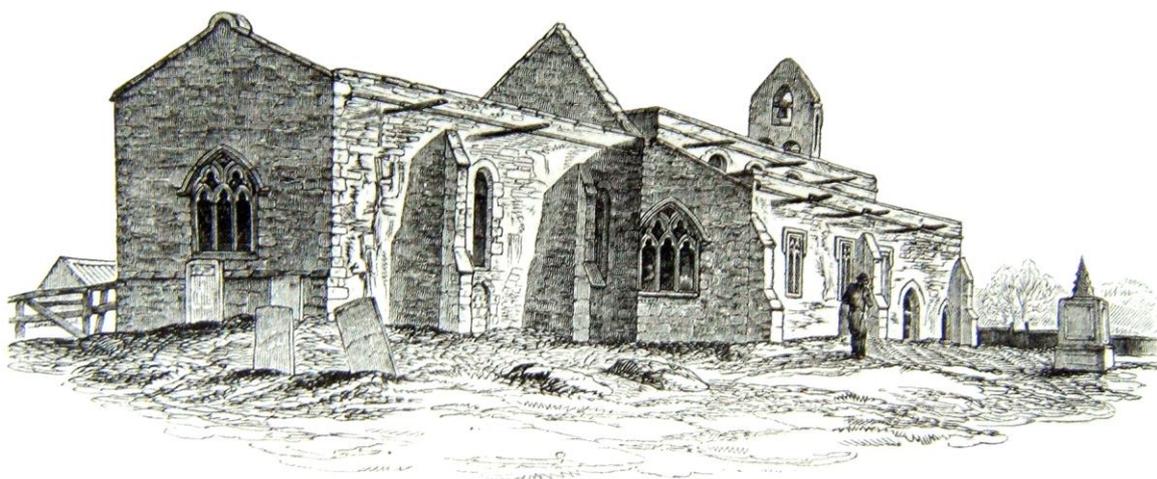


St Andrew's Church, Bothal

An Archaeological Assessment
March 2006



BOTHAL CHURCH, NORTH-EAST VIEW.

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St Andrew's Church, Bothal

St Andrew's Church at Bothal (NZ 240866) stands close to the north bank of the Wansbeck 4 km down-river from Morpeth, at the centre of what is in effect a little late-19th century estate village, with the land to the south-west rising to the promontory crowned by Bothal Castle, the stronghold of the Bertram and Ogle families who made the church their burial place.

The church consists of a nave with a four-bay north and a three-bay south aisle, a south porch, and a chancel. Its silhouette is very typical of Northumberland, with flat-roofs to the clerestoreyed nave and aisle, a tall western bell-cote, and a steeply-pitched red tile roof to the chancel.

Description

The Exterior

The west wall of the **Nave** is of coursed squared sandstone; there is no plinth to the wall itself, but the buttresses at either end and the central buttress/projection (which seems to be an addition) do have a chamfered plinth. This central projection has two chamfered off-sets and dies into the wall below the bellcote; the end buttresses are quite shallow, with a single chamfered off-set only c 0.20 m above the plinth, and die into the wall at around the level of the tops of the aisle end walls; above the buttresses the wall has neatly-cut alternate quoins. On either side of the central projection are single-light ogee-headed windows, which seem to have had chamfered surrounds, but have been slightly enlarged so that the chamfers have been removed except at the very top of the arch.

The bell-cote is quite complex; the lower part of its west face is segmental in plan, and has a pair of openings, the northern re-using the damaged monolithic head of a former window of two trefoiled ogee-headed lights and the southern with a segmental head; the upper part has larger opening with a shouldered segmental head (19th century in its present form), underneath a steep pyramidal cap.



The upper parts of the side walls of the nave (south wall, left) are exposed above the flat roofs of the aisles, and are built of coursed square stone; on each side the eastern half of the wall has rather more elongate blocks than the western. Each elevation has four single-light windows with chamfered surrounds and trefoiled ogee heads, below a parapet with a

chamfered oversailing course at its base and a chamfered coping. At the east end of the south wall is a shallow buttress, with its sloped top a little below the base of the parapet.

