

## All Saints Church, Great Stainton

All Saints Church, standing alone in the fields to the north-west of the village, consists of an aisleless three-bay nave with a west tower and spire, a south porch, and a two-bay chancel with a north vestry and organ chamber.

### Architectural Description

The church is constructed of rough-faced stone, in quite thin courses (which vary in height), with smooth sandstone ashlar dressings. The roof is of graduated Lakeland slates. The present building (right, south-east view) is entirely of 1876, and in a free Decorated style. The two light windows are generally in two alternating forms, one with two cinquefoil-cusped lights and a pierced quatrefoil in the



spandrel, the other with cinquefoiled four-centred lights with a cusped mouchette above each; the latter form is used for the belfry openings. There is a chamfered plinth (doubled in the chancel) and a big chamfered off-set below the windows; the walls are articulated by broad stepped buttresses (paired at the angles) with deep sloping set-backs. There is a chamfered oversailing course to the eaves, and the gables have a slab coping, chamfered on the underside, carried on chamfered kneelers, with finials on cross-gabled bases. The roofs are of graduated Lakeland slates.

### The Exterior

The **West Tower** has paired buttresses at the angles (the eastern rising from the nave roof) and is divided into four stages (the lower the tallest); the lower are divided by moulded strings and at the base of the belfry a big sloping set-back. The two-light west window differs from the others in the church in having mouchettes set horizontally rather than vertically. The second stage has trefoiled lancets on west, north and south, and, and the third chamfered roundels probably intended to carry clock faces. The belfry openings are again only in three faces. Above is a moulded oversailing course at the base of the octagonal stone spire, which has broaches at the angles; the finial was being replaced at the time of survey

The three-bay **Nave** has two-light windows; the western bay of the south wall is covered by the **South Porch**, which is a simple rectangle in plan and has a large double-chamfered arch with a small trefoiled lancet (without a hoodmould) above, and larger trefoiled lancets in the side walls. The gable finial is missing. The east gable of the nave has a cross fleury finial. On the north side of the nave, stone steps descend against the eastern bay to a boiler room beneath the vestry.

The **Chancel** has two two-light windows on the south, and, above a chamfered set-back at a higher level than that of the side walls, a three-light east window with flowing tracery. Below the window is a dedication stone inscribed

TO THE GLORY OF GOD  
THIS STONE WAS LAID  
AS A MEMORIAL STONE  
OF THE RE-BUILDING OF  
GREAT STAINTON CHURCH  
BY MRS MARGARET DALE COOK  
JUNE 6<sup>TH</sup> 1876

The pent-roofed **Vestry** runs most of the length of the north wall of the chancel, and overlaps the north-east angle of the nave; there is a lancet window towards the east end of its north wall, and a chamfered doorway in the east end, at the head of four stone steps. Behind the vestry a stone stack rises from the chancel eaves, with two circular shafts.

### The Interior



The interior of the whole church is plastered and whitewashed, except for the exposed ashlar dressings of the various arches; the windows and south door all have segmental-pointed rear arches, with chamfers to their heads only. The windows all have horizontal timber sills.

(left) Interior looking east

The **South Porch** has a wooden bench on each side. The **Nave** is entered by the south door has a two-centred arch of a single double-chamfered order, under a moulded hood with head stops. At the west end is the narrow two-centred tower arch, with a continuous chamfer on both faces; the only access to the upper floors of the tower (not inspected) is by a trapdoor in the ceiling of the lower stage

The arch into the **Chancel** is two-centred; the moulded inner order is carried on pilasters with foliate caps, marble shafts and moulded bases, carried on corbels c 2 m above the floor, and has the usual moulded hood and head stops - a king on the r., and a bishop on the l. At the west end of the north wall of the chancel is a segmental-pointed arch to the organ chamber,

double-chamfered under the usual hood; further east is a two-centred chamfered doorway into the vestry, again with a hood and head stops. The interior of the Vestry is plastered, and has no features of interest, other than an ashlar fireplace on the south wall that is largely hidden by the present furnishings.

The roof of the nave is of three bays, and that of the chancel of two; both have arch-braced trusses (with the arch braces springing from shaped stone corbels), and intermediate trusses with collars but without braces; there is a moulded wall-plate, ashlar to the eaves, two levels of purlins and a ridge board. The south porch roof has trussed rafters, ashlar to the eaves and a simple moulded wall-plate.

