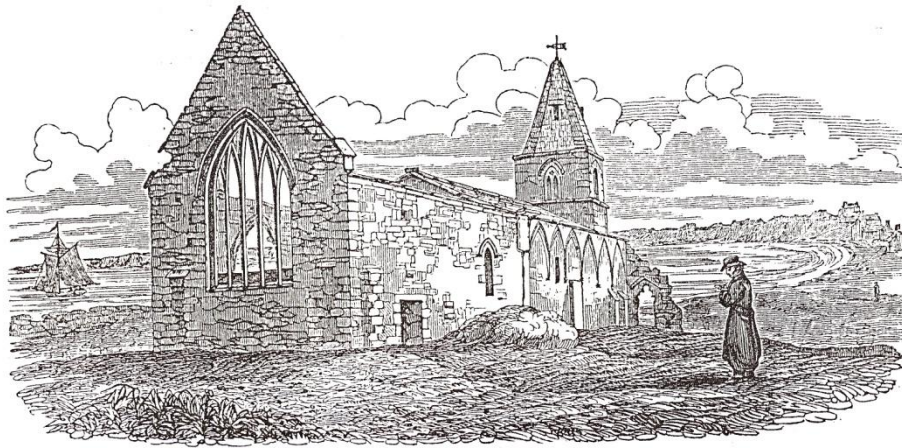


St Bartholomew's Church, Newbiggin

An Archaeological Assessment

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Newbiggin Church in 1832 (above) and today



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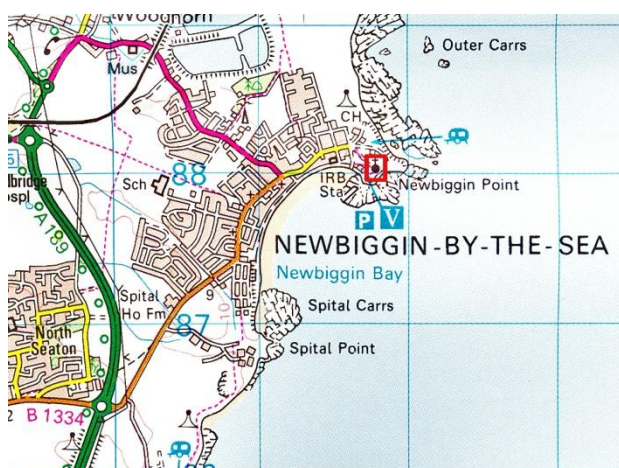
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St Bartholomew's Church, Newbiggin

St Bartholomew's Church occupies one of the more remarkable church sites in Northumberland, standing on a low rocky promontory at the end of the long sweep of Newbiggin Bay, its spire a sea mark visible from far down the coast. Clusters of low wooden chalets to the east barely figure in the view but more intrusive is the modern Marine Centre a short distance to the west. The building consists of a long nave with a north aisle, west tower and south porch, and a chancel with an organ chamber and vestry on the north.



Location Map taken from OS Landranger 1:50,000 sheet 81
OS map licence 10005703

Description

The **West Tower** is relatively small, and built of coursed squared stone, the courses varying in height, without angle quoins; although there has been some obvious re-facing, particularly around the belfry, much of the stonework seems to be genuinely medieval and must be uniquely resilient, given the persistent wind- and sand-blast on this exposed site. There is a chamfered plinth, now largely buried, above which the walls rise in one unbroken stage to a string-course-cum-set-back at the base of the belfry, above which there is a parapet with a thin square-edged coping (relatively recent), behind which rises the short octagonal stone spire, with traces of a roll moulding at each angle. On the west an irregular patch of secondary masonry indicates a former doorway position¹, within which is a more recent doorway with a simple two-centred arch. Above it, and set slightly south-of-centre, is a window with a chamfered surround, and a pointed arch with a trefoiled head, and a hoodmould chamfered beneath, now blocked. Its jambs do not course in with the wall, suggesting that it is an insertion; immediately above it, and set more centrally in the wall, is a circular window with a chamfered surround, and trefoil cusping. On the south side of the tower at the same level as the lower window is a window in the form of a 'spheric triangle'², also containing a trefoil, with above it a blocked lancet. The north side of the tower has the same arrangement of openings, although in this case both are now blocked.

The belfry has an identical opening in each wall, of two lancet lights with a blind quatrefoil in the spandrel; the eastern opening is now walled up. The spire has a small square-headed light half way up each of the side that face the principal cardinal points.

¹ During archaeological recording in 2006 evidence was seen for the dressings of this earlier doorway having been prised out of the wall (perhaps for re-use elsewhere?), part of the plinth having been displaced when this was done.

² A triangle with each side slightly curved, a form which occurs in 14th century tracery, but not common in the North of England.



The external walls of the **Nave** are of mid-19th century coursed rough-faced stone, with alternating ashlar quoins; there is a chamfered plinth, only just exposed at the south-west corner and up to 0.50 m below the present ground level further east. There is a chamfered oversailing course to the eaves, and the gables have a square-edged coping carried on substantial kneelers with a concave lower and convex upper element; the eastern gable has a ring-cross finial.

The south wall is of seven bays, with the porch projecting from the second. The first and third to sixth bays have windows consisting of two broad lancet lights with a quatrefoil in the spandrel, under a segmental-pointed arch with double-chamfered jambs and a hoodmould, with shaped stops, chamfered on its underside; all are of mid-19th century date, although their stonework is quite weathered in parts, prompting some modern replacement, eg the sills of the windows in the fifth and sixth bays. The head of the sixth-bay window is quite recent as well³. The window in the easternmost bay is a very recent one, and has two lancet lights with a pierced spandrel, within a steep two-centred arch, under a similar hoodmould. Nave and chancel have roofs of green Lakeland slate.

The **South Porch** is of similar fabric and has an outer arch of two continuous chamfers, under a hoodmould, chamfered above and below, on mask stops; the gable coping and kneelers are similar to those of the nave and chancel, and the gable has a square-topped finial. In each side wall is a small lancet window with a monolithic head and single upright block for each jamb, possibly re-used medieval work.

The **North Aisle** is of snecked stone, with smooth ashlar quoins, dressings and parapet. The west window is of three stepped round-arched and trefoiled lights under a three-centred arch, and a moulded hood with turned-back ends. The north wall is of six bays, articulated by

³ Old photographs show a square-headed traceried window here, like those in the 1913 north aisle, but in the 1960s it was returned to its mid-19th century form. Fragments of tracery inside and outside the east wall of the porch may come from this.

stepped buttresses, with a further buttress set diagonally at the north-west corner, but none to the north east. The windows here are all square-headed and of two cinquefoiled ogee-headed lights, with two different patterns of head tracery, the first, third and fifth from the west having a central quatrefoil whilst those in the alternate bays have heads characterised by dagger-like mouchettes; they again have hoodmoulds with turned-back ends. The parapet has an oversailing hollow-chamfered course at its base, and a coping with a chamfer and roll moulding; it is interrupted by projecting stone spouts in the centre and towards each end



The **Chancel** is built of coursed squared stone, many of the blocks being almost square; there is a chamfered plinth but once again this is largely buried, only just appearing at the foot of the east end. There has clearly been extensive re-facing as the former priest's door, clearly visible internally, shows very little external evidence. There are two windows in the south wall; the western is of three lancet lights, with open spandrels, and the eastern, again of three lights, has simple intersecting tracery; both have hoodmoulds chamfered below, with simple shaped stops like those of the nave windows. The east end (left) has a large window of five stepped lancets, again with

the spandrels open, with similar detail; about 0.50 m out from the head of each of its jambs is a small blocked opening with an eroded sill, perhaps a drain⁴. The east gable has a 19th century coping and kneelers like those of the nave, and another ring-cross finial.