The west end of the **South Aisle** is of squared stone, without a plinth; there has been some

re-facing at around mid-height, and higher up is evidence of a slightly-steeper roof-line, relating to an eaves line c 0.6 m below the present one. The south wall of the aisle is of roughly-coursed squared stone, with a clear break in build c 0.8 m below the parapet; the upper section of wall has more regularly-coursed elongate blocks with a distinctive pecked tooling. To the west of the porch is a square-headed window of two trefoiled lights, with open panels above, under a hoodmould with rough mask stops; all its stonework looks medieval except for a renewed mullion. Then comes the south doorway, now inside the porch; it has a steep four-centred arch with continuous mouldings, and a casement-moulded hood with turned-back ends. East of the porch comes a second two-light window, very similar to the first, and then a buttress with a chamfered plinth and an off-set at mid-height, with its top c 0.8 m below the parapet. Immediately beyond the buttress is a ragged break in the fabric, and then come two more windows of the same type; the first has its east jamb and sill renewed, and an 18th-century (?) sundial immediately above its hoodmould; it has shaped hoodmould stops rather than masks, and the second is similar, with its west jamb and sill renewed, but with mask stops again. At the end of the wall is a more substantial buttress, set at a rather skewed angle; on its east side it is clear that this is an addition.

The east end of the aisle has a 14th-century three-light window with trefoiled heads to the principal lights and the two sub-lights above, under a four-centred arch with a hoodmould ending in carved stops with ballflower. Above is evidence of the same slightly-steeper roof line seen at the west end of the aisle; the masonry above it is probably of 19th-century date.,

The **South Porch** is of yellow sandstone ashlar and later-19th century character, and has a chamfered plinth. The outer arch is of two-centred form and of two chamfered orders, the outer continued down the jambs to broach stops just above the ground, and the inner carried on semi-octagonal responds with moulded capitals and bases; there is a moulded hood on ball-flower stops. The gable has an ashlar coping chamfered on its underside, rising from foot-stones with triangular trefoiled ogee-topped panels and moulded finials, to a cross finial on the gable.

The west end of the **North Aisle** is of roughly-coursed and roughly-squared stone, and seems to have a blocked opening low down, although its form is uncertain. Further up is an earlier steep roof-line, with its eaves line c 2 m below that at present, coming down to the top of the two-stepped shallow buttress at the west end of the north wall of the aisle. There is another similar buttress at the east end of the wall, which unlike the west end has a chamfered plinth; there is a parapet with a chamfered oversailing course at its base (not very level) and a chamfered coping. The wall is of coursed and squared sandstone, with some quite large blocks. Near the west end is a two-light window of the same type as those in the south aisle, but it appears all 19th-century work; below it a 19th-century staircase descends to the square-headed doorway, with a window alongside, into a boiler room under the west end of the aisle. Then comes the north door, now concealed by a wooden garden-shed like structure; behind this the door has a rough two-centred arch with a continuous roll moulding, its head cut in two inclined slabs¹, with beyond it another window of the usual type, which in this case looks authentic medieval work except for its mullion and the central part of its sill. An old buttress follows (its base removed), and finally two more windows, of the same general form, but much more crudely cut than the others; the tops of their lights are rounded rather than pointed arches. The north aisle windows all have hoodmoulds, but no carved stops.

¹Several authorities have seen this as an Anglo-Saxon feature, but it is in fact quite a common medieval constructional technique.

Set hard up against the south end of the east wall of the aisle is a three-light 14th-century window very like the corresponding one in the south aisle; it has a hoodmould with a turned-back end to the north, while the south end looks to be over-built by the adjacent chancel wall - difficult to explain, as the chancel wall is a century earlier in date.

The south wall of the **Chancel (below)** is of good-quality coursed squared stone, and was reportedly rebuilt (at least in part) in 1887. There is a two-step chamfered plinth, and the wall is articulated into three irregular bays by two-stepped buttresses with their tops set c 0.6 m below the chamfered oversailing course at eaves level. The narrow first bay has an old lancet window with a chamfered surround and a monolithic head, with dressings that do not course in well with the adjacent masonry; below is a low-side window with a damaged arched head that may have originally been trefoiled, and sockets for a central iron bar. The low-side is set in an area of disturbed masonry and looks as if it replaces an earlier opening. The broad central bay has a priest's door with a trefoiled head ornamented with a band of nail-head, all restoration except for one block at the head of the east jamb; parts of the chamfered jambs, with worn broach stops at the base, are old. To the east is a lancet, again with dressings that do not course in well with the walling; its head and sill are clearly restoration; there is another similar lancet in the



eastern bay.

