

# OLD HAYDON CHURCH

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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*The church from the south-west*

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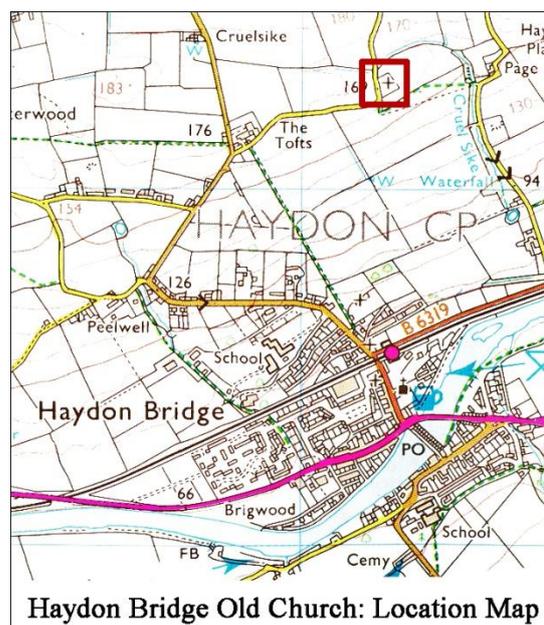
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## The Church of Old Haydon

The former church of Old Haydon (NGR NY 8425 6530) stands on a spur on the north side of the valley of the South Tyne, 1 km north of the bridge and c 100 m above it. Screened by trees even from the very minor road which today provides the only access, running east from The Tofts at the head of the hill above Haydon Bridge, the Old Church today feels strangely remote. Haydon was technically a chapel in the parish of Warden, and is first mentioned as such (along with ‘Stancroft’ and Langley) in a document of 1297 (Hodges 1883, 28). In 1795 a new chapel was built in the present village of Haydon Bridge, which had replaced the original medieval one near the old building, parts of which – the nave and tower, along with a south



Haydon Bridge Old Church: Location Map

aisle and/or transept, were demolished to provide stone for it. The present church, dedicated to St Cuthbert, only became parochial in 1879. The remaining chancel and south chapel of the old building were retained as a cemetery chapel, and were restored by the architect Charles Clement Hodges in 1882. Hodges’ 1883 article is the prime source on the old building; a good recent guidebook (Telford 2010) draws on Hodges’ article but provides additional material as regards both the history of the site and the monuments.

## Description

### The Exterior

The surviving part of the church consists of the old chancel with a two-bay southern chapel. It is built of coursed squared masonry (reusing much Roman stone<sup>1</sup>), heavily pointed in parts, with a roof of graduated stone slates which has the highly unusual vernacular features of a ‘wrestler’ ridge<sup>2</sup>.

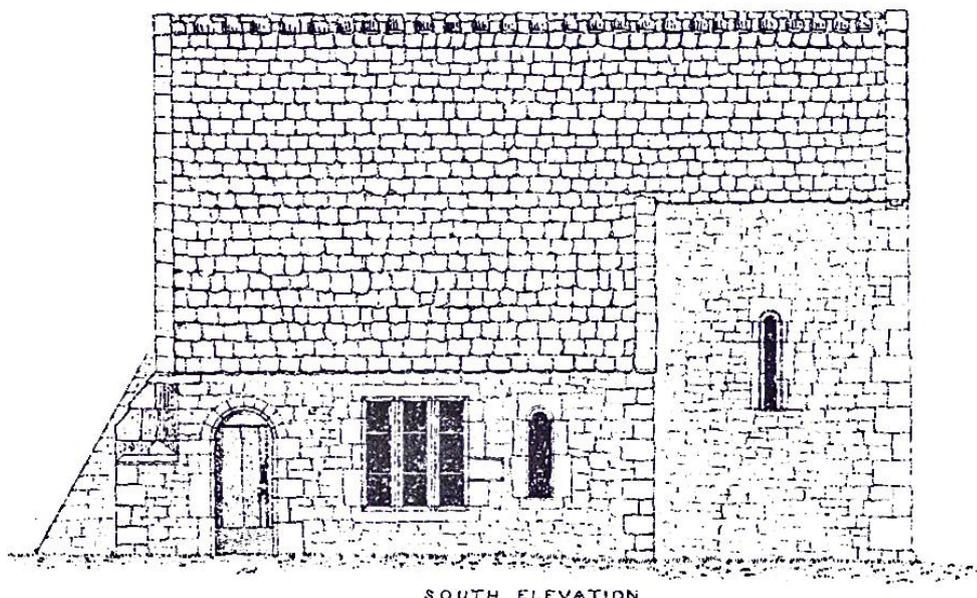
The basic fabric of the west wall of the church is probably of late-18<sup>th</sup> century date, although most of its present architectural features all date from C.C.Hodges’ 1882 restoration. The main gable has a pair of narrow chamfered lancet windows; to the south, between chancel and chapel, is a stepped buttress of 19<sup>th</sup> century ashlar, and then, in the west end of the chapel, a window of two trefoil-headed lights with simply tracery above, under a chamfered hoodmould with turned-back ends, an 1882 piece which is an approximate copy of the 14<sup>th</sup> century window in the east end of the chapel. The gable has a square-edged coping, and is topped by a bellcote with a four-centred arch; a string at its base, the impost of the arch and

<sup>1</sup> Also evident in the re-used stonework on the north side of the present church.

