

# QUINQUENNIAL REPORT

INSPECTION OF CHURCHES MEASURE 1955

CARE OF CHURCHES AND ECCLESIASTICAL JURISDICTION MEASURE 1991

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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 2008 QUINQUENNIAL INSPECTION**  
**of the Parish Church of**  
**S A I N T M A R Y , E A S I N G T O N**

Diocese of Durham  
Archdeaconry of Durham  
Deanery of Easington  
Historic Buildings Listing: Grade I  
Conservation Area: Easington Village  
Civil County and District: Durham, Easington  
Ordnance Survey Map Reference: NZ 414 435

**Date of Inspection: 30th May 2008**

**Date of Report: 23rd March 2009**

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

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## **BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

Among the finest ancient churches in the county, having a stately grandeur commensurate with its status as one of the principal churches of the medieval Diocese.

The church comprises: Substantial Norman west Tower, with parapets and large diagonal buttresses added in the 13th or 14th century; Early English Nave with tall elegant four-bay arcades and eccentrically-spaced small lancet clerestory windows above; contemporary North and South Aisles though with windows mostly of Perpendicular style (renewed in the 19th century); Chancel, also Early English with characteristic east window (also restored in 1852-3) composed of five lancets rising to the centre and flanked by a blank niche either side internally to continue the arcading right across the east wall; and what was probably a north Chapel adjoining the Chancel, now containing the Organ and Vestries. In other words, in plan and most of the masonry a very complete medieval church. The seventeenth century added the Cosin-style oak furnishings (much re-arranged since) and the nineteenth century restorations (1852-3 probably by Hardwick; 1985 by Hicks & Charlewood) included new roofs and parapets.

Walls are a mixture of the iron-stained yellow-buff sandstone and the whitish-grey magnesian limestone found in County Durham, and are plastered and painted internally. Roofs are covered in light green Lake District slates.

A plan of the church is included on the buff-coloured sheet 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 (the 1989 report was 'ghosted' for Ian Curry). As well as that issued in 2002, previous quinquennial reports dating from 1959 (G.E. Charlewood), 1964, 1969, 1974, 1979, 1984 and 1994 (all Ian Curry) were also available on the architect's file for reference in compiling the present one. This also includes a copy of the record in the Diocesan Archives of a 1971 survey made for the National Coal Board.

These previous reports form a valuable record of the condition of the building and of the work carried out over the past fifty years and surviving copies should be carefully preserved. In particular, the 1994 report included a full list of works carried out since 1950.

Repairs and works carried out since 2002 have included:

Renewal of the badly eroded capitals of the three columns of the south arcade (2002).

Removal of carved fragment of Anglo-Saxon cross-shaft from South Aisle wall, and infilling of resulting void (2002).

Provision of waterproof covering to Tower roof.

Repair of table tomb and stabilisation of headstones in the churchyard.

Replacement of churchyard gates.

Accessibility improvements including provision of portable ramps and (in 2007) eliminating step at main entrance to church.

Checking of churchyard trees by specialist.

Structural repairs to Nave clerestories and roof, with re-building of parapets and re-forming and lining of parapet gutters (2007).

Remedial work to slating and eaves detailing of east end of North Aisle roof (2008).

## 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) Any voids below floors and platforms.
  - ii) Roof void above the Chancel ceiling.
  - iii) Interior of the Organ.
  - iv) Roofs were examined internally from floor levels and externally from ground levels, accessible parapet gutters and the top of the Tower.
- 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 at the outset that the church is in good condition generally and is evidently very well looked after. A tremendous amount of excellent work has been done over the last forty-five years and this effort has been sustained since the last inspection with the major structural repairs to the Nave clerestories, etc. This report is intended to help direct the efforts of those responsible towards an orderly programme for the further work needed in the foreseeable future.

