

Diocese of Durham

**St NICHOLAS  
DUNSTON**  
(281)

Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991

**QUINQUENNIAL REPORT**  
on the architect's inspection on

**21 February 2018**

Sunderland Archdeaconry

Gateshead West Deanery

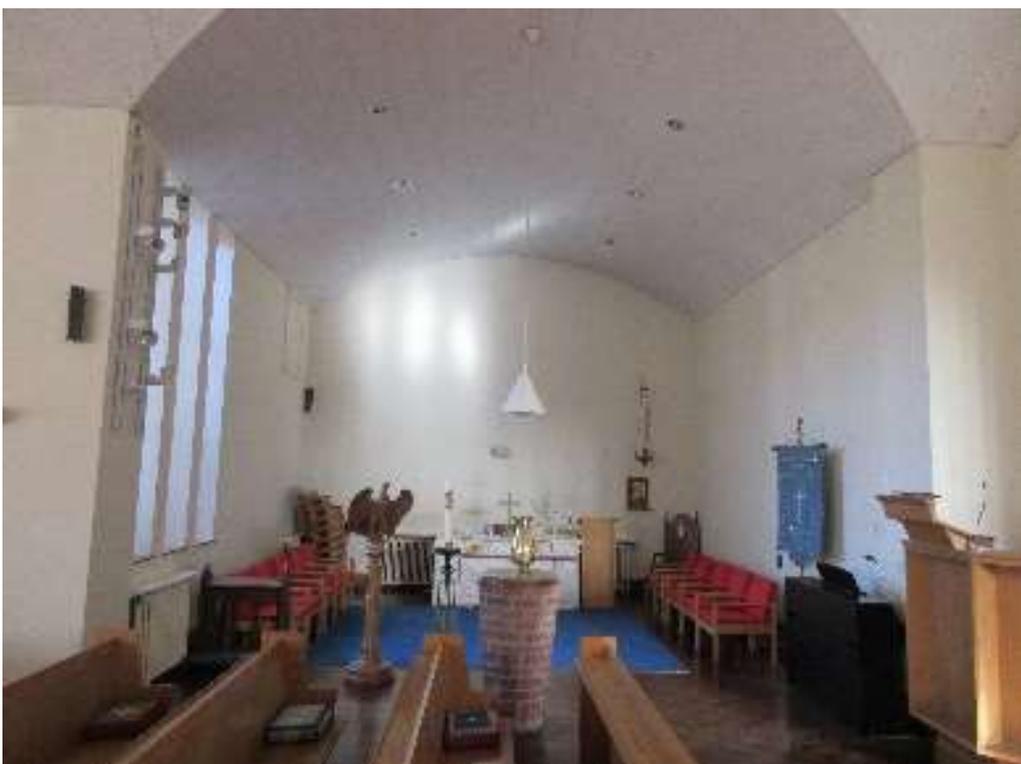
an unlisted building

not in a conservation area

Incumbent Revd David Atkinson



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## PART ONE

1. I have made a thorough general survey of the condition of the church and grounds. The inspection was such as could readily be made from ground level and ladders. I have not inspected woodwork or other parts of the structure which are covered, unexposed or inaccessible and I am therefore unable to report that any such part is free from defect. The chimney flue was not inspected and none of the services were tested. Damp meters were not used.
2. No material seen is likely to contain asbestos. Asbestos was removed from the Boiler room since the last inspection. However this report is an Assessment rather than a Management Survey under the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2012. The PCC may wish to see the guidance on the Church Buildings Council ('ChurchCare') website.  
If a further management or demolition survey is required in future and not previously done, a specialist surveyor should be approached.