The east end of the chancel has paired multi-stepped buttresses of 1887, but the lower part of the wall between them seems old, and the lower member of the plinth becomes a roll moulding rather than a chamfer. The double-chamfered string course and all the walling above it, with a stepped triplet of lancets, are clearly 19th-century work. The lancets have a stepped hoodmould, and in the steep gable above is a vesica window with a chamfered surround; the gable has a coping chamfered on its underside, and an eight-armed cross finial.

The north wall of the chancel seems genuine medieval work; it is of coursed and squared stone,

in rather smaller blocks than on the south, and is articulated by stepped buttresses into four irregular bays. The short western bay has a lancet window (only its head restored); in the first buttress a roll-moulded stone (either an architectural fragment or part of a grave cover) has been re-used a course below the chamfered off-set. Then comes a blind bay and a 19th-century buttress, and a bay containing a priest's door with an irregular block surround and a roughly triangular arched head; it looks to be an insertion. inserted; above is a genuine lancet. East again is a medieval buttress, and then a lancet that has been largely renewed except for parts of its east jamb.

The Interior

The interior walls of the church are bare of plaster.



Interior looking east

The **Nave** has an asymmetric feel; the north arcade, with a length of blank wall at the west end, is of four narrow bays, whilst the south, running the full length of the nave, is of three much wider arches. The west wall is of coursed and square stone, which seem to run through with at least the lower part of the west wall of the south aisle. The two single-light windows have shallow segmental rear arches; in the centre of the wall c 3 m above the floor is a re-used chevron-moulded voussoir.

The south arcade is of three broad segmental-pointed arches, each of two chamfered orders. The eastern pier is simply a rectangular piece of wall, with its angles chamfered; three chamfers are stopped at the base, but on the fourth, at the north-east corner, the broad chamfer ends c 1.6 m above the ground, with below it a narrower and rougher chamfer that looks like an afterthought, stopped around 0.90 m from the floor. The pier, which leans rather alarmingly to the south, has a chamfered plinth, that on the western half being set a few cm lower than that on

the eastern. The masonry in the spandrel above the south face of the pier shows a ragged vertical break; on both sides it is coursed stone, in quite elongate blocks, but that to the west has a distinctive diagonal tooling whilst the older fabric to the east is more roughly finished. On the north (nave) face of the wall this older fabric survives above the eastern arch, as far as a set-back at the level of the sills of the clerestory windows; to the west the whole wall, clerestory and all, seems of one build and there is no set-back.

There is a marked change in alignment of the arcade on the eastern pier, the eastern bay inclining markedly to the south, a change paralleled by the outer wall of the aisle. At clerestory level the lean of the pier allows the wall to achieve a rather straighter course.

The two western arches have hoodmoulds on both faces of the wall, whereas the eastern has none; towards the nave there is a mask stop above the pier, and towards the aisle above the pier and western respond. The pier between them is an octagonal one, with a moulded base but with no capital, the chamfers of the arches simply dying into its faces. At either end of the arcade the arches similarly die into the walls, without any responds.

The north arcade is of four narrow arches with quite steeply two-centred arches, on quite slender octagonal piers. The arches are of two chamfered orders, with stiff-leaf foliage stops to both order towards the nave, and broach stops to the aisle; there is a hoodmould, chamfered above and below, towards the nave only; it has four mask stops (above the western respond and piers), from west to east depicting a woman, a man, a king and a bishop. The piers have moulded capitals and moulded 'holdwater' bases; the central one has a square plinth and the other two octagonal ones. The responds have short triple-shafts carried by corbels, and capitals (the eastern somewhat mutilated) with more stiff-leaf foliage. It is clear, especially on the north face of the wall, that the arcade is inserted in older walling, heightened in better-quality squared stone when the clerestory was added, but this does not continue far beyond the western respond; there are ragged joints in the lower part of the wall c 1 m beyond the respond on the south face of the wall, and c 0.6 m from it on the north.