### A) STRUCTURAL CONDITION OF THE FABRIC:

The building is of conventional construction with substantial stone walls supporting timber roof structures. It has a long history of structural problems, usually taking the form of separation of the outer facing of the rubble stone walling from the core, but occasionally also involving distortion believed to result from past mining activity in this area. Major works within living memory have included consolidation of the Tower in the mid 1960's and a programme of repairs in the early 1980's dealing with weaknesses at the west end of the South Aisle, the north-east corner of the vestries and the north wall where the organ arch exerts lateral pressure. Another phase of works in 1990-91 involved tying the outer facing of the three lower stages of the south elevation of the Tower back to the inner face, tying the south respond of the Tower arch back to the wall core behind and rebuilding part of the upper stages of the buttress in the angle between the North Aisle and the Tower. This was followed in 1993 by structural repairs to the east end of the South Aisle (including re-setting the window surround) and the feet of the east gable of the Nave.

Then in 2007 structural repairs were undertaken on the Nave roof and clerestories, after the checking of the Nave parapet gutters recommended in the last report led to the discovery of evidence that the clerestory walls were moving apart and also that their external faces were separating from the wall cores. This project, grant-aided by English Heritage, involved dismantling (and subsequently re-building) the parapets and excavating into the clerestory wall heads on both sides of the Nave, casting reinforced concrete eaves beams under the gutter bases, tying these to the main tie-beams of the Nave roof and grouting and stitching the clerestory walls - the latter with 'Cintec' anchors inserted to tie inner and outer faces together. The parapet gutters of the Nave had to be re-constructed and re-lined and some of the clerestory downpipes had to be replaced.

With this history of wall face separation in mind, the indications of parting between the outer window surrounds and the inner reveals around the aisle windows, particularly towards the east end of the South Aisle, should be kept under observation. More urgently, as recommended in 2002, the signs of bulging and cracking in the external facing of the south elevation of the South Aisle, especially in the upper part of the panel between the first and second windows from the west, may indicate detachment of the outer face and consideration should be given to tying-back or taking down and rebuilding this section of

wall within the next five years - sooner if the cracking appears to worsen appreciably. The same applies to the bulges at springing level between the two windows in the north wall of the vestry range and to the east of the easternmost one.

As noted in 2002, easings in the upper part of the main lower stage of the north face of the buttress in the angle between the Tower and North Aisle suggests that this is giving further trouble despite the rebuilding of the part of the upper sections in 1990-91. Although no action is needed yet this should be kept under observation and a limited area may need re-building in due course. The same goes for the area of bulging stonework under the eastern jamb of the westernmost window on the north wall of the North Aisle.

Slight separation between the outer wall face and the main body of the walling seems to be recurring around the main entrance doorway in the south face of the Tower, despite the insertion of ties in 1990-91. Though not warranting any action for the time being, this should be kept under observation in case further remedial work has to be considered.

Previous reports have expressed concern over the easings in the Tower parapets. The centre section of the eastern parapet was rebuilt between 1994 and 2001 in order to deal with localised instability where it rises above the clock face. Structural easings remain evident in both faces against the south-east corner upstand, but these do not appear to be developing at a significant rate and should merely be reviewed in future inspections. Also, as recommended in the last two reports, the Tower as a whole should be kept under observation for any signs of increased movement resulting from the installation of the enhanced ring of bells (the original three augmented to eight) prior to the 1994 inspection.

The Chancel arch has distorted very considerably over the centuries, and open joints between the voussoirs and between the inner and outer orders and the hoodmould, etc., suggest that this is continuing, albeit very gradually. It too should be reviewed in future inspections.

Various structural crackings through the heads and sills of windows, down beside window jambs and where buttresses meet main wall faces, etc., are evidence of foundation settlement perhaps related to past mining activity in this area. None seem active and they should merely be reviewed in future inspections - details are recorded in the appended inspection notes for this purpose.

Prior to the recent provision of a waterproof covering the concrete roof of the Tower suffered water seepage through cracks in the concrete itself, causing spalling of the underside where the reinforcement has expanded as it rusts. It is to be hoped that this has arrested the deterioration before it could become a serious structural problem but this roof should be kept under observation just in case.