### Brief Description

3. A Church (with attached vicarage) built 1964-6, designed by Newcombe and Newcombe of Newcastle. An island site in the middle of Dunston, next to a separate Hall. A steel frame clad in brick, roofed in westmorland slate with flat copper on small offshoots. Comprehensive drawings were included in the very detailed 2002 report, not repeated here.
4. A traditional plan with modern section and materials. Broad barrel ceilings with downlights unify the interior. A hall Nave with W gallery over a large entrance Narthex. Chancel with shallow Sanctuary recess similar to Nave but narrower and lower with the E wall slightly canted on plan. A Lady Chapel and Baptistry in a N Transept. S Transept divided off for a Choir Vestry, stair and large upper Clergy Vestry, now combined with a parish Office. Passage to the linked vicarage.
5. Good daylight from multiple narrow windows, full height at the private S side, high level only at the public N side. Small single low level N lights for extra light.
6. A large basement under the N Transept is divided into Boiler room and oil tank room. A chimney built into a fin-like bell turret pierced in the shape of a cross.
7. Open site with tarmac paths and parking area and low brick boundary walls. An enclosed planted garden of remembrance at SE between Church and Hall.

### Recent structural history

8. Main work 1997-2002

Rewiring, relighting, new emergency lighting and fire alarm, sound installation  
Interior redecorated

2002-07:

Pew repairs, new lamps in church, upper Vestry refurbished as Office  
New external notice board, paths retarmaced  
Obstructed drain causing flood in boiler room cleared

2011 new fire door fitted at Choir Vestry, emergency light at organ loft replaced

2012 basin replaced at Narthex wc, redecoration inside and out

2012 part of a lead valley replaced, roof slates refixed, deterrent paint applied to copper flat roofs

2013 drains under carpark and Church unblocked

2014 asbestos removed from Boiler room, new boiler and flue

2015 ceiling over Clergy Vestry insulated

2016 small conifer removed from S of Church

New floor finishes in Narthex and wcs

Emergency lights and fire alarm tested

Church sound system modified

Periodic Electrical System test

Nave upright lamps replaced and fittings cleaned

Water heater in upper Vestry replaced

### Summary of structural condition

9. The building is well built and maintained and stable. Cracks in the Chancel N wall and movement of the Chancel paving reported investigated in the 1980's and found to be due to red shale on site (which tends to expand with time when damp) but it was decided no action was necessary.

## PART TWO

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EXTERIOR

#### Roofs

10. Roofs covered in slightly diminishing grey Westmorland slates with concrete ridge tiles – where many joints are open. All slates appear sound but a few are uneven. The slate verges project slightly over timber bargeboards. Timber fascias and wide soffits overhang the eaves and gables.
11. Lead valleys at the N and S Transepts appear sound.
12. Lead flashings where Tower intersects roof (and lead back gutter not visible). Stepped lead flashings where Chancel roof abuts Nave wall. One piece of flashing at the top N side is coming loose from the brick joints. Remainder appear sound.



13. Small flat roofs at NW (open Porch) and SW (wc off Narthex) abut the brick walls. Copper with capped battens, covered with non-setting deterrent and disguise paint. Pitched capping on Tower similar copper but unpainted. All appear sound.



### **Rainwater System, Drainage**

14. Deepflow half round cast iron gutters on brackets on fascias. 4" round cast iron pipes to swan neck shoes over gullies. Paint good.
15. Small pipes from the Tower gutters turn into the brickwork and out again into its back gutter. Holes through the bricks inside the cut out cross allow access to the internal rainwater pipe.
16. Around the Porch roof a small white painted channel gutter, beginning to rust by the outlet. Plastic gutter at wc roof. Small cast iron downpipes at both. The wc pipe is cracked lengthways, rusted and leaking, perhaps burst by ice if blocked.



17. Most gullies are clear. Cast iron covers on manholes on drains which appear to pass around from SW to N. Glazed earthenware drain in a deep brick manhole with good flow at right angle bends.

### **Walls, Buttresses, Chimney**

18. Facing brick cavity walls on a brick plinth and damp proof course. At Nave a sandstone drip course matches the lintels and cills. The brick and bucket handle pointing are generally sound though a very few joints are part open at the E gable and on the W side of the Tower.
19. Two signs of minor past movement are:
  - a narrow vertical crack L of the outer Vestry door down from the first Vestry window cill level through bricks and joints and
  - a vertical crack under the N Chancel middle cill, narrowing downward, suggesting past slight heave or spread to the E.

