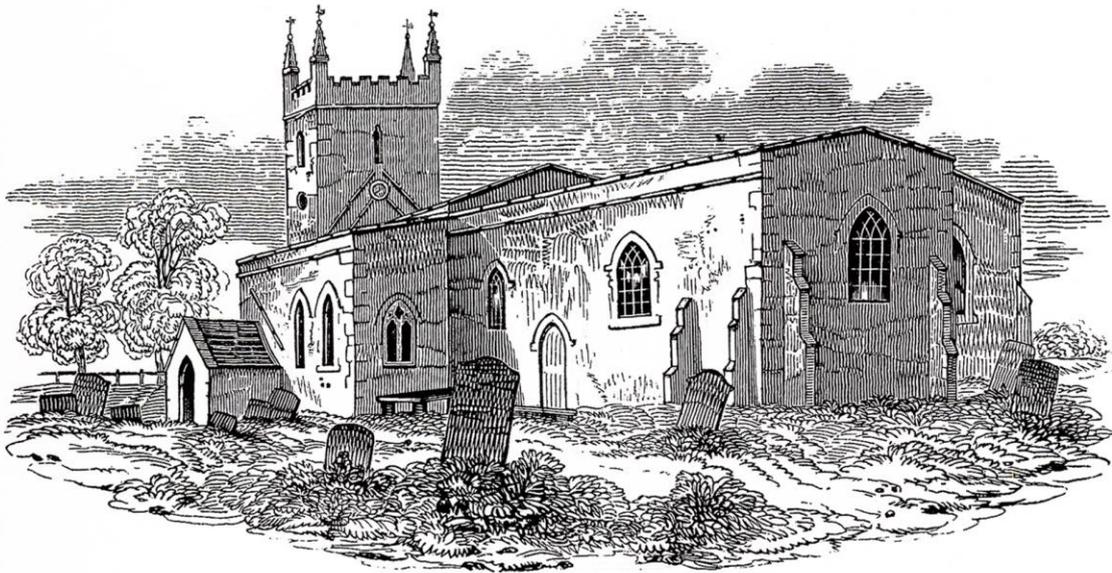


St Mary Magdalene, Whalton

An Archaeological Assessment

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THE CHURCH OF WHALTON,

South east view, from Hodgson's History of Northumberland (1827)

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St Mary Magdalene, Whalton

Whalton parish church stands to the south of the single street of the village, on the east side of the road to Ogle. The building consists of a three-bay aisled nave with a west tower and south porch, and a chancel, its east end skewed north of the central axis of the nave, with a two-bay north chapel rather wider than the adjacent nave aisle..

The Exterior

The **West Tower** is built of coursed squared stone in irregular courses; many of the blocks are almost square and some quite large. It rises unbroken except for a chamfered set-back above the lower stage, on the west and north sides only. There is a steep chamfered plinth with a square off-set below, abutting at the south-east corner against the earlier plinth (with a short 45Eoffset) of the projecting south-west angle of the original nave, which forms a buttress-like feature in re-entrant angle between south aisle and tower. The tower plinth is not continued around a buttress set towards the west end of the south wall, and is also interrupted at the western angles of the tower, almost as if there have been earlier angle buttresses, although there is now no sign of these in the fabric above. The buttress on the south has a series of chamfered offsets and rises to a little above the top of the first stage. The base of the eastern part of the north wall is concealed by a modern sunken boiler room; a shallow buttress-like feature rising above this in the angle between tower and aisle is in relatively recent masonry, and probably part of a flue.



The church from the south east

The only window of the lower part of the tower is the west window, which has a two-centred arch with alternating block jambs in tooled ashlar and a simple archivolt to its head, holding a 16-pane sash with intersecting Gothick glazing bars at the top; in style it looks of late 18th century date but its dressings are a more recent renewal. The upper parts of the tower show evidence of considerable structural movement, and areas of rebuilding. There is one ragged vertical break towards the west end on the south side (above the buttress) with the wall face to its west being set back c 0.15 m; and another towards the north end of the west side that similarly displaces the plane of the wall face; the break on the south dies back into the wall below the top, but that on the west continues to full height to displace the parapet. By the times one reaches the belfry, much of the walling seems to have been rebuilt in rather larger coursed stone, except perhaps on the west.