<sup>2</sup> In which the topmost course of slates on each side are cut so as to interlock with each other; there are only two or three other examples of this roof type in Northumberland, eg White heather Cottage in Beltingham.

the coping of the gabled cap are all hollow-chamfered on their lower angles. There are ragged vertical breaks in the masonry close to the north-western corner and again just to the north of the 19<sup>th</sup> century buttress.

At the south end of the wall (and the south-west corner of the present church) is a larger buttress which is clearly of older fabric, and presents some interesting problems. Its lower portion is rectangular in plan, with a chamfered set-back on either side of a triangular-plan upper part. The southern side of this is formed by the northern splay and jamb of an early window, apparently in situ and partly blocked when the 14<sup>th</sup> century south aisle was added. Two stones of its chamfered north jamb and the north end of its sill remain as well as the internal splay. Immediately to the north is what appears to be a corresponding southern splay



Hodges' 1882

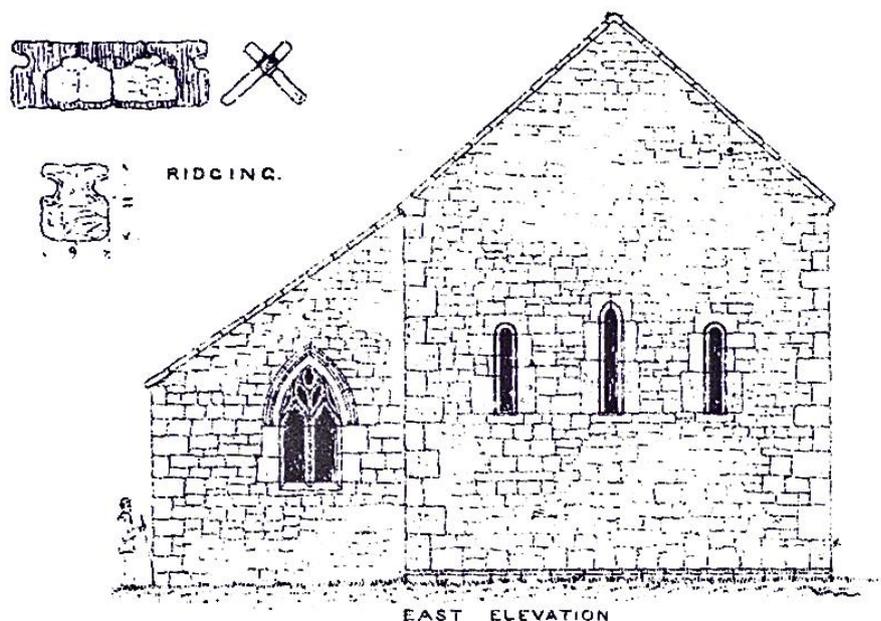
South Elevation

to an adjacent window. Hodges refers to the remains of 'lancet windows' in what he saw as the remains of the east wall of a south aisle, but the fact that there were at least two windows, and the structure was clearly considerably wider than the surviving chapel, raises the possibility that, like its parent church at Warden (and several other medieval churches in Tynedale), the Haydon Chapel was provided with transepts.

The south side of the chancel chapel is now rather heavily pointed, and contains three openings. At the west end is a simple doorway with an almost semicircular arch, with a continuous chamfer; its form led Hodges to see it as a late 12<sup>th</sup> century feature re-set in the 14<sup>th</sup> century aisle wall, but it could equally well be of later medieval date; one or two of its stones are clearly 19<sup>th</sup>-century repair. East of this is quite a tall three-light square-headed mullioned window with a hollow-chamfered surround, perhaps of 16<sup>th</sup> century date; one of the blocks of its east jamb is a re-used section of a small tapering medieval grave cover, with a simple incised border. Near the east end of the wall is a narrow window with a slightly segmental arched head, seen as another re-set 12<sup>th</sup> century feature; the head is of rebated section, but below it the rebate seems to have been cut away to slightly widen the opening. There are substantial alternating quoins at the south east angle of the chapel. In the east wall is a medieval window of two cinquefoiled ogee lights, with three cusped mouchettes above

under a steep two-centred arch with a bold but very eroded hoodmould. The wall below the window seems to show some disturbance.

The south side of the Chancel is of coursed almost square blocks, typical of 12<sup>th</sup> century work, and contains a single window, set quite high; this is a narrow round-headed opening with a rebated surround inside a narrow chamfer.



Hodges' 1882

East Elevation

The east end of the chancel has a chamfered plinth, not present on the side walls, and has a triplet of quite small lancet windows, each with the same narrow external chamber outside a rebate; the central one is only slightly taller than the others and has a pointed head (recut?) whereas those of the flanking lights are roughly semicircular.