The roof of the nave is of six bays, with simple quadrant-shaped corbels (set at rather different levels) carrying wall-posts which in turn support principal rafters set at quite a shallow angle; long arch braces combine in a single segmental curve; there is a square-set ridge with a separate strainer beam c 0.30 m below, and one level of butt purlins; at the intersections of trusses and longitudinal timbers there are bosses with angels holding shields.

In the **South Aisle** the lower part of the west wall is, as already mentioned, coursed square stone, with rather the larger blocks in the upper courses similar to those in the uppermost metre or so of the south wall. In the lower part of the south wall the courses vary in height, and there is a ragged vertical break between the two eastern windows, at which point the wall makes a marked change in alignment; there are two re-used chevron-moulded voussoirs, one 0.5 m east of the westernmost window and 0.5 m below its lintel, and the other 1 m east of the south door and 2 m above the floor. The south door has a segmental rear arch; all its inner west jamb is renewed stonework and the three windows in the south wall have simple stone lintels and level internal sills. In line with the eastern pier of the arcade is a short slot and other indications of a former screen, and at the east end of the wall is a piscina with a shallow recess under a trefoiled ogee arch; the projecting bowl has been cut away. There is a roughly-cut shallow recess in the internal east jamb of the easternmost window, possibly cut to accommodate a now-removed wall tablet.

The east window of the aisle has a four-centred rear arch with a chamfer only to its head and to the north of it, a little south of the central line of the arcade, a semicircular moulded corbel with a line of nail-head and an open triangle, the Bertram *orle* carved in relief². Just beyond this is a straight joint, more or less in line with the inner face of the south wall of the nave, rising from just above the floor to the springing of the arcade.

The aisle has a roof of five full bays, with the end trusses being set a short distance out from the actual end walls. The principals are carried on short wall-posts which rise from quadrant corbels, with solid knee-braces, and a single level of butt purlins; at the intersections of principals and purlins are bosses of angels holding shields; at their upper ends the principals rest on a plate alongside the nave wall, supported by a further series of corbels.

At the east end of the aisle stands the alabaster tomb of Ralph, lord Ogle (d1513) and his wife Margaret, one of the most important late-medieval sepulchral monuments in the county, but outside the scope of this report.

The west wall of the **North Aisle** has an internal off-set c 1.8 m above the floor, which now, together with four architectural fragments appropriated as corbels, supports the head of a three-light window, similar in style to the east windows of the aisles but in relatively fresh unweathered stone³. The westernmost window in the north wall of the aisle is entirely in 19th-century ashlar (and has a chamfer to its lintel), and there is also 19th-century refacing or rebuilding of the wall below it. The north door has a segmental rear arch. The second window has a medieval cross slab re-used as its internal lintel, and just beyond it is a recess with a rough trefoiled head, skewed so as to face south-west. Its sill is at the same level as those of the windows, which are set deeper below the actual openings than those in the south aisle. In the north-east angle of the aisle is another recess with a square head and a sill formed by a slab, chamfered on its lower angle, set diagonally to span the wall corner. The recess is asymmetric in plan; its north-west side includes part of a cross-slab, re-used, and a large block in the internal face of its south jamb has an odd series of rune-like incised lines.

The east window of the aisle has a four-centred rear arch with a chamfered head; below its south jamb is a straight-joint, on the line of the external face of the original nave north wall.

The roof of the aisle is very like that of the south aisle, but of quite crude workmanship.

The arch to the **Chancel** is set markedly north-of-centre in the east wall of the nave; it is two-centred, and of two chamfered orders, with a chamfered hood both to nave and chancel, with carved stops; towards the nave the northern stop is set high to clear the adjacent hoodmould of the north arcade. The arch responds are semi-octagonal, with moulded capitals. The northern leans back at an odd angle, and has been strengthened by a spur of 19th-century ashlar. Its capital and its holdwater base both look 19th-century. The south respond has an old moulded capital; only as fragment of its base is visible, below the present floor level of the chancel. To the south of the respond is a small squint, angling through the respond so as to give a view of the altar. Above the arch are slight indications of a possible former pre-clerestory roof line, and then at about the level of the nave eaves is a horizontal set-back, with just above

²This is sometimes interpreted as the eastern respond of an earlier arch or arcade.

³It is almost certainly the head of the east window removed in 1887, but is probably no older than the mid-19th century.

it, and a little south-of-centre, a re-used chevron voussoir.