As recommended in 2002, the steel grillage set on the wall heads just under the Tower roof (presumably provided for the work on the bells in 1994) should be painted to inhibit the rust that is taking hold. The cast iron end plates for the tie-rod system in the Tower, which show on the external wall faces, also need painting.

## B) WALLS AND MASONRY:

The external walls of the church are generally of rough rubble general walling contrasting with ashlar dressings to the architectural features. The walling material is predominantly sandstone but includes a high proportion of the local magnesian limestone. Interestingly - as commented in previous reports - despite the general advice in construction textbooks, in this instance there appears to be no chemical reaction between the two types of stone (which usually results in rapid deterioration of the sandstone), and it may be that the magnesian variant of limestone is not aggressive.

In general, apart from the structural problems recorded above, the walling remains in fair condition - much work having been done in recent years in the course of the structural repairs already mentioned. General superficial weathering with a few areas of more pronounced erosion, and delamination of exposed elements such as gable watertabling stones and string courses, is only to be expected. This may necessitate the renewal of limited numbers of stones in the course of re-pointing and/or consolidation work in years to come. Rather more worrying is the discovery in the course of the structural repairs in 2007 that the stone used in the 1890's for the parapets of the Chancel, Nave and Aisles contains soft beds which leaves it prone to differential weathering and disintegration. This necessitated the renewal of a considerable number of parapet string course stones in the course of the recent structural repairs, and the same problem will arise should any of the other parapets have to be dismantled in the future. Even if they do not have to be disturbed for other reasons, the string courses can be expected to erode quite rapidly - many of them are already doing so and have lost their bottom roll mouldings.

The medieval stones surviving (amongst later replacements) in the Tower parapets are continuing to erode quite noticeably and, though not needing renewal just yet, should be reviewed in future inspections. The same goes for the eroded areas of stonework of the internal faces of the Belfry which, though not urgent, could do with renewal in due course - as suggested in previous reports. Perhaps more urgently, the open joints of the stonework of the west wall of the Heating Chamber should be filled within the next five years with a soft mortar designed to act sacrificially, and some consolidation is needed around the flue penetration on its south wall.

Except for those areas that have been repaired and re-pointed over the last fifty years most of the external walling is covered with buttered-over pointing, probably applied in one of the nineteenth century restorations. As noted in previous reports, this is now loosening generally and in some areas has reached the stage where it should be easy to remove it and re-point in a more sympathetic manner with softer mortar. However, though this may be a desirable long-term objective, the only areas that need attention within the next five years are those where structural repair is recommended (see above), together with the following:

Open joints in plinths of south side of South Aisle and west end of north wall of North Aisle. Also open joints at the base of the west wall of the Tower and in the footings of its south-west angle buttress.

Part of mortar filling around frame of main entrance doorway in south face of Tower. Area of open-jointed stonework above westernmost window in south wall of South Aisle.

Voids in base of central buttress on north elevation of North Aisle (together with limited re-bedding or possibly renewal of disintegrating stones) and filling of holes above buttress head.

General walling of north elevation of Vestry range (beyond that in need of structural repair).

It is likely that the north and west walls of the North Aisle will need total re-pointing, together with limited stone replacement (for example, of the parapet string course and rubble stone courses immediately beneath it) in the foreseeable future. Some voids in the west wall could do with filling in the meantime.

The stone surrounds of the two windows in the north wall of the Vestry/Organ Chamber range appear to be face-bedded and are suffering delamination. They have some way to go yet before action has to be taken but are likely to need renewal in the foreseeable future.

The severe and inexplicable erosion of three of the capitals of the south arcade was dealt with at around the time of the last inspection by renewal of the affected stones with faithful copies in new natural sandstone.

The splitting of the stones of the two circular columns of the north arcade by corroding of the iron cramps embedded within them has also featured in past reports. There has been no significant deterioration in recent years so the damage should merely be reviewed in future inspections. Any further fragments that fall out should be re-fixed with masonry adhesive, as should any that have fallen out in the past and been retained.