### **Tower, Bell**

20. More than half the N Transept W wall is thickened and built up as a thin brick Tower facing the main road. Pierced by a tall slot and arms making a cross shape. Lead weatherings on exposed tops of bricks in the cross. An access hatch to the Tower interior high in the Chapel wall was not opened.
21. The Tower incorporates a flue, now disused, and chimney ending just above the Tower capping. The former small bell has been replaced by small speakers under the eaves.

### Window and Door Openings

22. Good quality narrow artificial stone lintels and throated cills in good condition. A round window in the W gable. Elsewhere single windows and some larger assemblies of windows. Open joints at some cills should be carefully pointed in moderate strength lime mortar to prolong their life.



### External Iron and Wood

23. Galvanised cross on E end of ridge. Painted roof bargeboards, eave soffits, galvanised steel windows and round steel posts at the Entry canopy. Most paint good but flaking at some bargeboard joints.



24. The Entry and Vestry outer doors are well stained panelled oak with bronze ring handles at the Entry. A sound hardwood handrail in the SE garden needs restraining.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERIOR

### Roof timbers

25. Over Clergy Vestry visible timber purlins and rafters on steel frames and ridge.  
Remainder of building concealed but likely to be similar. No sign of defect.

### Ceilings

26. In Church small flush mineral tiles fixed as a shallow vault across the whole of the Nave, Chancel and N Transept. Painted white and sound though some lines of joints are open perhaps due to seasonal movement of the frame above. The Transept 'vaults' intersect the Nave at curved cover beads. A vertical tiled bulkhead links the Nave and lower Chancel vaults. No ready access and unlikely to be insulated.
27. The tiles are pierced for many recessed downlights and fissured to prevent unpleasant echo except plain over the organ to reflect sound.
28. The Narthex, wc, Choir and Clergy Vestry ceilings are sound painted flat plaster. The accessible void over the Clergy Vestry has stored material and recent insulation quilt between ceiling joists and another unused roll of quilt which might be spread over the joists to thicken part of the insulation.



### Partitions, Doors, Panelling, Screens

29. Partitions are painted plaster on brick or studwork upstairs, all sound.

30. Between Narthex and Nave simple small oak framed glazed panels in wall.
31. At the W and S of Nave pairs of well made double acting glazed oak doors with floor springs. Clear glass at W, obscure at S. Good brass push/pulls. Projecting tenons show the timber has shrunk and draughts pass wide gaps all around. A draught brush has been fitted at the meeting edges of the W doors but it is so stiff and wide that the doors do not close fully. If draughts are troublesome it may be possible to find suitable seals for all edges.
32. The room doors are painted flush ply with slightly moulded painted architraves. A closer on the Clergy Vestry door does not overcome the latch spring. At the Choir Vestry and wcs door closers and brass pulls only.



### Plaster, Decoration

33. All plaster and paint is good.

### **Ventilation, Glazing, Protection**

34. The steel framed windows are mainly fixed but some opening casements with three position catches for trickle ventilation. All single glazed clear float except reeded obscure at the low N Nave lights and cast at the S Transept passage and wc. No protection. Eventual replacement in thermally broken frames with double glazing would save energy.
35. Two bottom hung at the Chancel (painted shut), two at the Chapel (one painted shut), four at the S side of the Nave.  
Four inaccessible high level pivots on the Nave N side and two on the Nave S side without a visible pole.
36. Very small hoppers in the W wc (painted shut). Hopper at the wc lobby opens and is small enough to be left open as a trickle vent if necessary. Both opening lights at the Narthex screwed shut.
37. Two side opening casements in Clergy Vestry. Five fixed shut on stair, passage and Vestry wc, four in Choir Vestry (of which three are screwed shut for security).