Inside the chancel is a panelled dado, below a boldly-projecting ashlar string-course, at the level of the sills of the lancet windows, which looks wholly Victorian, although the fact that the wall face above the string is set back considerably from that below seems an old feature. Small openings have been left in the dado to allow a view of various features in the lower parts of the walls, the most perplexing of what is actually within the south-east angle. This is a cavity



within the thickness of the wall, with its rounded back-wall on the south and west retaining medieval plaster and remnants of a 'masonry' pattern painted in red. This cavity is spanned by a lintel set north-south (and one the line of the west end of the chancel) carved with stiff-leaf foliage below a series of mouldings, quite an elaborate piece obviously contemporary with the north arcade (left). To the east the cavity is blocked by rubble infill immediately behind the west jamb of the low-side window, which is quite widely splayed internally; to the east of the lintel (which is set just below the level of the sill of the adjacent lancet window) the plastered wall face

has extended to a higher level, but the cavity is now roofed with rubble wall core. It is difficult to work out how either the lintelled opening (usually seen as a squint) or the plastered chamber/cavity (which would seem later in date, as the plastered wall seems to block whatever opening the lintel spanned) relate to the present apparently-13th-century chancel, although the carved lintel is little earlier in date. 2.4 m from the west wall a tiny window in the panelling allows a glimpse of a chamfered jamb, possibly the east end of some feature related to the mural cavity.

The south wall of the chancel, above the string, is of coursed squared stone, more regular than on the north side, and probably all an 1887 rebuild, older dressings being replaced around the lancet windows although the round-headed rear arch of the priest's door (over which the string is carried as rather a clumsy label) looks all Victorian. Genuinely medieval are the sedilia and piscina at the east end of the wall. The sedilia have three steep trefoiled arches with a filleted roll moulding, continued down the outer jambs but between the arches springing from moulded capitals carried by short octagonal shafts which in turn are supported by corbels rising from carved bosses; there is much good carved detail, including more stiff-leaf foliage. The piscina to the east has a large semicircular arch with the same filleted roll moulding, and a projecting 19th-century bowl with a line of nail-head (perhaps copied from the corbel at the east end of the south aisle), springing from a carved boss that may be medieval.

The north wall of the chancel seems genuine medieval masonry, except for its upper 2 m or so, and the walling to the east of a ragged break midway between the central and eastern lancets. The internal opening of the north doorway, with a plain ashlar lintel, is largely Victorian ashlar; under the eastern lancet is a semi-octagonal credence table under a two-centred arch with a narrow chamfer; and this too looks all 19th century work.

Internally the east end of the chancel is all of 1887; above the string course the eastern triplet of windows are set within a five-bay wall arcade of stepped richly-moulded lancet arches, with clustered red sandstone shafts with moulded capitals, bases and shaft-rings, a rather ostentatious piece of Victorian gothic.

The late-medieval chancel roof, of five bays, is very similar in form to that of the nave, except that its bosses mostly have the Sacred Monogram. Externally the chancel has a high-pitched 19th-century roof, so there must be a roof-space above (lit by the vesica in the eastern gable⁴

Structural History

The structural history of the church poses some interesting problems, debated in print by several Victorian antiquaries (eg Ellis 1901) and more recently at considerable length by Bibby (1973). A complete reconstruction of the building sequence is not possible, but some long-standing errors can be corrected.

Starting with the Saxon period, there is little doubt that there was an early church on or near the present site. Several pieces of indubitable Pre-Conquest sculpture were retrieved during the 1887 restoration, and given to the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle, but three features of the present building - the doorways on the north of chancel and north aisle, and a window head re-used in the bell-cote, which Bibby and others saw as Saxon work, can be firmly discounted. The manner in which the head of the north door is cut in two angled slabs is a relatively common one in medieval Northumberland, the chancel door is of a form familiar in local domestic architecture in the 16th/early 17th centuries, and the re-used window head in the bell-cote looks like a piece of crude 14th-century work.

Turning to in-situ fabric, the oldest structural element seems to be the north side of the nave, and probably also the eastern bay of the south wall, into which later arcades and arches have clearly been inserted. This walling has no obvious datable characteristics; its thickness suggest a post- rather than a pre-Conquest date. The foundations of an eastern apse were seen (but not it appears recorded in detail) during the 1887 works; this would tally with a late 11th or 12th century building.

