

## The Parish Church of St Hilda, Hartlepool

The parish church of Old Hartlepool, dedicated to St Hilda, abbess of the Saxon monastery nearby, today dominates the headland of Old Hartlepool, looking out over the harbour to the south-west. 'The finest of the parish churches in the North of England' (Boyle 1891, 611) consists of a large square western tower with a Galilee Chapel to the west, a six-bay with aisles that extend west to embrace the tower, and a five-bay chancel, with aisle to the two western bays.

### Description

The **West Tower** is built of squared blocks of creamy Magnesian Limestone, the courses varying in height. It rises in four stages, with moulded strings between the upper ones; as first built there were a pair of shallow buttresses at each angle, rising to gabled tops just below the parapet, except for those at the south-west angle which in effect form part of an octagonal stair turret. The westward-facing buttresses had moulded angles; at a later date the northern and southern buttresses have been enlarged in two successive phases, and the western extended even further. The outermost section of each of these secondary buttresses has been carried up as a separate gable-topped pinnacle; those on the south carrying flying buttresses to the tower behind.

Single storey adjuncts, their roofs pent against the tower behind, have been built in between the buttresses; these conceal the external faces of the lower stage of the tower. The second stage has a blind four-bay wall arcade of lancet arches on the north and south; these have moulded arches carried on shafts with moulded capitals, bases and mid-height rings. Most of the dressings of the arcade on the south have been renewed, but more old work remains on the north. The west wall of the tower at this level, above the roof of the western adjunct (the Galilee Chapel) has a round-arched window of three lancet lights, the spandrels pierced, with a moulded hood, set within the outline of a large two-centred arch

The third stage of the tower has a pair of lancets on north, west and south, in double-chamfered surrounds, the outer order being carried on shafted jambs like those of the blind arcades below. The fourth, belfry, stage has on three sides a pair of lancet openings set within another four-bay wall arcade, in this case the outer bays being narrower than the inner two which contain the openings. On the fourth side, to the east (where the ridge of the nave roof comes up to the base of the belfry) there are two plain lancets, set further apart, without any wall arcade.

Below the tower parapet is a moulded string course, carried on a series of carved corbels and continued round the octagonal stair turret at the south-west corner. The parapet itself has an embattled and moulded coping, and crocketed angle pinnacles, octagonal above the stair turret and square at the other corners.

The massive buttresses extending north and south from the western angles of the tower have each clearly been built in two stages, as can be seen from a change in the section of their plinths. At the ends of the earlier stages the west face of each buttress has a projection of semi-octagonal section, at first sight resembling the respond for an arch, but which seems in fact to have been a subsidiary buttress with a gabled cap; the southern is the better preserved of the two. The even more elongate buttress extending west from the south-west angle of the tower also has a subsidiary buttress on the south at its end, which has stop-chamfered angles.

As already mentioned, the southern buttresses are topped by pinnacles carrying flying buttresses with double-chamfered segmental arches; lower in the same buttresses, and in both other pairs, are blind arches of similar form. Those set just below the top of the western buttresses may have been intended to have formed similar flying buttresses, but there are a second pair some distance below which can never have been more than relieving arches; there are similar low-level blind arches in the northern buttresses.

Turning from the tower itself to the chambers set between its buttresses, that on the west, the **Galilee**, has doorways on north and south. The south doorway has a fine archway of four orders, the innermost with a moulded and trefoiled head, the outer each cut to a pair of chamfers, under a worn moulded hood. The moulded jambs have three orders of attached shafts, all with moulded capitals and bases. On either side of the doorway the plinth has elaborate panelled stops, set diagonally to the wall. Above the doorway is a chamfered and moulded set-back, and a quadrant-shaped relieving arch high up. The north door has a two-centred arch with the three separate chamfers of its arch dying into a single broad chamfer on each jamb. Above is a moulded set-back, and two quadrant-shaped relieving arches, one above the other. The west side of the Galilee is all early 20<sup>th</sup>-century work; it has a moulded plinth matching that of the buttresses, and a central two-light window flanked by two single-light ones, sharing a common hoodmould; above that is a moulded string below the parapet, which has a moulded coping.

The chamber on the north of the tower has its north wall set back a little between the ends of its flanking buttresses; in front of it at its west end is a remnant of the original medieval walling. The present wall has three windows, each of two lights, with cusped tracery under segmental arches and linked hoodmoulds.

The chamber on the south is in effect a westward extension of the south aisle. Its lower courses and moulded plinth are medieval, but the external stonework of the three lancet windows above is all restoration.

The south elevation of the **Nave**, above the aisle roof, is of six bays; the wall, of squared limestone, is articulated by stepped buttresses that die into a moulded eaves cornice set on carved corbels. The bays are not all of equal length. Each has a lancet window set in the broader central opening of a three-bay blind arcade which has moulded arches carried on shafts with carved capitals, and linked hoodmoulds. The eastern bay, in which the arcade and lancet are set at a slightly higher level than the remainder, includes a metre or so of plain wall to the east of the arcade, crossed by a moulded string continuing the arcade hoodmould.

The north elevation of the nave is very like the south, with a similar length of blank wall in the eastern bay; the carved corbels that carry the parapet are especially well-preserved on this side. The east gable has a coping of overlapping ashlar slabs, and the base of a finial at the apex. The nave has a steeply-pitched roof of graduated green Lakeland slate.

The south walls of the six-bay nave and two-bay chancel **South Aisles** are continuous, and are described together; they are of squared limestone, the courses varying in height. There is a plinth that varies in form and a hollow-chamfered oversailing course at the base of a low parapet, which has a moulded coping. The wall east of the porch is articulated by stepped buttresses, the first has been carried up as a pinnacle, now truncated at parapet level, whilst the others rise only to the level of the string below the parapet. The western bay of the wall has no openings; there is a moulded plinth of the same form as that of the chamber on the

south of the tower. The second bay is covered by the early-20<sup>th</sup> century south porch, but above it is an old square-headed window with a broad chamfered surround, set directly beneath the parapet. The next four bays all have windows with three-centred arched heads and casement moulded surrounds, each of three lights with simple cusped tracery, under hoodmoulds with turned-back ends; they look to be largely 19<sup>th</sup>-century work although parts of their heads could be older. The third, fourth and sixth bays have a simple chamfered plinth, possibly the result of later modification, but in the fifth the roll-moulded upper member reappears, and the sill-string steps up to a higher level; there has been considerable interference here, and there is a possible blocked opening beneath the western part of the window. Above the window head is a stone with two incised shields, set upside down. The sixth and seventh bays are the chancel aisle, and continue the chamfered plinth. Hard up against the buttress on the west side of the sixth bay is a blocked two-centred priest's doorway with a chamfered surround and a simple moulded hood linked to the string. This other features of this and the next bay, paired lancet windows with moulded arches on shafts with carved and moulded bases, and the buttress between the bays, all look 19<sup>th</sup>-century. The buttress is carried up to a gabled top, carrying as flying buttress to the chancel wall behind. At the south-east angle of the aisle are a pair of clasping buttresses with stop-chamfered angles and gabled tops, and in the east wall another 19<sup>th</sup>-century lancet window with similar detail to those on the south.