On the east face of the tower, above the present almost flat nave roof, cuts or raggles for two earlier and much steeper roof-lines are visible, their upper parts concealed by the clock face; the apex of the upper comes just below the belfry window. The only opening in the upper part of the tower below belfry level is a plain round-headed slit high up on the west, cut crudely

through the wall. The belfry has single-light openings; those on north, south and east have shouldered jambs and chamfered surrounds, and vary in their width and shape, the southern and eastern having two-centred heads whilst the northern has an almost segmental arch. The western opening, set a little lower, is quite different, and has a chamfered surround and a round-arched head cut into a block that is also shaped to a neat semicircle on its extrados.

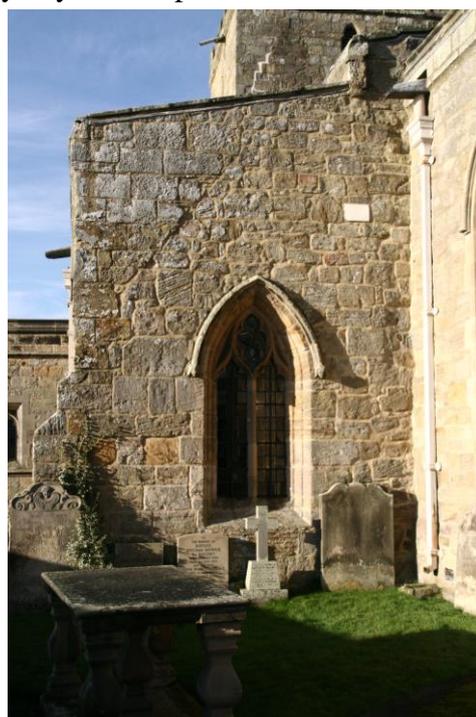
The parapet has an oversailing chamfered course at its base - interrupted by projecting spouts on north and south - and an embattled parapet. The merlons are tooled-and-margined blocks with steeply-chamfered tops, and may be later than the square pinnacle bases at the angles. The northernmost merlon on the east side has the initials 'I.D' and a shaped panel with the date '1822' incised on its top. The corner pinnacles were removed c 1927¹

Very little of the side walls of the **Nave** are exposed above the leaded roofs of the aisles; there is barely enough height to accommodate one low square-headed clerestory window at the east end of the south wall; the walls have a simple chamfered parapet.

The west end of the **South Aisle** is built of coursed squared stone, with alternating ashlar quoins, renewed up to the level of the original steeply-sloping roof line, which remains clearly visible. A fairly broad lancet window is set close to the north end of the wall; it has a chamfered surround, and a renewed sill.

The south wall of the aisle has a parapet with a chamfered oversailing course at its base and a chamfered coping. At the west end of the wall the south door (now inside the south porch) has a two-centred arch of one continuous order with a pair of chamfers, and a moulded hood with worn head stops. The wall directly above the doorway is rendered and lined to simulated snecked stone, above this section the gabled roof-line of an earlier and lower porch (perhaps that shown on 19th century prints) is visible. Immediately beyond the porch and set low in the wall is the west jamb of an early window, and then comes a 19th century square-headed window of two trefoiled ogee lights under a casement-moulded hood with turned-back ends; beneath its sill is a raised shield with the bearings of Ogle. East again is the eastern jamb of a second early window, also low down, and then a second similar 19th-century window, with some disturbed walling beneath it as if it replaces an earlier window with its sill at a lower level. At the east end of the wall is a small stepped buttress.

The east wall of the aisle (right) has a window of two trefoiled ogee lights with a quatrefoil in the spandrel, under a two-centred arch with a triple-chamfered surround and a moulded hood with worn head stops; as at the west end, the steep roof line of the 13th-century aisle is visible above. A little to the north of the window is a ragged straight joint between the squared stonework of the aisle wall and rubble, where one



¹According to Briggs, who dates the pinnacles to 1783 ; four openwork crocketed pinnacles, quite elaborate pieces that seem to have been cast in some form of Roman cement, now stand on the internal sill of the southern belfry openings. These are presumably the ones removed from the parapet, but look more like Victorian work..

would expect to see the quoins of the south-east angle of the original nave².

The 1908 **South Porch** is built of squared roughly-tooled stone with ashlar quoins and dressings; it has a two-part chamfered plinth and a moulded string at mid-height, which at the south end is carried up as an ogee-arched hoodmould over the two-centred doorway that has the moulding of its head dying into a broad chamfer on the jambs. There is another moulded string below the eaves, and the south gable is topped by a foliate cross finial. The east wall has a small square-headed window with a single cinquefoiled ogee light.

