

Diocese of Durham

TOW LAW - St. Philip & St. James CH249

Incumbent – Revd. J Whalley

Inspection of Churches Measure 1955

ARCHITECT'S REPORT June 2019



John A.G. Niven
Registered Architect

T.O.h.P. Architects
The Old Hall Practice Limited
57 Front Street
West Auckland
Co. Durham
DL14 9HL

Tel: 01388 834368

Email: john@theoldhallpractice.co.uk

1.0 PREMISES IDENTIFICATION

Church: St. Philip & St. James Church
Deanery: Stanhope
Diocese: Durham
Date of Inspection: 21st May 2019
Weather: Dry and sunny

2.0 PARTICULARS OF SITE (Location, adjacent buildings etc)

The site lies towards the eastern boundary of this uplands small town with open farmland to the north and east, housing to the south and the church hall and former vicarage to the west. The church stands within a stonewalled churchyard, which contains graves on the east and south sides.

3.0 PARTICULARS OF PREMISES (General Construction, layout etc)

These consist of an aisleless nave, with a lean-to west porch, a chancel and a combined north vestry and organ chamber. The building is constructed of stone throughout with blue Welsh or fibre cement slate-covered pitched roofs.

4.0 REPAIR WORKS OR NEW WORKS SINCE LAST INSPECTION (September 2014)

2015

June

West wall of vestry rendered.

September

Organ comprehensively restored and overhauled – David Tindale – Approx. cost £8,000.00

2016

June

6 No sections of cast iron guttering to main nave roof renewed.
Water table and associated leadwork to rear of steeple repointed.
Ridge tiles repointed.
Approximate total cost of above items £1980.00

August

2 No apex stone crosses re-fixed and made safe.
Carpeting to walkways renewed.

December

1 No defective Vaillant gas fired boiler replaced with Baxi Megaflo.

2017

October

2 No sections of rainwater downpipe and hopper head renewed to vestry.

2019

April

Belfry cleared of bird nest material and metal wire guards renewed to belfry openings.
North walls to nave and vestry repointed.

5.0 SUMMARY OF GENERAL CONDITION OF BUILDINGS

The building is generally in a good condition and well maintained with the introduction of a new heating installation in 2008, improving the comfort of the building, the interior of which is kept very clean and attractive.

The parish are also to be congratulated in dealing with most of the work recommended in the previous inspection report, including the repointing of most of the north side of the building with only minor repair or routine maintenance work currently required.

6.0 DETAILED CONDITION OF BUILDINGS

EXTERNAL FABRIC

6.1 General Structure

This is sound with only some minor ancient settlement cracks to the south wall of the chancel and on a similar position on the north side to the vestry gable, and to most window positions to the nave.

These do not appear to have worsened since the last inspection.

There is also slight movement cracking to the apex of two windows on the north side of the nave and two on the south side and a slight movement of the arch over the west entrance.

The extensive settlement of the tiled floor adjacent to the altar is most likely due to the compaction of the underlying fill material and is therefore unlikely to be related to the main structure of the building.

6.2 External Wall Surfaces

These consist of squared, coursed sandstone rubble throughout, with large dressed blocks to external openings, corners of buttresses etc. The external stonework is generally in good condition except as itemised below:

6.2.1 North Elevations

(From right to left)

- The whole of the north wall and gable to porch has been repointed with what appears to be cement rich mortar within the past year.
- Upper horizontal joints to west corner buttress lean on north and east sides. The west face has been repointed as main areas.
- Small patch of lean pointing to mid-centre panel of buttress to left of central bay.

The face of the wall to height of down-pipe to return corner with organ chamber at extreme left end of nave was wet at the time of the inspection with moss growing to the joints.

Slight movement crack following joints to east side of top of organ chamber gable has been repointed and does not appear to have worsened since last inspection.

Previous area of open lean joints to panel 1m – 1.5m above ground to vestry wall has been repointed as other north wall areas.

Joints slightly lean or open to redundant of chimney particularly to corner stones and on west face. Upper section of chancel wall has been previously overpointed and this is now cracking and becoming loose.

Organ chamber wall retains earlier pointing which is generally sound except for a small area at head which has been overpointed previously and is now becoming loose immediately under the guttering. Some pieces of lead flashings remain above external door.

6.2.2 South Elevations

General Condition

This elevation has extensive 'over' pointing, almost totally covering stonework at upper levels to springing line of lancet windows. There are slight settlement cracks to the east of the central down-pipe to the chancel, which has been previously re-pointed and above the central window, which are slightly cracked below the string course. These do not appear to have worsened since the last inspection. A small area of previous open pointing at eaves level between the heads of the double windows extending to the movement crack above the middle window has been patch pointed.