Towards the east end of the north wall of the chancel is a lancet window, moved here in 1913 from the west end of the wall (when the arch into the organ chamber was formed); close to the east end of the wall is an area of disturbed stonework which probably relates to a former buttress⁵. Further west, just short of the added vestry/organ chamber is a blocked square-

⁴ Assuming a lower roof line, which would have cut across the head of the east window

⁵ Hodgson's early C19 print seems to show remains of buttresses here and just set back from the angles of the east end, where there are now only faint traces of disturbance.

headed doorway, or rather the rear arch of a doorway from the chancel that opened into a previous vestry; its lintel is only c 1.2 m above the external ground level.

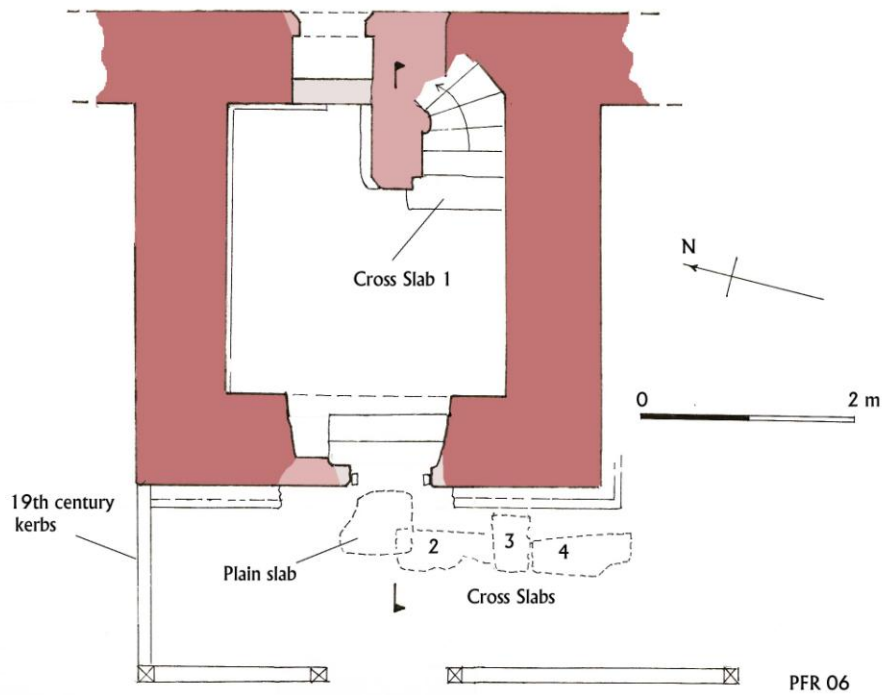
The vestry/organ chamber is built of snecked stone with ashlar quoins and dressings, and has a pent roof of purple Welsh slate. Its north wall has two square-headed windows, each of two round-arched trefoiled lights, with at the west end a two-centred doorway that has a continuous chamfer with broach stops at the base, and a moulded hood with turned back ends. Low in the wall midway between the two windows is a large stone with hints of incised lines, perhaps part of a medieval cross slab.

Interior

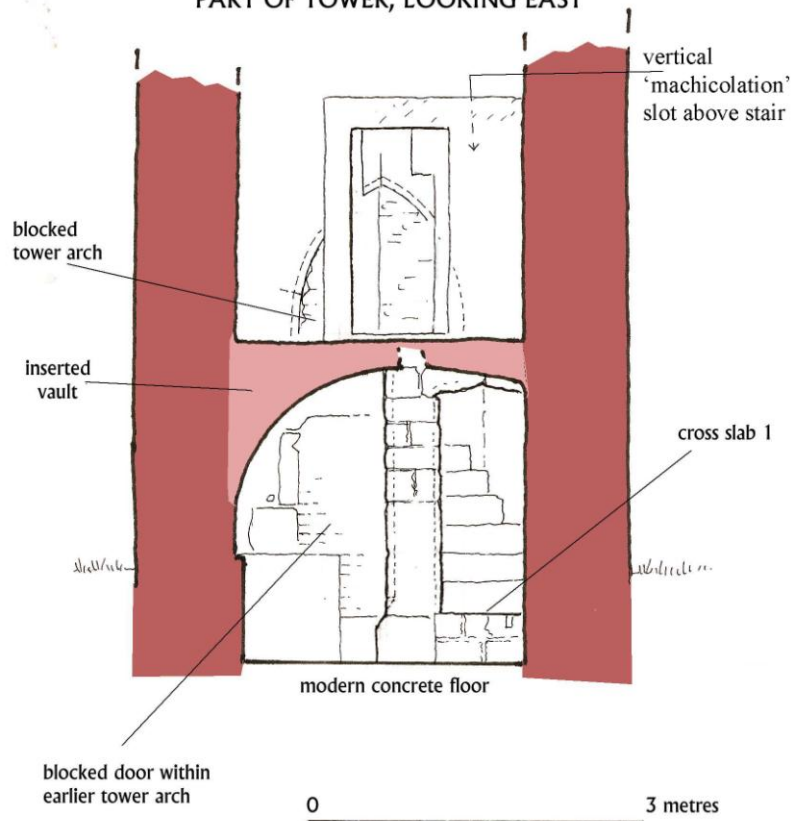
The interior of the **Tower** can now only be entered from the external doorway in the west wall; in 2006 a toilet was installed here, and the walls whitewashed. The lower chamber has an inserted vault which is probably coeval with the blocked of the tower arch, which it cuts across. Prior to the 2006 works the floor inside the tower – a modern concrete one – was virtually a metre below the level of the current floor in the nave, but it has now been raised somewhat. The vault is a rough barrel-vault set east-west, although of markedly asymmetric, with its soffit a little below the surviving segmental rear arch of the original west door. Set onto the south-east corner of the chamber is a square turret with a doorway that has externally-rebated jambs and an eroded lintel giving onto a tight newel stair, accommodated partly within the blocking of the tower arch (and partly by the cutting away of its south jamb), that rises steeply to the first-floor chamber. The lowermost step now at floor level) is a re-used cross slab (25). The top step of the stair is c 10 cm above the present floor of the chamber, which is formed by the rough extrados of the vault; presumably some flooring slabs have been removed. The internal stair turret forms a much shallower projection at this level, which has been somewhat altered (the doorway has a recent lintel) although it still retains a vertical slot opening above the lower steps of the stair, which seems to have formed a sort of machicolation, reinforcing the defensive nature of the alterations to the tower. The west wall of the first floor chamber is of well-coursed stone, with no sign at all of the blocked window visible externally; the window on the south has a horizontal slab as its internal lintel, but that on the north a series of four slabs laid on edge, at least the first of which is a worn medieval cross slab (29). To the west of the window and 1.2 m above the floor is a large square socket; there may be another in the south wall opposite but this is heavily mortared.

The second floor of the tower is of recent timbers carried on iron girders; access is by ladder. At this level the circular window on the west has a plain slab as an internal lintel, but the blocked lancets on north and south have splayed recesses with pointed arches formed by chamfered ribs. On the east is the high-level doorway into the nave; it seems to be cut square through the wall, and has the look of being an insertion, its arched head cut into coursed stonework.

