

Diocese of Durham

Church - St Thomas, Stanhope

Church No. 246

Incumbent – Revd Susan Kent

Inspection of Churches Measure 1955

ARCHITECT'S REPORT January 2011

John A.G. Niven
Chartered Architect

T.O.h.P. Architects
The Old Hall Practice Limited
57 Front Street
West Auckland
Co. Durham
DL14 9HL

Tel: 01388 832 587

Fax: 0845 299 1182

E-mail: enquiries@theoldhallpractice.co.uk

1.0 PREMISES IDENTIFICATION

Church: St Thomas, Stanhope
Deanery: Stanhope
Diocese: Durham
Date of Inspection: 11th January 2011
Weather: Cold and Damp
O.S. Reference NY 997392

2.0 PARTICULARS OF SITE (Location, adjacent buildings etc.)

The church occupies a prominent elevated position overlooking the Market Place and Stanhope Castle towards the west end of the town. There has been a church on the site, it is believed, since the 9th or 10th century with the present building dating from the late 12th century.

There is residential development to the east side and the Durham Dales Commercial and Visitor Centre on the west side.

3.0 PARTICULARS OF PREMISES (General Construction, layout etc.)

The building consists of a three storey square bell tower, nave with north and south aisles, chancel with organ chamber, choir area and the clergy vestry on the north side and a south entrance porch. It is constructed throughout in local sandstone with lead or stone covered timber framed roofs.

4.0 REPAIR WORKS OR NEW WORKS SINCE LAST INSPECTION

(Date: February 2005)

2005

August Weather nave replaced
External notice board replaced

2006

May New galvanised metal handrail provided to the external path.

Nov/Dec Full replacement of CH installation – Dumphy Heating - £42,000.00
5 pews removed from the west end areas.

2010 Renew/repair west window glazing – Iona Art Glass - £15,500.00
Stonework to west window and repointing to west gable of south aisle
– David France - £4,200.00

2008-11 Replace 3 sets of lead thefts - total £15,000.00 – Matthew Charlton,
Hexham

2009-10 Stabilisation of loose grave stones – Parish member

5.0 SUMMARY OF GENERAL CONDITION OF BUILDINGS

The building is generally in a good condition, particularly the roof coverings, areas of which have been re-leaded or repaired in recent years and the interior which is well maintained. There is widespread minor movement or settlement cracking to most of the 'pressure points' of the building, which have been noted previously with tell-tales fitted adjacent to the chancel arch suggesting little if any deterioration of the situation. Since the last Quinquennial Inspection the central heating installation has been renewed and the important glazing of the west window repaired and releaded. At the time of the inspection, work was in hand replacing the third section of lead covering, stolen from the north aisle within the past few years.

The parish are therefore proposing the installation of an external intruder activated alarm to cover the roof areas.

6.0 DETAILED CONDITION OF BUILDINGS

EXTERNAL FABRIC

6.1 General Structure

Generally sound except as follows:

EXTERNAL

- i) Very slight movement/settlement joints to left corner of organ chamber, to outer head of window arch and left joint of cill.
- ii) Very slight movement/settlement to outer joints of right side jambs at the lower level of west most windows to north aisle, visible internally and externally.
- iii) Slight movement joints to top left corner of west gable of north aisle following the joint lines.
- iv) Slight movement/settlement joint through centreline of west window to north aisle (note; original door opening to boiler house directly below which has been infilled).

Slight movement/settlement joint to centre and right of centre to cill of west window and wall below and below right jamb line to ground.
- v) Slight movement/settlement joint through right hand outer quoin joints to west gable of south aisle and vertically above the window.
- vi) Slight movement/settlement joints to outer doorway arch and through cill stone to apex window.
- vii) Very slight movement/settlement joints to outer right corner of south aisle.
- viii) Some vertical unevenness to south chancel wall, particularly noticeable at position of the rainwater down pipe.
- ix) Slight movement/settlement joints to centreline, from parapet to ground to east gable of south aisle. Most notable to ashlar sloping parapet where joints have opened by about 15mm. The mortar to these is dropping out.