There are open joints to the upper part of the east nave buttress and the upper stone block under the coping of the west nave buttress is laminating.

The cement rich over pointing is beginning to drop-off or is loose in places, particularly at the lower levels and at the west end adjacent to the tower base.

South Gable to Entrance Porch

The pointing to the upper triangle which has been patch repaired previously is uneven and appears to be loose in places.

6.2.3 East Elevations

Chancel Gable:

North side – Cracking of some overpointing and adjacent abutment haunching with a vertical point at the apex close to dropping out..

South side – Generally sound but with a few open or eroded joints. The third and fourth coping blocks above the kneeler appear to be rotating very slightly.

East Gable

The upper section of the gable above the upper string course, the seating to apex cross and the gable copings were re-pointed prior to 2002 and this remains good. The remainder of the gable is generally sound. An area of stonework close to ground level had been chopped out, at the time of the last inspection and has now been repointed with a cement rich mortar. The pointing around a stone block at the top right corner of the panel immediately under the string course is open.

Vestry

Stonework is sound. Previous movement cracking to midway coping blocks has been repointed.

6.2.4 West Elevations

The whole of the exposed part of the gable and the adjacent return face of the tower has been repointed previously with what may be a cement rich mortar but it appears to be weathering well except for the very top part of the gable which is open or lean.

The bottom cylindrical column of the rose window has been repaired with cement mortar which has cracked slightly.

Some of the joints to the rose window surround are becoming lean, particularly to the lower part.

Porch

This is generally sound but all the pointing is cement rich but appears to be weathering well.

6.3 Roof Coverings

The roofs are slated with Welsh Blue slate of equal size throughout except for the entrance porch. Generally these are in good condition. The porch had been re-slated with asbestos cement which had been extensively damaged by vandals and was replaced with new fibre cement slate shortly before the last inspection. The Vestry/organ chamber roof was recovered in 2 sections in 2011 and 2013. The ridge tiles are half round blue terracotta.

6.3.1 North Elevation

Nave

Generally sound. The haunching to east and west abutment has been renewed and is sound except for a small section of the top layer at the bottom of the east end which has dropped off.

There are a few open end joints to the ridge tiles.

Vestry

The east and west slopes have been recovered with an imported blue/black slate with the north slopes recovered with salvaged slate. These all appear to be sound but the mortar haunching to the east coping has as an open upper joint.

The detail of the hips appears to rely on a cement mortar fillet for weathering to the edge of the slating.

Chancel

Appears sound but the cement haunching to the east verge is cracked at the top and the upper finish has dropped off to a section.

The bedding of the ridge tiles has been renewed and appears sound.

6.3.2 South Elevation

Chancel

Generally sound with 3 number small areas of slates refixed using the white adhesive at the upper east end. The cement mortar haunching to the east abutment is cracked and beginning to become loose.

Nave

The covering verge pointing and ridge tile bedding to this side appears to be in good condition, except for one loose slate at the eaves. A few individual slates have been refixed using a white coloured adhesive.

6.3.3 West Elevation

The porch roof, which was recovered in 2014, is good.

6.4 Rainwater Disposal System

Rainwater goods are mainly of cast iron half round gutters and round down-pipes and are in sound condition.

The walling to the return corner of the vestry/nave appears to be regularly wetted which may be caused by the overflowing of the guttering above.

6.5 External Windows & Doors

External Glazing: consists of leaded lights with either protective metal grills or clear polycarbonate overglazing.

The east window to south side of the nave has also been over-glazed with glass, which is cracked on three panes.

The south chancel windows have been over-glazed with polycarbonate.

The east window is over-glazed. The centre and bottom circular infills which were previously cracked or broken have been renewed. The older polycarbonate is now beginning to discolour with the left-hand circular section broken.

Seven lancet windows to the nave have been reglazed in antique clear glass.

All the circular of shaped opening to the west rose window have been covered with polycarbonate with one shaped section missing.

6.6 External Metalwork, Woodwork & Paintwork

The galvanised window grills on all sides of the building have begun to corrode and some have been touched up with paint.

The 2 pairs of external doors to the west porch are in good condition. The north external door to the vestry is sound and is secured with a separate steel gate.

The iron ferramenta, which has been decorated where the glazing has been recently replaced, appears sound.

There are small pieces of lead flashing projecting from the wall above the vestry door from an earlier porch which could be removed.

The old boiler house door is sound and is secured with a separate steel gate.

6.7 Tower, Spire, Bells & Frames

(Date Bell(s) last serviced: Not known)

The belfry consists of an all stone tower and pinnacle with a single lightning conductor. Previously defective pointing was renewed in 2007 but a small area of pointing around the brackets supporting the electrical supply is loose or lean.