The **North Aisle** is built of coursed squared stone with, as on the south, larger blocks in the upper parts of the walls. At the west end is a single lancet set centrally; again as with the south aisle, the original steep roof line is clearly visible. Where the aisle wall meets the tower the masonry has been roughly cut back, probably to form a flue from the boiler room at the foot of the wall. The stepped diagonal buttress at the north-west corner of the aisle looks of 19th-century date. The north wall has three 19th-century windows, each of two trefoiled lights with a quatrefoil in the spandrel, under two-centred arches with simple moulded hoods. Under the westernmost the jambs of a narrow north door remain visible, and immediately to the east of the central one and beneath the east jamb of the easternmost are remains - jambs and sills - of earlier windows. The parapet is like that of the south aisle, but looks of 19th century date, with projecting stone spouts at each end; at its west end it terminates against an odd and apparently medieval feature in the form of a semi-octagonal shaft rising for c 1 m to the wall-head, and carried on a corbel rather like those of the arcade responds..

The south wall of the **Chancel** is built of coursed squared stone; much of the upper wall is late 18th or 19th-century refacing or rebuilding, showing a distinctive rough horizontal tooling. There is a simple chamfered plinth, broken by the 19th-century priest's door; further east this has a square step below the chamfer; the oversailing parapet has a hollow-chamfered course at its base, and looks all of 19th century date. The doorway has a segmental-pointed arch with a hollow chamfer, with a bar stop at the base of each jamb, and a simple moulded hood with turned-back ends; on either side are 19th-century windows of two trefoiled ogee lights, with quatrefoils in the spandrel, under two-centred arches with hollow-chamfered surrounds and hoodmoulds like that of the door. Some disturbed masonry at the west end of the wall probably relates to an earlier window. The stepped plinth is continued around a pair of buttresses close to the east end of the wall, which only rise to around half the wall height and have a narrow blocked opening - partly hidden by a monument fixed to the wall- between them.

The east end has a pair of similar but slightly taller buttresses, set back a little from the angles. Between them the 19th-century east window is of three trefoil-headed lights with reticulated tracery above, under a segmental-arched head, in a chamfered alternating-block surround and under a moulded hood with turned-back ends. A patch of 19th-century ashlar below the sill of the present window may indicate that a predecessor had a lower sill. The present shallow-pitched gable has a moulded coping and a cross fleury finial.

Only a short length of the north wall of the chancel is exposed externally, to the east of the North Chapel; this has a buttress similar to those on the south and east walls.

The **North Chapel** is constructed of coursed squared stone above a chamfered plinth, with a larger two-part plinth to the squat diagonal buttress at the north-east corner; it has an

²For further discussion of this see description of interior

oversailing parapet with a chamfered course at its base and an old moulded coping. Although the chapel is a little wider than the adjacent north nave aisle there is no buttress at the north-west angle. The north wall has two 19th-century windows, each of two trefoiled ogee lights with a quatrefoil in the spandrel, under double-chamfered two-centred arches and moulded hoods with head stops; to the east of the eastern window part of an incised cross slab grave cover has been re-used in the wall, and east of this again is an apparent straight joint, perhaps a remnant of an earlier window; much of the upper wall around the window heads has been refaced in 19th century stone. The east wall of the chapel has another 19th century window, of two trefoiled ogee lights under a segmental-headed arch, with a double-chamfered surround and a moulded hood with head stops.

The Interior

The internal wall faces of the church are clear of plaster except in the North Chapel.

Inside the **Tower** the west face of the tower arch is similar to the east (see description of nave), and is set south-of-centre as regards the present tower. Above the extrados of the outer order on the south, and just below the underdrawn plaster ceiling, is an area of diagonally-set rubble; in the corresponding position to the north of the arch is conventional squared masonry. The lower 2.5m or so of the internal walls of the tower are concealed by a tall boarded dado.



tower arch

there is an open socket c 3 m above the ground and 1 m from the west end of the north wall, and another shallower one c 4 m up at the north end of the east wall, on the same level as the impost of the tower arch. The west window has a plain two-centred rear arch in roughly-tooled stone; above it, and just below the ceiling, is a timber lintel that seems to relate to an earlier opening that was taller and slightly narrower than the present window.

The west face of the

A relatively modern ladder stair rises eastwards against the north wall of the tower to a trapdoor that exposes one roughly-shaped north-south beam of some age. The floor above has no windows, and houses the clock pendulum and weights; its only significant feature is what looks like a blocked opening c 0.90 m square and 1m above the floor, set a little south-of-centre in the east wall; it is possible that this has had a shouldered head³. The walls are of coursed roughly squared stone; in general there appears less evidence of the cracks and rebuilding lines in the internal wall faces than is seen externally. High in the west wall just below the second floor is a re-used stone with a fragment of roll moulding.

