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St Peter's Church, Heversham

General Statement of Significance and Listing Notice

October 2019



ST PETER'S CHURCH, HEVERSHAM is the oldest recorded church in the original county of Westmorland. It was originally the Parish Church of a large Parish which included the small market town of Milnthorpe until the Church was built there in the mid 19th century. The building stands in the heart of the village at a crossroads which is still a busy focus of activity. A large Churchyard surrounds the Church and the land rises sharply behind where there are public footpaths onto Heversham Head from where the Church can be seen set in the beautiful landscape of the Kent estuary with the Lakeland fells beyond.



View from the path onto Heversham Head

The Church is rectangular on plan and consists of the Nave and North and South Aisles with the Tower to the west, a Chancel with the Levens Chapel and Clergy Vestry to the north east and the Dallam Chapel to the south east. There are two entrances – a Porch to the south west and a second entrance into the Dallam Chapel. The Nave occupies the space of an earlier Chapel dating from around 1100 to which a square Tower and the South Aisle were added later in the 12th century, the south arcade being the oldest surviving part of the fabric. The South Aisle was widened and the Dallam Chapel added in the 14thC and the Chancel, the Levens Chapel and the Vestry were added in the 15thC. Finally the Dallam Chapel was extended to the east in the 16thC and the footprint of the plan seen today was completed. It is all in the Gothic style - the walls generally are rubble limestone but with some ashlar sandstone and with sandstone window dressings. There are some slated roofs and some leaded, including the Nave, South Aisle, Dallam and Levens Chapels. There are a number of fine windows including the 15thC five bay window in the Chancel and a similar 16thC window in the Dallam Chapel, all re-glazed in the 19th century.



The Church suffered a disastrous fire in 1601 caused, according to records, by a plumber and although much of the masonry survived, most of the roof dates from the renovation that followed. The building then underwent a major Victorian restoration as part of which the Chancel was re-ordered and its roof rebuilt by Paley and Austin. The Norman tower was demolished and a new tower built, also by Paley and Austin - an early work dating from 1868. (Mr Hubert Austin owned Heversham House opposite the Church and the Tower would have appeared large in his window – see photo.) A ring of six bells was re-hung and a new organ by Wilkinsons of Kendal and the oak pews were all installed around this time.



The view of the Tower from Mr Hubert Austin's window (the architect)

The building then remained largely unchanged until recently when the interior was re-ordered. An enclosed Creche was formed in the north west corner and a little later the forward altar and the removable communion rails were installed, the font was moved to the east end of the South Aisle and alterations made to the Dallam Chapel to provide a kitchenette and coffee area, all constructed from the original pews. The Choir pews were altered to provide more space in the Chancel and those removed were relocated into the ground floor of the Tower.



ENGLISH HERITAGE LISTINGS NOTICE

Name: CHURCH OF ST PETER

List entry Number: 1086557

Grade: II*

Date first listed: 12-Feb-1962

SD 48 SE HEVERSHAM Heversham

2/6 Church of St Peter 12-2-62

G.V. 11*

Parish Church. C12 South arcade to nave, South arch and South porch probably C14; Chancel and North Vestry rebuilt during early C15; nave clerestory and South Chapel added or rebuilt late C15; North Chapel probably early C16. Considerable rebuilding and alteration in early C17 following a fire. Comprehensive restoration in 1868 by Paley and Austin including additional West Tower and rebuilding of Chancel arch and North arcade. Mostly limestone rubble with sandstone dressings, Vestry and East wall of Chancel coursed sandstone blocks. Lead roofs. Perpendicular style: Victorian additions. Early English. West Tower, nave with aisles, chancel with North and South chapels and North Vestry. Square 3-stage Tower with clasping buttresses to lower stages, stair turret to South West corner and small leaded spire. Gabled porch with pointed-arched openings with hood moulds: heavy oak studded inner door with early medieval ironwork. Shaft of Celtic cross in porch. Interior: 3-bay nave, 2-bay Chancel. For full description, including fittings and memorials, see RCHM pp109-111.

Listing NGR: SD4960083390