There is a set of manually operated tubular bells. The bell openings have been recently infilled with plastic coated mesh to prevent birds nesting.

Small galvanised grills to the small top vents appear to be loose or distorted.

INTERNAL FABRIC

6.8 Roof Structure

Nave

Consists of 5 arched tied timber trusses with purlins which appear sound.

Chancel

Consists of 2 arched timber trusses and hidden purlins which appear sound.

6.9.1 Internal Partitions

There are none.

6.9.2 Internal Ceilings

Are of horizontal pine boarding fixed to underside of rafters in the nave and appears to be in sound condition. In the chancel these have been formed into panels which also appear sound.

6.9.3 Internal Walls

Consist of exposed stonework to the nave and chancel and are generally sound, except for slight

water staining under windows. There is oak panelling to the choir and sanctuary area. The vestry is plastered and is generally good except for slight damp staining to the top of the east wall and surface deterioration above the external door and the west wall.

6.9.4 Internal Doors

These are varnished pine and are in good condition.

6.10 Internal Decoration

Church

The exposed stonework is undecorated, there is some slight water staining below some windows and the inevitable build up of dust, otherwise the internal stonework is in good condition.

Vestry

Reasonably good, except to head of east wall which is water stained above the external door and to the west gable where there is surface deterioration.

6.11 Floors & Balconies

Nave

Solid concrete to walkways and area around font, carpeted. Level T&G flooring to pewed area which appears sound (under floor void not inspected). The timber flooring to the east end of the nave has been varnished.

Chancel

Stone paving and T&G boarding to choir, dressed stone steps and tiles to sanctuary in sound condition, except where earlier settlement has occurred to the altar area. (see 6.1)

Porch

Stone flags, sound but inclined to get wet from condensation in damp conditions.

A concrete ramp has been provided to the step to the inner door.

6.12 Glazing & Ventilation

The glazing is complete. There are no opening ventilators but the building otherwise appears to be adequately ventilated.

6.13 FIXTURES & FITTINGS

6.13.1 Furniture and Fittings

The Reredos and adjacent panelling and altar rail are of oak, there are brass memorial plaques set within the panels. The altar, choir stalls and pews are of pitch pine generally in good condition. The pews have felt seat pads. There is a vestment chest in the vestry.

There is a fine brass Eagle lectern.

6.13.2 Organ and/or other musical instruments

This is a 2 manual pipe instrument by Harrison & Harrison with 14 playing stops. It is reported that it is being regularly tuned and is in reasonable playing order.

It was previously reported that dampness in the organ chamber was adversely affecting the organ pipe-work and casing and 2 permanent heaters have been installed, together with a dehumidifier.

6.14 Monuments and/or peculiar features

The chancel screen consists of pine cones fixed over a timber frame. This is an attractive and unusual feature, which has been coated with intumescent paint as it was considered a potential fire hazard.

There are a number of marble memorials including the town War Memorial and a number of framed pictures, prints and photographs which add interest to an otherwise fairly plain interior.

SERVICES

6.15 Heating System

(Date of last service: - December 2015)

This is a comparatively new installation, installed in 2008 consisting of 2 condensing boilers, 1 No Vaillant Eco TEL plus 630 and a Baxi megaflow serving fan convectors (5 in Nave and 1 in chancel.)

6.15 Electrical System

(Date of last inspection: 08 January 2014)

The system consists of a 3 Phase and Neutral Supply with a T.T. Earth. Wiring is mainly M.I.C.C. with some lead-sheathed cable, PVC/PVC cable and PVC in conduit.

At the time of the last inspection the installation was found to be in a satisfactory condition.

Portable electrical appliances were last tested in December 2015.

6.17 Lightning Protection

(Date of last test: December 2016)

The conductor consists of a single flat copper doughtape with 3 earthing points. The installation does not comply with the Current British Standard for Lightning Protection as this requires a minimum of two doughtapes.

6.18 Fire Precautions

(Date of last test of extinguishers: January 2019)

3 x 6 litre foam extinguishers new in March 1995. These are checked annually.

6.19 Sanitary Facilities

There is one wash-hand basin in the vestry.

A toilet is available in the nearby church hall which, although not to building regulation standard, can be used by disabled persons.

6.20 Security Situation

The vestry door is bolted and locked from the inside and a metal grill has been fitted externally. The porch doors have large rim locks.

The church safe has been built into the fireplace recess.

The external former boiler house door has been renewed recently and fitted with a steel grill.

A CCTV camera was installed in February 2009 to cover a hidden corner at the NE corner of the building which was attractive to local youths who were causing a serious nuisance. Original stone wall adjacent to the old boiler house which was used as seating by the young people has been removed.

