

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

CONSULTANT ARCHITECT TO
DURHAM CATHEDRAL

ECCLESIASTICAL AND HISTORIC
BUILDINGS CONSULTANT

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

TELEPHONE/FAX: (0191) 384 7010

QUINQUENNIAL REPORT

INSPECTION OF CHURCHES MEASURE 1955

CARE OF CHURCHES AND ECCLESIASTICAL JURISDICTION MEASURE 1991

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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 2010 QUINQUENNIAL INSPECTION
of the Church of
S A I N T M A R Y , P I E R C E B R I D G E
in the Parish of Coniscliffe

Diocese of Durham
Archdeaconry of Auckland
Deanery of Darlington
Historic Buildings Listing: Grade II
Conservation Area: Piercebridge
Civil County and District: Durham, Darlington
Ordnance Survey Map Reference: NZ 210 157
Date of Inspection: 29th April 2010
Date of Report: 11th August 2010

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

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The church was built in 1873 in a reinterpretation of the medieval Early English (or 'lancet') style by the architects Cory & Ferguson, and appears to have escaped major alteration since. It consists of Nave and Chancel in the usual alignment with single continuous roof, a Vestry abutting the south side of the Chancel and a shallow Porch formed by a projection of the westernmost bay of the south side of the Nave. Two large buttresses against the west gable of the Nave clasp a small Ringing Chamber with lean-to roof between their bases and then arch over above the centre west window to carry the square bell-cote with its pyramidal stone spirelet.

The timber roof structures, concealed by faceted timber-boarded barrel vaults in the Nave and Chancel, are covered with Welsh slate. Walls are of local sandstone with smooth ashlar dressings to the architectural features contrasting externally with the scutched ('quarry-dressed') finish to the general walling and internally with plastered and painted wall surfaces.

A copy of the original architects' plan of the church preserved in the archive of the Incorporated Church Building Society 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. As well as those prepared in the year 2000 and 2006 a previous report dated 1993 (Forsyth & Stastny) was available on the architect's file for reference in compiling the present one. The 1988 report, not seen, is believed to have been by Anderson Ellis Partnership.

These previous reports, where they survive, should form a valuable record of the condition of the building and of the work carried out over the past fifty years and should be carefully preserved.

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

Minor repairs to roof coverings and rainwater goods.

Re-pointing of the spire (2005/6).

Making good to damp-damaged plaster and decoration.

Testing of electrical and lightning conductor installations (2006/7).

Checking suspect materials for asbestos content (none found, surprisingly).

External repainting (2009).

Obtaining specialist report on harmonium (Richard Hird, 2005).

At the time of the inspection careful consideration was being given to replacement of the electrical lighting installation (including re-wiring) and installing electric heating.

LIMITATIONS OF THE SURVEY

- a) Attention is drawn to the recommendations of the **Preamble** to this report, and to the **General and Technical notes** given in **Appendix `B'**.
- b) The following inaccessible parts were not included in the inspection:-
 - i) Voids below the suspended timber pew platforms and flooring.
 - ii) Roof voids concealed above internal ceilings.
 - iii) Interior of the Harmonium.
 - iv) Interior of Belfry and its spire.
 - v) Roofs were examined internally from floor levels and externally from ground levels.
- c) The Architect's detailed inspection notes are given in the following appendix, with descriptions of various parts of the building where appropriate, and comments on the condition of the fabric. These notes are an important part of the report, and should be read by the Parish (PCC officers, etc.), for the appraisal, recommendations and priorities in this report have been prepared from them. They are not a specification for repairs, and are unsuitable for obtaining builders'

estimates. When the PCC is ready to proceed with any part of the recommended repairs, it is advised to contact the professional adviser for recommendations as to the appropriate course of action and ask him to prepare any necessary specifications and schedules.

APPRAISAL AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following remarks inevitably concentrate on the defects noted during the inspection but it must be emphasised at the outset that the church is in good condition generally, with some good work having been done since the last inspection despite limited resources. This report is intended to help direct the efforts of those responsible towards an orderly programme for the work needed in the foreseeable future.