The north wall of the **North Aisle** is built of coursed and squared stone; there has clearly been extensive re-facing or even rebuilding, above the lower courses. The wall is articulated by stepped buttresses of fawn 19<sup>th</sup>-century ashlar; there is a hollow-chamfered course at the base of the parapet, which has a simple moulded coping. The westernmost bay has no plinth, and no window; an off stepped feature in the masonry at the west end could be evidence of an earlier buttress, supplanted by the present more massive one. There are the beginnings of a chamfered plinth which steps forward in advance of the present buttress between first and second bays. The next five bays all have windows with three-centred arches and casement-moulded surrounds, each being of three lights with simple panel tracery; virtually all their stonework looks of 19<sup>th</sup>-century date, although parts of the east jamb of that in the second bay may be older. At around the centre of the second bay there is an odd projecting footing and in the third bay the plinth seems to show evidence of earlier buttresses inside the lines of the present ones; there is similar evidence of possible earlier buttresses at the east end of both fourth and fifth bays. At the east end of the wall is an older stepped buttress, beyond which the wall of the chancel aisle is set slightly further back.

The two bays of the chancel aisle have a moulded plinth and a moulded string c 1.5 m above. The first bay has a small window, set quite high, of two lights with trefoiled ogee heads under a segmental arch and a hoodmould with turned-back ends; this could be genuine medieval work. Then comes a buttress, its upper part (and the flying buttress which it carries) clearly being renewed; the second bay has a two-centred priest's door set hard up against the buttress; the lancet window alongside, the string-course which is carried up over it as a hoodmould, and the paired buttresses at the north-east angle of the aisle are all similar to their counterparts in the south chancel aisle, and all look 19<sup>th</sup> century. The east end of the aisle has another similar 19<sup>th</sup>-century lancet window.

The **South Porch** is of tooled fawn ashlar, with a big moulded plinth., The side walls are each of four narrow bays with shallow pilaster buttresses. The south wall has a broad shouldered segmental archway, and a square-headed inner opening with a lintel made up of joggled voussoirs; there is an incised cross on the gable, and a stone slab roof with a moulded

ridge.

The **Chancel** is of five bays, the western two of which have aisles. On the south the clerestory wall above these looks largely ancient, and continues the form of the nave clerestory, although the ashlar of the external arcade seems largely 19<sup>th</sup>-0century restoration, as does the eaves cornice with its billet moulding set on carved corbels with dogtooth. Between the bays is a flying buttress with a steep stepped coping and a moulded ridge. Between the second and third bays is a large buttress with a gabled top; the third bay has 19<sup>th</sup>-century stonework up the level of its first string course, with above that a lancet window with a moulded arch on shafts with carved capitals, and a hoodmould which is continued eastward as a string; above comes a moulded set-back and a clerestory following the form of that further west. There follows a large stepped buttress, again with a gabled top W, and the plinth changes from chamfered to moulded. The fourth bay is similar to the third, except that the lancet jamb shafts have moulded rather than carved capitals. The easternmost bay is quite different; the sill string steps up, and there are a single pair of lofty paired lancets spanning the full height of the wall. The eastern angles of the chancel have octagonal pinnacles reinforced by stepped buttresses on their outer faces, and carried up to embattled cornices and tall pinnacles.

The north side of the chancel is very similar to the south, with some medieval masonry surviving in the clerestory of the western bays, and 19<sup>th</sup>-century squared limestone up the level of the string course in the third bay. The lancet I in the clerestory of the first bay has simple block capitals (unfinished?) whereas those of the one in the second bay are carved.

The east end of the chancel has the same plinth as the eastern bays of the side walls, and is divided into three bays by slender full-height buttresses. In the centre is a large window of two trefoil-headed lights with a big trefoiled opening in the spandrel, whilst the side bays have lancets; all have transoms at mid-height, with shouldered heads to the lights below, and moulded hoods. In the top of the gable, above a moulded set-back, is a three-bay blind arcade with a central lancet, modelled on those of the clerestory; the gable has a steeply-chamfered and moulded coping and a cross finial.

## The Interior

At the west end the **Galilee** has an early-20<sup>th</sup> century vault by Caroe, springing from a central pillar; this does seem to replicate an older feature, as part of the capital of the shaft at the south-west corner looks old<sup>1</sup>. The side walls have a moulded string c 1 m above the heads of the north and south doors; the internal face of the south door is concealed by a wooden frame, whilst the north door has a surround of two 2 continuous chamfered orders. There is a large moulded plinth on the west wall only.

The west doorway of the tower, opening into the Galilee, has a large arch of four continuous chamfered orders; on either side are the exposed jambs (and parts of the capitals) of wider 13<sup>th</sup> century predecessor with large dogtooth on chamfer and jamb shafts.

The Tower opens to the nave by a lofty arch, richly moulded and of an odd shouldered form. Its upper part looks ancient, but the lower section, comprising the moulded capitals and vertical section of mouldings above - may be Caroe's work. Above and to south of the tower

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<sup>1</sup> Caroe prepared plans with one-pier and four-pier versions of the Galilee interior; his choice may have been influenced by excavated evidence.

arch, the blocked doorway into the clock chamber simply shows as a dark patch of cement render. Directly above the arch, the low-pitched line of a post-medieval roof is visible.

Within the tower, the high quadripartite vault looks to be largely of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century date, but the triple shafts in each corner from which its springs are ancient. The side walls have renewed arches to the aisles, with above them a big moulded string-cum-set-back. The west wall has a segmental rear arch for the present west door, and high above it the west window has a segmental-pointed rear arch, with a passage on its south side linking to the newel stair in the south-west angle. At a slightly lower level there is exposed, in the south-west corner, a shaft with a moulded capital at the same level as those of the adjacent vaulting shafts and a base c 1.5 m above the level of the rear arch of the doorway, relating to some earlier arrangement, perhaps a wall arcade.

The tower stair is entered by a small doorway with a segmental-pointed arch, its masonry all 19<sup>th</sup>-century, on the south side of the western respond of the arch between the tower and the southern chamber. Just above the base the circular newel has an old blocked loop to the south-west, and a little further up is a blocked square-headed doorway in the north wall, which must have communicated with the putative wall-arcade/gallery mentioned above. One turn further up a similar small doorway gives access to the narrow gallery across the internal face of the west window, a fine vantage point for a view eastwards.