The north wall of the chancel is of squared stone; the substantial alternating quoins at the north-east corner do not course in well with the walling, whilst those at the north-west corner are clearly secondary and probably go with the late-18<sup>th</sup> century rebuilding of the west wall. The only feature in the wall is a narrow blocked square-headed doorway towards east end; its jambs again do not course in well with the walling, suggesting that it is an insertion. The outline of the gabled roof of the vestry or sacristy into which it opened is still clear, its apex coming at eaves level, and its east wall around 1 m short of the present east end. Built into the blocking of the door, just below its head, is a stone with the incised inscription 'AN 1742'.

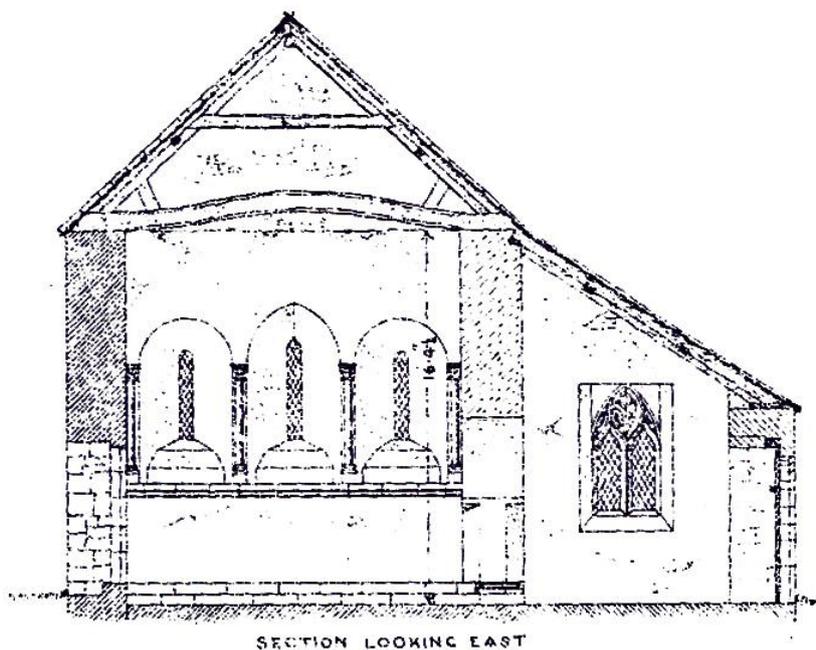
### The Interior

The interior of the building is plastered and whitewashed except some exposed dressings. Between the chancel; and chapel is an arcade of two bays, good-quality work in ashlar of 1882-3 by C.C.Hodges, who saw it as a reinstatement of its medieval predecessor, which had been replaced by a single wide arch, probably of 1795; only the semi-octagonal base of the western respond looks older, and is a close match for the base of an old respond Hodges

illustrates as being found in 'the buttress at west end'<sup>3</sup>. The steep two-centred arches are of two chamfered orders, with broach stops to the outer order and a chamfered hood to the chancel. They are carried on a squat circular pier on an octagonal base; the western respond is semi-octagonal and the eastern semicircular; all have simple moulded capitals and bases with 'holdwater' mouldings.

The two late-19<sup>th</sup> century lancets in the west wall of the chancel have hanging rear arches of segmental-pointed form, with chamfers to their heads. In the north wall, the narrow doorway to the former vestry or sacristy has a simple chamfered surround; it is infilled with carved stones, mostly pieces of medieval cross slab grave cover (Ryder 2000), with part of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century headstone at the foot. At the east end of the wall is a plain square-headed aumbry, with a 19<sup>th</sup>-century oak frame and no exposed dressings other than a 19<sup>th</sup>-century slightly-projecting sill; it is shown on Hodges' 1882 plan and thus probably a genuine medieval feature. The window in the south wall has a level step to its sill; nothing is visible of the reveal of a second similar window further west, shown on Hodges' plan as cut into by the eastern respond of the arcade<sup>4</sup>.

The internal arrangements of the east end are very interesting. Below the three windows there is a string course, square above with a roll moulding on its lower angle, and above this there are four shafts, set between the broad splays of the windows, with moulded bases and capitals that have crocket-like tightly-coiled leaf foliage; the two southern capitals are ancient and the two northern seem 19<sup>th</sup>-century copies of them. Normally one would expect shafts such as these to have carried moulded rear arches to the windows, but there is no evidence of these<sup>5</sup>. The three windows themselves have plastered rear arches which follow the form of the external openings – a two-centred arch to the central one and



<sup>3</sup> Hodges states however that it was the base of the eastern respond of the medieval arcade that had survived. He also found an octagonal base which he took to be that of the central pier; it now lies outside the south door

<sup>4</sup> This retained 'traces of fresco painting. These consisted of a kneeling figure, the drapery being delineated by broad lines of a dark colour, and beneath it a circle rather curiously foliated, and within it some conventional foliage of the maple-leaf character, indicating late 13<sup>th</sup> century work'.