As noted in 2002, there are signs of slight movement of the bottom stone of the south slope of the watertabling on the east gable of the Chancel and this should be checked from close quarters - it might be sufficient to re-point the cracked joints at this stage and then review in future inspections.

## C) ROOF COVERINGS AND RAINWATER DISPOSAL:

Though various areas within the building show evidence of past leakage through the roof coverings - particularly in the Vestry range and at the ends of the aisles - most appeared dry at the time of this inspection and the causes are believed to have been dealt with - in particular, the roof of the Vestry range was repaired in 1997-8. The exception was the east end of the North Aisle, where persistent and quite severe leakage following the structural repairs of 2007 was attributed to damage to the slating arising in the course of that work. Investigation at the time of the quinquennial inspection proved inconclusive so was followed by further opening-up and the main problem was eventually identified as a peculiar arrangement at the eaves, where what was in effect a hidden gutter was formed by the lead of the gutter lining being turned down behind the tilt fillet. This was collecting and re-distributing the water from leakage through cracked slates so that it emerged internally a considerable distance from the actual defect. All has now been remedied.

The pitched main roofs were all re-slatted in the early 1950's with light green Lake District slates. In general these remain in serviceable condition but they exhibit a natural defect in the form of veins of a dark material which appears to represent a weakness and causes the slates to fissure and break easily. As a result, a considerable number of slates had to be replaced in the course of the structural repairs in 2007 where the slating had to be stripped out and re-fixed or had to have scaffold erected on it. This inherent weakness should be borne in mind for the future as it effectively renders the slates unsuitable for re-use, but no action is needed as long as they can be left undisturbed beyond the usual minor repairs.

As part of the 2007 repair project the slating was overhauled generally so at the time of the inspection needed only very minor attention to three isolated slipped or broken slates at the southern eaves of the Chancel roof. Despite the inherent defect mentioned above the slating can be expected to last for the foreseeable future with occasional minor maintenance of this kind. At the same time the mortar pointing of the ridge tiles on the Nave and Chancel and joints between the copings of the parapets of the north and south aisles, the north parapet of the Chancel and between the watertabling stones of the east gable of the Chancel needs patching/renewal.

Several of the lead cover and apron flashings around the perimeters of the roofs and parapet gutters need re-fixing where they have worked loose and re-pointing or sealing where the mortar in the joints into which they are tucked has perished or cracked. The locations concerned include:

Abutment of south slope of Nave roof with its east gable.

Apron flashing at head of South Aisle roof.

Abutment of north slope of Chancel roof with its east gable (possibly).

The cover flashings on the backs of the parapets of the North and South Aisles appear to be of a fairly thin material and have splits in several places. These can be patched over for the time being but eventually both these flashings should be renewed with thicker lead.

Most of the lead linings to the parapet gutters have been renewed in the course of the various repair campaigns of recent years. These include the north and south parapet gutters of the Chancel and that of the Vestry range which were dealt with in 1993 and those on both sides of the Nave in 2007. Also the west end of the South Aisle in the mid-1980's. The remainder of the parapet gutters of the aisles presumably date from the restoration of 1895 and, though the bay lengths are too long by present-day standards and the drips between bays too shallow, seem to remain in serviceable condition for the time being. The likely need for eventual reconstruction of these older gutters should be borne in mind for the future.

At the time of the inspection several of the downpipes and hopper heads were choked (see appended inspection notes for details), causing spillage of water down the walling which will accelerate deterioration of the stonework as well as damaging the wall core in the long term and causing peeling and discolouration of internal plaster and decoration. As commented in previous reports, regular checking and clearing of the rainwater disposal system is essential and should be carried out at least twice a year. The gullies and the concrete channel around the building should be included. Nesting birds as well as human activity seem to exacerbate the problems with the downpipes and it would be worth providing stainless steel wire mesh guards to the outlets to prevent nesting materials and tennis balls, etc. being washed down into the funnel-shaped hopper heads. One of the fixings to the bottom bracket on the westernmost downpipe on the South Aisle needs replacement, having gone missing.

