

QUINQUENNIAL SURVEY OF FABRIC 2009

**ST NICHOLAS' CHURCH
West Boldon
Tyne and Wear**

E435111 - N561112

Grade I

Archdeaconry of Sunderland

INSPECTION NO 6

Date of Inspection: 3 December 2009

**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 structure is of 13th Century with some Saxon foundation. The present form is a stone fabric consisting of a nave with tower and spire at the west end, north and south aisles, chancel and organ bay to the north. The roof coverings were repaired and replaced in a 1997/8 project and include slate to chancel and nave with lead sheet to aisles and organ bay. The small south porch retains its stone slated covering.
- 1.2 The church is listed Grade 1 and stands on high ground to the west of the village and the spire is a very prominent landmark.

2.0 SUMMARY OF WORKS CARRIED OUT SINCE LAST INSPECTION

- 2.1 The church does not hold a formal log book, but the following works are noted;
- a) Sketch proposals were prepared for consideration by the PCC for a toilet and store, within the west vestry, in August 2006. Full contract details and tenders were received in December 2008 and works began in December 2009.
 - b) The weather vane was repaired in June 2008

3.0 STRUCTURAL CONDITION

- 3.1 The building is in a good order with no structural defects and the overall condition does not appear to have changed since the last quinquennial inspection.

4.0 WALLS

Interior

- 4.1 The walls of the interior are painted plaster, with no signs of surface cracking or deterioration, and exposed stone to nave clerestory and baptistery at the base of the tower. The general appearance is good with only some previous poor repointing at the base of the tower which is visually poor but not requiring immediate attention.

Exterior

- 4.4 As noted in the last report the fabric was archaeologically recorded by Peter Ryder during the 1997/8 repair project and the stonework remains in very good condition with no defects. (see appendix 'iv')

- 4.5 It is noted that the ivy and hydrangea growth at each side of the porch is now clear of the stonework.

5.0 TOWER

- 5.1 The stonework to the Tower and Spire is in good condition.
- 5.2 The comments made in previous report regarding the ladder to the clock floor and roof access are still relevant. (see appendix 'v'))
- 5.3 An inspection of the upper level and bell frame was not made.
- 5.4 The oak access door to the roof is in excellent condition and weathered to silver grey. (see appendix 'v')

6.0 ROOFS, GUTTERS AND CEILINGS

- 6.1 The nave and chancel roof covering is in new slate and remains in excellent condition following the 1997/8 replacement. There is one dislodged slate in south gutter and one cracked slate at the south west lead air vent and one the north east side of the nave The gutters to the Chancel are in cast iron and clear of debris and well painted. (see appendix 'vi')
- 6.2 The remaining roof covering, to Aisles and Vestry/organ bay, is in lead sheet and remains in excellent condition with no signs of damage. All gutters in the leadwork are clear. (see appendix 'vii')
- 6.3 Internally the roof structure is exposed and viewed from ground level appears to be in good condition. It was checked and cleaned following the repairs in 1989. However a closer inspection would be advisable.

7.0 RAINWATER DISPOSAL, DRAINAGE AND EXTERNAL DECORATION

- 7.1 Rainwater disposal is by cast iron downpipes from either lead gutters behind parapets or surface mounted cast iron gutters. They are all in good condition.
- 7.2 The gullies require checking and clearing of leaves and debris noted at the time of the inspection. The inspection chambers were inspected and the system was noted as a form of 'French drain' and generally clear.

8.0 INTERNAL DECORATION

- 8.1 The redecoration of the internal plaster in "Farrow and Ball" off-white remains in good condition with no damage. (the new work within the toilet and store will be finished in the same material)

9.0 FLOORS AND GALLERIES

- 9.1 Nave – carpet covers the aisles with only the baptistery stone exposed. Cast iron heating grilles within stone paving are sound and generally intact. Pine wood blocks, 115 X 345mm within pew areas are clean and in good order with only a small area at north east corner showing signs of movement. No action is needed but should be kept under observation.
- 9.2 Vestry – concrete floor above boiler room is in sound condition. The west vestry, being converted into a toilet, has sound wood block to be covered with plywood and vinyl flooring.
- 9.3 Chancel – carpet covers most of the area, except for a small part of stone and tile at east. There are still signs of the uneven surface noted in last report. This item requires further investigation. (see appendix 'vii')

10.0 GLAZING & VENTILATION

- 10.1 All glazing is in good condition and there are no signs of damage to wall surface from condensation.
- 10.2 The wire window protection remains sound and well painted.