<sup>5</sup> Hodges sees the shafts as merely ornamental, and never carrying arches, citing parallels at Medomsley in County Durham (where moulded arches were introduced or reinstated by the Victorian restorer) and the old Lady Chapel at Hexham Abbey.

semicircular heads to the others.

In the chapel, the east and west windows have plastered rear arches follow

ing the arched form of the external openings, whilst the three openings in the south wall all have plain square lintels; that of the doorway is a re-used medieval grave slab. 18<sup>th</sup> century grave slabs have been re-used as the sills of the two windows, two inscribed ones in the broad mullioned window and fragments of one with carved heraldry in the eastern light. The mullions of the larger window are cut square on their internal faces, possibly a later modification.

The present roof structure of the church is all from Hodges' restoration, and is attractive and good-quality piece of work. That of the chancel is of four bays, with king-post trusses that have raking struts to the principals, with heavy mouldings to the principals that have run-out stops' there are two levels of heavy square-section purlins and a heavy ridge. The three-bay aisle roof has similar detail with moulded principals, two levels of purlins and a top-plate carried on shaped stone corbels.

The flooring of the church is largely of 1882-3, although the two steps up to the sanctuary, in line with the eastern respond of the arcade, are shown on the pre--restoration plan. On the south of the altar is a medieval grave slab to John Elrington and his wife, probably of 14<sup>th</sup> century date (see appendix 1), which Hodges shows as then being in the floor below the sanctuary steps; in front of the altar are three ledger slabs, one of 17<sup>th</sup> and two of 18<sup>th</sup> century date; their inscriptions are given by Telford (2010, 20)..

In the floor of the chapel are several tapered slabs, including a medieval one with a cross and sword; a smaller slab with a sword which Hodges shows as in the chapel is now in the floor at the south-west corner of the chancel. The font, a re-cut Roman altar, is shown by Hodges as on the north side of the chancel but is now in the chapel.

There are a number of loose architectural fragments and pieces of monuments lying around the church, and also outside around the south door

### **The Structural Development of the Church**

Two principal elements of the medieval chapel survive, the chancel and its south chapel. Hodges dated the chancel, primarily on the basis of the surviving features at the east end, to c1190. It is possible that there was more than one early build, as the north-east quoins of the chancel do not course in well with its north wall, although this could be a consequence of re-using locally-available Roman stone. Hodges observed a large Roman inscribed slab re-used in the fabric, which he was unable to have removed<sup>6</sup>.

This date for the chancel is broadly acceptable; but Hodges' dating of the chapel to 'the later decorated or curvilinear period' of 1315-1360 on the basis of its east window perhaps lays too much emphasis on the architectural style of the feature and an assumption that it is

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<sup>6</sup> (1883, 28) Frustratingly he does not tell us where this slab was located!

contemporary with the walling. The arcade, as reconstituted by Hodges, looks more of 13<sup>th</sup> century character; however, the chapel clearly post-dates the east wall of the aisle or transept onto which it built, which can be tentatively dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the single quite broad external splay of its windows being quite distinct from (and presumably later than) the rebated surrounds of the chancel windows. The eastern window in the south wall of the chapel is clearly one of the earlier chancel lights re-used, but seeing the south door as another ex-situ early feature relies on correlating its semicircular form with the 12<sup>th</sup> century, which may be unwise<sup>7</sup>.

The large three-light window on the south of the chapel is described by Hodges as of 17<sup>th</sup> century date in his text, but shown as of the 18<sup>th</sup> century on his plan; in fact its hollow-chamfered surround (and mullions) is much more characteristic of earlier – 16<sup>th</sup> century or even possibly late medieval – work.

When the old building was partially demolished in 1795, a new west wall was built, with a two-light window ('a large window of modern form' according to Hodges); the broad arch between chancel and chapel was also seen as an introduction of this period, although it is not clear whether it directly replaced the medieval arcade, or whether this had already been removed. This arch was supported by a heavy buttress on the west wall, in the fabric of which various architectural fragments and pieces of medieval grave slab were re-used, retrieved by Hodges in 1882 when it was dismantled and replaced by the present small stepped one.

The present roof structure is all of 1882 (Hodges' pre-restoration section – see p.4 - through the building shows the chancel as having a roof truss with a cambered tie beam, small raking struts from tie to principals, and a collar, probably of post-medieval date). His drawings detail the 'wrestler' roof, which he thankfully reinstated.