### **Fittings and Furnishings**

The **Font** stands beneath the tower; it has an octagonal bowl, circular at the base, on a cylindrical shaft with two moulded rings, and a worn moulded base set on a 19<sup>th</sup>-century octagonal step. Hodgson (1912, 237-8, pl.f.p.234) sees it 'as of the Pudseyan period' (ie later 12<sup>th</sup> century) but the shaft almost has the look of an Anglo-Saxon baluster. In 1876 this font was removed to the vicarage garden, but returned and reinstalled in the church some years later. A Victorian font, probably contemporary with the church, stands at the north-east corner of the nave; it has an octagonal bowl with a sunk quatrefoil on each face.

Most of the **Furnishings** are of late 19<sup>th</sup> century date; simple **Benches** in the nave, the **Pulpit** with traceried panels and **Choir Stalls** with poppy heads and trefoiled arcading on the front desks. The **Altar Rails** have cast-iron standards with foliate brackets, and the wooden **Reredos** of 1914 has traceried panels. There are Minton tiles in the sanctuary, and beneath the tower. There is one **Bell**, without inscription.

The only **Stained Glass** is in the east window, (The Good Shepherd) which is again of late 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

On the east side of the porch is a tablet stating that the Incorporated Society for Building and Churches granted £50 in 1874 towards the rebuilding of the church.

### **Sepulchral Monuments**

A group of medieval cross slab grave covers are built into the internal face of the north wall of the tower. These are described and illustrated by Ryder (1985, 90-91, pl.32). They comprise:

- (1) Upper part of slab carved in relief, eight-armed cross with sword and part of bow. 14<sup>th</sup> century?
- (2) Part of interlaced-diamond cross head carved in high relief, early 14<sup>th</sup> century.
- (3) Upper part of slab, or perhaps a headstone, with bracelet-derivative cross, very like a fragment at nearby Bishopton. Later 13<sup>th</sup> century.
- (4) Upper part of incised slab, cross with cusped arms and trefoil terminals, 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century.
- (5) Upper part of incised slab; cross with rounded cross bands and fleur-de-lys terminals.

14<sup>th</sup> century.

- (6) Upper part of slab very similar to (5)
- (7) Lower part of slab with incised cross shaft rising from chalice, with book (?) on right.
- (8) Part of slab base, relief design, cross shaft terminating in fleur-de-lys with sword point on r., very similar to a stone at Darlington. 14<sup>th</sup> century.
- (9) Fragment with sword. 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century.
- (10) Now lost, headstone with cross pate in circle, drawn in 1905 when it lay in the vicarage garden.

There is also a section of a 12<sup>th</sup>-century coped slab, now lying loose in the south porch, with tegulated sides and a splay-armed cross within a circle on the end.

A number of post-medieval ledger slabs, which lay in the chancel of the old church, are now set in the internal faces of the north and south walls of the tower. These comprise:

#### North side

- (1) Top right (to right of medieval grave slabs). Ledger stone to Elizabeth, wife of George Scurfield, dated 1644, which lay in the chancel of the old church (Surtees 1823, 63)
- (2) Bottom left. Ledger, with shield (a fesse dancette inter six martlets; Surtees 63), to Mr William Scurfield, late of Elstobb, d1627
- (3) Bottom right. Ledger to George Scurfield d 1640. In the old church this slab lay on the south of the altar; a slab nearby to his wife Elizabeth (d.1644) is now lost (Surtees III, 63)

#### South side

- (1) Top left. Ledger to James Platts, Rector d 1706. This lay 'within the altar rails' in the old church (ibid)
- (2) Top right. Ledger, hard to read, to Elizabeth and Grace Goodchild, daughters to Thomas Nicholson, d 1723 and 1726; this lay within the chancel of the old church (ibid).
- (3) Bottom left. Ledger to Thomas Carre 'late minister of the Gospel at this place' d 1655. This lay within the chancel of the old church (ibid).
- (4) Bottom right. Ledger to Rev Thomas Nicholson Rector d1749. 'A flat blue marble stone' this lay within the chancel of the old church (ibid).

