

HEBRON

ST CUTHBERT'S CHURCH

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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HEBBURN CHAPEL.

PETER F RYDER
B.A., M.Phil, F.S.A
HISTORIC BUILDINGS CONSULTANT

The Vicarage
Otterburn
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE19 1NP
01830 520590
E mail: PFRyder@broomlee.org



Hebron, St Cuthbert

The hamlet of Hebron lies c 4 km north of the centre of Morpeth, 1 km to the east of the Great North Road (A1). The church of St Cuthbert, formerly a chapel in the parish of Bothal, stands alone at the north end of the settlement (NGR NZ 1942 8983) .



Description

The church consists of an aisleless nave and chancel, and a north vestry and organ chamber.

The south and west walls of the **Nave** are of close-jointed squared stone with a distinctive horizontally-tooled stone, whilst on the north there is more weathered untooled stone in the lower courses- probably older work re-used, and blocks with a rough horizontal tooling higher up. The roofs of nave and chancel are of Welsh slate; the vestry is of horizontally-tooled ashlar with a red tile roof.

The west gable has a central projection, carrying the bellcote; it has a window with a plain two-centred arch, and higher up a quatrefoil panel enclosing a smaller square opening. The gable has an ashlar coping, carried on hollow-chamfered kneelers and chamfered on its underside. The bellcote is rather attractive, and has a four-centred arch, with an impost band, with above a tapering stone spirelet. The south side of the nave has a doorway at its west end, and two windows, all with simple two-centred arches. Old illustrations show a high-level window, lighting the former gallery, a little to the east of the doorway, but it has been infilled with stonework closely matched to the original. On the north there are two further windows of the same type; Wilson's 1870 plan shows only the eastern, but the inserted western only gives itself away by having slightly smaller dressings. Rising from the east end of the wall (which is overlapped by the western part of the vestry) is a tall ashlar chimney stack with an east-west opening in its cap, with round arches to both intrados and extrados.

The east gable of the nave has a cross finial, replacing a small square pinnacle with cusped quatrefoils on each face, which now lies at the foot of the south wall of the chancel.

The Chancel has two contrasting fabric types. The western half of the south wall is of close-jointed horizontally-tooled stone, a close match of that in the nave but perhaps a little less weathered; to the east, beyond a ragged vertical joint is roughly-coursed and toughly-shaped stone, clearly much older. The south wall is now quite featureless; a 1904 plan (and older



The church from the south-west

(left) North-west view

(right) Chancel from south



illustrations) show a priest's door, with a two-centred arch, at the west end of the wall but there is now no real sign of it, suggesting that this area must have been re-faced.

The east end of the chancel is largely of the older roughly-coursed masonry, which extends virtually up to eaves level on each side, although the present east window, of five lights in a free Perpendicular style, is of late 19th/early 20th century character. It has a four-centred arch, and a casement-moulded hood with turned-back ends. The broader ogee-headed centre light has cinquefoil cusping, whilst the flanking lights have trefoil cusping under segmental-pointed arches, and the head has panel tracery with brattished transoms. Beneath the window is a patch of secondary masonry, suggesting that its predecessor had its sill at a lower level. The gable has an ashlar coping, on hollow-chamfered kneelers, with a cross finial; old illustrations show a pyramidal finial, which is possibly the same one as now lies outside the west end.

The north side of the chancel is covered by the early-20th century Vestry; its openings all have hollow-chamfered surrounds. Its north elevation is in three parts, the centre, under a hipped gable, is set forward, with a shoulder-arched doorway and a trefoil-headed window alongside to the west. The west part has a narrow square-headed window and the longer east part is featureless. The east wall has a square-headed three-light mullioned window and the west wall a square-headed doorway and a small square hatch.

The Interior

There is a small internal lobby around the south door; the interior of the church is all plastered and whitewashed, except for the exposed dressings of the chancel arch and openings in the chancel. The Nave has an old fielded panelled dado; its openings have plain pointed rear arches, and in the centre of its west wall is an apsidal recess with a tall pointed arch. The roof is of three bays, with two queen-post trusses and two, set against the end walls, of hammer beam type. The trusses are set on shaped ashlar corbels supporting short wall posts beneath the principals, with curved braces. There are two levels of heavy purlins on each roof slope, the lower being additionally supported by braces from the queen posts, and the upper by wind braces from the principals. There is ashlar to the eaves. The whole roof structure looks of late 19th or early 20th century character.