A ladder stair rises west along the south wall to the clock chamber, which has a floor of 20th-century east-west joists carrying recent boards. Here there is a round-headed light in the

³On the opposite (east) face of the wall this is probably concealed by the present roof.

west wall, which looks as if it has been crudely cut through the existing wall masonry, without any proper lintel. The timbers supporting the clock mechanism bear the date '1982'. Another short ladder stair rises north alongside the west wall to give access to the belfry, which has a floor of north-south joists (mostly recent), additionally supported on two 20th-century beams set east-west.

The bell frame is of bolted construction, and of late 18th or early 19th century character; it could well be contemporary with the single bell, which is dated '1824', but has been strengthened by a variety of recent timbers. The belfry openings on north, south and east all have similar shouldered rear arches and neatly-splayed jambs; the smaller round-arched opening on the west is set a little lower, and has a plain stone lintel, but its splays resemble those of the other openings.

The roof of the tower is carried on six slightly-cambered north-south beams, resting on wall-plates; secondary timbers have been added to strengthen some of the beams, and to partially conceal the original plates. There are simple shaped corbels at the north end of the east wall (supporting the adjacent beam) and set south of centre on the west wall, in this case supporting a short

The west wall of the **Nave** is of coursed squared stone in quite large blocks, many having a rough diagonal tooling. The tall semicircular tower arch is set considerably south-of-centre, and of two chamfered orders, the inner springing from square imposts chamfered on their lower edges. Any imposts to the outer order have been cut away, although there is some sign that an impost band extended back along the wall to the north for c 1m. Above the arch there is a disturbed area, perhaps an infilled socket, at the north end of the wall just below the nave ceiling.



Interior looking east

The nave arcades are each of three bays and have steeply two-centred arches of two chamfered orders, springing from octagonal piers with moulded bases on square plinths and capitals which have a ring at the base and both bell and abacus having a broad hollow chamfer on their lower angle, with semi-octagonal corbels as

responds.

There are some differences of detail. The corbel carrying the western respond of the south arcade springs from a block of wall 0.86 m thick, the wall thickening to c 0.93 m at the east end. Towards the nave the outer orders of the arches have carved foliate stops above the capitals, whilst the inner orders have simpler broach stops, and there is also a hoodmould, chamfered on its lower edge, with good head stops above the piers - a bearded and long-haired

male above the eastern and a head in chain mail above the western. Towards the aisle both orders have broach stops.

The wall above the arcade is of considerable interest and is of roughly coursed and quite irregular stone, except at the west end where it is of better squared and coursed stone and seems one build with the west wall; this section has a set-back just above the tops of the arches. A little to the east of centre of the western pier is a vertical feature that looks as if it could represent a cut-back cross-wall, although on the opposite (south) face of the wall the only large quoin-like blocks are around a metre to the west of this point. Returning to the internal face, there are remains of plaster with wall paintings - black-letter texts within a red border - above the eastern pier; the single clerestory window above the top of the eastern arch is set at the very head of the wall and has a timber lintel. The external face of the wall in general seems of better squared stone than the internal, and has a continuous set-back above the arches and c 0.6 m below the wall head; this is cut by a shallow recess, perhaps to house a former roof timber, immediately to the east of the apex of the westernmost arch.

A particular puzzle is found at the east end of the arcade (right) ; the arch springs from a corbel of the usual type, but the corbel is set above a series of large blocks⁴ that have a straight joint in line with the external face of the arcade; the adjacent east end wall of the aisle is set-back a few cm to the east; these for all the world look like the south-western angle quoins of an earlier structure to the east. Couple this with the fact that the south-eastern angle quoins of the original aisleless nave do not appear externally where one would expect them to, and we have a structural enigma not easy to resolve (see Structural History section).



The north arcade differs from the south in having no hood, and in the stops of its outer order, above the piers, having only rudimentary carving, as if unfinished. The western respond is also quite different, in that its corbel is set a block carried by an earlier respond of 12th-century character, of semicircular plan with a simple moulded base and a scalloped capital. The wall below the eastern respond (a corbel distinguished by having a line of nail-head ornament) has been cut back at some time, to bring it flush with the face of the east end of the nave and chancel arch. Above the arcade the wall is both markedly thinner than that on the south (0.71m at the west end and 0.81m at the east) and of more regularly-coursed squared stone, although there does appear to be a short straight joint above the western pier, opposite the possible cut-away wall on the south. There are again remains of wall painting of similar character to that seen on the south, and evidence of sockets for earlier tie-beams c 0.50 m below the 19th-century corbels that carry the present roof timbers.. The north face of the wall is again of regularly-coursed stone, although examination is hindered by heavy ribbon pointing.