A) STRUCTURAL CONDITION OF THE FABRIC:

The building appears to remain fundamentally sound with no significant increase in the minor hair-crackings - mostly above archways or window openings - noted in the last two inspections. The same applies to the more pronounced crack rising from the northern sweep of the large arch supporting the Belfry, up to the north end of the sill of the Belfry opening above. As commented in the last report, this has obviously been pointed up in the past and then re-opened by perhaps 2 or 3mm since, but is evidently of considerable age and can be regarded as dormant. The various easings recorded in the appended inspection notes should merely be reviewed in future inspections.

The timber roof structures also seem to be in good order as far as can be judged from floor level although the pale patches along the edges of some of the ceiling boards could indicate woodworm activity. Accordingly, as recommended in the last two reports but not yet attempted, it would be worth having the voids above the ceilings inspected - to check for signs of woodworm in particular. It should be possible to arrange this in conjunction with the planned work on the electrical installation.

As recommended in 2006, timber lumber stored in the rather damp former Heating Chamber under the Vestry should be removed so as not to initiate an outbreak of dry rot, and the support structure for the recently-constructed platform over the steps down to this chamber should be strengthened as there will be occasions when it has to bear a man's weight.

B) WALLS AND MASONRY:

The external walls are of the local buff-coloured sandstone, with quarry-dressed finish to the general walling contrasting with the smoother finely-tooled dressings to the architectural features. As usual with this stone it is weathering reasonably well although prone to erosion where subjected to evaporation of moisture percolating through the masonry - for instance, the underside of the arch supporting the Belfry. This is unavoidable but more pronounced erosion has occurred where the walls have been saturated by blocked or defective rainwater gutters or downpipes and, as noted in previous inspections, there are clear associations between the various areas of erosion and the positions of rainwater downpipes, etc. Some of the worst erosion is of internal elements such as window and door jambs where moisture drawn through the stone has evaporated leaving the salts it contains to crystallise and break down the matrix of the stone. None are yet to the stage where any action need be taken, but

as recommended in the last report any defects in rainwater goods should be dealt with promptly as and when they arise so as to avoid further saturation.

The eroded surround of the Vestry window was reported to have been treated with a silicone sealer at some time prior to the 1999 inspection in an attempt to arrest its noticeable rate of deterioration, but as commented in 2006 this appears to have been unsuccessful and may actually have made things worse.

The mortar pointing of the stonework joints remains generally sound and the re-pointing recommended in the last report has been carried out since - notably that to the spire. However, a couple of limited areas could do with similar attention over the next five years:

Open joints in west face of Belfry - especially on lines of slight structural easing.

The open joints around and above the head of the Vestry window, including the hoodmould, in case these are contributing to the dampness showing internally.

As noted in the last report, the stone at the southern springing of the external doorway to the Vestry has been split, probably by rusting of the iron hook for the door. This seems no worse now than in 2005 but should be reviewed in future inspections. Eventually it may be necessary to ease off the spalled pieces, clean off, treat and re-set the ironwork within, and then re-fix the stone fragments with a masonry adhesive.

C) ROOF COVERINGS AND RAINWATER DISPOSAL:

As commented in the last two reports, the Welsh slating on all the roofs appears to be the original covering, dating from 1873, and is therefore likely to be reaching the end of its useful life. However, following the repairs that have been carried out since the 2005 inspection the slating seems to be in good order generally and should continue to serve for the foreseeable future. Similarly, the leadwork and mortar fillets at the roof abutments also appear to be in serviceable condition for the most part. A further round of routine repairs is desirable within the next year and should include:

Main roof, south slope: Broken slate in third course down at abutment with Chancel gable; soaker apparently above rather than below slating at bell cote abutment. flashing at abutment with Bell-cote which could be cause of reported leakage; cracked mortar fillet where lower part of slope meets west gable of Nave.