## Carved Stones

A section of an Anglo-Saxon cross shaft lies in the south porch. Cramp (1984, I, 91-2) describes it as being of the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century; prior to the 1876 rebuilding it was built into the wall of the nave. A further section of cross shaft, in two pieces, was built into the north wall of the choir, and was taken in 1876 to Durham Cathedral, where it now forms part of the Monks' Dormitory collection; this piece is dated to the last quarter of the 9<sup>th</sup> or first of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Three other small stones - an incomplete cross shaft and two fragments, referred to by Hodges in the Victoria County History are now lost. Boyle (1892, 640) refers to five fragments of Pre-Conquest sculpture lying in the churchyard.

A further group of stone artefacts lie around the base of the pulpit:

- (1) A large tapering block containing a socket, probably the base of a Pre-Conquest cross.
- (2) The moulded bowl of a 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century piscina.
- (3) The gabled base of a finial cross, perhaps 13<sup>th</sup> century.
- (4) A small bracelet cross, probably of 19<sup>th</sup> century date, perhaps a gable finial.

A note in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle (1902, 112) describes various stones as lying outside the south porch, and 'crosses and other fragments of pre-Conquest and later date' as lying on the rectory rockery.

## Historical Notes

The church of Stainton, along with an endowment of 2 oxgangs of land, was granted by Guy de Balliol in the late 11th or early 12th century to the Abbot of St. Mary's, York. The grant was confirmed by various members of the Balliol family and by Roger Bertram, grandson of Guy, whose confirmation was made between 1149 and 1152. The church has remained rectorial, the Abbots of St. Mary, who presented till the Dissolution, receiving a pension from it of 13s. 4d. Since 1539 the advowson has been in the Crown. (VCH)

1794 The Durham historian Hutchinson (III, 170-171) writes: 'The church of Stainton, a neat little edifice, stands on elevated ground, at a distance from any habitation: The chancel is seven paces in length, and four in width; lighted by a window of three partitions to the east under a pointed arch, and two windows to the south: the nave is twelve paces in length and six in width, neatly and regularly stilled; the windows are modern: No tower

1857 Fordyce (II, 328-9) describes the church as 's small neat edifice, without tower or side-aisles, capable of accommodating 103 persons. The east window consists of three lights under an obtusely-pointed arch; there are two arched windows on the south side of the chancel: those of the nave are common sashes. The font is an octagonal basin of freestone; the communion table is plain and unadorned. Texts of scripture, in plain black frames, are arranged on the walls. The burial-places of the Scurfields of Elstob, and the Nicholsons, are in the chancel.

## Faculties and Records of Structural Work

These are now in Durham University Library (Palace Green section) and are coded DDR/EJ/FAC/3.... Only faculties which might relate in any way to the structural history of the building, or to archaeological matters, are listed.

214	1876	'Taking down and rebuilding church'.
681	1914	Erection of a reredos
3363	1950	Replacement of the present system of lighting and heating by the electric

## The Structural History of the Church

The evidence of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of c1860 shows that the present church stands on the site of, and follows the orientation (slightly south of east) of its medieval predecessor.

Fortunately the faculty for the 1876 rebuilding includes a plan, and external elevations, of the earlier building. It consisted of a nave 32'3" by 17'2" internally, with a small south porch and a chancel 24'3" by 12'4". The nave is shown with a blocked north door that has a two-centred arch, and trefoil-headed windows (which Hutchinson terms 'modern' and Surtees 'common sashes' on north, south and west; the chancel has a three-light east window with simple intersecting tracery (it is not clear whether this is of stone or wood) and two plain round-arched windows, probably 18<sup>th</sup>-century sashes, on the south. The west gable of the nave rises some distance above the low-pitched roof, and had what Hodgson (1912, 236) describes as 'a fair 15<sup>th</sup>-century double bell-cote'<sup>1</sup>. The Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle report (1902, X, 221) is accompanied by a photograph of the old church, seen from the south, but this shows it partly hidden by a tree and adds little to the faculty drawing.

Insufficient evidence remains to reconstruct the structural history of the old church; the VCH account comments that it was 'said to be of 12<sup>th</sup> century date'