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH
 NEWBIGGIN
 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING 2006
 PLAN OF TOWER BASEMENT



ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH
 NEWBIGGIN
 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING 2006
 SKETCH SECTION THROUGH LOWER
 PART OF TOWER, LOOKING EAST



A further ladder leads to the third floor, again of recent timbers carried on girders, which is the belfry. The internal stonework at this level is all quite badly eroded. The belfry openings have chamfered rear arches, and two old east-west timbers span the base of the spire, the angles of which are carried on squinches.

Inside the **Porch** the outer opening has a plain lintel internally. Various medieval cross slabs have been re-set in the internal walls⁶; an initially-puzzling set of straight joints relate to other larger cross slabs which were set here in the 19th century and then removed in 1913 to the walls of the north aisle. . In the side walls the small lancet windows have inner heads cut from a pair of stones, and there are some puzzling straight joints, eg c 0.50 m from the south end of the west wall, and c 0.30 m north of the window on the east. The inner doorway has a two-centred arch with a continuous chamfer, and looks of early 19th century date.



Interior looking east

Inside the main body of the church the walls are all of exposed stonework; the internal dressings of the doorways and windows in the nave and chancel are roughly-tooled, as if to take plaster. Inside the **Nave** the west wall is built of coursed squared stone; the tower arch, now blocked, has been of segmental-pointed form, apparently with a chamfer to the head only, stopped on the lowermost voussoir on each side. The lower stones have the jambs have been removed and re-set to form the jambs of a narrower doorway, set within the blocked close to the north jamb, which has a square head and quite a broad chamfered to its surround. Its opening is bricked up on the line of the west face of the wall, but the recess is infilled with

⁶ See Ryder 2002, 84-6, 113-6 for most of these.

stacked stones (used for the church Easter Garden) which prevent its jambs being properly inspected; Brigg's plan shows a drawbar tunnel in the south jamb. Higher up the wall, just below the level of the eaves of the side walls, is a big set-back, and above that a blocked doorway, now a shallow recess, with an odd three-sided head cut into a monolithic lintel. Set in the lower part of the blocking is a carved stone, a probable medieval grave slab (12). The masonry of the gable above seems to show traces of a roof-line rather steeper than the present one⁷.

The nave arcades are each of six bays, with octagonal piers, double-chamfered arches and corbel responds; there is no longer any south aisle, but the 19th-century south wall of the nave has been constructed just outside the line of the arcade. The two western bays on each side are quite distinct from the remainder, having broader almost semicircular arches with large and clumsy conical stops to their chamfers, and rather more elaborately moulded capitals to their piers⁸. Both parts of the arcade have moulded bases to the piers, but those to the eastern sections have deeper 'holdwater' mouldings; all have octagonal bases except the second pier of the north arcade, which stands on a square plinth with motifs rather like shallow broach stops to the corners. The eastern parts of the arcades have nailhead ornament (two lines to each of the eastern respond capitals, single lines to the two eastern piers of the southern arcade and the eastern pier of the northern); the capital of the second pier from the east of the north arcade uniquely has rudimentary stiff-leaf foliage. The eastern arches have a hoodmould that is chamfered below, the western a moulded one; only the eastern arches have hoodmould stops, in the form of masks. The corbels of the eastern responds also spring from masks, the southern, a bishop, looks medieval, but the northern, a lady, is clearly mid-19th century work. The stone of the western parts of the arcades is slightly olive coloured; the stone of the eastern is pink in parts (almost as if it has been burned) and, at least in the case of the south arcade, looks more heavily eroded. Above the second arch from the west of each arcade the jambs of a blocked window are visible, a mid-19th century feature, shown on Wilson's 1870 drawing, which lit the former western gallery. Above the second pier on the north, and a little to the east, are re-used stones with geometrical ornament, interpreted as pieces of 12th century grave covers (23 and 24) but alternatively possibly of architectural origin.

At the west end of the south wall, on the west of the window framed by the western arch of the arcade, is what looks like a blocked doorway (a square-headed opening with a relieving arch above) but Wilson's plan shows a fireplace here, so it is perhaps more likely related to that. The south doorway has a segmental-pointed rear arch with a chamfer to the head only

The easternmost bay of the present nave, beyond the arcades, was formerly the western bay of the chancel, but in 1845 it was incorporated into the nave. The position of the original chancel arch is indicated by disturbed masonry in both side walls. The north wall appears featureless, although it is partly obscured by old commandments boards; on the south the recently-reopened window in the south wall of the bay has a segmental-pointed rear arch with

⁷ Although this would mean a higher roof, which would impinge upon the eastern belfry opening of the tower.

⁸ Briggs (1998) gives useful descriptions and sections of the mouldings

a chamfered head, and a small square-headed recess - an aumbry or possibly a piscina that has lost its bowl - directly below its horizontal sill. Photographs taken at the time of the re-opening show that the original opening appeared to be a single quite broad lancet light, with a chamfered surround.

The nave roof is of seven bays, and has hammer-beam trusses with braces springing from shaped ashlar corbels, with long arch braces to an upper collar, carrying a narrow ridge and two levels of purlins; there is a brattished and moulded wallplate.

Inside the **North Aisle** the western bay is railed off to form a choir vestry. At the south end of the west wall a ragged column of medieval masonry survives, above the south jamb and part of the triangular (?) rear arch of what looks to have been a doorway, adjacent to which cross slab (9) is re-set. The west window of the aisle has a segmental rear arch with a chamfer to its head only; the six windows in the north wall have straight internal lintels, again with chamfers. In between the windows medieval cross slabs (nos 3-8, from east to west) have been set upright in the wall (see appendix one) . Above nos 5 and 6 are re-set fragments of high-relief carving, both apparently animals with pairs of feet – presumably from effigies – resting on them. In the east end wall of the aisle slightly darker stone indicates the extent of the incorporated west wall of the 1895 vestry; at each end of the wall are further re-set cross slabs, nos 1 and 2. The aisle ceiling is a good piece of early 20th-century work being coffered and boarded with small quadrant corbels on both walls carrying wall posts from which arch braces rise to the tie beams which with a medial beam divide the ceiling into twelve square panels, each further sub-divided into four by joists, all the timbers having hollow chamfers

The **Chancel** is entered under a lofty two-centred arch of two chamfered orders, the inner carried on semi-octagonal moulded corbels and the outer continued down the jambs, under a casement-moulded hood with turned-back ends; the wall above is of snecked stone. The other three walls of the chancel are of roughly-coursed squared stone, quite heavily mortared in places, and showing signs of the erosion suffered when this part of the building lay roofless; on the north wall there is a clear horizontal line, a little above the present vestry door; although a little low it might relate to an inserted ceiling level at some time. At the west end of the south wall is a blocked priest's door with a segmental rear arch, only its head chamfered, with its west jamb concealed by the present chancel arch. The two windows further east have steeply-pointed rear arches, again with only their heads chamfered, and widely-splayed internal jambs. The western has a level sill with an area of secondary stonework – thinly coursed stone – below, whilst the internal sill of the eastern is lowered to form a sedile, with cross slab (11) re-used in its rear wall. To the east is a piscine with a two-centred chamfered arch and a slightly-projecting bowl, rather damaged, with a drain.