- x) Slight movement to joint to left kneeler block to east gable where a small section of mortar immediately above is loose.
- xi) Slight movement/settlement joint to centreline of east gable to centre of window arch for about half its height and from cill to ground following joints.
INTERNAL
- xii) There are diagonal settlement cracks on the inside of the entrance porch particularly noticeable on the west side and partially on the east side. These run in opposite directions.
- xiii) Movement cracking around internal arch to east most window to north aisle and through both reveals.
- xiv) Easings around internal arch to west end of organ chamber which extend to ground on north side and to the adjacent window reveal.
- xv) Easings around internal arch to south entrance door and vertically above the eaves level.
- xvi) Movement stress cracking to inside to south and north faces of tower and above west window. The internal face of the north wall has also expanded in the past.
- xvii) Movement stress crack around inside and outside of chancel arch with glass tell-tales which, where they remain, have not failed. The mortar pointing appears to be loose on the right side of the west face. There is also a vertical crack under the arch corbel on the north side.
- xviii) Easings around all north arcade arches which extends into the springing part of the arches above the 2 eastern columns..
- xix) Settlement crack on inside of west gable of south aisle behind font.
- xx) Slight settlement cracking around west window to south aisle.
- xxi) General stress cracking to east gable of organ chamber including above both vestry doors and to organ opening arch to chancel.

The widespread extent of the structural movement throughout the building suggests problems at foundation level rather than deficiencies within the superstructure. The cracking is similar and consistent with horizontal ground strains that can be set up as a result of horizontal ground movements caused by landslip or mining subsidence.

Whilst the condition has existed for a number of years and does not appear to have significantly worsened, consideration should be given to carrying out further structural investigations to try and confirm the explanation for the condition.

6.2 External Wall Surfaces

These consist of natural sandstone masonry throughout, either coursed or un-coursed random rubble with dressed margins to door and window openings. The external walls are generally sound except as listed below:

6.2.1 North Elevations

Vestry:

- i) Full height section to left corner over pointed with cement rich mortar.

- ii) Face of wall uneven, particularly at ground level but otherwise sound.
- iii) Redundant chimney - previous open joints have been re-pointed.

Organ Chamber – North Aisle (Includes Battered Base):

- i) A few lean or loose joints to left side of junction buttress and to left corner area.
- ii) A few lean or loose joints to top left corner of north aisle.
- iii) The projecting base was very wet at the time of the inspection and affected red lichen.

General

- (i) All metal wall grills are broken.
- (ii) An original vent opening which it is assumed related to the old boiler house remains at the west end of the aisle but the metal grill is missing.

Tower

- (i) Generally sound except for a few small openings to the joints at parapet level.

6.2.2 South Elevations

Entrance Porch: Generally sound except for movement cracks listed in 6.1 including easing around outer arch.

South Aisle: Some lean, loose or open joints above and to left side of central window opening and to the parapet with face eroded course under parapet corbel.

- Chancel:**
- i) Open joints to left window hood mould.
 - ii) Loose, lean of defective joints in isolated areas.

- Tower**
- i) One small opening under parapet coping to right end.
 - ii) Pointing slightly lean under belfry opening.

6.2.3 East Elevations

South Aisle: A few lean or open joints associated with movement joints to centreline including to parapet.

East Gable: Isolated open or lean joints, particularly above ground level plinth course with open bedding joint to water table.

Vestry Loose or uneven mortar particularly under window where there is also a large hole which appears to extend downwards.

North Aisle: Generally sound, except for movement joints. Some of the joints to the tracery are open.

Porch Sound

Tower
course Generally sound except for some small openings to the bottom of the parapet.

6.2.4 West Elevations

North Aisle: Generally sound except for movement/settlement cracks listed in Section 6.1.

There is a large hole to the left end of the plinth.

South Aisle: Previous extensive area of loose or open joints to left side of gable elevation was repointed in 2010.

South Porch: Slightly cracked joints, to centreline of wall.