The stair continues to a square-headed doorway into the ringing chamber; here there is a blocked doorway in the east wall, set south of centre, with a chamfered two-centred arch; the paired lancets in the other three walls have their internal jambs cut square to the wall rather than splayed. There is much evidence of 20<sup>th</sup>-century repair and measures to counteract structural failure; a big north-south girder in the floor, along with patching and cement which indicate further ironwork inserted into the walls. The belfry floor frame has four east-west beams, spaced irregularly, carried on plain quadrant-section corbels that do not appear ancient. Access to the belfry is by what is in effect a steep narrow passage rising to another square-headed door; as in the chamber below, the internal jambs of the openings are all cut square with the wall. The ceiling is all of concrete beams. The newel stair continues to the top of the tower; all the stonework at this level looks to be restoration.

The six-bay arcades of the **Nave** have pointed and richly-moulded arches; at first glance they appear a stylistic unity, but closer inspection shows a considerable variation in detail. The two arcades correspond in plan; the eastern bays are the widest, the next three of almost equal width, and the western two markedly narrower. On the south there is a considerable variation in the plan of the piers; the first, third and fifth square have keel-shaped shafts on each face, the second is round with eight small circular shafts set around it, and the fourth similarly encircled but octagonal; the arches have hoodmoulds with nutmeg decoration. The north arcade has piers of uniform plan (clustered shafts with alternately round and keel-shaped members); their capitals are rather simpler but their arches more elaborately moulded than on the south, although without hoodmoulds. On both sides of the nave corbels immediately above the arcade piers carry full-height wall-shafts rising to capitals at wall-top level that presumably carried the original roof trusses.

Above each arcade is a clerestory consisting of a single lancet light to each bay; those of the eastern bay are markedly taller, probably for the purpose of lighting the rood loft. Internally there are moulded strings at the level of their sills, and carried up over their heads; the internal arches have jamb shafts with variously-carved capitals carrying moulded rear arches.

The chamber on the south side of the tower now forms in effect the west end of the **South Aisle**. On the west it has a recess with a two-centred arch, with the same roll moulding as the small lancets in the S wall, springing from big shouldered corbels with a billet moulding, with above it a chamfered quadrant arch. The triplet of little lancets in the south wall have quite broadly-splayed roll-moulded rear arches; the internal frame of the eastern is old. The arch into the main part of the aisle seems all restoration except perhaps for its northern capital; adjacent to its east face is the first of a series of old transverse arches spanning the aisle, springing on the aisle side from a corbel with nutmeg ornament; above this can be seen roof tabling of aisle before its 15<sup>th</sup>-century heightening.

The south doorway opens into the second bay of the aisle; now accessible through the south porch, it has a semicircular Romanesque arch of two orders, each chevron-moulded on both faces, the inner is continuous (without any impost) whilst the outer carried on shafts with capitals of 13<sup>th</sup>-century character, within outer jambs with more chevron, giving substance to the theory that this is an older doorway re-used in the present church.

The transverse arches which span the aisle, now variously distorted, are carried by the arcade piers and corbels on the aisle wall, which rather awkwardly are set at a higher level. The third arch (the one to the east of the south door) has an unusual, and apparently coeval three-sided shaft c 5 cm in diameter rising to its corbel from c 1.5 m above floor level. The window in the next bay of the main aisle has a rear arch with a segmental hollow-chamfered head and roll-moulded jambs, possibly re-used from earlier lancets windows); parts of the window itself look old. A little to the east of the corbel from which the transverse arch between the fourth and fifth bays springs is an incised shield that has been identified both as the arms of Lumley (Hodgkin 1913, 155) and Fitz Marmaduke of Horden (Todd 1953, 38); the fifth bay window has plain splayed jambs (old?) and hollow-chamfered rear arch. The arch between the fifth and sixth bays of the aisle springs from a full-height respond on the south; in this case the capitals of pier and respond are at the same level, and the arch is symmetrical; there is a band, chamfered above and below, at mid-height on the shaft of the respond, which is continued as a string a short distance along the wall to the east. Below the window in the sixth bay (which looks all restoration) is a segmental-headed piscina with a line of nailhead and bowl half cut away.

The chamber on the north side of the tower now opens into the main aisle in the same manner as that on the south. Its west wall seems to have had a similar recess to its southern counterpart, but here only the southern corbel survives, with a big triple-chamfered quadrant arch above. The north wall with its three windows is all of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century date, as is the arch into the aisle proper, although, as on the south, there is an older transverse arch adjacent to its east face, one of a series that span the aisle, similar to those on the south except that, instead of springing from the capitals of the arcade piers, their responds have small capitals of their own set at a slightly lower level, and the arches are all regular instead of being distorted. The north wall of the first bay of the aisle proper is blank; the rear arch of the window in the second bay has a stepped splay to the jambs and a hollow-chamfered segmental head, that look like medieval work. The windows in the next four bays all have plain square jambs and segmental arches, and are probably wholly 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the east end of the aisle the arch into the Organ Chamber (ie the western bay of the north choir aisle) looks to be single-chamfered, but is largely concealed.

The arch that opens into the **Chancel** is richly moulded and rises almost to the full height of the clerestories, springing from responds consisting of grouped shafts, the central keeled, with classic Transitional 'waterleaf' capitals; on the west the central shaft has additional capitals set a little below the main ones, to carry the ends of the rood beam, whilst on the east there is an additional shaft tucked into the western angles of the chancel, springing only from the capitals of the western responds of the chancel arcades. In general chancel arches show their greater elaboration towards the nave, but the reverse is true here, another indicant of some unusual status being given to the eastern arm, traditionally said to have been a mausoleum for the De Brus family.

The chancel is of five bays, the western two aisled; its axis deviates noticeably to the south of that of the nave. The greater part of the original structure was demolished in 1724, leaving only 15 ft (4.6 m) - around a bay-and-a-third - of the original standing. The little that survives of the c1200 chancel points to it having been a structure of unusual architectural finesse. The surviving piers have clusters of eight shafts alternately round and filleted, and carry richly-moulded arches with nutmeg hoodmoulds. The capitals of the western responds of the arcades are set at a markedly higher level than those of the piers, a fact that has occasioned antiquarian debate. The clerestory is considerably more elaborate internally than that of the nave, having in effect of two orders, the inner as in the nave and the outer carried on additional shafts supported by corbels, the overall effect being an internal thickening of the upper section of the wall. There are decorative paterae (small cusped panels) in the spandrels of this outer order.