On the north of the chancel the arch to the organ chamber, at the west end of the wall, is the 1845 chancel arch re-set; it is of segmental-pointed form and of two chamfered order, the inner springing from imposts with shaped capitals, the outer continued to the ground. There is a hollow-chamfered hoodmould on large and grotesque masks, the eastern evidently intended to represent a satyr. Further east the vestry door has a two-centred arch and diagonally-tooled ashlar dressings, with a chamfer that has broach stops at the base;

immediately beyond it is a smaller 13th century door, now blocked, with a two-centred arch and a hacked-back hoodmould. The re-set lancet window in the eastern part of the wall has an almost triangular rear arch without any chamfer.

The internal frame of the east window is ancient, with splayed jambs and a chamfer to the head, and a restored horizontal sill; the drain openings on either side of the head are only faintly visible internally. On the north of the window and c 0.60 m above its sill is a carved head of the same robust character as the other 1845 masks, and in a corresponding position to the south a re-set 12th century capital with a relief pattern interpreted as a net with entangled fishes.

The chancel roof structure is of precisely the same type as that of the nave, but of three and a half bays, her half bay being at the east end.

Inside the **Vestry** the doorway into the chancel has a segmental-pointed and chamfered rear arch; to the west of is the plastered rear surface of the modern screen closing the organ chamber arch (the organ having been removed to the west end of the nave) with the diagonally-tooled ashlar quoins of the north-east corner of the nave being exposed beyond. On the north the external doorway again has a segmental-pointed and chamfered rear arch, and the two windows plain lintels; set in the wall between them are cross slabs (20) and (21). The roof has close-set common rafters.

Structural History

Unlike many of the old churches in Northumberland, Newbiggin has had the benefit of a relatively recent scholarly analysis (Briggs 1998), with the conclusions of which this report generally concurs.

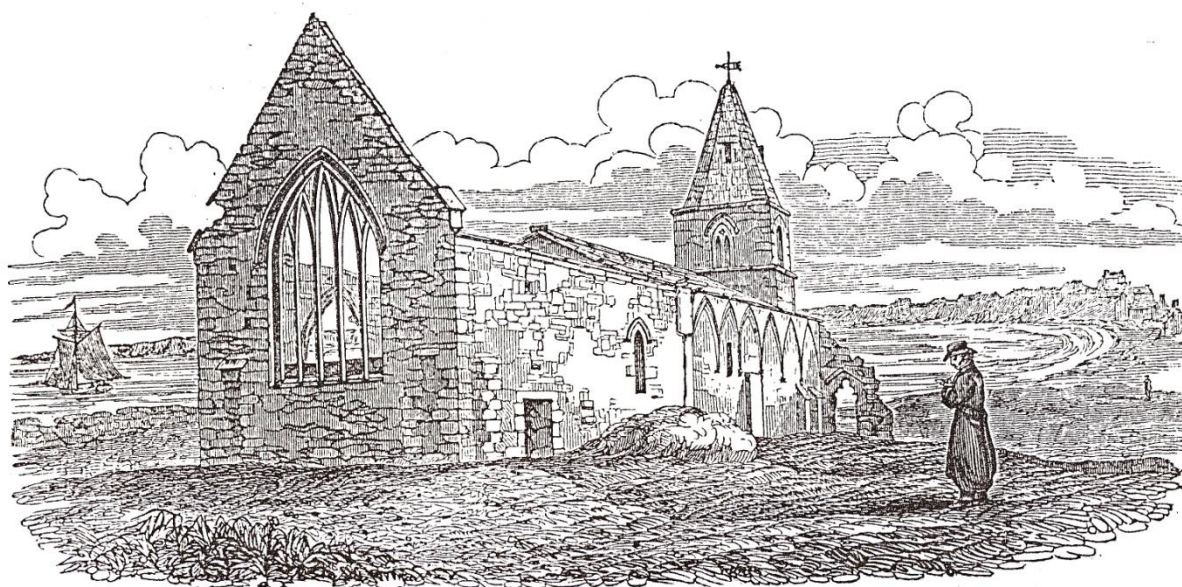
Whilst the site of Newbiggin church is a classic coastal one of the type chosen for several Pre-Conquest churches, there is no physical evidence of any Pre-Norman building and the church was a chapelry of Woodhorn, 1.5 km inland, which preserves early sculpture and also early structural remains which may fall before the Norman Conquest as well. At Newbiggin the earliest stones are fragments of 12th century date – the capital now in the east wall of the chancel and two pieces in the north wall of the nave, although the long narrow proportions of the nave – if these are not the product of later western extension – might indicate an early date. Briggs suggests that the four eastern bays of the nave might replace an aisleless 12th century predecessor.

The earliest documentary reference to the chapel is in 1174, when it is referred to, along with those of Horton and Widdrington, in an agreement between Tynemouth Priory and St Albans Abbey. These bays of the present arcades are of mid-13th century date; the western bays are clearly later, and generally of 14th century character, but what is not clear is whether the nave was extended, or a previously-aisleless western section received arcades, or the two western bays of a six-bay nave were rebuilt for some reason. As Briggs points out, the style of the west tower is of c1300, and rather earlier than the western bays of the nave, which prompts him to speculate whether the tower might have been built separately and the nave extended to

join it⁹. However, the western corbels of the arcades, west nave wall and tower arch really all look to be of the same build, and it may be easier to see them as coeval.

When the north aisle was rebuilt in 1913, foundations of its predecessor, only 2m wide were seen, along with those of ‘a small transept or vestry’ on the north; this is interesting, as during works in 1999 to install floodlighting a wall, with a chamfered plinth on the east, was found extending at least 2 m north from the north-east corner of the present aisle¹⁰. A wall in this position only really makes sense as the east wall of a north transept. Quite a number of churches in the area which have 12th and 13th century aisles also possess transepts (cf, probably, Woodhorn) so this may well have been the case at Newbiggin.

The chancel also looks c1300 in its details (primarily its basic window tracery); the fact that it is as wide as the nave¹¹ suggesting that it replaces a narrower predecessor; it is generous in its proportions, although relatively simply architecturally. The recently-reopened window was originally at the west end of its south wall; although it is not set particularly low in the wall, its level sill suggests that it may have functioned as a ‘low side’, the function of which was probably to house a lamp to cast light into the graveyard outside. Hodgson records the footings of a vestry on the north of the chancel 2.4 by 1.8 m internally.



North-east view after Hodgson (1832)

So by the early 14th century we find Newbiggin possessing a sizeable church suited to its status as a developing sea port, but by this period, with the commencement of the long Anglo-Scottish wars, we are entering upon troubled times, and this is reflected in the church

⁹ This last scenario would help explain some oddities in plan – the nave being 0.9 m wider at its west end than the east, the western bays of the south arcade deviating from the line of the eastern part as if to make up for an error in planning.

¹⁰ Archaeological Watching brief by Northern Counties Archaeological Services, copy with Northumberland Sites and Monuments Record

¹¹ Which would be very unusual at this period in a church of one build.

building, both in the remodelling of the western tower as a defensible retreat¹², and, probably, in the loss of the aisles (and putative transepts). The tower had its arch reduced to a small doorway, a vault inserted, and the west door and window blocked. A considerable number of Northumberland churches lost aisle and transepts in the medieval period, presumably as a result of war damage. There is no known historical record of whatever vicissitudes the church suffered; by the time we meet it again in the earliest post-medieval description by Archdeacon Sharp in 1723 ‘It hath formerly been a large church, consisting of three aisles, but now nothing remains but the body of the middle aisle, the arches between the pillars on both sides being walled up, and the outward walls or boundaries of the building on both sides quite taken away. The walls of the old chancel, which hath been a spacious one, are yet standing without roof, and built out of the present chapel, the arch between the body and the chancel being walled up’. This is very much the condition in which the Rev Joseph Hodgson describes the church a century later, providing what looks to be a detailed and accurate engraving of the church seen from the north-west. He opined that ‘the walls (of the chancel) are more modern than the stone-work of the windows and doorways, and the needle holes for the scaffolding to build them are still open’, suggesting that the Prior and Convent of Tynemouth has been engaged in repairs ‘when the Storm of the Reformation drove them from their work’¹³. The chancel arch had gone; in its place was walling in which recent storm damage had been made good with straw.