### **Archaeological Assessment**

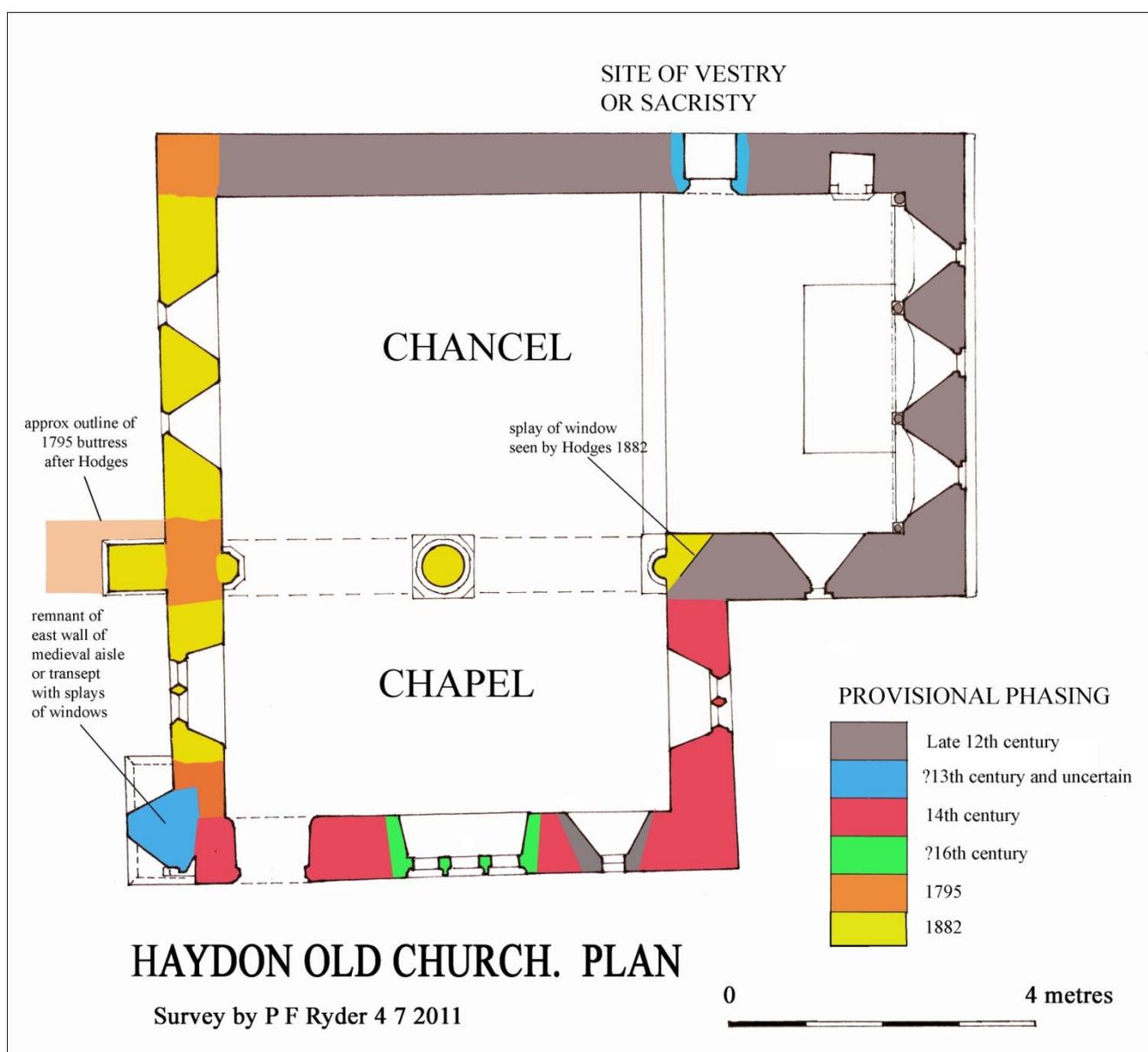
Having had the benefit of C. C. Hodges tactful restoration, and his article describing his findings, the standing fabric of Haydon Old Church is fairly well understood. As in many old churches, there remain two areas of uncertain archaeological potential - the sub-floor deposits (which here will never have been disturbed by the creation of an underfloor heating system) and the wall plaster. It is not clear whether the internal wall faces were stripped in 1882; Hodges mentions the discovery of wall painting on the splay of an early window in the chancel, as this was exposed during the reconstruction of the eastern respond of the arcade. If anything survives of this it will now be inaccessible again behind the new masonry of the replaced respond, but there could well be remains of painting elsewhere. So the usual caveats apply; if any significant area of wall plaster is to be removed or replaced, a proper investigation should be made so that remains of earlier mural decoration are preserved or at least properly recorded. The same applies to any disturbance of sub-floor deposits, which will necessitate an archaeological watching brief.