As mentioned under 'structural condition' above, the concrete roof of the Tower has been covered with a waterproof coating since the last inspection. This should help prolong its life by preventing seepage through the cracks, provided it is maintained adequately.

#### D) WINDOWS AND DOORS:

The church contains a number of good stained glass windows - including several by nationally-known artists as well as some run-of-the-mill examples. Repairs were carried out to the side windows of the Chancel and west windows of the aisles following vandal damage around 1990 and the east window of the South Aisle was taken out and re-leaded at the time the stonework was repaired in 1993, all as recorded in previous reports. All the glazing appeared to be reasonably intact at the time of this inspection, though water staining down the window sills suggests that some of the windows leak in storm conditions - this is not uncommon in leaded windows as the (dilute) putty sealing the junction between glass and lead perishes after about a century.

The stained glass in the north window of the Chancel is holed, cracked, buckled and coming away from its saddlebars so were it not for the protective overglazing externally this would need re-leading urgently. As it is, this window should be reviewed in future inspections with a view to its eventual re-leading. The same applies to the glazing of the east window of the Chancel which shows some buckling, together with signs of parting between lead and glass in the figurative panel of the northernmost light. Here too the external overglazing will give some protection against the weather and wind forces but cannot be relied upon to compensate indefinitely for the weakness of the glazing itself.

The stained glass in the west window of the South Aisle (By Percy Bacon and Brothers) has sustained quite serious damage since the last inspection around the foot of the main figure and down into the canopy work below. This needs repair by a specialist. It also shows some separation between glass and lead around the head of the main figure, together with some buckling of the glass, and that in the westernmost window in the south wall has some cracked quarries and minor buckling so the glazier should be asked to look at these defects at the same time.

As mentioned in the 1989 report, the uncoloured glass in square pattern leading filling the windows in the Clergy and Choir Vestry windows is in poor condition, noticeably buckled in places and badly discoloured. Re-leading of selected panels is an option but it might be better to have these windows completely re-glazed and this would give an opportunity to improve on the leading design - not urgent but worth considering for the foreseeable future, ideally at the time that their deteriorating stone surrounds are renewed.. Similarly, the leaded clear glazing in the tracery lights of the north windows of the North Aisle - which seems older than that in the main lights below - may well need re-leading in due course, and at least one of these seems bad enough to warrant attention within the next five years.

Most of the windows have external protection of one form or another. The galvanised wire guards to several of them are beginning to rust and stain the stonework - most are now too far gone for painting to inhibit this so consideration should be given to replacing them with either polycarbonate sheeting or black powder-coated stainless steel mesh. This latter is less obtrusive but ineffective against air rifle pellets, whilst polycarbonate can be visually intrusive (particularly when set too far out from the glass) and discolours with age - both disadvantages are demonstrated on this church. Any new protective guards should be cut and fitted to each individual light and set well in towards the glass so as not to detract from the architectural form of the window. The old practice of sealing glass or polycarbonate into the stone surround (as evident on a couple of the South Aisle windows) is now generally considered to be damaging to the stained glass because it prevents ventilation, encouraging both heat build-up in summer and condensation at other times of the year. The external glazing in timber frames to the west windows of the North and South Aisles is likely to run the same risks and it would be worth including these in any general strategy for replacement. In the meantime, however, if they are to be retained the putty needs renewing where perished or missing and then painting over to reduce its visual impact and prolong its life.

Consideration should be given to providing appropriate security bars to the windows of the Vestries and the low-light window on the south side of the Chancel, to resist would-be intruders.

The shattered overglazing of the window in the second stage of the west face of the Tower needs replacement in some form before long and, as commented in 2002, the west-facing window in the Ringing Chamber could do with overhaul of both its glazing and its rather elderly timber frame.