11.0 ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION, LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR

- 11.1 The lighting, installed in 1998 under direction of Michael Philips, is well designed and maintained. (see also general noted 21.1)

12.0 HEATING

- 12.1 The heating installation is by gas fired boiler with pipes within floor ducts and radiators at the west end and in chancel. All in good condition and the radiators well painted. However the pipe ducts contain much debris and covering to pipes which will inhibit their effectiveness.

12.2 The boiler house is situated below the vestry and access is by external steps within a 1998 enclosure. All in good condition and boiler regularly maintained.

12.3 The entrance door is a framed, ledged and battened door in good condition.

13.0 FIRE PREVENTION

13.1 The 9ltr water and 2.3Kg CO2 extinguishers are situated at north door and adjacent to the organ. They are recorded as tested 1 July 2009.

14.0 FURNITURE AND FITTINGS

14.1 All of the furnishings are in good condition and well maintained.

14.2 The memorials and wall plaques at the south west are as report at the last inspection. but with some cleaning in progress. Two plaques are fixed to the east wall of the porch and three are within the chancel. One plaque on the window sill of the west vestry, now to be the toilet, will require fixing in an alternative position. (see appendix 'ix')

15.0 CHURCH GROUNDS

15.1 The churchyard maintenance is in the care of the Local Authority and the condition is fair although attention should be given to the trees and saplings. The condition of the gravestones is poor and in some case dangerous. The ground condition has made most lean and or sink with one in particular near the north entrance steps at a dangerous angle of 45 degrees. Some have been laid flat to the ground and to do this with others must be resisted if the character of the churchyard is to be retained. (see appendix 'ix')

15.2 the Calvary erected in the memory of Frederick Wilson, Rector 1945-50 in a central position within the churchyard is fine but the white painting of the stone is unfortunate and generally detracts from the character of the church yard. (see appendix 'x')

15.3 Access to the church is via a main gate at the west over two steps and a secondary gate at the north east corner of the churchyard with a flight of steps. Permanent access, to main entrance, to comply with DDA requirements would be desirable but not easy to achieve with the slope of churchyard path and public footpath adjacent to steps.

15.4 At the time of the inspection the work to the new toilet was in progress and the drainage trench had been excavated. The work was monitored by an archaeologist from the Archaeological Services from Durham University. (see appendix 'x')

16.0 BOUNDARY WALLS

- 16.1 The wall to the north adjacent to the public footpath was rebuilt by the Local Authority in 1999 and remains in sound condition. Towards the west end there is a section of timber fencing, also in sound condition, adjacent to the main entrance gate. The gate pillars are weathered but appear to be structurally sound with no sign of movement. The metal gate requires redecoration.
- 16.2 The remaining walls to the south and east are in good condition – the repairs carried out in 2004 are now in good condition. One section to the west is covered with ivy and needs to be kept under control.
- 16.3 A section of the south west wall has a metal fence fixed to the top stones. This was an issue with the neighbour in 2006 when it was agreed that the fence, if still required, should be self supporting. No action has been taken, however the fence is screened by under growth and not affecting the character of the churchyard. (see appendix 'xi')

17.0 ENVIRONMENT SITUATION

- 17.1 The Church is surrounded by residential properties but is situated on higher ground and is not affected by its neighbours. The tower and spire is a powerful landmark when seen from the approach road.

18.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS

- 18.1 The following are noted for further investigation and/or monitoring –
- i) inspection of the bell frame (item 5.3)
 - ii) investigation of the chancel floor (item 9.3)

19.0 PRIORITY OF ADVISED REPAIRS

19.1 Of utmost urgency

- i) Check and clean all gutters of vegetation before winter – (7.2) est. cost £ 200

19.2 Essential within next 6-18 months

- i) Replace damaged slates to nave roof - (6.1) est. cost £ 900
- ii) Investigate and attend to defective floor in chancel - (9.3) est. cost £1,000
- iii) Refix plaque from west vestry – (16.2) est. cost £ 250

19.3 **Necessary within the Quinquennium**

(i) None

19.4 **Ultimately desirable**

(i) Improve safety to the tower access
ladder – (5.2) est cost £2,500

(ii) provide DDA access requirement to
main entrance – (15.3) est. cost £ 2,500

(iii) improve condition of graves and memorials
in churchyard and record before they
are lost – (15.1) L.A and in-house

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

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.