churches Measure 1955, Diocesan Scheme Revised 1976.

- 1.0 Brief Description of the Church and grounds
- 2.0 Summary of works carried out since the last inspection
- 3.0 Structural condition
- 4.0 Walls and masonry
- 5.0 Tower/Spire
- 6.0 Roofs and Guttering etc
- 7.0 Rainwater disposal, drainage, external decorations, etc
- 8.0 Internal Decorations
- 9.0 Floors and galleries
- 10.0 Glazing and ventilation
- 11.0 Electrical system
- 12.0 Heating system
- 13.0 Fire prevention
- 14.0 Furnishing and fittings
- 15.0 Churchyard and grounds
- 16.0 Boundary walls, paths, etc
- 17.0 Environmental situation
- 18.0 Recommendation for further investigation
- 19.0 Statement of the order of priority for advised repairs
- 20.0 Sketches and photographs of Church
- 21.0 General notes

## **21.0 GENERAL NOTES**

- 21.1 Any electrical installation should be tested every quinquennium and immediately if not done within the last five years (except as may be recommended in this report), by a competent electrical engineer, and a resistance and earth continuity test should be obtained on all circuits. The engineer's test report should be kept with the Church Log Book. This present report is based upon a visual inspection of the main switchboard and of certain sections of the wiring selected at random, without the use of instruments.
- 21.2 Any lightning conductor should be tested every quinquennium (in addition to any works which may be recommended in this report) in accordance with the British Standard Code of Practice, No C.P. 326 1965 by a competent electrical engineer, and the record of the test results and conditions should be kept with the Church Log Book.
- 21.3 A proper examination and test should be made of the heating apparatus by a qualified engineer, each summer before the heating season begins; the PCC should consider arranging an Inspection Contract with their Insurance Company.
- 21.4 At least one fire extinguisher of the right type should be provided; there should also be one additional extinguisher of the foam or CO type where the heating apparatus is oil fired. (There are three main types, and it is essential to have the appropriate one in the appropriate place. Advice should be sought from the local authority Fire Prevention Officer.)
- 21.5 This is a summary report only, as is required by the Inspection of Churches Measure; it is not a specification for the execution of the work and must not be used as such. The architect is willing to assist the PCC in applying for an Archdeacon's certificate or a faculty, as may be required to comply with the regulations.

The PCC is reminded that their minutes must record the fact that the application is being made for a certificate or faculty, and that a copy of the Minutes must accompany the application together with a full specification, drawings where application, and an estimate of the cost of the work. In any application for grant-aid, a full specification is always required.

- 21.6 The PCC are strongly advised to enter into an annual contract with a local builder for the cleaning out of gutters and downpipes twice a year.

- 21.7 Although the Measure required the church to be inspected by an architect every five years, it should be realised that serious trouble may develop in between these surveys if minor defects are left unattended. It is strongly recommended that the churchwardens should make, or cause to be made, a careful inspection of the fabric at least once a year, and arrange for immediate attention to such minor matters as displaced slates and leaking pipes. Guidance may be had from the pamphlet, '**How to Look After your Church**', obtainable from Church House Bookshop, Great Smith Street, London SW1.
- 21.8 The PCC are reminded that insurance cover should be index-linked, so that adequate cover is maintained against inflation of building costs. It is of course important to ensure that the basic sum insured is adequate at inception of index-linking, as this will deal only with future inflation. The Ecclesiastical Insurance Office Ltd which covers the majority of churches in this country, will send its regional surveyors without charge to offer guidance as to the appropriate level of assessment in every case.