The north and south-facing Belfry openings have timber louvres which could do with preservative treatment within the next year or so. Some of the louvre blades are splitting and the topmost blade in the south-facing opening is missing but no action is needed on this. The galvanised mesh bird guards to all the Belfry openings are rusting noticeably and will need renewal eventually.

The external doors to the church both appear to be in fair condition except that their ironwork could do with painting to inhibit the rust and at the time of the inspection the main entrance door needed a new staple for its latch.

## E) FLOORS AND INTERNAL FITTINGS AND FINISHES:

The floors throughout the church are of solid construction, with surfaces of concrete, stone or tile except in the Nave and aisles where the pew areas have wood block. All seem to remain in fair condition. As suggested in 2002, it would be worth providing nosings of contrasting tone to the carpeted steps at the Chancel screen and at the east end of the Choir stalls to improve safety for visually impaired persons.

The internal plasterwork was renewed where damaged by past water penetration and then the entire interior was re-decorated in the course of the repair works in the early 1990's. However, a number of areas show evidence of water damage since, notably in the Vestry range and at the east and west ends of the South Aisle. At the time of the inspection all appeared to have dried out except for the east end of the north wall of the North Aisle. This latter should also have dried out by now, the roofing problems having been resolved last summer, so all could be redecorated as and when desired.

Some limited making-good was carried out to the plaster and decoration of the Nave clerestories as part of the 2007 repair contract. Apart from some limited deterioration in the damp-damaged areas this has left the plaster in fair condition overall except for the hint that the plaster of the spandrel above the easternmost column on the back of the north arcade is becoming detached from the masonry. As mentioned in 2002, this may need to be renewed.

As suggested in the last report, whilst nothing much can be done to eliminate the underlying cause, the areas affected by the slight but persistent rising damp in the lower parts of the walls should be redecorated as and when the damage becomes visually unacceptable.

The long-standing tradition of limewashing in this church was broken in the 1990's redecoration, with a modern paint whose surface sheen accentuates the irregularities of the plaster and is best described as inappropriate. Whether it allows the walls to breathe in the way that limewash does remains to be seen, particularly as the effect of successive re-coatings over the years has yet to be experienced, but regardless of its technical characteristics the visual effect of the modern material is unfortunately harsh - an effect accentuated by the glaring lighting.

The internal fittings and fittings - including some very fine carved furnishings - appear to remain in fair condition throughout.

## F) INSTALLATIONS:

The **electrical installation** is reported to have been tested in 2004 so will be due for re-testing this year. It was re-wired in 1994, and then the lighting renewed in the year 2000. Unfortunately, as commented in 2002, the new light fittings with their high output low energy lamps have no glare control attachments. This results in a high level of glare, particularly uncomfortable for people with certain forms of visual impairment. Consideration should be given to adding glare control baffles of some kind, even if these have to be made specially by a local manufacturer. It is also unfortunate that the light colour of the fittings themselves contrasts starkly with the dark colour of the roof timbers against which they are seen, but little can now be done about this.

No defects were noted on visual inspection of the rest of the installation in the course of this inspection.

The **lightning conductor** installation was comprehensively upgraded in accordance with the current British Standard in 1994, and all appears to remain in good order. The resistance of the earthing points should have been re-tested in 2004 but there appears to be no record of this having been done, so it should be arranged within the current year.

The **heating** system comprises two Hamworthy gas-fired boilers linked in tandem and sharing the flue, serving cast iron pipes and radiators around the perimeter walls. The boilers are serviced annually and reported to be in good working order - they were installed in the early 1990's when the fuel was changed from oil to gas. The upper parts of the twin-wall metal flue were renewed when the bells were re-hung in 1994. Prior to the last inspection the cast iron pipework running under the floors was replaced with copper. Some leakages reported to be occurring at joints of this pipework at the east ends of both aisles were - at the time of the inspection - awaiting the attention of a plumber.