The mid- to late-12th century provides a collection of architectural pieces, including several capitals and bases of shafts rather smaller than the average arcade pier. These were retrieved from the chancel walls in 1887, and may indicate a rather prestigious rebuilding of the early apsidal chancel.

Returning to the standing fabric, we come to the north arcade, with its good-quality detail and stiff-leaf foliage of c1200. Stiff-leaf foliage is seen again in the chancel, on the lintel of the blocked opening (usually seen as a squint) at the south-east corner, and in the sedilia. However much of the chancel seems to be the product of a rebuilding a little later in the 13th century, when the mysterious chamber at the south-east corner was infilled and the present quite plain

⁴Is there any access to this? There may be an opening in the west gable. The roof was presumably restored to the pitch of this gable, which old illustrations show remained standing although both chancel and nave roofs were reduced to a lower pitch in the late medieval period.

lancet windows inserted; was this work prompted by some structural failure, or damage occasioned during some raid or political upheaval?. The corbel at the east end of the south aisle (sometimes rather doubtfully interpreted as the respond of an earlier arcade) is also of 13th-century date, but of markedly poorer quality than the north arcade and other stiff-leaf work; presuming that it is in its original position, it must post-date the 'squint' opening.

The position of the 'squint' opening at the south-east corner of the chancel seems to imply the contemporary existence of a south aisle or chapel to the nave, seen in the earlier walling that survives in the eastern bay of the south aisle probably relates to this, although all its architectural features relate to the c1400 remodelling.

Another puzzle comes in the north aisle. Once again, all its features are of 14th-century date, but at the west end is a steep roof-line typical of the low eaves of a late 12th or 13th century aisle, so does fabric of the same period survive here as well? However, there is some evidence to suggest that the nave has been extended to the west:

- (1) The c1180-1200 arcade is of four narrow arches, yet there is a panel of blank walling, virtually sufficient for another bay, at its west end. In most cases aisles ran the full length of the nave to which they were added.
- (2) Examining the west end of the arcade, there are clear breaks in the masonry, at least in the lower wall, c 1 m from the respond on the south face of the wall and c 0.60 m on the north; too far back to simply result from the insertion of a respond in an older wall, but more congruent with the wall to the west being either extended or rebuilt, leaving the arcade respond undisturbed.
- (3) The west end of the nave, and that of the south aisle, have no pre-14th century features, and on the internal face of the wall look to be of a single build⁵.

One theory which would accommodate all this evidence is that the nave was either extended to the west in the 13th century, or a priest's house was built projecting from the west end of the north aisle. The re-used doorway of this period, now part of the screen at the west end of the aisle, is said to have come from the north wall nearby.

A century or so later, and after the vicissitudes of the early 14th century, came a much more extensive building programme, which Bibby (1973) relates this to the documented 1399 founding of a chantry chapel by Helen Ogle and her husband David Holgrave, whose arms remain in a south aisle window. At this time it would appear the nave was either rebuilt (or, if the priest's house theory is correct, extended), the south aisle extended and the north aisle, apart from its west wall, rebuilt.

This work certainly took place in more than one phase, although trying to distinguish a coherent order is difficult. The inserted eastern arch of the south arcade and to the two western arches are similar in style, but cannot be contemporary, as the section of wall between them has two different sections of plinth, set at different levels. The two western arches seem to be contemporary with the wall above, including the clerestory. This can be seen by the uniformity of masonry in the internal face of the nave wall, and the absence of any set-back at the level of

⁵The masonry of the western part of the north wall of the nave does look markedly rougher than that of the adjacent west end

the sill of the clerestory windows, present above the rougher masonry of the older eastern bay. This western section of wall is also on a markedly different alignment to the eastern bay, as is the aisle wall. It would appear that the earlier nave was of trapezoidal plan, narrowing at its west end, and when the rebuild took place the rebuilt section of the south wall was set-out parallel to the north wall.