Tower Generally sound except for a few open joints to the parapet and movement joint under the central window and one open joint to the lower string course

6.3 Roof Coverings

6.3.1 **Vestry:** North slope – number of stone slabs showing signs of lamination and with broken corners. Two slabs have been replaced with what may be concrete tiles at eaves course.

6.3.2 **Organ Chamber:** North slope – appears complete but with some laminated and chipped stones.
South Slope - one stone slate replaced with concrete tile and 2 broken slates underlaid with lead. Two lengths of sacrificial lead cover flashing have been stolen.

6.3.3 **Chancel:** Piece of stone coping broken off to north side of chancel gable and 2nd from top coping is face laminated.

6.3.4 North Aisle:

Double pitched lead covered, Valley gutter between nave and north aisle has a few previous lead burned repairs to seams and upstands. Water ponds to the top bays.

6.3.5 South Aisle

Double pitched lead covered. 2 no. floodlights on 600x600x50 PC pavings have settled into lead. Previous joints open or loose to the parapets have been re-pointed but some of the pointing to the lead flashings had cracked or is loose.

6.3.6 **Nave:** Double pitched lead.

North Side: Appear Sound

South Side: Appears sound. Some lead burned patches to valley gutter.

- 6.3.7 **Chancel** Double pitched lead.
- South Side:** Appears sound. Some minor unevenness to eaves adjacent to gutter.
- 6.3.8 **Tower:** Shallow double pitched lead. Basically sound except for loose flashings to the south and east sides. There is a section of soft timber boarding on west side where the lead has settled and water ponds.
- Chimney Head and Parapet and the** Open joints to top courses of chimney and a lead flashing has dropped out. Open or eroded joints to parapet copings, particularly to lower steps and to south east corner. These had been re-pointed but most have failed and the mortar dropped out.
- Many of the parapet stones are severely eroded allowing water to lie or soak into the pockets which have been formed.

6.4 Rainwater Disposal System

This consists of ½ round cast iron eaves gutters to pitched roofs with lead lined parapet gutters, with square tinned coated steel down pipes, partially damaged to vestry and west end of north aisle. The installation is complete and appears to be connected to an underground drainage system.

It is generally sound but there is evidence of occasional overflowing occurring at west end of north aisle.

6.5 External Windows & Doors

All the windows are either stained or of leaded quarries and are complete except for:

- i) Lower section – buckled left hand north organ.
- ii) Missing or cracked quarries both 3 light windows to South Chancel.
- iii) Missing quarries to small window to porch

The quarried glazing has ferramenta framing which is rusting in places. There are wire guards to north, south and east windows these are corroded to 2 window lights on the north aisle. Doors are of boarded oak generally sound.

The outer entrance porch painted timber door is in a very poor condition.

6.6 External Metalwork, Woodwork & Paintwork

Cast iron eaves gutters require cleaning and redecoration. Window ferramenta requires redecoration.

6.7 Tower, Spire, Bells & Frames

(Date Bell(s) last serviced: Not Known)

External Walls

East Elevation: Belfry openings are unguarded externally and continue to be used as bird nesting sites.
(**Note:** wire mesh has been fitted internally but this enables birds to nest by piling branches against the mesh, with some falling into the belfry).

South Elevation: Stones to plinth course to top section extremely eroded in places remainder of face appears sound.

Clock Face: This had been comprehensively repaired and re-decorated during the previous Quinquennium.

North & West Elevations:

The cills to the belfry openings on the west side are eroded and there is obvious run off to this position.

Internal Spaces

Clock Chamber: Houses weighted turret clock by W. Potts and Sons, Leeds, 1894 which is wound weekly and maintained by the Local Authority. Internally walls are plastered and are generally sound. There are vertical timber posts which appear to have been introduced to help support the ends of the beams supporting the bell chamber. These appear sound.
The ceiling has been lined with insulation board which is damaged to some sheets.