Ringing Chamber: A couple of lengths of lead flashing needing re-fixing and re-pointing.

Boiler House: Pointing to east end of head flashing needing renewal.

Vestry: Two cracked slates in fifth and sixth courses down against south abutment.

At the time of the inspection all the cast iron rainwater gutters, downpipes and gullies appeared to be in good working order and had clearly been repainted recently. However, they will need to be checked at regular intervals and cleared promptly when necessary so as to

minimise the risk of future blockages causing more damage to the stonework and internal finishes. Particular attention should be paid to the downpipe at the east end of the south side of the Nave, which may have contributed to the saturation of the stone in this area.

D) WINDOWS AND DOORS:

The windows throughout the church are filled with uncoloured obscure glass in diamond pattern leading. This appears to remain much as seen in 2005 - in other words, in fair condition generally despite the occasional cracked pane and with no appreciable worsening of the slight buckling of the glazing in the opening vents. The only action needed is to replace a couple of holed panes in the Vestry window and one at the top of the southernmost light of the east window in the Chancel, all as recommended in the last report.

The window vents were overhauled and re-corded prior to the year 2000 inspection so as to assist in dissipating the condensation caused by the bottle gas heaters, but are not much used because birds come in when they are open. Following the recommendation of the year 2000 report consideration was given to providing wire mesh guards over these vents externally to prevent this, but the proposal was abandoned on grounds of cost. It remains advisable to open the windows whenever the building is occupied to help dissipate the moisture generated by the bottled gas heaters, which is likely to be contributing to the growth of mould on the internal plastered wall surfaces.

Erosion of the stone has left a slight gap between down the northern jamb of the northernmost light of the east window of the Chancel and this could do with filling with a soft lime-based mortar. Slight parting of the glass from the lead in the bottom half of the window in the north wall of the Chancel should be reviewed in future inspections.

The external doors appear to remain in good order, except that the lock on that to the former Heating Chamber needs lubricating if it is to remain usable. The ironwork on the internal face of this door, including the lock block, could do with painting to inhibit the rust. The external ironwork on this and the other doors has been re-painted recently along with the window vent frames and the rainwater goods. A short length of the edge of one of the boards in one leaf of the pair at the main entrance has broken down due to old woodworm attack and the resulting crevice could do with filling.

As suggested in 2006, access for wheelchairs, buggies, etc., could be improved very simply by raising the level of the approach path as it nears the main entrance and lifting the large threshold slab accordingly to eliminate the step up. A wheelchair user might also have difficulty with the deep pile coir fibre door mats just inside the entrance.

E) FLOORS AND INTERNAL FITTINGS AND FINISHES:

The flooring in the body of the church consists of stone paving in the entrance area, around the font, down the centre passageway and through into the Chancel, etc., together with raised timber platforms to the pew areas. Though slightly eroded at the joints the paving seems to be in fair condition overall, except in the Chancel and just inside the entrance door in the Nave, where a number of open joints could do with filling - as recommended in the last report. Some of the heating grilles concealed by the carpet running down the central passageway and into the Chancel rock slightly underfoot and it would be worth checking that these are fully supported when the heating duct is accessed for the proposed re-wiring. The timber flooring appears to be in sound condition.

The Sanctuary has Victorian encaustic tiles, of which a couple have come loose at the gap in the communion rail. As suggested in the last report, these need re-fixing promptly before they get broken or lost.

The furnishings including pitch pine pews, oak pulpit, lectern and altar, carved timber Chancel screen, sandstone font, etc., are in good order. However, the oak communion rail on cast iron brackets is rather loose and could do with tightening or renewal of the fixings down into the floor (as noted in 2005). The Victorian pine chair with turned legs in the Chancel is reported to have been treated for woodworm as recommended in the last report.

In general the internal finishes are in fair condition with the bare plaster patches recorded in 2006 having been redecorated since. Some very limited areas affected by damp show peeling of the paint but these need nothing more than careful preparation and repainting in due course.