At the west end of the **South Aisle** the old roof-line visible externally is again clear; the lancet

⁴One block c1.8 m above the floor has an incised consecration cross

window has a broad internal splay and a trefoiled rear arch. The heightening of the south wall is also clear, with larger blocks in the upper section. At the west end of the wall the south door has a segmental rear arch, with a chamfer only to its head, and an open drawbar tunnel in the west jamb and infilled socket opposite; alongside it is a two-centred arched recess, semicircular in plan, for a stoup or benitura, then two taller recesses, again with two-centred arched heads, from the former lancet windows (of which more fragmentary remains are visible externally) set low in the wall on either side of a 19th-century window which has a segmental rear arch, but older masonry in its internal splayed jambs. The second two-light window further east is wholly in 19th-century ashlar; below it is a medieval tomb recess with a four-centred arch and a chamfered surround, now containing a medieval cross slab grave cover⁵. At the east end of the wall is a piscina with a plain two-centred arch of square section, and fragmentary remains of a projecting bowl, with a drain; above it are more remains of wall painting, perhaps an ornamental border parallelling the east jamb of a predecessor of the eastern 19th-century window.

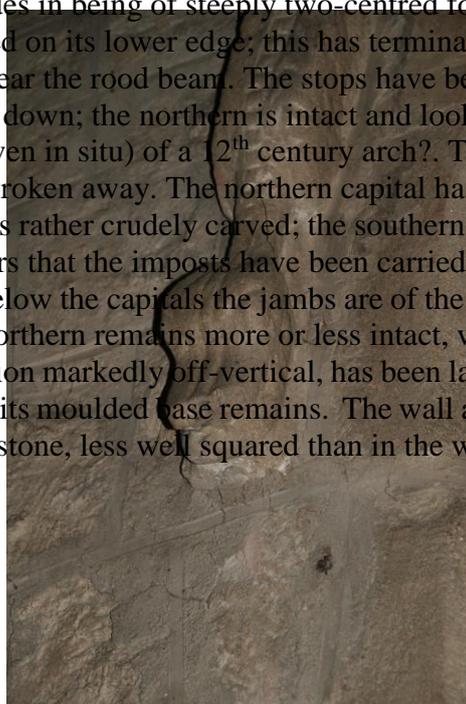
At the east end of the aisle the east window has a steep two-centred rear arch and a sloping sill; there is an odd section of projecting masonry at the foot of the wall, extending c 1 m beyond the 'quoining' already described on the south of the arcade respond, and rising c 0.3 m above the floor.

The floor of the **North Aisle** is set one step above that of the nave. The west window has a shouldered rear arch, with a cross slab grave cover re-used as its internal lintel. The north wall is heavily pointed; its three 19th-century windows all have plain two-centred rear arches, and jambs set almost square with the wall. Traces of the old north door are visible beneath the western, and immediately to the east of the central the east jamb and part of the curved head of an earlier window, with remains of wall painting - two parallel bands of red (on white) outline the head. Evidence of the second window further east may be concealed by wall monuments.

At the east end of the aisle a two-centred arch of two chamfered orders opens into the North Chapel; its outer order dies into the wall, but the inner is carried on corbels, the northern with nail head and cable ornament, and the southern with two lines of nail head. Below the corbels both jambs have been partially reconstructed in 19th-century ashlar, although at the foot of the southern a short length of 12th-century plinth survives. Above the arch the earlier steep roof-line of the aisle is visible, cut into by the arch head.

The **Chancel** arch resembles those of the nave arcades in being of steeply two-centred form, with a hoodmould towards the nave that is chamfered on its lower edge; this has terminated c 0.40 m above the respond capitals, presumably to clear the rood beam. The stops have been in the form of rather fine dragons, their heads pointing down; the northern is intact and looks of Romanesque character; is this a remnant (perhaps even in situ) of a 12th century arch?. The southern may have been similar but is now largely broken away. The northern capital has a band of nail-head and a cable moulding below, and is rather crudely carved; the southern, with a single line of nail-head, is partly restored; it appears that the imposts have been carried back along the west face of the wall, but later cut back. Below the capitals the jambs are of the same double-chamfered section as the arch capitals; the northern remains more or less intact, with a simple moulded base, but the southern, its inner section markedly off-vertical, has been largely rebuilt in 19th-century ashlar; the merest fragment of its moulded base remains. The wall above the arch is of heavily-mortared and roughly-shaped stone, less well squared than in the west

⁵For this and other slabs in the church see Ryder (2002).



and north walls.