Bell Chamber: Houses two brass bells founded in 1672 and 1673, one of which is chimed by the clock. The internal walls are plastered on all but the south face. The belfry openings are partially covered with framed chicken wire but there is a build up of nesting material on the external stone louvers, some of which has spilled through to the inside. There is also a general degree of dust and debris overlying the structure which consists of five primary oak beams, the softwood of which has been damaged by woodworm and the beams may be structurally weak in places.

The Roof: Is supported on timber beams and boarding which is stained with salts particularly towards the south side.

Roof Covering see section 6.3.8

INTERNAL FABRIC

6.8 Roof Structure

Nave: Cross braced exposed pine rafters appear sound.

South & North Aisles: Purlins on cross beams appear sound except for salt staining to west end of ridge beam to north aisle.

Chancel: Open crossed rafters and section over sanctuary panelled appears sound.

6.9 Internal Surfaces

6.9.1 Internal Partitions

There are None A temporary stud partition in the vestry has been removed except for the outer frame.

6.9.2 Internal Ceilings

Church Areas: Exposed timber roof boarding stained varnish appears sound.

Vestry: Plaster between rafters sound except for one small damp stain at eaves.

6.9.3 Internal Walls

Church Areas: Exposed sandstone masonry with flush jointed pointing generally sound except where joints have opened with movement.

Vestries: Plastered above timber dado. Badly affected by water ingress to east gable around window reveal and slightly to west wall.

6.9.4 Internal Doors

Oak panelled and glazed with leaded lights or solid battened oak and deal all sound.

6.10 Internal Decoration

This is limited to woodwork and furnishings which are good except where damaged by moisture in the vestry.

6.11 Floors & Balconies

Nave & Aisles: Level softwood boarding with sandstone walkways appears generally sound.
There are a few loose floor boards close to the chancel on the south side.
There is also a temporary patched section of flooring where a pew has been removed to the right of the main entrance.
The section of floor above the old boiler house has been replaced and finished with what appears to be art stone paving.

Chancel: Terrazzo tiles and pine blocks sound.

Vestries: Carpeted – suspended timber appears sound.

Sanctuary: Sandstone and Frosterley marble steps with terrazzo platforms sound.

6.12 Glazing & Ventilation

See 6.5 for glazing. There are a few opening lights which do not appear to be used and there is an old roof level ventilation system which has been blocked off at the outlet at tower roof level. Otherwise the building appears to be adequately ventilated.

6.13 FIXTURES & FITTINGS

6.13.1 Furniture & Fittings

Altar, reredos, choir stalls, organ and chancel screen and pulpit are in oak – good except for a few loose floor blocks to pulpit. Pews are pitched pine.

There is an attractive oak cupboard in the vestry dated 1650.

6.13.2 Organ and/or other musical instruments

This is a 2 manual pipe instrument with 21 stops with a pneumatic action by James J Binns of Leeds. It is regularly played and tuned and is reported to be in good order having been completely overhauled during the Quinquennium before last.

Electric piano located in nave.

6.14 Monuments and/or peculiar features

Two carved oak medallions on north wall of chancel, reported as of Flemish origin. Various painted timber, metal and stone memorials and photographs and oil paintings of former incumbents.

Other historic artefacts housed in the building include a Roman altar and a Saxon font. There is also a section of timber panelling stored in the north aisle which was an early reredos from the church which was used in a Chapel-of-Ease at Crawleyside till the 1950s. This item has some woodworm damage. It is proposed to resist this panelling, following repair, under the west window.

SERVICES

6.15 Heating System

Date of last service - June 2009

The present system was installed in 2006 and consists of a Potterton Paramount (two) 80 gas fired condensing boiler serving small bore distribution pipes and convector radiators.

This is reported as in good working order.

6.16 Electrical System

Date of last inspection – Imminent

This is a relatively modern installation protected with MCB's and earth leakage current breakers supplied through MICC cable. (Installed 1988).

Lighting is Tungsten Halogen throughout the church areas with fluorescent lights in the vestries.

The installation is reported to be in working order and is due to be inspected.

6.17 Lightning Conductor

The installation was upgraded to conform with a full Faraday cage installation to the current British Standard and appears to be in good condition.

