

**QUINQUENNIAL SURVEY OF FABRIC 2011**

**ST GEORGE'S CHURCH  
Durham road  
GATESHEAD  
Tyne and Wear**

**Ref. NZ 258618**



**Listed Grade II**

**Archdeaconry of Durham**

**INSPECTION NO 8**

**Date of Inspection: 18 October 2011**

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

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

## **1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

- 1.1 The Church, with the adjacent Hall is situated on the east side of Durham Road, Low Fell, on a site opposite the War Memorial and the Art Gallery. The building was designed by S Piper of Newcastle and built around 1896.
- 1.2 The building consists of a nave with north and south aisles, and chancel, with an organ bay to the north and vestry to the south. The main entrance is to the south west below the tower, with a secondary entrance at the north west porch. The fabric is of sandstone walling and slated roof covering

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

- 2.1 The church does hold a formal log book but the works are recorded in a file. The following works have been carried out;
- Connection of new electric heaters with in vestry
  - Improved security locks to vestry and adjacent doors.
  - Replacement of boarding to baptistery ceiling following repair of flashings and water damage.

## **3.0 STRUCTURAL CONDITION**

- 3.1 The building remains in very good order with only minor defects which do not give concern. There are no signs of major movement in the structure.

## **4.0 WALLS**

### Interior

- 4.1 The walls of the interior are painted plaster with stone columns and dressings to windows etc. Generally the paintwork remains in very good condition with only one minor stain on the wall of the south aisle, caused by a faulty rainwater hopper/gutter following snow damage last winter. This is to be allowed to dry naturally.
- 4.2 The timber dado boarding is in good condition and requires no attention. The section in the south transept affected by the dry rot attack has been removed.

### Exterior

- 4.3 Generally the stonework remains in good condition with no major defects. The pointing is reasonable although there are some areas with hard mixes and some requiring attention. However there is no immediate concern but a programme of repointing should be prepared for future use. (Refer to previous reports)

## **5.0 TOWER**

- 5.1 The Tower stonework is in a similar condition to that of the other walls of the church, and there are no major defects when viewed from the ground. The slated pitched roof appears sound with no visible signs of damage.
- 5.2 The access to the ringing floor is by a stone spiral stair, although narrow it is in good order. Access to the bell chamber is by a timber ladder and a hatchway in the timber floor.
- 5.3 The floors to the both levels are boarded and in sound condition. There is an opening visible in the floor of the ringing chamber but no access to the porch below. There is considerable dust and grit on both floors due to the extensive ventilation at high level.
- 5.5 The walls internally are exposed stonework with that of the ringing Chamber showing signs of earlier painting. The arches to the window openings are formed in brickwork.
- 5.6 The tubular bells remain intact but regular inspection is advised to ensure that they are safe. Scaffold from previous work remains in the bell chamber. This is of no concern and may be useful in future if high level work is required to the internal rainwater pipe. At the time of the inspection the pipe and hopper were in good condition with no signs of water discharge. (see also item 7.2)

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

- 6.1 Internally the roof structure is a boarded vault to Nave and Chancel, and from ground floor level appears to be in excellent condition (cleaned and inspected at last redecoration) The aisles have lean-to ceilings in similar boarding and condition. The boards to the Baptistry have been replaced, following previous repair, and are now in sound condition with no further signs of water damage.
- 6.2 The roof covering is blue slate and remains in excellent condition with regular maintenance. The church roof is 100% reslated.
- 6.3 The only lead gutters are in the Transepts and these were replaced with the roof repairs in 2000. (not inspected at this visit) An annual inspection is recommended.
- 6.4 All other guttering is cast iron and in good condition, following replacement in 2000. Snow damage occurred to the south aisle gutter last winter but now repaired and in sound condition. Gutters should be checked annually and kept clear – at time of inspection vegetation was noted at the organ bay

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

- 7.1 Rainwater disposal is by cast iron downpipes – repaired or replaced in 2000 – and in good condition.
- 7.2 Rainwater from Tower is by an internal downpipe discharging into a lead box in the bell chamber then onto the aisle gutter to the north side of the tower. This appears intact and there are no signs of water damage. However this arrangement must be kept under observation and checked from time to time.
- 7.3 All downpipes discharge over fireclay gullies, and although sound, at the time of the inspection most were covered with leaves and some vegetation.
- 7.4 The decoration of gutters and downpipes is good – painted black . The only other metalwork is in the form of railings and gate at the Vestry and at the west entrances and these are all in good decorative order.
- 7.4 The condition of the entrance doors are good and require no further attention at the moment but in the near future they will require a coat of clear preservative for protection.

## **8.0 INTERNAL DECORATION**

- 8.1 The decoration of the plastered walls remain in very good condition (decoration in 2000 in Farrow & Ball “Chalk White”) There is a little staining on the west wall from condensation runs but this is much improved from previous inspections. The damage referred to in item 4.1 on the south aisle is noted but should require no further action.