At the time of the 1999 inspection some areas, such as the north wall of the Chancel, were suffering from mould growth due to condensation, probably from the bottled gas heaters. This had been brought under control by the time of the 2005 inspection by use of a mild solution of bleach, but has now reappeared extensively in both Nave and Chancel. Re-treatment with a bleach solution may prove effective again but the planned removal of the heaters would almost certainly mitigate if not entirely eliminate this problem.

It has been reported to the writer that the suspect materials in the former Boiler House under the Vestry to which attention was drawn in the last report have been tested since and found not to contain asbestos. In the light of proposals to run cables through the existing underfloor ducts it would be sensible to check that there is no asbestos lurking in these either.

It would be worth providing an insulated ceiling to the Ringing Chamber, which appears never to have had a ceiling at all.

F) INSTALLATIONS:

The **electrical** installation is wired in ordinary p.v.c. insulated cable. As noted in 2005 a new fuseboard had been fitted in 1998 but the rest of the installation is of uncertain age. Testing and/or assessment by several electrical contractors in 2009 has led the P.C.C. to conclude that total renewal is now necessary.

As commented in previous reports, the lighting in the Chancel consists merely of three elderly spotlight fittings fixed at high level above the Chancel arch - none of which appeared to be working at the time of this inspection. Even when functioning this arrangement is unsatisfactory both in terms of light direction and maintenance and these lighting positions should not be repeated in the proposed renewal of the electrical installation in the church. The new fittings should be mounted at a lower, safely accessible, level on both sides of the archway, with perhaps additional lights halfway down the Chancel to light the Sanctuary. The pendant lighting in the Nave is relatively satisfactory and a reasonable model to follow.

As noted in 2005, the external light fitting above the main entrance doors appears to be loose and needs re-fixing.

Following the recommendation of the year 2000 report the wire to the lamp on the entrance gateway to the churchyard was replaced with an exterior quality cable, but the lantern has now disappeared.

The **lightning conductor** was tested for earthing efficiency in 2006/7.

As noted in the last report, the original central **heating system** has long since been abandoned and the church is currently heated by mobile bottled gas units. All the products of combustion, mostly comprising water, are therefore discharged into the church and this will generate excessive condensation on windows and walls - probably largely if not entirely responsible for nurturing the mould growth already mentioned. Furthermore, one of the heaters was implicated in setting light to the flowing robes of a visiting clergyman recently, underlining the safety issues associated with their use. It is understood that serious consideration is being given to installing a new system comprising a number of fixed electrical heaters.

The header tank to the abandoned heating system is reported to have overflowed and saturated the surrounding walling at the east end of the south side of the Nave until the water supply was turned off. It should be possible to cap off the supply to the tank so as to allow the tap just inside the former Heating Chamber to continue in use. The curious redundant pipe rising up the west wall of the Nave should be removed.

The small **pipe organ**, perhaps best described as a harmonium with external blower, is a self-contained free-standing domestic-scaled instrument by the Bell Piano and Organ Company of Canada. Unfortunately it remains entirely out of use and disconnected. The

Diocesan Organs Advisor's opinion has been sought regarding the feasibility or desirability of restoring it and the sad conclusion is that this is unlikely to be worthwhile. Musical accompaniment to services is provided by an Electone electronic instrument, which has replaced the Yamaha noted in the last inspection.

The single **bell** is reported to be in working order and to have been checked in 2005.

The church has an adequate number of **fire extinguishers**, serviced annually.

G) CHURCHYARD:

This constitutes a burial ground and remains in current use, well maintained by the Parochial Church Council. A couple of the headstones and one of the crosses (that to Thomas Emans) can be rocked by hand so could do with being stabilised but none are dangerous except to persons of malicious intent. The mature trees seem healthy but should be checked at least once every five years by a specialist.

In the corner between the east wall of the Vestry and south wall of the Chancel the ground level has risen rather too high against the building. This should be dug back out to reduce the rising dampness in these walls.