Date of the last test was - June 2001.

6.18 Fire Precautions

Last tested November 2010

CO₂ type – Organ

Water type – Vestry and entrance

6.19 Sanitary Facilities

There is a wash basin with electric water heating in vestry.

There is no toilet within the building. Plans had been prepared prior to 2005 to extend the vestry area with a 1st floor meeting room and provide a suite of toilets on the ground floor area. This scheme has now been shelved and consideration is currently being given to a more modest scheme to provide toilet and kitchen/servvery facilities within the west or north side of the main area of the church.

6.20 Security Situation

The building is protected by an internal intruder alarm system which was renewed in 2000. At the time of the inspection a new external intruder system was being proposed to protect the lead covered roofs.

External doors are bolted internally except for the main entrance which has a security lock.

6.21 Disabled Persons Provisions

- (i) **Access**
The existing entrance is unsuitable for wheelchair users and involves two short flights of steps. A removable ramp is available for the use of wheelchair users.
- (ii) **Sound Aspects**
There is no induction loop, but the sound reinforcement installation was renewed during the previous quinquennium and provides full amplified speech facilities.
- (iii) **Lighting**
The natural and artificial lighting levels appear to be adequate.

6.22 External Areas

The church yard remains open and is maintained by the Parish. It is generally in good order. There are a number of gravestones including some of historic interest.

The parish has carried out a full check of the security of all standing headstones and has secured or laid flat any found to be unstable.

6.23 Archaeology

Consultation with the Diocesan Archaeological Advisor and Local Authority Archaeologist indicates that the church and its site are of archaeological importance and they should be consulted when significant works are being considered.

An archaeological investigation was undertaken by Archaeological Services University of Durham prior to the last inspection within the embankment to the north of the chancel where it is proposed to extend the building.

A report of this investigation was not available to the inspector but it was understood that a chancel pit and other interred remains were uncovered.

6.23 Areas Not Inspected

(This may not be an exhaustive list)

- 1 Organ pipework
- 2 Under floor voids
- 3 Roof voids (e.g. to chancel)
- 4 Oil Storage Installation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.0 ITEMS REQUIRING ATTENTION IMMEDIATELY

1.1 Rainwater Installation

Check and repair or adjust west valley outlet or hopper-head to north aisle to ensure rainwater is adequately drained.

1.2 Roof Coverings

- (i) Re-fix using lead wedges and re-point loose lead covering flashings to tower roof.
(see also item 2.4 below which could be done at the same time)
- (ii) Repair and repoint open joints to chimney head to tower and re-fix and repoint loose lead flashings.
(or remove whole structure and extend lead cover see recommendation 5.7 below)

1.3 Lightning Protection

To be tested in accordance with the requirements of British Standard 6651 with 5 years from the previous test. Any defects or sub-standard elements to be repaired or replaced and/or reported to the Inspecting Architect as soon as possible and a copy of The Test Certificate placed in the Log Book.

1.4 Electrical Installation

Should be tested for earth continuity and resistance in accordance with the current I.E.E. regulations within 5 years from the previous test. A copy of the test certificate should be placed with the Church Log Book and any recommendations carried out or reported to the church Architect.

2.0 ITEMS TO BE ATTENDED TO WITHIN THE NEXT 12- 24 MONTHS

2.1 External Walls

Re-new all broken or missing under floor and wall ventilation grills to north side with new cast iron grills to match or infill to match stonework where redundant and the ventilation is no longer required.

Infill to match, stonework openings and voids in external wall to east gable and west gable of north aisle.

2.2 **Roof Coverings**

- (ii) Re-dress lifted section(s) of lead roll to north slope of south aisle.

2.3 **External Metalwork**

- (i) Re-decorate all cast iron eaves gutters and window ferramenta.
- (ii) Replace 2 No corroded wire guards to window to north aisle.

2.4 **Tower**

Repair and repoint internal face of parapet and individual open or defective joints to external face.

Clear all debris, nesting material etc. from belfry area.