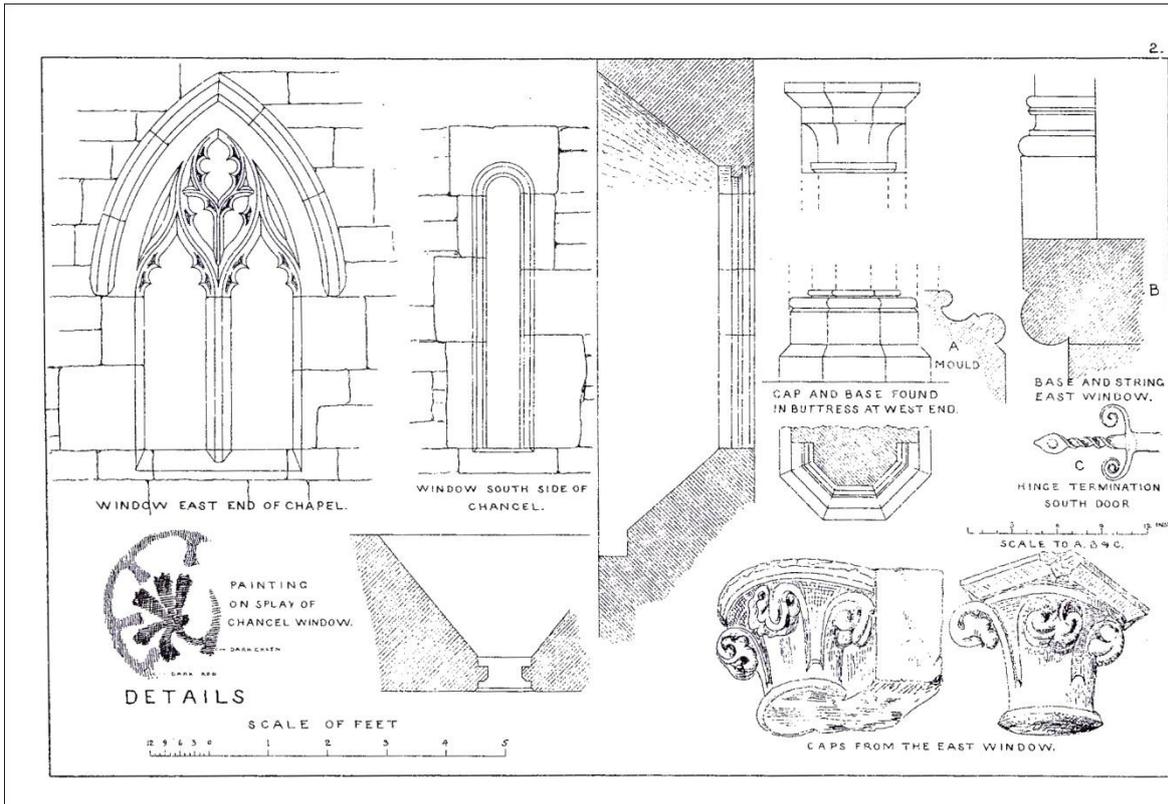
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<sup>7</sup> Simple round chamfered arches like this can occur in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries; a round arch would afford more headroom than a pointed one in a low wall such as this.

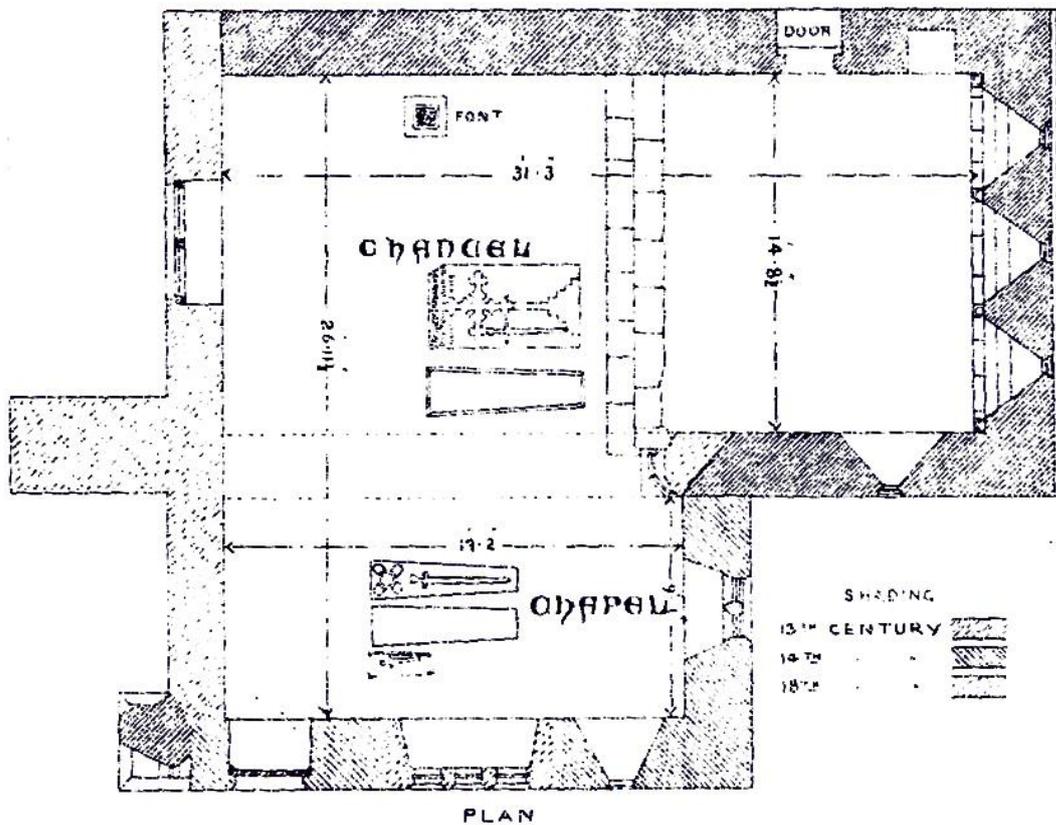
This also applies to disturbance of ground levels outside the building – especially important in this case as substantial parts of the old church have been demolished, and little is known of them. These comprise the nave, with whatever aisles or transepts it had, west tower and the vestry or sacristy on the north of the chancel. Any sub-surface remains of nave and west tower lie between the extant building and the road, an area crossed diagonally by the yew-tree lined ‘tunnel’ from the churchyard gate, and also disturbed by later graves. There is one area of scattered stone but this seems a little to the north of the presumed line of the north wall of the old nave. Any ground works in this area must receive careful monitoring. A non-intrusive geophysical survey could well be helpful here, and provide information as to the ground plan of the destroyed sections of the medieval building.