The tarmac path is in good condition but as mentioned in 2005 the stone paving just outside the Vestry doorway is rather uneven so could do with being re-laid. As suggested above, it would be worth raising the path as it approaches the main entrance to eliminate the step and thus comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act without having to resort to a temporary movable ramp.

The boundaries are defined by a mixture of stone walls, hedging, etc., with responsibility for maintenance varying between the church and the adjacent owners - it might be helpful to advise these owners of the concerns raised in the appended inspection notes where their sections of walling are concerned. Those sections for which the P.C.C. is apparently responsible seem in fair condition except for the eastern boundary wall. This, of rough rubble work, shows general looseness of the pointing but, more urgently, has lost the copings from a section towards its north end and these - lying on the path beyond at the time of the 2005 inspection but now not immediately visible - need reinstating as soon as possible, together with consolidation of the loosened underlying courses. The sooner this is done the better. Part of the northern boundary walling east of the adjacent owner's barn is also believed to be a P.C.C. responsibility and needs some filling and re-pointing of voids and open joints. It would be sensible to ask the farmer to adjust his guttering, which at present appears to discharge into this boundary wall. At the northern gateway the western pier seems to have shifted and the top pivot let into it is loose, all effectively preventing the gate from closing properly. This pier may have to be rebuilt to overcome the problem.

SUMMARY AND PRIORITIES

The church is basically sound and well looked after. Much good work has been done since the last inspection where the church building itself is concerned although the recommendations concerning boundary walls in the last report have yet to be implemented.

The main areas for concern now are the need for electrical re-wiring and associated improvements in heating and lighting, and the state of the north end of the eastern boundary wall.

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) Checking for asbestos in underfloor ducts.
- b) Implementation of preferred scheme of electrical heating, lighting and re-wiring; reinstatement of lantern on churchyard entrance gateway; re-fixing of external lamp above entrance doors.
- c) Re-building of north end of eastern boundary wall.
- d) Checking and where necessary clearing of rainwater gutters, downpipes and gullies (repeat every six months).

(Range of likely cost: £11,000 - £12,500)

III. ESSENTIAL within the next YEAR:

- e) Minor repairs to roof slating, abutments flashings and mortar fillets.
- f) Minor repairs to doors; painting of ironwork on inside face of Heating Chamber door.
- g) Minor repairs to window glazing.

h) Minor repairs to plumbing installation.

(Range of likely cost: £500 - £750)

IV. NECESSARY within the next TWO YEARS:

- i) Tightening or renewal of fixings on communion rail.
- j) Re-pointing of floor paving; re-fixing of loose floor tiles in Sanctuary.
- k) Removal of timber lumber from former Heating Chamber; improvement of structure supporting platform over Heating Chamber steps.
- l) Excavation to reduce ground level against Vestry/Chancel walls.

(Range of likely cost: £500 - £750)

V. NECESSARY within the next FIVE YEARS:

- m) Inspection of roof voids if and when access is available; checking of ceiling boarding for evidence of woodworm or decay.
- n) Raising of approach path to eliminate step at main entrance; re-laying of uneven paving outside Vestry door.
- o) Re-pointing of specified limited areas of external masonry.
- p) Repairs to boundary walls, fences and gate pier; stabilisation of headstones; checking of churchyard trees.
- q) Making-good to decoration where affected by damp.
- r) Consider providing ceiling in Ringing Chamber.

(Range of likely cost: £2,500 - £3,500)

VI. FUTURE Repairs:

- s) Review symptoms of structural movement; re-examine splitting stone in external doorway of Vestry.
- t) Repair/renewal of split and eroded stonework of door and window surrounds.

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

QUINQUENNIAL REPORT

on the Church of

SAINT MARY, PIERCEBRIDGE

in the Parish of Coniscliffe

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

DATE OF REPORT	11TH AUGUST 2010
DIOCESE	DURHAM
ARCHDEACONRY	AUCKLAND
DEANERY	DARLINGTON

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

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

TELEPHONE/FAX (0191) 384 7010