The easternmost bay of the chancel is partitioned off by a screen; the central section of its base is formed by the reredos, with an openwork cresting, with to either side a shoulder-arched doorway into the so-called Brus Mausoleum; above are three taller arches on clustered piers, with a cusped opening above the broader central one.

The south aisle of the chancel is divided from that of the nave by another transverse arch, again rather distorted. In the south wall of its first bay the jambs of the blocked priest's door are visible to the west of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century lancet window; an internal string course may also be old, as is the transverse arch between the two bays of the aisle.

The chancel aisles are only differentiated from those of the nave by being slightly narrower; the transverse arches continue.

The **Roofs** are all of 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century date. That of the nave is of six-bays, and of crown-post form. The chancel roof is based on moulded stone arches, in effect stone trusses, with circular openings above the head of each arch; there is a single purlin on each slope, additionally supported by diagonal braces set in a vertical plane; there is ashlar to the eaves.

### **Fittings and Furnishings**

The **Font**, of brownish crinoidal limestone, stands at the west end of the nave and has a moulded and gadrooned bowl set on a circular urn-like shaft; on the east side of the step is the incised inscription 'THE GIFT OF GEO BOWES ESQ 1728'. The Carved wooden cover may be contemporary, and has a loop so that it can be suspended from above.

## Carved Stones

The church has quite a large collection of architectural fragments, most of which were probably found during the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century restoration; these include a number of moulded and carved voussoirs and capitals, largely contemporary with the main building period of the church. A selection of these are now set into the wall arcades on the east and north of the Brus Chapel, but three other piles of such pieces are less satisfactorily cared for<sup>2</sup>. These are currently to be found in:

- (1) The small gallery below the west window of the tower, reached by a narrow passage from the newel stair.
- (2) In the Ringing Chamber; around twenty pieces lying loose on the floor.
- (3) A smaller number of fragments, including a good capital, lie loose and exposed to the elements on the very top of the tower.

At the east end of the north aisle on the step in front of the arch to the organ chamber is a piece of a late medieval carved canopy, and a simple sub-rectangular stone bowl, with drain, possibly a stoup or benitura. On the wall alongside is an 18<sup>th</sup>-century sundial.

## Medieval Monuments

The earliest sepulchral monument is a small 'pillow stone' from the Saxon monastery, now set in a glass case at the east end of the south aisle. One of a number found in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in a cemetery to the south-east of the church, it is of 8th century date and bears a cross with an alpha and omega and the name 'Hildithryth'. Two other stones are in the Museum of Antiquities at Newcastle, one in the Monks' Dormitory collection at Durham Cathedral, and three in the British Museum. (Cramp 1984,98)

Eleven medieval cross slabs and headstones, of 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century date, are now mounted on the internal walls of the Brus Chapel; most of these, and a grave slab with an incised drawing of a medieval ship (now badly worn) were found built into a tower window in 1893, and are described by Ryder (1985,94-96, pl.36).

Within the Brus Chapel stands the so-called Brus tomb, a weathered altar tomb of Frosterley marble which stood exposed in the churchyard prior to the 1920s rebuilding of the chancel. On the evidence of its worn heraldry it has been argued that the traditional ascription of it to the Brus family is incorrect, and it is more likely to be the monument of a William Bulmer who died between 1509 and 1531.

Fixed upright to the rear face of the screen wall above the tomb is a worn medieval effigy of a lady, which most authorities have considered too eroded and damaged to comment on or describe.

Lying on top of the tomb are two small stone coffins, three pieces of a 12<sup>th</sup>-century coped and tegulated grave cover, and also a carved 13<sup>th</sup>-century block with an arcade of trefoiled arches and other motifs.

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<sup>2</sup> It is understood that all these stones have been catalogued by Tees Archaeology.

## Post Medieval Monuments.

Mounted on the north wall of the north aisle at its east end is a brass to Jane Bell, ‘vertuos gentelwoman’, d.1593, depicting here as ‘a lady in the costume of the later years of Elizabeth’s reign. She is dressed in gown and cloak, the former wrought over with needlework, and wears the ruff and high-crowned and broad-brimmed hat of the period’ (Boyle 615)

In the floor to the north of the font is a reddish limestone slab, unusually set north-south, with an inscription to Joshua Smith d. 1707. There are a number of Wall Monuments in the aisles; in the south aisle, from west to east, tablets to Joseph Nixon and his daughter Jane Eden, both d 1855, Thomas Pulleyn Mosley d 1813 and Joshua Emmerson of Durham d 1843. In the north aisle is a tablet to Peter Watson d 1860, signed by Bulmer, and a larger memorial to William Romaine, a leading light in 18<sup>th</sup> century evangelical revival; he was Rector of St Ann’s, Blackfriars, London, d 1795, but born in Hartlepool. The tablet was erected ‘after a lapse of 80 years by whom who reveres his memory, loves the scriptural doctrines which he embraced and regards his name as an honour to his native town and county’, and is signed by R Beall of Newcastle. In the westernmost bay of the north aisle is a **Hatchment** to William Blackett ‘Baronet, Burges(s), Alderman and sometimes Mayor of Newcastle-upon-Tyne’, d 1680 who bequeathed ‘to the poor of the parish of St Gyles in Hartinpoole forty shillings 40s yearly for ever’.

On the wall of the westernmost bay of the south aisle is a large **Benefactions Board** with the details of Smith’s Charity, dated 1878.

## The Bells and Bell Frames

The three bells are all dated 1819,, by J. Mears ( Durham Diocesan Bell Catalogue 1979, 9)

The bell frames are of timber, and of the long-headed type, enclosing three parallel pits . They have braces from sill to head, and jack braces from brace to head, without end posts (Pickford layout 3.1 and truss type 6B, 1993, 53 & 26) . They are of pegged construction, with metal bolts used in various later modifications; they would appear to be post-medieval, and possibly of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## Historical Notes

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| c640                           | According to Bede, the monastery of Heretu (Hartlepool) was founded by the nun Hieu; St Hilda was abbess from 649-657, when she moved to Whitby. Both chancel finds and 20 <sup>th</sup> -century excavations have yielded much information on the early monastery, which may have covered much of the headland, . and seems to have been abandoned in the 8 <sup>th</sup> century. |
| Early 12 <sup>th</sup> century | The de Brus family founded the town of Hartlepool, which functioned both as a port and an agricultural centre. Around the end of the century the existing parish church was rebuilt on a grand scale, a demonstration of the seignorial status of the family (who had no castle or manor house in the town); they also founded a  |

Franciscan Friary.