The evidence of the churchwardens’ accounts shows that a major scheme of repair and restoration was carried out in 1846 at a cost of £811; the chancel was re-roofed, a new chancel arch provided, to the east of the position of the original (thus lengthening the nave), and new nave walls were built immediately outside the line of the old arcades, extending eastwards to the position of the new chancel arch.

F.R.Wilson’s 1870 drawing and plan give a good impression of the church in its mid-19th century form. The two western bays of the nave were screened off (with a vestry at the south-west corner) beneath a gallery, which was lit by a pair of dormers in line with the porch. The tower had a very small window on the west set in the blocking of the former west doorway.

A second restoration took place in 1898, W.S.Hick being the architect. The Newcastle Diocesan Gazette for December 1898¹⁴ records that the church was reopened on October 12th, and that ‘the hideous and vulgar gallery has been removed and the west end of the nave thrown open’. A new and taller chancel arch was constructed, its 1846 predecessor being re-used opening into the new organ chamber (and vestry) built on the north of the chancel.

¹² This is discussed by Brooke (2000,160-163) who suggested it provided a retreat for the priest.

¹³ The chancel walls have been patched and in part re-faced, but Hodgson is probably wrong in seeing them as rebuilt with older features being reused. His ‘needle holes’ are a puzzle; perhaps he saw the opening here identified as drain holes on either side of the head of the east window. They suggest that the chancel had a much lower roof (perhaps cutting across the top of the east window) at some stage), perhaps relatively temporary. It is difficult to see the roofless shell having survived intact for three centuries in this location.,

¹⁴ Cutting in Minute Book for Woodhorn Parish, Woodhorn Archives ref EP22/60

Further works were carried out in 1913 or 1914, when the present north aisle, twice the width of its medieval predecessor, was built. It looks as if the then-easternmost window on the south of the nave was replaced at the same time by one in the same style as the new aisle windows, but this was returned to its 1846 form in the 1960s. More recent changes have included the re-opening of the medieval window at the east end of the south nave wall, the conversion of the base of the tower into a toilet (2006) and structural stabilisation of the south nave wall (2011).

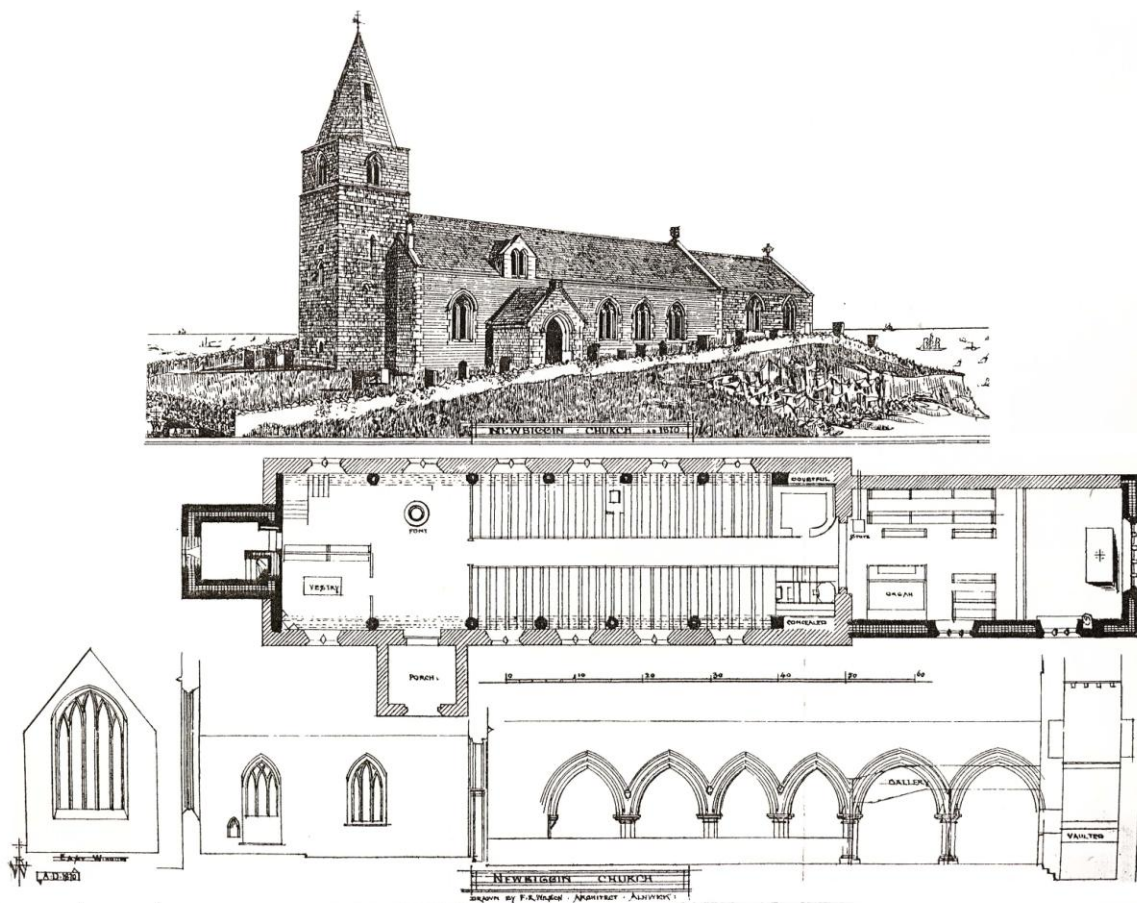
Archaeological Assessment

As with any medieval church, any disturbance either of internal floor levels or the external ground surface adjacent to the building will require archaeological monitoring; it is highly likely that sub-surface structural remains of earlier phases of the building survive, as well as numerous burials. It is now clear how much works such as sub-surface heating systems have disturbed underfloor deposits and structural remains; the present nave floors – partly flagged, with boarded areas beneath the pews – seen quite recent, and the entire chancel now has fitted carpets. Archaeological recording was carried out in 1999 when new floodlighting was being introduced, in 2006 during works in and around the Tower, and also in 2011 in a small area adjacent to the external face of the south wall of the nave. .