Peter F Ryder July 2011





Architectural Details etc (above) and Pre-Restoration Plan (below) (Hodges 1883)



## Appendix 1 Medieval Cross Slab Grave Covers at Old Haydon

(from Ryder 2000, 69-70, amended)

The nave, south aisle and west tower of the old parish church of Haydon were demolished c 1796 to provide materials for the new church then being built at Haydon Bridge, half a mile to the south. The chancel and south chapel of the old church remained as a ruin until 1882 when they were restored by C.C.Hodges; he then published an account of the church and its monuments (Hodges 1884). A sketch of the building, apparently under restoration, appears in the Blair sketch book (III), along with drawings of some of the cross slabs, and the appended note 'the medieval coffin slabs above sketched are lying about the churchyard, some newly broken and one or two apparently newly tooled'....

1. A complete limestone slab 1.84 m x .39 m x .23 m in the floor of the chancel aisle. Hodges (1884) shows this slab in the same position on 1882 plan, although his interpretation of the badly worn design is incorrect. Cross paté carved in relief within a sunk circle; there is a central sunk disc with a raised radial pattern. Incised cross shaft and stepped calvary base. No emblem visible. 12th century.
2. A tapering slab re-used as the internal lintel of the south door, and whitewashed over. Incised design; what appears to be an open book placed centrally with a sword on the r. Hodges' slab 'C'

Fragments (3) to (7) were re-set in the 1882 restoration in the recess of the blocked doorway on the north side of the chancel.

3. Two pieces of an incised slab; straight arm cross with cusped arms and fleur-de-lys terminals, the leaves curled. Sword with ogival pommel on l. of shaft. 14th or early 15th century'. Hodges' slab 'B'.
4. Fragment with incised cross shaft and the letters ' ... I O H A N...' The carving here, and on fragment (5) does look suspiciously 'fresh' ; in the light of Blair's comments, it seems that Hodges (or at least his workmen) was happy to 'improve' stones he found; he was certainly prone to drawing stones in a less weathered or worn condition than they actually were, as can be seen by comparing his notebook drawings (Society of Antiquaries Library, Newcastle) with the published end-product - or by comparing his drawings of slabs 3 and 6 with their actual condition..
5. Fragment with incised cross shaft and pair of shears on the l.
6. Upper part of a slab of fawn sandstone. The cross head has stylised fleur-de-lys terminals with leaves curling back and sword on r. 13th or 14th century. Hodges' slab 'D'; he illustrates it as rather more complete, with the cross shaft terminating abruptly a little below the short cross-bar which remains just below the hilt of the sword.
7. Part of a slab with a simple incised straight-arm cross
8. A complete slab 1.87 m x 1.04 m x 0.94 m on the south side of the sanctuary floor. Incised cross with cusped arms and trefoil terminals rising from 4-step calvary base,

with sword on l. of the shaft. Inscription at the top of the slab inlaid: in lead, now much decayed. Hodges (slab 'A') gives the inscription as:

Hic iacet Iohaner Elrington et

..ina uxor eius quae anima

bus ppicietur deus...

Hodges conjectures the name of John Elrington's wife to be Elina.