The one medieval feature of the church, the chancel arch, is of steep two-centred form, and of two chamfered orders, the inner carried on semi-octagonal responds with moulded capitals but no bases. The other features of the chancel are probably of early 20th century date; at the west end of the north side of the chancel is a three-centred arch to the organ chamber (now screened off) with a continuous hollow chamfer, with alongside it both east a vestry door, smaller but of similar form. The east window has a hollow-chamfered rear arch, and its internal sill is lowered to take a reredos. There is a simple boarded wagon roof.

The interior of the vestry has been sub-divided in the relatively-recent past, a kitchen replacing the organ with a toilet alongside on the north.

Interior looking east



Structural History.

Little appears to be known of the medieval chapel except that by the 17th century it was in very poor condition. Dr Bazire, in his 1674 visitation, found it ‘most scandalously and dangerously ruinous: roof divided, underpropt within by eight crutches, without with three : the seats all upturned or broken’¹. In 1793 the nave was totally rebuilt in a simple Gothick style. An 1870 plan² shows the church as it then stood, with a western gallery half the length of the nave, against the south wall of which the pulpit stood.

The church was altered again in the late 19th or early 20th century, when the roofs and most of the internal fittings and furnishings were renewed, and the earlier vestry shown by Wilson, which may have been contemporary with the 1793 rebuilding, was replaced by the present structure³.

Archaeological Assessment

As this is an albeit much-altered building it is one of some archaeological significance. As the present church almost certainly occupies the footprint of the medieval chapel, then structural remains of its predecessor may well survive beneath its floors, although there will have been the usual disturbance by generations of burial, and probably the 19th century creation of an underfloor heating system. Any disturbance of sub-floor deposits should be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief.

In terms of the above-ground fabric, medieval masonry only appears to survive in the chancel arch and in parts of the chancel, in walling rendered mute internally by plaster. If this plaster is removed, then again vigilance is essential; there is a small chance that medieval plaster (with paintings) may survive, and a larger one that medieval structural features (such as piscine, sedilia and aumbries) may remain. The nave is almost certainly a complete rebuild of 1793, and its fabric unlikely to be of much interest (although there is a blocked gallery window on the south, well disguised without but which may retain some detail internally); if late 18th century plasterwork survives beneath more recent layers, it might well have painted texts or some other decoration, which although of less value than medieval paintings would still merit some degree of recording if disturbed.)

¹ Quoted by J.F.Hodgson History of Northumberland Part II Vol., li (1832) 130

² Wilson, F.R. (1970) Churches of the Archdeaconry of Lindisfarne, 160 (see p.6)

³ If these were all the result of one campaign of works, this probably took place in the first decade of the 20th century; a plan dated 1904 (seen by the writer on a visit in 1984) showed a window on the south side of the chancel, no longer evident, whilst the present vestry appears in between the 1897 and 1923 Ordnance Survey 25":1 mile maps.

Wilson's 1870 account and drawings, which provide a valuable record of the internal arrangements of the Georgian church before its c1900 remodelling.

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Hebburn Church.

It was Hebburn church that Dr. Basire found propped up with thirteen "rough-hewn props." This was in the reign of Charles the Second. Since that date the fabric has been re-built, with the exception of the chancel arch, which is ancient.

It is a small structure, not exceeding sixty-five feet in length, consisting of a nave and chancel, with a vestry opening out of the chancel on the north side. At the west end a gallery lowers over nearly half the nave. The pulpit is in the centre of the south side of the nave; and the font at the west end.

On the west gable is a bell-turret for one bell finished with a pinnacle.

The external doorways, two in number, one at the west end of the south side of the nave, and the other on the same side of the chancel, are precisely similar to the window openings. All are, as nearly as may be, of the same height and width, and finished with the same arched headings. The doorways, however, are furnished with planked doors; and the windows filled with many small panes of glass. The gallery is lighted with a window corresponding with the rest and with the doorways except in the matter of size. It is of half the length of those of the lower portion of the fabric.