The east face of the arch and wall present some puzzling features. On this side the two lower block of the outer order of the arch at its northern springing seem to belong to an earlier arch, and project beyond the line of those above; there is also some rough projecting masonry higher in the corner above them which might relate to an earlier wall. On the opposite (south) side the outer order dies into the side wall of the chancel high above the respond. Just below the roof and above the extrados of the outer order of the arch are two cut-back corbels, one on each side⁶, and on the north the steep line of an earlier roof, coming down to at least 1.5 m below the present eaves, is visible.

Dragon terminal to chancel arch hood

The internal face of the south wall is also quite complex. Close to its west end is the west jamb of a window, with the turn of its arched head; then come the pair of two-light windows and the priest's door between them, all of 19th-century date; the windows have two-centred arches and chamfered surrounds, and the door a hollow chamfer to its segmental-pointed rear arch only. Below the eastern window is what appears to be the projecting sill, chamfered on its lower angle, of former sedilia. In the rebuilt wall directly above are a small piscina with a two-centred arch and cut-back bowl (opening into a larger recess utilising the back wall of the earlier feature) with a square-headed aumbry to its east and then, at the east end of the wall, a larger recess with a simple segmental arch, formed in the upper part of a blocked opening which continues down to floor level. Above and between the aumbry and this recess, c 2.5 m above the floor, is a block, probably re-used, with a raised petalled boss with a deep central piercing⁷. Above and to the west is the east jamb, and turn of the rear arch, of another blocked window.

The north wall of the chancel has a two-bay arcade to the North Chapel, with a very clear break in walling material just above it, running the full length of the wall; the lower walling is of coursed quite thin blocks, and the upper of larger stones, including some almost triangular blocks, presumably re-used. The arcade is of two broad arches, almost semicircular in form, and each of two chamfered orders. The responds are semi-octagonal, with capitals decorated with lines of nail-head, the eastern having an additional line of cabling below. The most notable feature of the arcade is its central pier, which is probably the architectural highlight of the church, This is quite low, and square in plan, with a filleted shaft set diagonally at each corner, and each face occupied by a vertical band of large dog-tooth ornament. There is a moulded base on a square plinth, and a square capital with lines of nail-head and cabling, with pendants bearing pairs of tiny volutes at each corner, the south-eastern being additionally carved as a human face. There are infilled sockets both in the responds and in the lower voussoirs of the inner order, for former screen(s). The two arches have no hoodmould on either face - and it is clear from the adjacent masonry that they never did have except, puzzlingly, at the west end, where there are remains of a one accompanying the first four or five voussoirs. On the internal face of the wall this has been cut back flush with the wall, but on the external face it survives, chamfered above and below. On the south face of the wall immediately to the east of the arcade is a large projecting corbel, at the same level as the respond capital, its upper part damaged but with three Ogle shields below, and a crude vernacular human head at its base.

⁶These seem to be shown on Wilson's 1870 drawing and may have been of late 18th or 19th century date; it seems unlikely that Hicks and Charlewood would have destroyed them if they were thought to be genuine medieval work.

⁷Possibly, in some previous context, for a bell rope?

*The pier of the chancel arcade
from the south-east*

The 19th-century east window has chamfered jambs internally, with a clear ragged break between them and the wall fabric beyond, and a segmental rear arch turned in brick, that was presumably intended to be concealed by plaster. The lower part of the wall is concealed by the ashlar reredos of 1911.



Inside the **North Chapel** the east and lower parts of the other walls are plastered. The west wall shows a straight joint, to the south of the arch into the adjacent aisle, that represents the north-east angle of the early aisleless nave. The quoins are quite elongate, and course in with the walling stone; about 0.50 m out from them, above the arch, is a rough socket. On the north the two 19th-century windows have two-centred rear arches; the east end of the wall retains plaster almost up to the roof, hiding any evidence of the possible window position seen externally. The 19th-century east window has an internal frame of ashlar, with a chamfer only to the segmental rear arch; above and on either side the upper jambs and segmental-pointed rear arch of its medieval predecessor have been left clear of plaster.