6.21 Disabled person's facilities

Access – Simple permanent ramps have been installed at the external entrance door and to the change in level between the entrance porch and nave. There are the usual steps at the chancel and sanctuary.

Sound – There is a sound reinforcement system installed in 2006 but this does not have an induction loop.

Lighting – The lighting level appears to be reasonable, but generally relies on the artificial lighting, except on very sunny days.

Toilet Facilities – There are none within the building, but a toilet, which can be used by wheelchair users is available in the nearby hall.

6.22 External Areas

The churchyard, which is closed, is bounded by a pointed sandstone wall approximately 4' 0" high, which is generally sound.

There are a number of mature or semi-mature deciduous trees or shrubs of medium height. There are a few headstones remaining but a number have been laid flat. The churchyard is largely under rough grass, which is being kept tidy by the local authority.

There are a number of loose old bricks and pieces of stone lying adjacent to the building in places which might be mis-used by some people and should be removed.

6.23 Areas not Inspected (This list may not be exhaustive)

1. Under floor voids.
2. Interior of tower and spire (restricted access).
3. Internal roof eaves and roof structure at close quarters.
4. Organ pipe-work.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 ITEMS REQUIRING ATTENTION IMMEDIATELY

Electrical Installation

Should be tested for earth continuity and resistance in accordance with the current I.E.E. Regulations within 5 years from the previous test. A copy of the test certificate should be placed with the Church Log Book and any recommendations carried out or reported to the Church Architect for further advice.

Lightning Protection

The existing Lightning Protection Installation should be tested for satisfactory earth continuity to satisfy BS EN 62305:2006 and made good or up-graded if necessary. A copy of the Inspection Certificate should be kept with the Church Log Book

7.2. ITEMS TO BE ATTENDED TO WITHIN THE NEXT 12 - 24 MONTHS

Roof Coverings:

Replace loose slate on south side of nave at eaves level.

Rainwater Goods

Adjust or alter rainwater collection to hopper and downpipe in return corner between the vestry and the nave.

External Windows

Replace missing or broken small sections of polycarbonate overglazing to east window and west rose window.

Tower

Refix or replace loose small wire mesh panels to upper vents of spire.

7.3 ITEMS TO BE ATTENDED TO WITHIN THE NEXT 5 YEARS

External Stonework

Repair and/or re-point localised defects or damage as follows:-

North Elevations

- (i) Upper Horizontal joints to west corner buttress.
- (ii) Mid centre panel of left buttress
- (iii) Upper part of main chimney including west face.
- (iv) Upper section of chancel above east buttress.
- (v) Top course of east chancel buttress.

South Elevation

- (i) Eaves level to chancel between pairs of windows.

East Chancel Gable

- (i) Joints under coping verge blocks and upper level joints.

West Gable

- (i) Repair or replace defective cylindrical stone column to bottom of rose window.

Glazing

Replace cracked over-glazing to east window on south side of nave.

Tower

Re-point small area of open joints around electrical supply point to south side.

7.4 ITEMS WHICH ARE DESIRABLE BUT NOT ESSENTIAL

Internal Flooring

Relay settled, uneven or loose areas of tile flooring to sanctuary.

Glazing

Clean discoloured or dirty older polycarbonate over glazing, particularly to east window.

7.5 ITEMS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION OR CONSIDERATION

General Structure:

Maintain a regular, say annual, visual inspection of all structural movement cracks to south wall of chancel, north gable of vestry and window and door positions of nave and report any apparent progressive movement to the inspecting architect for further advice.

Lightning Protection

Obtain the advice of the building insurers regarding the need to upgrade the installation to the current British Standard. This will normally require the provision of a 2nd down tape.

8.0 ESTIMATION OF COST OF REPAIRS AND OTHER WORKS

Notes:

To assist the Parish, the Diocese and potential funders, including English Heritage, the following approximation of costs are provided as a guide for budgeting purposes.

The costs are based on typical costs for the work described currently at the date of the report i.e. no allowance is made for any special arrangements which may be required or for the effect of inflation.

An allowance is made for Architects and any other relevant fees where these may be payable but excludes VAT which may be reclaimed under the LPW Grant Scheme.

Where work might be expected to be carried out by unskilled or voluntary labour, no allowance has been made except for materials.

8.1 Items requiring immediate attention

£250.00 - £500.00

8.2 Items to be attended within the next 12 – 24 months

£500.00 – £750.00

8.3 Items to be attended within the next 5-10 years

£1,500.00 - £2,500.00

8.4 Items which are desirable

£500.00 - £1,000.00

8.5 Items for Further Investigation (which may require further work)

£500.00