- 1719 A brief was granted by George I to collect a sum of £1,732 for the repair and rebuilding of the church. The choir (chancel) was said to be almost entirely unroofed and the remainder of the fabric in poor condition. In 1724 permission was given for the eastern part of the chancel to be taken down.
- 1794 The Durham historian Hutchinson (III, 36) provides the first detailed account of the church. 'The church of Hartlepool....stands on elevated ground; the architecture of the most ancient parts, the tower and center aisle, shews, that this was once a beautiful building; the chancel has been taken down, leaving merely a recess for the altar, and the side aisles have been rebuilt, near the same period of time. The length of the nave is about twenty-seven paces, and with the aisles fourteen paces wide. The aisles are formed by five pillars on each side, light and clustered, supporting pointed arches, beautiful and well proportioned; the chancel has been divided from the nave by a lofty pointed arch springing from a cluster of pilasters. The church is regularly stabled with oak, paved and kept with great neatness: There is a gallery at the west end.
- 1823 Surtees account of the church (III.116) adds that 'the heavy flying buttresses seem added for support, as the tower has swerved from its perpendicular'; he saw the western gallery as 'erected probably in 1724, when a great proportion of the structure was rebuilt or repaired' In a footnote he adds that in 1724 Bishop Talbot granted permission to take down the roof and replace it by a flat roof, and the chancel, which was then 23½ yards in length, ordered to rebuilt five yards within the walls'.
- 1838 One flying buttress, which had fallen was rebuilt. At the same time 'whitening' (plaster) was removed from the chancel arch and some nave columns (Fordyce II, 253)
- 1851-2 A new south porch known as 'Vollum's Porch' (it was funded by Elizabeth Vollum in memory of her husband and son) was built.
- 1865-6 Restoration of the nave by Hodgson Fowler
- 1869-70 Reconstruction of the chancel by J.P.Pritchett
- 1916 The architect W.D.Caroe prepared an elaborate restoration scheme for the church, which lay in abeyance for eight years until Sir William Gray offered to pay for the cost of the restoration of the chancel; the chancel works were carried out between 1925 and 1927, the tower restored in 1927-1930, the restorations of Galilee Chapel and nave in completed in 1931 and the new south porch completed in 1932.

## Faculties and Other Records of Structural Work

### All coded DDR/EJ/FAC

3/60	1724/6	Rebuilding church and re-allocation of pews
3/61	1733	Assignment of pews in the new erected gallery
3/367/12	7.9.1893	Chancel screen
3/2117	4.5.1925	Extension of chancel
3/3078	4.3.1948	Introduction of a baptistery screen
3/3606	13.4.1953	Repairs to tower
3/3740	18.10.1954	Erection of inner porch
3/6223	31.10./1984	Provision of toilets and servery
3/6448	19.11.1986	Re-siting of font and new York paving surround

## Structural History

The following analysis is based on research carried out by the writer in 2000, on behalf of Tees Archaeology, who have given permission or its use.

### (1) Early History: a Brus Family foundation

As it stands today the overall form of the church is very much that of the one built by the Brus family in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. Robert Brus II had endowed Gisborough priory with the church of Hart and its dependant chapels of Hartlepool and Seaton; it is generally agreed that the construction of the present church, still technically a chapel of Hart when built, was begun by Robert Brus IV (who died in 1191) or more likely his son, William de Brus, Lord of Hartlepool 1191-1215. It was a prestigious building in the new Gothic style (reflecting the reconstruction of the Priory Church as Gisborough); it is thought that masons who had worked on Byland Abbey were employed in its construction (Heslop 1995, 121). There is a long antiquarian tradition that the church also served as a mausoleum for the Brus family, but this is now thought unlikely<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Gisborough Priory itself seems to have fulfilled the role of the Brus burial place; Robert de Brus I was certainly buried there, and also the grandfather of Robert de Brus king of Scotland who died in Galloway. The so-called 'Brus Tomb' is a late medieval monument which has been convincingly ascribed to a William Bulmer who died between 1509 and 1531.

The only possible earlier feature in the late 12<sup>th</sup>/early 13<sup>th</sup> century building is the Romanesque south doorway. Most antiquaries have seen the doorway as early to mid-12<sup>th</sup> century work, re-used from the predecessor of the present building. This is certainly possible, as the jamb shafts with their moulded capitals look like 13<sup>th</sup> century work, the original chevron moulded jambs of the outer order having been re-set behind them. The medieval porch, demolished in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, is known from the engravings of Grose and Billings. It was an unprepossessing structure externally with a plain square-headed outer opening and two square-headed windows in each side wall, but internally it had stone seats, with, set in the internal angles and midway along each side wall, an attached shaft with a moulded base and richly-carved capital with 13<sup>th</sup> century foliage, presumably intended to carry a vault. Billings' drawing (1846, f.p. 43) shows this foliage as similar to, although perhaps a little more naturalistic than, the eight-petalled flowers of the hoodmould that then survived over the doorway. What is not clear is whether this was a genuine 13th-century porch in a much altered form, or whether its shafts had simply been retained in some post-medieval rebuilding. The doorway itself seems to have suffered somewhat since the mid-19th century, in that its hoodmould with a line of eight-petalled flowers cut upon the chamfer has been removed. This seems to have survived the 1851-2 rebuilding of the porch as it is drawn by Perry and Henman (1867, plate 43); a solitary fragment of it is now in the Brus Chapel. The fact that Boyle (1891, 614) dismisses the doorway briefly, stating that it was 'adorned with chevron mouldings, but bears evident marks of the restorer's chisel' hints that it may have suffered during the 1866-7 works on the nave.

The church of c1200 had an impressive six-bay nave and a chancel that was a structure of unusual architectural finesse, but one with an architectural incongruity that has never been properly resolved. The capitals of the western responds of the arcades are set at a markedly higher level than those of the piers. Hodgson (1895, 218-221) made much of the concept of compound bays, ie pairs of bays with their central capital at a lower level to those to either side, Tavernor-Perry (1912, 102) simply saw it as 'something in the nature of an accident' but Page (1928, 281) concludes 'the probable deduction is that this is the remains of an original scheme for a central tower, abandoned during the course of building'

## **(2) The Tower as planned, c 1230?**

The building of the church would seem to have proceeded from east to west, as was often the case; the use of nutmeg in the chancel and then in the south arcade of the nave has been taken as implying this was constructed before its northern counterpart. It is generally agreed that the tower, to which we now turn, was built a little later, although as part of the same overall scheme., Page cites the Papal interdict of 1215 as possibly occasioning a pause in building, between the completion of the arcades and the construction of clerestory and west tower c1230-1240. Architecturally these parts are fully in the Early English style, as against the Transitional of the earlier sections.