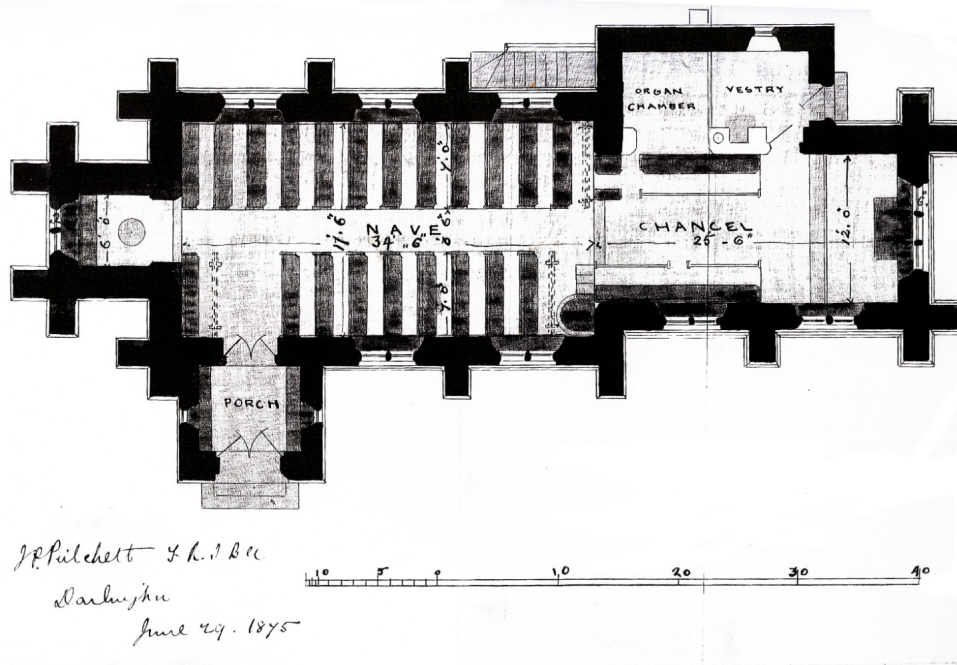
The present church remains very much as built in 1876, a pleasant by minor Victorian Gothic building, the work of a competent architect of some local significance.

## The Churchyard

The church is set a little to the east of the centre of a roughly square churchyard, approached from by a short lane from the road through the village, which enters at its south-east corner. It is bounded by fences; on the south there is a pronounced scarp (with some old trees) 1.5 to 2 m in height running the length of the churchyard, and extending eastward along the south side of the approach lane. There seems to have been some clearance of monuments; most are of late 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century date, but a scatter of early 19<sup>th</sup> century headstones survive south of the church, with one or two small and illegible ones that are probably a little earlier.

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<sup>1</sup>This writer could usually be relied upon to decry the destruction of any significant medieval fabric, but describes the old church as 'never of much architectural interest or importance' mentioning only the bell-cote and the pieces of early sculpture re-used in its walls.



**Ground Plan of the Present Church (after Pritchett 1876)**

### Archaeological Assessment

Although entirely a Victorian building, All Saints Church stands on a site that has been in use since the Anglo-Saxon period, as shown by the various sculptural fragments. The present church appears to sit squarely upon the site of its medieval predecessor, and to follow the lines of its nave and chancel walls, to within a few inches. The faculty plans for the new building show substantial foundations, which will clearly have removed much if not all of any sub-surface remains of the medieval walls. However, deposits within the nave and chancel may remain, although, as usual, disturbed by generations of burial, and perhaps also by an underfloor heating system; the present heating pipes are above the floor, but Pritchett's 1876 drawings show a sunken chamber, presumably for a boiler, beneath the organ chamber. The surviving ledger stones show that local families had burial places, and quite probably vaults, beneath the old chancel.

Thus any works which entail significant disturbance of floor levels within the church should be attended by at least an archaeological watching brief. Whilst the above-ground fabric of the present building is not of especial archaeological importance, it is still possible that the wall plaster conceals evidence of Victorian mural decoration, which might be of some interest, so any large-scale stripping should be monitored.

A more significant area of archaeological concern is in the condition of the lapidary material preserved in the church - the important piece of Anglo-Saxon cross shaft and good medieval tegulated grave cover in the porch, and various stones currently lying under the pulpit, and the medieval and post-medieval slabs built into the internal walls of the tower. Since the loss of the church fabric in 1876, these (together with the font) are the most tangible relics of the earlier history of the parish, and are worthy of protection. Lichen growth is affecting the slabs in the tower walls, and those lying loose in the porch and around the pulpit should really be inspected by a conservationist, and stored, perhaps on wooden shelving, in a more appropriate manner. A search of the rockeries of the former rectory might also be a good idea.

Peter F Ryder October 2006

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Coped and tegulated slab in south porch;  
a vulnerable section of an important 12<sup>th</sup>-century monument