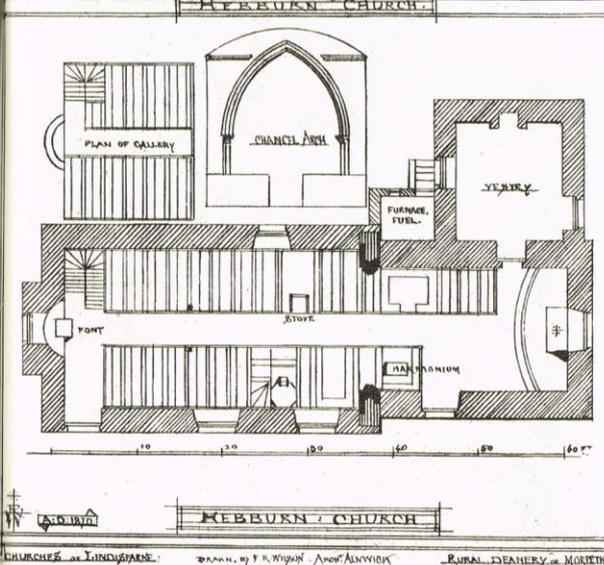
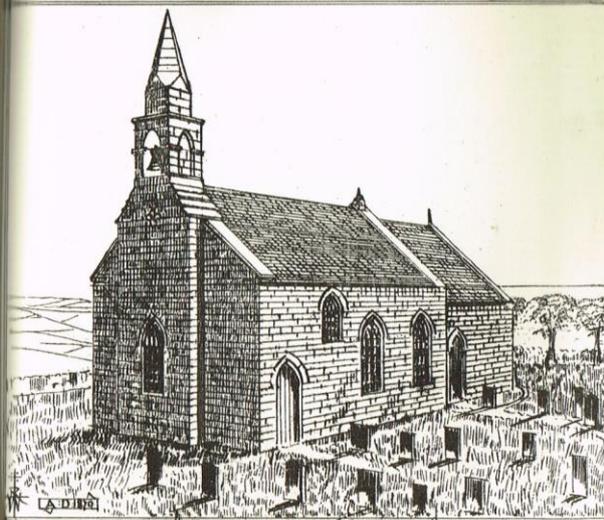
There are three tablets on the walls. One bears date 1761, and records the bequest of a hundred and forty pounds to the poor of Hebburn chapelry, by Henry Ogle, of Causey Park, Esq.; the second tells of the bequest of fifty pounds, by Joseph Tysack, Esq., in 1841, for the use of such school at Tritlington as may be under the patronage of his Grace the Duke of Portland and the Rector of Bothal. The third is a memorial of the Rev. Thos. Fallowfield, curate of the chapelry, who died in 1831.

In Dr. Basire's time, Hebburn was written Hepburne. It is now sometimes called Hebron.

The chapelry is ecclesiastically dependent upon Bothal.

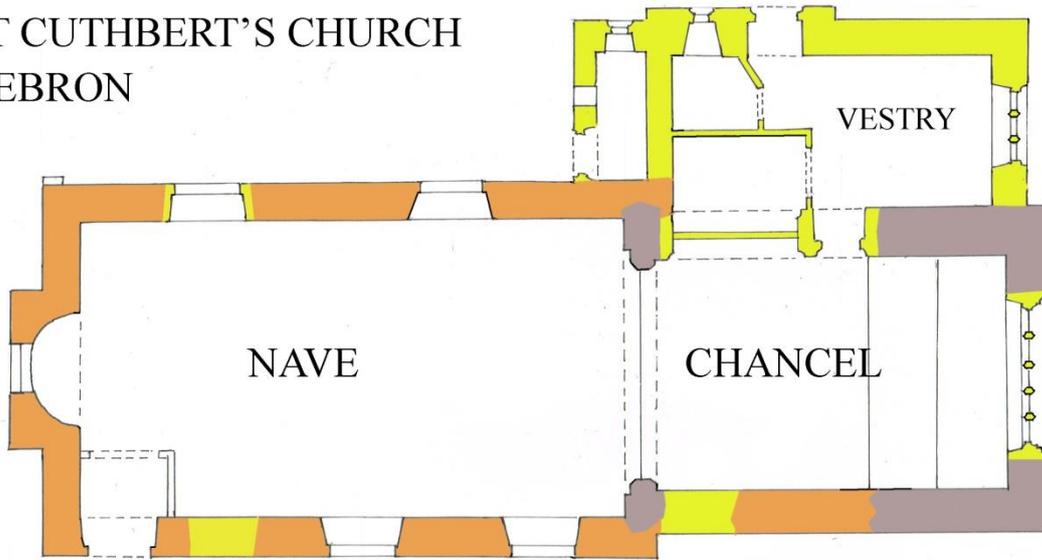
The Register of Hebburn commences in 1680. I am indebted to the Rev. J. A. Roberts for the following extracts:—

Baptized and Biwyed in the year of God 1680.
 Baptized Henry ye son of Henry Tod in fferrother, April y^e 14
 Buried Jannet Tod of fferrother ye first of April 1680
 Mawyges in ye yeare of God 1680.
 Maryed Edward Tod and Mabel Bell fferrother June ye 10.

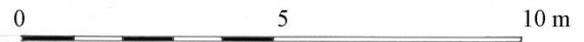


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- Medieval
- 1793
- 20th century



Survey P F Ryder 13 6 2020