As mentioned in previous reports, the lack of a door to the Heating Chamber in the base of the Tower means that there is no protection against fire spread, but the need for ventilation to the Chamber as well as the tightness of the space makes provision of a suitable door difficult. It may be that ventilation could be improved by using the disused brick-built chimney rising in the south-west corner of the Tower as a second vent. If not used for this purpose the chimney is perhaps best removed in the longer term to make more space.

The grille in the external end of the galvanised pipe serving as the ventilation duct out through the north wall of the Tower has been replaced as recommended in the last report, but the pipe itself still needs painting, both to inhibit rust and to improve its appearance.

The church is well provided with **fire extinguishers**, which are serviced annually.

The **organ** is tuned regularly, and is reported to remain in good working order following what amounted to a total rebuild in 1994.

A substantially augmented ring of **bells**, previously three and now eight in all, was installed in 1994, as described fully in the quinquennial report of that year. The work involved providing a new cast iron frame on a grillage of steelwork built into the Tower walls. All seems to remain in good order.

The **clock**, by Potts of Leeds, dated 1895, also appears to remain in good working order. However, its external face is beginning to look a little tired and may need repainting in the foreseeable future.

The fibreglass **flagpole** appears to be in satisfactory condition.

#### G) MONUMENTS:

Those of note include the effigy of a Lady in Frosterley marble (c. 1300) and the late 13th century (?) sandstone effigy of a knight lying at the east ends of the North and South Aisles respectively. Beside the knight is a large sandstone coffin, and there is an elaborate though worn example of a medieval cross-slab on the floor of the Tower. All seem to be in a fair and stable condition. Wall-mounted monuments and plaques adorn the walls of the Chancel and South Aisle. As commented in 2002, a couple of the marble monuments could do with cleaning (by a specialist conservator), as could the brass plaque in the Chancel.

The fragment of an Anglo-Saxon cross-shaft discovered in the external wall face of the South Aisle and removed for its own protection prior to the last inspection is understood to be in storage awaiting a decision on its long-term future.

## H) CHURCHYARD:

Closed for burials and maintained (to a reasonable standard) by the Local Authority, with mown grass prevailing. The churchyard contains a considerable number of headstones, some of which lean quite alarmingly but on cursory inspection those that were tested physically proved quite firm. All the headstones should be checked from time to time to ensure that none become potential hazards. The top of the tomb chest just south of the east end of the South Aisle has been repaired since 2002 but the sides of this chest still need some filling and pointing and the brickwork of the vault on which it stands needs consolidation where it is exposed beside the drainage trench alongside the Church wall. The supporting walling of a second tomb chest in the angle between the South Aisle and Chancel walls is also in a state of disintegration and needs consolidation too.

The churchyard contains a number of mature trees which, being in a conservation area, are protected by planning law. They are understood to be inspected annually.

The boundaries are defined by stone walling, mostly of rubblework with buttered-over pointing. As reported in 2002, that on the west boundary is disintegrating in its upper courses for part of its length and needs consolidation. The northern boundary wall could do with some limited consolidation and filling of isolated voids together with re-bedding of its top coursing which is beginning to go missing in places - these are the stones that are bedded on edge. It retains the churchyard soil to a considerable height above the surrounding land and slopes inwards, presumably to resist the outward pressure. Parts of the eastern boundary wall, which is of the same nature as the northern, need consolidation - particularly in the upper courses, although this is very limited in extent. The southern boundary wall is similar. It appears to be in reasonable condition for the most part, except for a small section which projects into the churchyard. Here the top of the walling has disintegrated and from this point westwards the walling appears to be of a more haphazard character and shows rather more cracking and hints of disintegration. No urgent action needed but running repairs are desirable over the next five years - all as recorded in the last inspection.

Since 2001 the gates at the northern and eastern entrances to the churchyard have been replaced with wrought iron designs. One of the gate posts at the northern entrance is loose and needs re-setting.

Although well cut down into the churchyard, the eastern approach path has steps and it might be worth considering modifying it to form a ramp for the benefit of wheelchair users - as suggested in the last report.