The eastern windows of the two aisles are identical, and probably contemporary with several of those in the side walls⁶, although, unlike the clerestory and west wall windows, no ogees are present, which could imply a two-phase reconstruction. At the time of the re-windowing of the aisles the east end of the chancel may also have been rebuilt, as Hodgson's print shows a three-light window there identical to those in the east ends of the aisles. A window head of the same form is now preserved at the west end of the north aisle, but this looks so unweathered that it seems likely to have been a mid-19th century renewal of the one Hodgson showed, removed in 1887 when the present eastern windows were substituted.

A second phase of reconstruction may have taken place in the 15th century, possibly as late as 1496 when the chancel was described as ruinous and dilapidated (Hodgson 1732, 146). The north door of the chancel certainly looks 'late' and may be of this period; it may have opened into a vestry, as Hodgson's 1832 print seems to show some hint of an adjacent structure here. Wilson (1870, 158) describes a south door, a 'beautiful equilateral cusped-headed doorway with small ball-ornament carved on the flat wall face; debased however, by the architect of the Perpendicular alterations to the flat form of arch he preferred'. The more major works of the rebuilding of the western part of the south arcade and west end, and addition of the clerestory, and heightening of the aisles, could just possibly be as late as this; the present roofs are probably date to this phase as well.

Other anomalies should really be mentioned. The two eastern windows in the north wall of the north aisle looks like crude copies of the others, and are much more widely splayed internally; they retain medieval glass, but of a later character to that in the south aisle (Bibby 1973, 262-263). The bell-cote in its present form looks, at least in its upper parts, like a post-medieval rebuild, perhaps of the 18th century.

The 19th-century brought its crop of repairs and restoration. Rector Hopwood (1845-1858) has the chancel 'thoroughly restored' (and probably renewed in the late 15th century east window); its internal walls were plastered, destroying a painted pedigree of the Ogle family. Wilson describes the church as it stood before the principal restoration of 1877: the chancel had a low-pitched roof but its old western gable stood 'isolated at its original pitch'. The north door was blocked up, and there was a simple south porch described as 'modern'. The west end of the north aisle had been 'shortened' (by which Wilson seems, to mean an internal cross wall had been built), and 'an excavation made under it to admit a furnace chamber for the heating of the building'.

The 1887 works were carried out by the rector W.C.Ellis 'under the careful eye of Mr Hodgson Fowler' (Ellis 1902, 258) and the building described as being 'restored, or rather repaired'; something of an understatement when the chancel was in fact largely rebuilt, and the evidence of 15th-century rebuilding at the east end erased. The west end of the north aisle was shown to have been a two-storeyed priest's chamber (cf Corbridge) with a small door on the north

⁶These windows have been dated to c1370, both on architectural form and from the heraldry in the surviving medieval glass.

(visible in Hodgson's print).

Archaeological Assessment

This is an important medieval church, possibly on a Pre-Conquest site; the foundations of an apse seen in 1887 show that structural remains of earlier phases of the building survive beneath the present floors, although as often there will have been disturbance occasioned both by burials and a 19th-century underfloor heating system; there is a subterranean heating chamber beneath the west end of the north aisle. Any disturbance of floor levels in or adjacent to the church should be accompanied by archaeological recording.

Turning to the above-ground fabric, walls are bare of plaster, but the lower parts of the internal wall faces of the chancel are concealed by a 19th-century panelled dado. It is clear that remains of some unusual structure, apparently a mural chamber or passage, survive at the south-west corner of the chancel. Whilst the 1887 restorers left some features visible - just - through small windows and a grilled opening, these merit proper investigation and recording. Any removal of panelling would afford the chance to properly inspect the walls behind; although much of the upper part of the south wall was rebuilt in 1887, it would appear that substantial medieval work may be in situ, at least on the internal face of the wall, below the level of the internal string-course.

Other important features worthy of proper recording and conservation are of course the important medieval stained glass in the windows of the nave aisles (outside the scope of this report), and the roof structures throughout the church. Several accounts refer to the chancel roof as 'modern' but this may be incorrect; certainly from floor level its timbers appear of some age; if it was of recent construction, why did the 1887 restorers retain it whilst covering it externally with a high-pitched roof structure more typical of the 13th-century ideal towards which they were clearly working? The nave roof is reported to bear a '1576' date (Ellis 1902), which Bibby (1973, 280) thought probably indicated a repair. It would be helpful if dendrochronological analysis of the roof timbers could be arranged.

Peter F Ryder March 2006

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