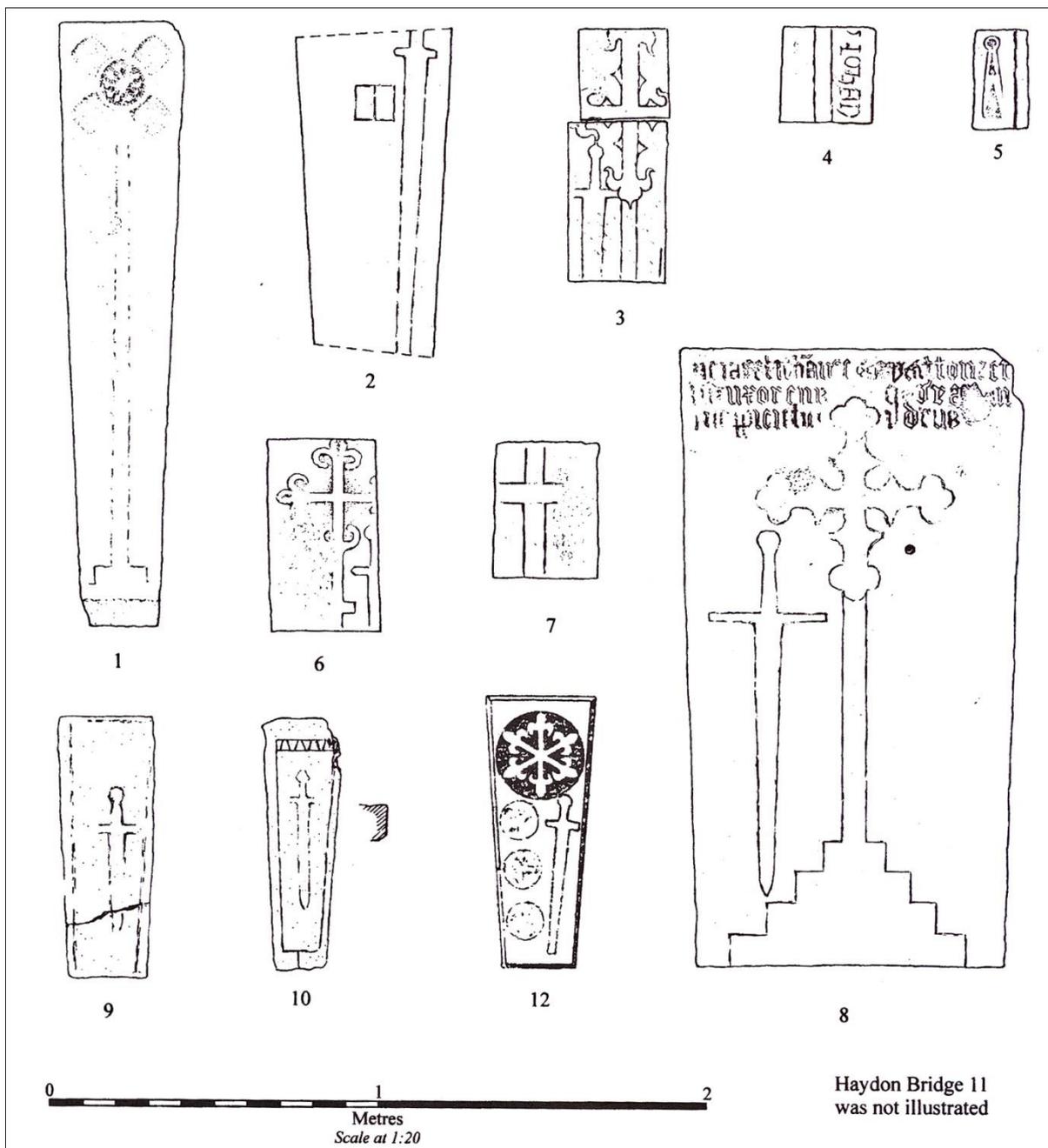
9. A small tapering slab (Hodges stone 'F') set in the floor on the north side of the west respond of the arcade between chancel and chapel. Incised border, and within it the only motif a small sword, not set as skew as Hodges' drawing shows.
10. A rather similar small slab that 'appeared' in the 1990s resting on a recent grave outside the east end of the chancel and is now lying loose against the west respond of the arcade; not figured by Hodges. Tapering sandstone slab with a small sword within an incised border, the top of which is a double line with a line of simple ornament (perhaps a rustic attempt at nail-head). 13<sup>th</sup> century?
11. The lower part of a tapering slab, 0.59 by 0.36 by 0.32 m now built into the external east jamb of the 17th century three-light window on the south side of the chancel (not drawn). All that is visible is an incised border.
12. Hodges illustrates a further slab (E) found re-used in the buttress at the south end of the west wall and already lost when he wrote. Six-arm cross with fleur-de-lys terminals carved in relief within a sunk circle. No conventional cross shaft but below the head on the r. a sword on the l. three roundels containing designs erased by weathering. Late 13th or 14th century. The roundels are paralleled on a small slab from Hexham (no. 44 Cambridge & Williams 1995, 122 & 124).

Hodges refers to but does not illustrate a slab re-used as a lintel at Page Croft, a partly-17th century house to the south-east of the church. This is no longer in evidence.

In addition to the above cross slabs, the upper part of an effigy, its head beneath a crocketed canopy, is illustrated by Hodges (G: 'part of an effigy found in the churchyard in 1883'); this is now in the present St Cuthbert's Church in Haydon Bridge.

### Sources

- Hodges (1883) Haydon Church. Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle. Vol.1 27-32
- Ryder (2000) Medieval Cross Slab Grave Covers in Northumberland 1. South West Northumberland, Archaeologia Aeliana 5<sup>th</sup> ser XXVIII 69-70
- Telford, Denis (2010) Haydon Old Church. A Short History and Guide



The Cross Slab Grave Covers (after Ryder 2000)