## **9.0 FLOORS AND GALLERIES**

- 9.1 The floor to the church is a combination of block and boarding in the nave with mosaic in the chancel. The wood block has been sanded and sealed, generally in good condition, but a number are loose at the west end, particularly near the entrance door. These loose block need attention.
- 9.2 The chancel stone step has been painted and now peeling with signs of efflorescence. The mosaic is in good condition with only one crack. None of the items require attention at this time.

## **10.0 GLAZING & VENTILATION**

- 10.1 The east window in the chancel and the east window of the south aisle are the only windows in the church with stained glass. These windows are in good condition. All other windows have been reglazed

in rectangular leaded units using Hartley Glass, or nearest equivalent and the general appearance is excellent. The transept windows include small memorial panels. There are no ventilation units within the windows.

- 10.2 External protection is provided to all windows and there has been no vandalism in recent years.

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

- 11.1 The lighting installation and the appear to be in order but a further inspection and test by a qualified electrician is recommended. (see also item 21.1 and 21.2)
- 11.2 The lightning conductor, situated at the east side of the tower, has been damage during recent theft and is under repair/ replacement

## **12.0 HEATING**

- 12.1 The heating installation is by a gas fired boiler, old but in good working order, to large bore heating pipes and it is performing well with regular maintenance. (see also 21.3)
- 12.2 The basement boiler room is large and in good condition, although it has been flooded recently. At the time of inspection there was much timber materials store in the basement. This could be a fire hazard and the material should be removed.

## **13.0 FIRE PREVENTION**

- 13.1 The fire extinguishers are correctly located around the church and have been regularly serviced – all March 2011. They are:
- One 6ltr water extinguisher stands near the main south west door.
  - One 6lr water extinguisher stands at the south door.
  - One CO2 extinguisher stands adjacent to the organ in the north transept
  - One 6ltr water extinguisher stands at vestry door
  - One 4kg powder unit stands at vestry door

(see also item 21.4)

## **14.0 FURNITURE AND FITTINGS**

- 14.1 All furnishings and fittings are in good order – it is recorded that some pews had been removed, some years ago, to provide open spaces for other activities in the transepts and at the west end. Fittings within the Chancel remain intact and well maintained. Fittings and furniture are;-

- Pine pews to nave
- Oak choir stalls
- Oak lectern
- Oak pulpit (with audio link)
- Oak reredos and table

14.2 There is only one memorial within the church – War Memorial in the south aisle in the form of a brass plaque. Above hangs the banner of the British Legion, Gateshead Branch.

14.3 The general appearance of the church is light and welcoming. This has been achieved with the clear glazing and the care and attention to the general maintenance of the fabric, the furnishings and fittings over the last forty years.

## **15.0 CHURCH GROUNDS**

15.1 The church grounds amount to only small areas of grass between the footpath and church walls, and the Hall and Church. These areas are well maintained. One tree near the junction of the tower and the south aisle is now quite large, but not yet causing a problem, but should be kept under observation for future attention. Some shrubs near the north steps look well but will need to be kept under control – they do act as a deterrent for unauthorised access to the door.

15.2 A gravel trench is formed at the south wall and it is advised that in the future a similar trench could be placed along the north wall. The present trench is becoming overgrown and should be cleared.

## **16.0 BOUNDARY WALLS**

16.1 The boundary railings and walls were removed, except those around the Vestry entrance, in the early 70's but the copings remain at ground level identifying the boundary.

16.2 The steps and walling at the two entrances on Durham road are in good condition however there is some damage at the northern steps. This does not require immediate attention. (wheelchair access is possible via the south door)

## **17.0 ENVIRONMENT SITUATION**

17.1 The Church with the adjacent Hall form a dominant group at the major road junction on Durham Road and add much to the townscape character of this part of Gateshead. Adjacent properties do not cause environmental problems, but the many road signs and street railings are a distraction when the Church is viewed from the western approach.

## **18.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS**

- 18.1
  - i) condition of the rainwater system within the tower (item 7.2)
  - ii) condition of lead gutter above transepts
  - iii) safe condition of tubular bells

## **19.0 PRIORITY OF ADVISED REPAIRS**

### **19.1 Of utmost urgency**

- i) none

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

- i) none

### **19.3 Necessary within the Quinquennium**

- i) Provide disabled toilet to comply with the DDA requirements ( Scheme proposed in last report - estimated cost in the region of £15,000 to £20,000 depending upon external drainage works)
- ii) Rebed loose wood blocks near entrance doorway

### **19.4 Ultimately desirable**

- i) Repair damage stones at north entrance steps
- ii) Prepare a programme of stonework repointing
- iii) Form gravel trench to north side of church

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

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

## **21.0 GENERAL NOTES**

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

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

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

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