The step at the main entrance to the church building has been eliminated since the last inspection but it would still be worth widening the path from the nearby church hall car park for the benefit of wheelchair users.

## SUMMARY AND PRIORITIES

Though the church has suffered considerable structural problems in the past, and remains prone to occasional recurrences such as that discovered in the Nave clerestories in 2003, it is generally fairly sound and evidently very well looked after. A tremendous amount of excellent work has been done since the beginning of the 1960's, and this effort has been continued over the seven years since the last report.

The main areas for concern now remain the signs of separation of specific areas of the external walling from the core and the need to keep rainwater gutters and especially the downpipes clear. Quite extensive re-pointing of the external walling is desirable within the next five years or not far beyond, and some of the windows are likely to need attention before long. Running repairs to the boundary walls will be a continuing need for the foreseeable future. Further measures are desirable to facilitate access for disabled people approaching the building.

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 all gutters, downpipes, gullies and drainage channels (repeat twice a year); provision of wire guards to outlets and of fixings to South Aisle westernmost downpipe.
- b) Minor repairs to roof slating and cover flashings; re-pointing of ridges, parapet copings and watertablings.
- c) Provision of new staple for latch of main entrance door, if not done already.

(Range of likely cost: £750 - £1,000)

*continued.....*

III. ESSENTIAL within the next YEAR:

- d) Testing and checking of electrical and lightning conductor installations.
- e) Repairs to windows in west face of Tower and treatment of Belfry louvres.
- f) Re-setting of gate post at northern entrance to churchyard.

(Range of likely cost: £1,000 - £1,500)

IV. NECESSARY within the next TWO YEARS:

- g) Painting of steelwork immediately beneath Tower roof, and of tie-plates on outer wall faces of Tower (by steeplejack).
- h) Specialist repair of stained glass and leaded glazing in specified windows.
- i) Consider provision of security bars to low-light window in south wall of Chancel and to Vestry windows.
- j) Provision of contrasting nosings to steps at Chancel arch.

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

V. NECESSARY within the next FIVE YEARS:

- k) Keeping signs of structural failure of external walling under observation; insertion of ties or taking down and rebuilding specified areas where external face appears to be coming away from core.
- l) Re-pointing of specified areas of external masonry, and of wall in Heating Chamber.
- m) Replacement of rusting window guards; painting of ironwork on external doors and of Heating Chamber ventilation pipe.
- n) Periodic checking of churchyard headstones for signs of instability; further repairs to table tombs by east end of South Aisle.
- o) Repairs to churchyard walls.
- p) Minor repairs to plasterwork; redecoration of damp-damaged areas of internal wall finish.
- q) Consider cleaning of marble monuments and brass plaque. Provide permanent secure setting for fragment of Anglo-Saxon cross shaft.
- r) Consider provision of glare control baffles on light fittings.

(Range of likely cost: £15,000 - £20,000 excluding work in churchyard)

*continued.....*

## VI. FUTURE Repairs:

- s) Review of signs of structural failure of external walling in any areas not repaired within next five years; checking of Tower roof structure for any signs of continuing deterioration.
- t) Review of eroded areas of external masonry (especially Tower parapets) and deteriorating pointing; possible renewal of eroded and delaminating stonework, including that within Belfry.
- u) Renewal of stone surrounds and glazing of windows to Vestries.
- v) Further measures within the churchyard to improve accessibility of the building.
- w) Reconstruction of parapet gutters to North and South Aisles.
- x) Review of buckled, holed or distorted window glazing; re-leading of the worst-affected windows.
- y) Consider removal of redundant chimney in Tower.
- z) Repainting of clock face.

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

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# QUINQUENNIAL REPORT

on the Parish Church of

## SAINT MARY, EASINGTON

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

<b>DATE OF REPORT</b>	<b>23RD MARCH 2009</b>
DIOCESE	DURHAM
ARCHDEACONRY	DURHAM
DEANERY	EASINGTON

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