### **Floors, Rails, Gallery, Stairs**

38. All floors are solid concrete including the Organ Gallery, stair and the first floor in the S Transept which rests on a deep downstand beam in the Choir Vestry.
39. A varnished oak dais at the Altar. Good sandstone flags in the Choir (one step above Nave) and Sanctuary (one step above Choir).
40. Hardwood strip finish in Nave and Chapel all sound. Red carpet runner from W doors to the Altar. In the middle of the Chapel a fixed blue carpet over the blocks.
41. Recent fitted ribbed clean-off carpet and inset mat in the Narthex are sound. Painted concrete at Organ Stair and Gallery.
42. Good recent non slip vinyl sheet in the wcs. In Choir Vestry loose carpets on lino or composition floor. Good fitted carpet in the Clergy Vestry, passage and stair.
43. Good deep chamfered oak skirts throughout except vinyl in the Vestries and wcs.
44. Plain rigid oak communion rail. Its heavy long lift out mid section is kept in the Chapel.



45. Good oak rail at Stair. The Gallery front rail is Festival of Britain metal and oak, a little flexible but sound.

## Reredos, Furnishings, Organ

46. Behind the Altar a reredos is suggested by exposed brick full height with vertical texture given by projecting alternate brick fins half a brick wide.

47. The Altar is a robust thick sandstone slab with painted sides on a single battered brick pier. Two assorted chairs and prayer desks in the Chancel.

48. Matching plain oak Pulpit and Lectern each side of the Chancel step.

49. Well made American oak pews and matching Choir benches which are raised on oak platforms at the back of the Nave. Some may find the pews uncomfortable because the framing of the backs projects slightly forward of the plain ply panels. This could be altered simply.

50. The font between Nave and Chapel is a deep lead bowl in an inverted brick cone with plain oak lid. In the Chapel an oak table Altar with carved front tracery and Laudian frontal, an oak eagle lectern and upholstered chairs.

51. The pipe Organ on the Gallery adapted from a Harrison & Harrison with side frames and case of 1896, installed in 1965 with new pipes and a light oak case. Protected from drying out too much by water in a bucket in the case. It fits the Gallery well but hides the round W window. Used occasionally.

## Heating

52. A large basement Boiler room with gullies in the concrete floor and at the bottom of the external steps. Dry at inspection.

53. Central heating by a large new oil boiler fed from tanks in a second basement chamber with galvanised external access hatch not entered. A fusible link to cut off the supply. A large metal flue pipe terminates just above outside ground level, protected by steel palings.

54. High level copper circuit pipes in the Boiler room are uninsulated so some waste of heat, though that heat may help to keep the Boiler room dry. Adding sectional foam lagging would improve economy and would be easily removed if there is sign of damp in the Boiler room.

55. A single pumped central heating circuit with feed and expansion tank over the Clergy Vestry. The high water volume in the large pipes and column radiators is slow to heat but the heating is said to be effective.

56. Numerous column radiators in Church, Narthex and Gallery on circuits buried in the solid floors. Two large radiators in the Clergy Vestry and one in the Choir Vestry, supplemented by an electric heater in the Clergy Vestry. Wall electric heater in Passage. No heating in wcs, or wc lobby.

57. Froststat in Boiler room. No visible room thermostat. The simple 7 day one period timer in the Chapel said to be adequate. Said to be most effective when the timer is set anticipating cold weather which may mean a modern optimiser control would improve the heating.