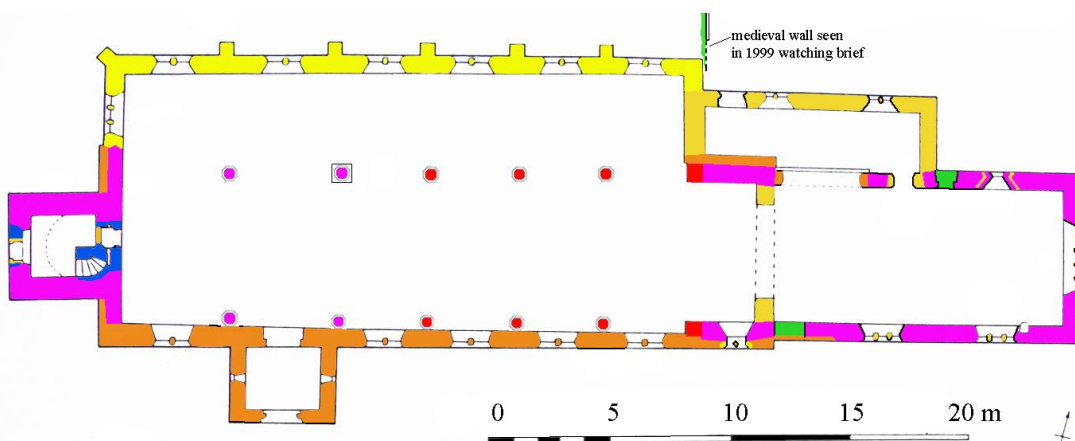
Although no historic wall surfaces seem to retain plaster, any substantial works to above ground fabric should also be monitored. Perhaps the most vulnerable area is the tower and its upper floors, now cluttered with heating equipment. A series of medieval grave slabs have been re-used above the northern window at first floor level, and whilst the one visible is badly worn, the others may be in good condition and might merit retrieval from the wall and display. The belfry was not fully examined as the ladder up to it did not inspire confidence.

The remains of a medieval wall, with a chamfered plinth, seen in 1999 are of great interest; the course of masonry surviving above the plinth lay immediately below the tarmac of the path on the north of the church. One would imagine it might not be difficult, using remote sensing equipment (or even direct excavation) to trace this wall further, and also to investigate the area on the south side of the church where the medieval aisle has never been reinstated, and foundations of aisle, and perhaps also another transept, may survive at shallow depth. With relatively little expenditure of effort further light could be shed on the development of this intriguing church.

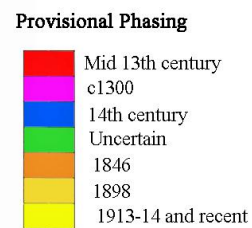
Peter F Ryder February 2013.



Drawings after Wilson (1870)



ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH, NEWBIGGIN
PROVISIONAL PHASED PLAN after Briggs 1998, amended PFR



Appendix 1

Cross Slabs at Newbiggin

The main part of this inventory is taken from the published account (Ryder 2002, 84-886, 113-117), updated with more recently-recorded material (slabs 24-29)

St Bartholomew's Church has one of the most important collections of cross slabs in the county, mostly re-set during the 1913 restoration when the north aisle, demolished in antiquity, was reinstated: Many of the slabs are of late twelfth or thirteenth century date; several show signs of post-medieval re-use.

1. Southern of the two slabs at the east end of the aisle. Fine-grained buff sandstone. Relief-carved design with incised-line decoration. Elaborate variant on bracelet cross with additional fleur-de-lys terminals springing from bracelets and petalled rosette at centre. Further fleur-de-lys on long curved stalks spring from the shaft, the uppermost pair curving to enclose a key on the r. and a pair of shears on the l. late twelfth century? Illustrated by Boutell (1849, f.p.91)
2. Another relief-carved slab of coarser brown sandstone, the cross slightly less elaborate than on (1) but here acanthus leaves are carved all round the edge of the stone; further foliage springing from the shaft and within the ogee-arched base; on the l. of the shaft shears and a pair of keys. Late twelfth century? Cutts illustrates this stone (1849, pl.XLII), taking his plate from Charlton (1848, f.p.253) and Boutell (1849, 91) only its emblems.

Slabs (3) - (8) are re-set, east to west, along the internal face of the north wall of the aisle:

3. Simple slab of yellowish sandstone, its only design a large sunk panel within which a chalice is carved in relief. not really datable.
4. Relief-carved slab of medium-grained sandstone. The cross head, a bracelet-derivative form, looks authentic (late twelfth century?), but the shaft now ends in a stepped base half way down the stone, with below it a much worn early-nineteenth century inscription. Two small incised crosses flanking the main one may also be secondary. This is probably a genuine medieval slab, incised in its original form, re-cut as a relief design in the nineteenth century.
5. Relief-carved slab of medium-grained sandstone. Bracelet cross with trefoil terminals rising from stepped base, with shears on left. Incised inscription of 1845. Thirteenth century.
6. Relief-carved slab of coarse brown sandstone. The cross head a circle of eight intersecting rings; sword on r. and what looks like an open book on left. Illustrated by Boutell (1849, 93) Stepped base. Late twelfth century?
7. Relief design on medium-grained darker brown sandstone within a raised border; bracelet cross, with big fleshy acanthus leaves and fleur-de-lys springing from the shaft, and a trefoil arch base. Shears on l. of shaft. Late twelfth century?

8. Largely-incised design on medium-grained brown sandstone Bracelet cross with petalled rosette at centre, stepped base, and a good sword with a lobed pommel on the r. Late twelfth or thirteenth century.
9. Part of a double slab, in the west wall of the north aisle. Incised design on coarse-grained sandstone. Crosses with fleur-de-lys terminals, the leaves swept up at the tips. The l. cross has a sword on its l; not enough is left of the r. side of the slab to ascertain whether there was any emblem. The fleur-de-lys forms rather suggests a late (fifteenth century?) date.
10. Fragment of the head of an incised slab of buff sandstone, built into the internal recess of the blocked lancet at the east end of the south wall of the nave. Cross with open bracelets between the arms, inside a ring. The outer edge of the stone seems to have been cut to a series of facets; was this a headstone? Late twelfth or thirteenth century? 2013 – removed when window re-opened and lying loose on window sill in north aisle alongside (28)
11. Slab at rear of sedile in chancel. Incised design on sandstone, worn. Cross head of four lenticular segments within a circle; the shaft is divided in an odd way; possibly what one is seeing is the blades of an overlying pair of shears. Twelfth century.
12. Stone set in recess of blocked high level doorway into tower. A cluster of three trefoils carved in relief within a sunk circle.. Thirteenth century??
13. Small slab set in internal face of south wall of south porch, west of the door. Very badly worn relief design on coarse fawn sandstone. Probable round-leaf bracelet cross head, with the odd feature of a raised boss at the centre; faint shears on l. of shaft. Late twelfth or thirteenth century. This is the slab shown by Blair (Blair n.d. II, 214) and also on a drawing in The British Architect October 24th 1879 as having the odd feature of an inverted human head at the base of the shaft.
14. In corresponding position on east of door, another small slab of coarse yellowish sandstone, not quite so badly worn. Cross with multi-lobed terminals ,within a ring; sword on r., of shaft, stepped base. Twelfth century?
15. Slab of purplish medium-grained sandstone, lacking its base, in internal face of east wall of porch, under window. Bracelet cross with incised line decoration and cross bands, with shears on l. of shaft; rough sunk panel cutting away shaft may relate to a later brass plate. Late twelfth century?
16. The upper part of a slab in corresponding position of west of porch. Relief design, on what a fine-grained greyish stone. An unusual cross head with fleur-de-lys with tightly-curved leaves, and further looped motifs with fleur-de-lys between the arms, that on the lower l. skewed to allow for the pommel of a sword ; on the lower edge of the stone on the far r. the beginnings of some further motif. Twelfth century.
17. A coped double slab that until recently lay outside the east wall of the porch, but has recently been built into the internal face of the west wall. Relief carved design on yellow sandstone. Each sloping face has a full-length bracelet cross, with discs on the shaft just below the head and stepped bases. The l. cross has three pairs of fleur-de-lys