The **Roofs** of the church are all of late 19th-century character. That of the nave, of very shallow pitch, is of four bays, with stopped hollow chamfers to the slightly-cambered ties and purlins, and a moulded ridge. The wall plates are carried by five simple quadrant corbels on each side, which seem contemporary with the roof. The aisle roofs are very similar, with a single level of purlins, and similar corbels. The four-bay chancel roof is similar in form but its timbers are of heavier scantling, and the ridge is of upright section and deeply moulded; the North Chapel again has a four-bay roof that is very similar but even simpler in detail; both have quadrant corbels below the tie-beams, like those in the nave and aisles.

The Structural Development of the Church

Whalton church is an intriguing building which has had a long and complex structural history, of which it is difficult to offer a clear reconstruction that takes into account all the visible evidence. The following interpretation - which more or less follows most previously published accounts - is offered with the proviso that there are several structural features which it does not account for, briefly discussed afterwards.

As often, the walls of the nave appear to be the earliest part of the fabric. The earliest architectural features - tower arch and the western respond of the north arcade - are both of early to mid-12th century date. The tower arch (and tower) have been described as of pre-Conquest date by some authorities, but there is no real evidence of this. Key evidence is seen in the external angle between tower and south aisle, where the corner of the early nave forms a buttress-like feature. This is constructed of relatively small blocks rather than large quoins, has a 45E plinth at its base, and the associated south wall of the nave is 0.86 m thick - all features which would point to a post-Conquest date. The exposed quoining at the opposite north-east corner of the nave is again of post-Conquest character, and presumably pre-dates the first north aisle (unless this did not extend the full length of the nave).

The tower arch poses several problems, not least the manner in which it is set off-centre both to the nave and to the tower. It seems likely that it was constructed for an earlier tower; the present one has a steeply-chamfered plinth that clearly post-dates that of the nave and seems of 13th-century character. The absence of plinth at the western angles of the tower suggests that there were formerly some sort of buttresses here, lost in a some subsequent reconstruction. The tower seems to have been prone to structural movements and consequent rebuilding, and offers little in the way of datable features. The external opening of the western belfry light looks of 12th-century character but may well have been re-used; its internal splays are similar to the other three openings which have shouldered heads (and rear arches) that could be of 14th or 15th century date.

The chancel is seen by Briggs (2002, 6) as having been rebuilt at the very end of the 12th century, on the strength of the similarity of the ornament of the pier of its north arcade to work in the presbytery of Tynemouth Priory (1190-1195).

Turning to the nave, the arcades are generally identified as of 13th century date, the northern replacing a 12th century predecessor. The aisle walls, or at least their lower parts, seem of the same date as well - assuming the 12th century north aisle to have been completely rebuilt. The 13th century church had a single steep-pitched roof covering both nave and aisles; the line of this is given by the lower of the two roof raggles still clearly visible on the east face of the tower, and by the roof-lines still visible in the aisles. Also contemporary are the western lancets of both aisles, and the remains of what were also presumably lancets set low in the side walls. The chancel arch may be of the same period, although it appears to incorporate a little of an earlier, possibly Romanesque arch.

A major reconstruction of the church followed, perhaps during the first quarter of the 14th century, possibly in more than one phase. Both the nave and aisle walls were heightened, and the chancel remodelled and its north aisle/chapel rebuilt. It is tempting to speculate that these works followed the church being wrecked in a Scots raid, perhaps in the early 1300s. It is difficult to date the remodelling, as old features were clearly re-used, and new ones perhaps

made to match the old⁸. The east window of the south aisle is of early 14th century character, as may be the south door; the drawbar tunnel in its western internal jamb is a significant feature, showing that the church when reconstructed was seen as a potential defensible retreat. Another feature of this period might be the very strange narrow doorway at the extreme east west end of the south wall of the chancel, a feature difficult to parallel in other local churches. The remodelled church also seems to have been very short on windows; when Hodgson wrote in 1827, it was still remembered that prior to 1783 the nave had only one window on the south, and none at all on the north. The tower was probably reconstructed again at this time, with 13th-century masonry only surviving in its lower walls.

Other changes may have taken place in the later medieval period; the second high-pitched roof (resulting in the upper of the two roof raggles on the east side of the tower), constructed when the nave and aisle walls were raised, was replaced at some time by a leaded one of the same low pitch as at present.