The tower was planned on a grand scale with a lofty tower arch matching the chancel arch in its proportions and lower side arches opening to the aisles, and a fine ribbed vault. As originally planned there were shallow paired buttresses at the angles of the tower, ornamented with roll mouldings and dogtooth, rising to gabled tops below the corbel table below the parapet; at the south-west corner was a semi-octagonal stair turret. A spire may well have been planned, as well as a vault at belfry level demonstrated by two surviving springers, although neither may have been completed. The nave aisles extended west to embrace the tower; at their western angles were pairs of slender buttresses with chamfered angles, which

remain in part<sup>4</sup>. In the surviving section of south aisle, the eastern of three small lancets in the south wall is partly genuine (its internal frame is old) but the others are by Caroe; in the adjacent west wall an arch springing from unusual cusped corbels with billet ornament seems to be the rear arch of a west window. One similar corbel survives at the west end of the north aisle.

### (3) Structural Problems, and the creation of the Galilee.

However, at a relatively early date, major structural problems were experienced. There has been debate as to their cause, with both the weight of the main tower vault and the inadequate foundations being blamed, but the problem may be more deep-seated than either of these. An observation made by a former clerk of works, quoted by Hodgson (1895, 243) is of interest here. He stated that ‘under the S.E. buttress I found a split or fissure in the rock about an inch and a half wide, with a current of air blowing out. I tried to fill it with cement, but it was out of the question; it went away as thought going down some drain’. This would seem to be an indication of large-scale movement of the underlying rock, the Magnesian Limestone which forms the headland.

Whatever the cause, within a few years of its initial construction, drastic measures had to be taken to prevent the collapse of the tower. The exact order of these has been variously interpreted. First seems to have come the addition of what are here termed the ‘great buttresses’ and, perhaps a little later, the creation of the Galilee Chapel.

The great buttresses, especially the two that project 7.25 m to the west, are so massive that some early interpreters saw them as the remains of nave and transepts, and suggested that the church first been planned as cruciform. Billings (1846, 43) rejects this, but suggests that ‘three small chapels’ were set between the buttresses, the southern still existing. Hodgson (1895, 241-2) shows his usual lack of charity for opinions other than his own: ‘for the whole history and explanation of the several features are writ so large upon their face, that ‘even a wayfaring man, though a fool’ need not ‘err therein’. He saw the two ‘compartments’ north and south of the tower as continuations of the nave aisles, whilst that to the west ‘if it were ever really covered in, was neither more nor less than a mere portico or shed to the west doorway’.

Hodgson, despite his verbiage, had not been sufficiently observant himself. The space between the western great buttresses had in fact once been vaulted; old illustrations (eg Tavernor-Perry 1912, 173) show vaulting corbels surviving at its angles; the south-eastern at least is still there, retained when Caroe reinstated the vault in 1927-30. With the creation of the Galilee the lower part of the west wall of the tower seems to have been reconstructed, as can be seen externally where the present wall face is obviously a thickening, now flush with the earlier corner buttresses. At the foot of this thickened section of wall was an elaborate doorway with vertical lines of dog-tooth between its jamb shafts; above there seems to have been, quite remarkably, a large open arch. Tavernor-Perry (1912, 172) recognised this but Caroe in a 1912 letter described it as the ‘scoinson arch of a great west window’. Externally the outer order of the arch now appears like a relieving arch, except that the capitals of its jamb shafts have been exposed below; internally the outer order is exposed (richly moulded

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<sup>4</sup>At the angle of the south aisle the surviving fragments of the southern buttress of the pair show dog-tooth on the chamfer. Semi-octagonal buttresses like this are again seen in Northumberland at Brinkburn, Hexham and Ovingham. Interestingly, the first two are, like Gisborough, Augustinian priories, and the third a church dependant on an Augustinian Priory (Hexham).

in contrast to the plain chamfers of the vaulting ribs adjacent to the side walls), carried at the south-west corner by a jamb shaft, with a moulded capital, that has been left exposed, along with the capital of an inner shaft supporting an order now largely buried in the wall. The outer order shaft has a moulded base about a metre above the rear arch of the present west door. Access to this raised arch, which may well have carried some sort of gallery, was by means of a short passage, the blocked doorway to which survives in the newel stair in the south-west angle of the tower.

All this implies that the original Galilee or western annexe was a two-storeyed structure. What is not clear is whether it was ever completed, or how it was intended to be used. Tavernor-Perry (1912, 172) suggests that it may have served as a court room. That the Galilee had some special function as an entrance is suggested by the fact that the church seems to have been provided with an elaborate south porch as well<sup>5</sup>. A tantalising possibility that the Galilee may have extended further to the west is provided by a note by Fordyce (1857, II, 254) 'the foundations of ancient walls have been found parallel with those of the nave, and extending westward of the tower about twenty feet'.

The great buttresses which formed its side walls show no further evidences of the upper floor, although they have been subject to much re-patching and repair.<sup>6</sup> Another rather earlier local church with an unusual west end, having an integral gallery, is Yarm (Heslop 1990, 35), which was another urban centre founded by the Brus family. Here, as at Hartlepool, the church (also given to Gisborough Priory) would have been the principal architectural demonstration of seignorial power.

These buttresses themselves are of considerable interest, containing a number of relieving arches. The western one on each side incorporated, but extended well beyond, the west ends of the earlier aisles, whilst the eastern of necessity cut across them, dividing off their western parts to produce Billings' 'chapels'. On the north the earlier end wall of the aisle was virtually rebuilt, with a chamfered quadrant-shaped relieving arch, whilst on the south a similar feature was introduced but the old wall retained beneath. All the buttresses had gabled off-sets and were carried up to free-standing gabled tops; those on the south being linked to the tower behind by flying buttresses.

#### **(4) The Galilee abandoned; later Medieval Changes**

Probably due to continuing structural movements, the Galilee seems to have been abandoned at a relatively early date, when again the west wall of the tower was radically altered. The old western doorway was blocked up and a smaller one inserted; this has a pointed arch of four orders, with plain chamfers on the jambs but with hollow chamfers, almost casement mouldings, to the head; these look as if they may be of 14<sup>th</sup> century date. On either side of it sections of stonework have been removed to expose parts of the shafted jambs of its larger predecessor. The large arch above was infilled, with a trefoiled-headed niche being inserted above the doorway (implying that this was now an external wall) and a new west window of quite modest dimensions. This has three lancet lights within an almost semicircular arch, with

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<sup>5</sup> The original church may have had a third door on the north, although later rebuilding of the aisle wall has erased any evidence.

<sup>6</sup> Although a late 18<sup>th</sup>-century sketch of the church by Grose does show a blocked opening, of indeterminate form but possibly a first-floor window, in the southern buttress.

the spandrels between being pierced. If the tracery (renewed) represents the original form it is a late 13<sup>th</sup>-century type (cf Newbiggin in Northumberland) often cited as demonstrating the very beginnings of window tracery; it might of course have been re-used from the demolished Galilee.