2.4 **Flooring**

Re-bed loose floor blocks within pulpit.

Refix loose floor boards to east end of south aisle.

Provide permanent matching making good to position of removed pew to right of main entrance.

3.0 **ITEMS TO BE ATTENDED TO WITHIN THE NEXT 5 – 10 YEARS**

3.1 **External Walls**

Re-point all areas of lean, open or defective mortar joints including the following areas: -

(i) **North Elevation**

Organ Chamber	(a)	Adjacent to junction buttress
	(b)	Left corner area

North Aisle	(a)	Top left corner.
-------------	-----	------------------

(ii) **South Elevation**

South Aisle		Above and left of central window including parapet.
-------------	--	---

Chancel	(a)	Open joints to left window hood
	(b)	Various isolated areas.

Tower		Under belfry opening
-------	--	----------------------

(iii) **East Elevation**

East Gable	Various areas including area above plinth and bedding joint to water table.
South Aisle	Open joints to gable and parapet.
Vestry	Gable generally including under window.
North Aisle	Open joint to window tracery

(iv) **West Elevation**

South Porch	Centre line of wall.
Tower	Movement joint under window and open joint to lower string course.

3.2 **Roof Areas**

Re-new face laminated coping stone to north side of chancel gable.

3.3 **External Windows**

Repair or replace cracked, broken or missing glass quarries to:

- (i) South Porch gable window
- (ii) South Chancel windows

3.4 **Internal Walls**

Repair/replace and re-decorate defective plaster to East and West Gables of Vestry following repair and drying out of wall.

4.0 ITEMS WHICH ARE DESIRABLE BUT NOT ESSENTIAL

4.1 **External Stonework**

Replace severely eroded coping stones to tower parapet.

4.2 **External Windows**

Repair buckled leaded glazing to North Vestry.

5.0 ITEMS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

5.1 **Structural Timber** in tower should be checked for active beetle infestation and treated if necessary.

5.2 **Water Table** – to Vestry gable to be checked for water tightness any defective joints to be re-pointed and/or defective lead flashings and soakers repaired.

5.3 **Structural Investigation**

Carry out an investigation of the existing foundations and underlying geological conditions to confirm existing situation and likely longer term effect on the building.

This work may be eligible for grant aid under the English Heritage Church Scheme.

5.4 **Redundant Chimney**

Consider removing redundant chimney to tower roof and extending lead roof covering over.

5.5 **Belfry Openings**

Investigate options for discouraging birds nesting or attempting to nest in the belfry openings.

5.6 **Clock**

Investigate converting the mechanism to electric operation which will enable the weighted mechanism to be removed and the concrete enclosure to be removed.

The redundant chimney on the north side of the tower could also be removed and the rather unsightly access ladder replaced by a more discrete design which does not require anti-fall hoops.

6.0 Estimation of Cost of Repairs and Other Works

To guide parish, diocesan and funding agencies (e.g. English Heritage) financial planning, the following approximations of the cost for the various categories or work listed in the Recommendations are given. These costs are based on current costs (i.e. no allowance is made for future inflation) and include allowances for professional fees (where this is applicable) and VAT at the standard rate on repairs and fees (i.e. no allowance has been made for any Listed Building Grant).

Allowance has also been made for works which may be expected to be undertaken by voluntary labour i.e. at no cost except for materials.

6.1 **Items requiring attention immediately**

£1,000.00 - £1,500.00

6.2 **Items to be attended to with the next 12 – 24 months**

£2,500.00 - £3,500.00

6.3 **Items to be attended to within the next 5 – 10 years**

£2,500.00 - £3,500.00

6.4 **Items which are desirable but not essential (at present)**

£10,000.00

6.5 **Items for Further Investigation**

£15,000.00

Note: This sum allows for the structural investigation work described in item 5.6 but **NOT** for any subsequently required remedial work.

T.O.h.P. Architects
The Old Hall Practice Limited
57 Front Street
West Auckland
Bishop Auckland
DL14 9HL

Date: 24th January 2011