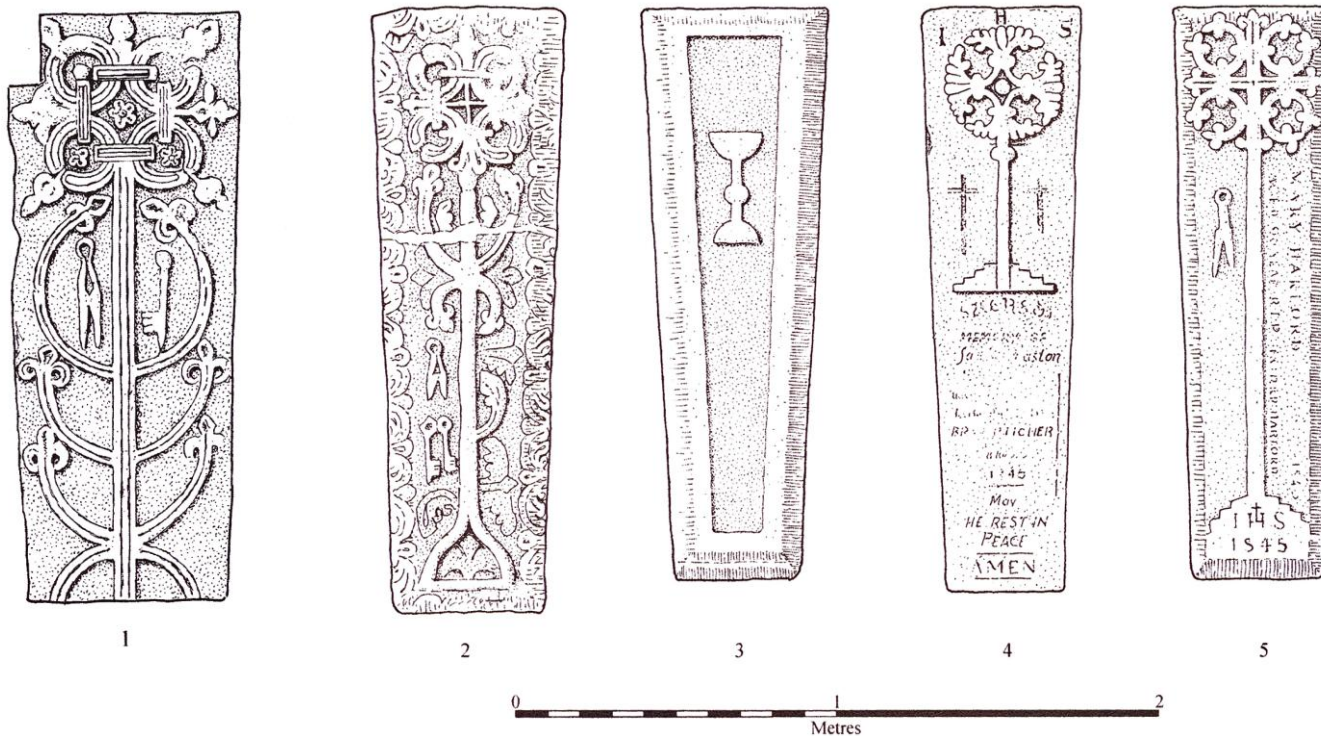
- springing from the shaft, the r. cross simply a pair of shears on the r. side. Thirteenth century.
18. Built into the external face of the east end of the chancel, at the north end of the wall 1.5 m above the ground. Small incised slab of grey sandstone with simple straight-armed cross and sword on r. Not really datable.
 19. In the same wall 0.5 m above (18). Small slab of coarse-grained sandstone with incised sword or dagger. Undatable.
 20. In internal face of north wall of vestry. Upper part of slab of light buff fine-grained sandstone with simple bracelet cross, panels within bracelets sunk. late twelfth or thirteenth century.
 21. Alongside (20). Small slab of coarse-grained brown sandstone. Incised design; rather unusual cross with fleur-de-lys terminals of a sort, stepped base and sword on r.
- (22) and (23) are built into the internal face of the north wall of the nave, above the second pier from the west end of the arcade.
22. A piece of what is probably one side of a slab, with a combination of chevrons and lobed leaves that would have flanked a cross shaft. A design somewhere between the simple Early Geometric chevrons of Woodhorn (15) and the acanthus leaf pattern bordering slab (2). Twelfth century.
 23. A very similar but slightly smaller piece, probably from the same slab.
- During the 2006 watching brief, when a new toilet was made in the base of the west tower, and a pathway constructed giving access to it. Four further slabs(24-27) were recorded, but none were thought of sufficient importance for removal, conservation and display, and (25)-(27) were re-buried undisturbed beneath the new path: all bore incised . Designs on of local Coal Measures sandstone
24. Slab forming the lowest step of the tower stair, the exposed section 0.86 m by 0.25 m. Incised design; cross shaft rising from stepped base, with the blade of a sword on the r. No datable features; 12th-15th century. Discovered 2006, still visible.
 25. The northern of the three slabs outside the west wall. Broken slab 0.87 by 0,30m. Incised design. Broad cross shaft rising from stepped base, with a key on the r., and an odd series of lightly-incised transverse lines, becoming a grid pattern below the key. Thee appear intentional, but are hard to interpret; no obvious parallel springs to mind. The key is a female symbol, often occurring alongside the more common pair of shears (as on slabs 1 & 2 in the church); a medieval housewife might well have worn keys and shears (compare modern kitchen scissors) on her girdle, so that they were regarded as her 'badge of office'. 12th-15th century. This was the most interesting of the 'new' slabs, but was broken into two, and looked as if it would disintegrate further if lifted.
 26. A smaller piece of slab, 0.45 by 0.19 m, set at right angles to the others; the only visible motif the lower part of a sword blade. Not datable.