Possibly at the same time as this<sup>7</sup>, the three arches of the tower were infilled. The blocking of the tower arch contained a large doorway; old plans show it as having a multi-chamfered arch facing west, ie it opened from the tower into the nave, not vice versa, and there were smaller arched doorways on north and south into the cut-off western compartments of the aisles. Whatever function the Galilee had was probably now transferred to the base of the tower. Within the tower, a small gallery was constructed across the internal sill of the new west window, reached by a short mural passage opening from the newel stair, one turn above the older one which was now infilled.

Another measure to aid stability was the blocking or reduction in size of many tower windows, as can be seen in old prints. Some were small lancets; their 13<sup>th</sup>-century style has been used to argue that these changes took place soon after the initial construction, but could simply indicate a pragmatic re-use of older material, from the Galilee or possibly the nave aisles. During restoration work in 1893 no less than thirteen medieval grave slabs were retrieved that had been built into one of these reduced lancet windows (Taylor 1893, 20)

#### **(5) Later Medieval Changes**

In the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries many parish churches were extended, usually to provide chantry chapels. That St Hilda's escaped such works is probably explained by the fact that the 13<sup>th</sup> century had provided the townsfolk with a grandiose building sufficient to all their needs. The only change of any consequence, and that one shared with many other churches, was the 15<sup>th</sup>-century heightening, and partial rebuilding, of the original aisle walls, and their provision with a new range of windows.

These windows have elliptical-arched heads; their present tracery is all 19<sup>th</sup>-century restoration, but probably follows something close to the original design. Some parts of their surrounds and internal splays are old; internally two of those in the south aisle have roll-moulded jambs re-used from earlier lancets. Parts of the south aisle wall - the two bays east of the porch which have a different plinth section - and much of the north aisle wall may have been rebuilt from the ground. The rather heavy embattled parapet of the tower, with its squat octagonal crocketed pinnacles at the corners, may also be of late medieval date; virtually all its stonework has been renewed in successive restorations.

#### **(6) Decline and Decay: The Post-Medieval Centuries**

In common with many other churches, the two centuries after the Reformation saw the building free from any major structural changes, but poorly kept and deteriorating. Things came to a head early in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. By 1719 the eastern arm was described as 'almost entirely unroofed, and the steeple, pillar and walls...so much decayed by length of time that

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<sup>7</sup>Most workers have seen this blocking (and the reconstruction of the west wall) as contemporary with the addition of the great buttresses, but have ignored the stylistic evidence of the west doorway. Evidence of the date of the doorways in the inserted walls was lost with their removal in Caroe's 20<sup>th</sup>-century restoration.

the whole fabrick will inevitably fall to the ground unless speedily prevented.... Around £1,700 was collected, and repairs put in hand in 1721, when a repair and restoration programme was devised in which, somewhat surprisingly for the time, antiquarian concerns were manifest: 'in respect to the glory of the antiquity of the said church what repairs the windows may want, they shall be wrought after the same manner that they are now' (Sharp 1851, 115). Sadly this scheme was not followed; on May 22 1724 Bishop Talbot granted permission for the chancel to be drastically shortened and the old roof replaced by one of much flatter pitch. This truncation duly took place, leaving the so-called Brus tomb standing outside in the churchyard.

Whoever designed the new east end took little regard of the architectural style of the original building; its window was a large round-arched Classical one flanked by panelled pilasters, with imposts, an archivolt and keystone, enclosing an arched centre light, with the impost mouldings being continued horizontally across the flanking lights. Similar glazing replaced the medieval tracery in the aisle windows.<sup>8</sup> At around the same time a western gallery was inserted, reached by a stair at the west end of the south aisle. The small square-headed window above the south porch may be an insertion of this period.

The structural problems at the west end seem to have continued throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods. A new buttress was built at some time to provide additional support to the south-west corner of the tower.

### **(7) The 19<sup>th</sup> Century; the Re-Emergence of the Medieval Church**

The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a whole series of phases of restoration and repair.. The flying buttresses - one of which had fallen- were restored in 1838; and as antiquarian appreciation of medieval architecture increased, whitewash was cleaned from the internal arcades and chancel arch in 1838 and 1851. Also in 1851 a new south porch was built replacing its predecessor demolished a few years before; a plate of c 1850 (Sharp 1851, supplement f.p.86) shows the church without any porch at all. A good impression of the building as it stood before later and more major changes is given by the painstaking and detailed architectural drawings of Perry and Henman (1867, plates 32-43) and an 1865 plan by 'Master Smyth' (on display in the church) less precise in architectural detail but much more informative as regards furnishings. By this time the 18th-century 'tracery' in the aisle windows had been replaced by 'dreadful' (Boyle 1893, 612) square-framed sashes. It is not clear what had happened to the east window; whilst Smyth shows one of three lights, Perry and Henman's plan and section both appear to indicate that there was no opening in the east end at all. Smyth's drawing labels the western ends of the original aisles as 'chantries'; the southern was only accessible by a doorway from the tower and the northern, which Billings' print of a few years earlier (Billings 1846, f.p.42) showed as a roofless ruin, then contained the 'heating apparatus' but was only accessible by a doorway in its external wall. The Galilee was only an empty space between the great western buttresses, and the western doorway was blocked up. The surviving sections of the chancel arcades were walled up; the remnant of the south aisle became a vestry whilst Tavernor-Perry (1912, 173) relates that what remained of the north was utilised for the singularly unecclesiastical purpose of a gunpowder store.

In the second half of the century the church began to regain a medieval appearance; in 1865-6

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<sup>8</sup> Windows of this style rarely survived the zealous re-gothicisation of the Victorian restorers, but old illustrations show similar ones in the south aisles of Brancepeth and Low Dinsdale.

Hodgson Fowler restored the nave and gave it a new roof; the tracery in the aisle windows and buttresses of the north aisle are probably his. Then in 1869-70 J.P.Pritchett, the Darlington architect, reconstructed the chancel, but not to its full medieval extent; incorporating what remained of the original, he made it a structure of two aisled bays with a single-bay unaisled 'sacrarium' projecting eastward. At some time in this period, or at any rate before the Victoria County History plan was drawn (Page 1928, 279) the west door was re-opened and a doorway opened or re-opened between the tower and the restored chamber to the north.