As often, evidence of post-medieval alterations has been swept away by later restorations. The first of these came in 1783, when a whole series of sash windows under Gothick arches were inserted, replacing all earlier windows except those in the ends of the aisles; only that in the west wall of the tower survives today. It is also recorded that the tower received its embattled parapet and corner pinnacles at this time.

Hodgson gives a print of the church, seen from the south-east, as it appeared after this restoration; he shows a south porch, clearly secondary, as the roof-line of a predecessor appears above it. Wilson's 1870 print (accompanied by a useful plan) shows that the sash in the east end had by then been replaced by a traceried window, but it was not until a major restoration in 1890, at the hands of the reputable Newcastle firm of Hicks and Charlewood, that the other sashes (except that in the tower) were replaced by good-quality Victorian gothic windows, in a free 14th century style; their 18th-century Gothick (or 'churchwarden', a perjorative term of the period) predecessors would have been thought quite inappropriate by this time; genuine medieval features were however respected and exposed.

The most recent change was the rebuilding of the south porch in 1908.

It remains to mention some features which cannot be easily incorporated into the above hypothesis, but do not fit readily into any credible alternatives.

- (1) The difference in character between the side walls of the nave. The south wall, c 0.9 m thick, is of roughly-coursed and irregular stone (like the east wall above the chancel arch), except for the section at its west end, which matches well with the squared stonework of the west wall. The north wall, only c 0.75 m thick, is of better-squared stone.

The difference in character between the squared stonework at the west end of the south wall and the remainder is most easily explained by the latter having been rebuilt when the arcade was inserted; but if this is the case, why is the wall above the north arcade so different, when the two arcades seem more or less contemporary?

⁸Eg the eastern respond of the chancel arcade, which has nail head of a much cruder form than that on the western respond and pier capital.

- (2) The apparent evidence of a cut-away cross wall above the western pier of the south arcade - and the semblance of a corresponding straight joint in the north wall - is very difficult to explain without a really radical rethink of the whole history of the building.
- (3) The most puzzling feature of all is the appearance of internal quoining at the east end of the south arcade, and the corresponding absence of it externally, where it might be expected, but there is only rough rubble masonry butting against the 13th century stonework of the aisle⁹. At face value this would suggest that the south-west angle of a building pre-dating the 12th-century nave survives here. The apparent consecration cross on the internal wall face - usually an external feature - would add weight to this hypothesis, although it can hardly be classed as more than an intriguing possibility.

Archaeological Assessment

Any church that dates from at the latest the early 12th century must be classed as a building, and site, of especial archaeological significance. This significance can be assessed in two ways, by looking at the above-ground fabric, and then at the potential for sub-surface structural remains and deposits.

Turning first to the standing building, most of the wall fabric is exposed, although there is still plaster in the North Chapel, and on parts of the nave walls (where it has presumably been left by the restorer because of the remains of wall paintings that it carries). A detailed record of the standing fabric, in the form of a photogrammetric record or stone-for-stone drawings would further assist in its interpretation; a proper photographic record of the remains of wall painting (which look to be largely post-medieval texts) would also be of value.

It is more difficult to assess what lies beneath the floors. There has clearly been an underfloor heating system, which will have disturbed structural remains of earlier phases of the building, as will have the usual many generations of burial within the building. Nevertheless, any disturbance of floor levels will need to be accompanied by proper archaeological monitoring; this will also hold true for any excavation adjacent to the external wall faces of the building, although the construction of a perimeter drain will have done some damage here, as has the unfortunate sunken boiler room in the angle between tower and north aisle, where the facing of walls in brick has either concealed or destroyed evidence of the plinths and lower walls of the adjacent medieval structure.

The Churchyard

The church stands a little north-of-centre in a rectangular churchyard bounded by stone walls of late 18th or 19th century date on north and west, a hedge on the south and railings on the east. The monuments - including a scatter of 18th century headstones on the south - look to have been thinned out; some of the 18th and early 19th century stones have carving of some local interest. There are no other features of apparent archaeological interest, except perhaps a bank at the foot of the northern boundary wall. The Old Rectory (now a private house), a complex house of medieval and later dates, lies to the east of the church, on the other side of the road to Ogle. The road is sunk below the level of both churchyard and Old Rectory grounds and was spanned, a few metres north-east of the churchyard gate, by a wooden turning bridge, probably of early

⁹Although there is a possible chamfered plinth here - a proper investigation is hindered by a headstone being set directly against the wall.

19th century date. The actual wooden bridge has been removed but the steps up to its at the west end, and a pier on the east with the iron pin on which the structure revolved, still remain.

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