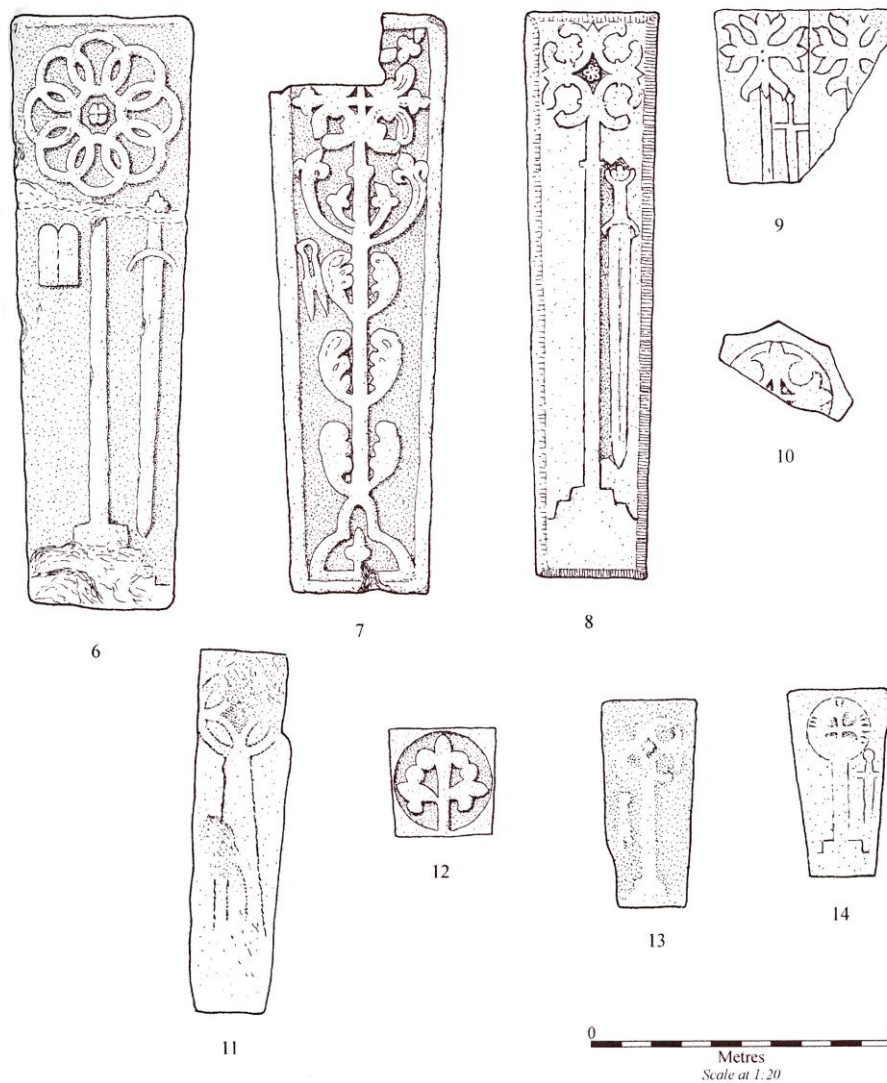
27. An intact slab, although all its r side and part of its head have been scooped away by erosion, seemingly whilst it lay in its present position (the erosional 'scarp' is continued on the adjacent slab 3). Faint remains only of design, some sort of foliate cross (only traces survive) rising from a semicircular arched base. Arched bases are quite characteristic of the area around Newcastle, and probably indicate a late 13th or 14th century date.

Slabs 28 and 29 do not appear to have been recorded prior to the 2013 Assessment.

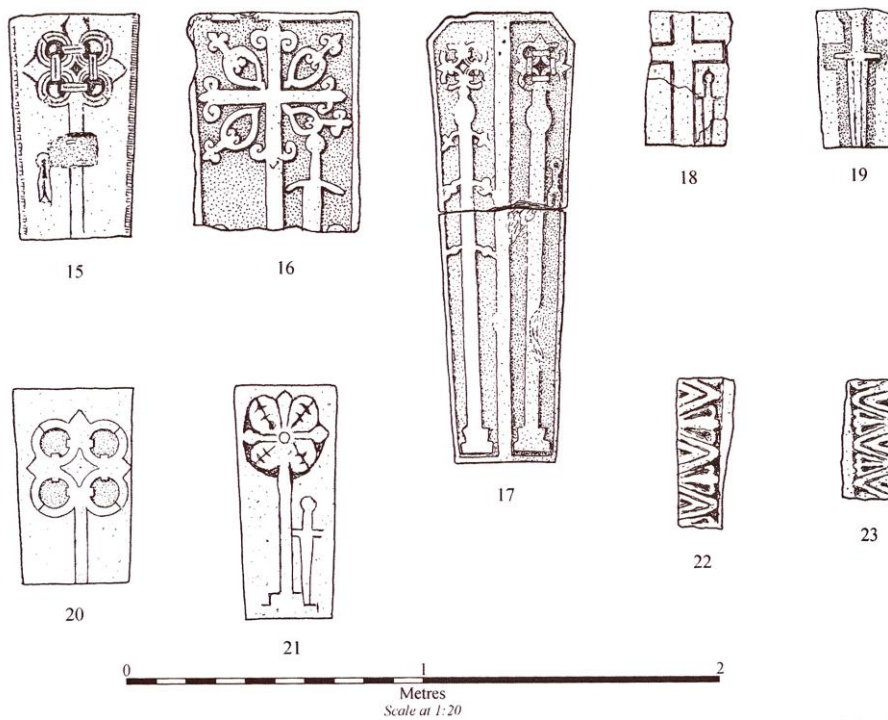
28. The upper part of a slab which had been set like (10) in the blocking of the now-reopened window at the east end of the south wall of the present nave. It may be part of a double slab, as a recess suggests there as a second cross head to the l. of that which survives, but it is difficult to be sure. Round-leaf bracelet cross carved in relief within sunk circle, with big pointed buds and a 'box' around the head centre. Late 12th or early 13th century.
29. Slab re-used, on its side, above the internal head of the window on the north of the first floor of the tower, very worn. Round-leaf bracelet cross with disc or rosette at centre, carved in relief; broad tapering shaft, incised, with a hint at an emblem, probably a sword, on the r. Late 12th or early 13th century.

Newbiggin (St. Bartholomew)



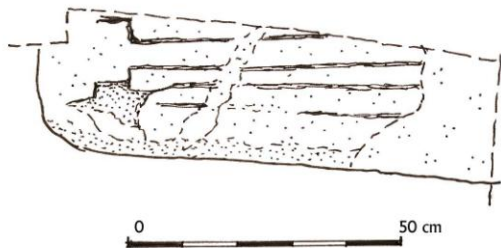


Newbiggin (St. Bartholomew), cont.



St Bartholomew's Church, Newbiggin
Archaeological Recording 2006

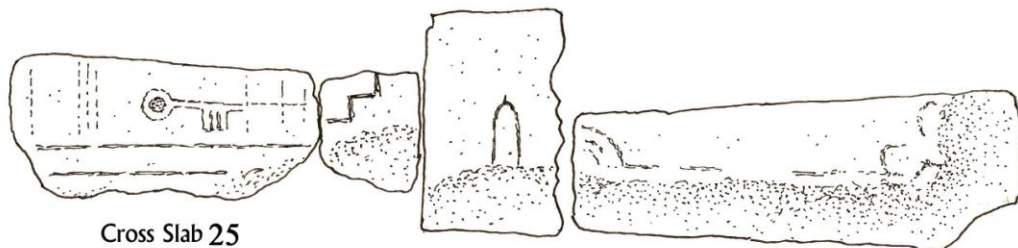
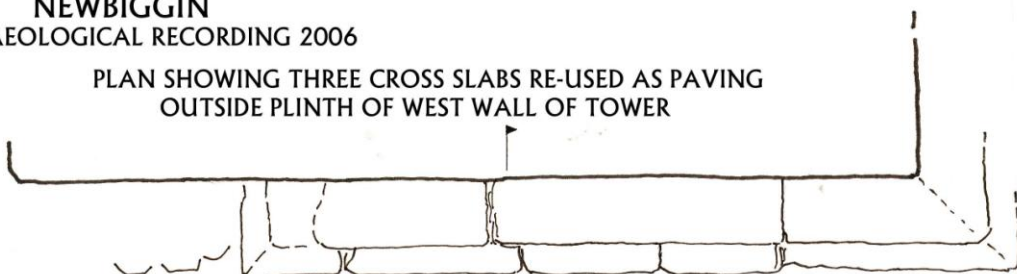
Cross Slab 24 (lowest step of tower stair)



PFR 06

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH
NEWBIGGIN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING 2006

PLAN SHOWING THREE CROSS SLABS RE-USED AS PAVING
OUTSIDE PLINTH OF WEST WALL OF TOWER



Cross Slab 25

Cross Slab 26

Cross Slab 27



PFR 06



28



29

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