### **(8) The 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Caroe's Restoration**

Thus the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the church with new roofs and a chancel, whilst suitably Gothic, was only half the length of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century original; these measures did not meet with full antiquarian approval; Boyle (1893, 621) felt he could not commend them. At the west end the interior of the tower had been filled with shoring, apparently as a preliminary to the removal of the blocking of the arches, although either lack of funds or discretion had prevented this being carried out. Hodgson (1895, 243) longed for the total rebuilding of the tower (using its old materials) which he saw as 'the best and only perfect way'.

It was left to the 20<sup>th</sup> century to return to the church to its full medieval extent. The architect was W.D.Caroe, Consulting Architect to the Ecclesiastical Commission; his 'elaborate and complete restoration scheme'<sup>9</sup> was prepared and adopted by the church in 1916-17, but lay in abeyance for eight years until Sir William Gray offered substantial funding.

In 1925 the east end of Pritchett's chancel was pulled down and 'the ancient foundations uncovered' (Slater n.d. 22). Up to this point antiquarian opinion had suggested that the medieval chancel might have either been fully aisled, or of four aisled bays and a fifth unaisled (Page 1928, 281). The chancel as reconstructed by Caroe, presumably on the basis of what he found, had only two aisled bays and three unaisled. His design, which won general acclaim, continued blind arcades along the first two aisleless bays and screened off the final bay, the 'Brus Mausoleum' with a lofty three-bay arcade; slender stone arches were introduced in lieu of roof trusses. The style chosen, after the architect examined Guisborough Priory, was one transitional between the Early English and the Decorated, perhaps fifty years later in date than that of the original. His new chancel was dedicated by the Bishop of Newcastle in December 1927.

Caroe then turned his attentions to the major problems presented by the tower. A letter from him to J.F.Booth & Son, Banbury, dated 16.11.27, details how works should proceed. First should come the elimination of cracks in tower and buttresses, then the insertion of tile arches into three sides of the tower. Underpinning followed, bringing the foundations down to the bedrock, after which the inserted walls were cut down sufficiently to enable the piers to be repaired. A further 'overhaul' was to be made, dealing with any new cracks, before the blocking walls (in place since the late 13<sup>th</sup> century) could finally be removed. The completed tower was dedicated by the Bishop of Durham on October 2nd 1930. The Bishop returned to dedicate the reconstructed Galilee Chapel on May 17<sup>th</sup> 1931; the final phase of the works was the completion of a new south porch in 1932. The entire cost of the scheme was in excess of £34,000

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<sup>9</sup>Many of Caroe's drawings and some of his correspondence survive; most are in the Durham County Record Office, ref Ep/Ha.SH 4.

In the event not all of Caroe's proposals were followed, as his drawings demonstrate. His original intention, presumably modified after the original footings were exposed, was that the chancel should have three bay aisles with 14<sup>th</sup>-century style two-light windows, and an octagonal stair turret set on the outer south wall at the junction of nave and chancel aisles. In the event Pritchett's side walls and aisles were retained. At the west end he proposed porches covering the Galilee doorways, with arcades springing from the semi-octagonal buttresses that remain from the western angles of the original early-13th century aisles. It is not clear whether Caroe interpreted these as features as having been responds in the first place, a simple enough error given their semi-octagonal form.

Thus St Hilda's Church was restored to its greatest medieval extent, and virtually all traces of its troubled post-medieval history finally erased, although sadly there was no final solution to the structural troubles of the tower.

Whilst the end result of Caroe's labours has aesthetically received little but praise, from an archaeological point of view there must be considerable frustration that the greatest of all opportunities for an investigation of the structural history of this remarkable church was passed by without any proper records being made of what was revealed whilst works were in progress. The surviving archive of his drawings and papers is disappointing in this respect.

Many problems and puzzles remain, some of which further research may answer. It has recently been suggested that a slightly-raised platform in the churchyard to the south-east of the present church may mark the position of its predecessor, and this awaits investigation. The unanswered questions as regards the remarkable western Galilee, as to whether it was actually completed and if so, how it was used, may be harder of solution.

### **The Churchyard**

The church stands towards the west end of a large roughly rectangular churchyard that is enclosed by a wall, generally c 1.5 m high, usually of roughly-coursed rubble but including some larger blocks in places; here are taller walls at the west end of the north side and on the west; most of the wall has a 20<sup>th</sup>-century moulded coping. Near the west end of the north wall is a gateway with square piers rebated for a gate, which may be of 18<sup>th</sup> century date, although the pyramidal ashlar caps are clearly more recent; west of the gate there has been an old stile with the coping curving down on either side, now infilled. There is another old gateway with square piers at the south end of the west wall. In the internal face of the west wall, to the north-west of the Galilee is a re-used moulded fragment, perhaps from such churchyard monument, c 0.5 m above the ground.

The churchyard monuments have clearly been extensively thinned out, especially around the church itself; most are headstones, of 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

### **Archaeological Assessment**

From a strictly archaeological point of view, the later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century history of the church is one of opportunities missed; in particular the foundations of the c1200 chancel, known to have been uncovered by Caroe, never seem to have been recorded in any way at all. A great number of questions remain unanswered, in particular as to the form of the 12<sup>th</sup>

century church which it is assumed preceded the present building (from which the south doorway presumably came), and the possibility that this too overlay a still-earlier building.

Much of the present flooring of the church- stone slabs in the nave and aisles, wooden block flooring under the benches – is clearly relatively recent, and the fact that there is no visible evidence of older underfloor heating systems certainly does not mean that they did not exist, and will have disturbed sub-floor stratigraphy and structural remains, as in the majority of ancient churches. Nevertheless, any interventions here will require strict archaeological monitoring, as will any excavation or ground works in the churchyard outside the building. Similarly, any works that disturb the wall fabric of the medieval parts of the church will require proper assessment and recording. Although the walls are largely bare of plaster, there are fragmentary remains of medieval wall painting in the south aisle.

There are some good drawings of the church in various 19<sup>th</sup>-century works, such as Perry, and Henman, but no modern detailed record of the fabric of the church (ie in the form of scale drawings or photogrammetry) appears to exist. This is unfortunate as this is clearly one of the most significant medieval buildings in the county; it has even proved impossible to trace a ground plan showing the church in its present post-1920s state, other than the merest sketch<sup>10</sup>.

The problem of architectural fragments and worked stones lying loose in the tower has already been mentioned in the ‘carved stones’ section (see ‘Furnishings and Fittings’); those heaped on top of each other in the west window gallery, and the few pieces lying loose on the tower to really need to be moved.

The long-term structural problems of the building have not been completely solved, despite the extensive early 20<sup>th</sup> century works, and it is not impossible that major interventions may become necessary, in which case it will certainly be necessary to prepare high-grade records of the whole building.

Peter F Ryder December 2005

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<sup>10</sup> Tees Archaeology intend to produce a proper plan within the next few months

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