## **Electrical**

58. Three phase supply with main distribution board in Choir Vestry. The church was mostly or fully rewired in 2001. A sticker at the DB says the last system test and report was in September 2016, next due Sept 2021 – see Addendum. Test report of 2016 not available (best kept with Log Book) though tests for the Hall were available.
59. The Church lighting mixes multiple recessed downlights with wall uplights mainly lighting the ceiling. Single low pendant over the font. Multiple spots on tracks each side of the Crossing, Chancel and Sanctuary. The overall lighting is a good balance of general and emphasis on significant parts and furnishings.
60. A scene-setting light programmer in the Nave has sophisticated switch gear in the Choir Vestry. Programmes include slow dimming of the uplights which is very effective. Good emphasis on the Altar, Pulpit and Lectern. Some glare at the Pulpit and Lectern even if using the reading lights which are wired to switched sockets.
61. While the lighting is good the church lamps especially the high lamps in the vaulted ceiling are not long lasting and are expensive to change due to access costs. If a problem a change to longer lasting LEDs may be justified.
62. The uplight glasses need an annual wipe clean when cool.
63. In Narthex and wc round low energy ceiling lights and spots on track. In Boiler room good light and metal clad switches and sockets on conduit. Under the Porch canopy three lights and a small flood with PIR detector which does not seem to work. If changed consider moving it to W end to reduce glare.
64. Recessed plastic twin 13A sockets. Sound system including microphone at reading desk. Digital bells.

## **Lightning Conductor**

65. None appears necessary.

## **Fire Precautions**

66. Extinguishers all last serviced November 2017:
- |               |                                       |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| Narthex       | 6 litre foam                          |
| Organ Gallery | 6 litre foam and 2 kg CO <sub>2</sub> |
| Choir Vestry  | 2 kg CO <sub>2</sub>                  |
| Clergy Vestry | 2 kg CO <sub>2</sub>                  |
| Boiler room   | 6 kg powder                           |
67. In case of proposal to change note that the insurer EIG advises dry powder extinguishers should be confined to boiler rooms and kitchens because discharge (including accidental and malicious) in church risks serious damage to organs and delicate surfaces due to the powder being corrosive.
68. A fire hose in the Passage but no record of testing or assessment of present need.
69. A comprehensive fire alarm system with panel in Choir Vestry includes break glasses and sounders in the Clergy Vestry, Passage, Narthex and Boiler room. Detector in the Nave with sounders and flashing signals at the Gallery. Heat detector in the Boiler room.

## **Water and Sanitary facilities**

70. At the entrance wc a basin, cold tap and hot water from a wall instantaneous heater with indicator switch.
71. A small basin at the Passage wc and a stainless sink and drainer in the Clergy Vestry are both connected to a recent wall storage water heater in the Clergy Vestry with indicator switch. Turned off at the inspection.

### **Access and use by people with disabilities**

72. Good access by gently sloping paths from the parking spaces and pavements to one low step (with added small ramp) up to a low thresh at the entrance doors. Doors wide enough for independent use in a chair. Ideally the step might be removed by raising the path.
73. Inside the pair of Nave doors are narrow and on strong floor springs without stand opens making independent chair use impossible and may be difficult for the infirm. This is acceptable if the doors are always manned but change for independent use is preferable.
74. The Nave is level to the Chancel step. No clear space for one or more chair users to sit with other worshippers.
75. No access to the wcs, Clergy Vestry or Gallery for chair users and poor for the infirm. Good handrails at the stairs but due to tight spaces further improvement of access to the upper levels is not practical. The wc sizes being small, improvement to chair standard would involve demolition and rebuilding the wc off the Narthex.



### **Security**

76. Mortice deadlocks and shootbolts at the entrance doors, Choir Vestry outside door and office. Two large floor safes in a Clergy Vestry cupboard. Overall the windows must be the weak part in case of determined intrusion.

### **Grounds, boundaries, signs, paths**

77. Small grounds mainly facing Ellison Rd to the N where raised beds are contained in low random sandstone walls. The beds are grassed with humped centre planting and a conifer all well maintained.
78. Around the Church small lawns with rose beds level with tarmac paths and edged with loose random stone. Paths continuous with a tarmac car park for Church and Hall next to a war memorial. A brick dwarf wall along School Avenue is fair with a few open joints at the corner.
79. At S a narrow bank with shrubs is enclosed with steel railings and the vicarage fence. At SE a small enclosed garden between Church and Hall, enclosed by high steel palings and gate (some rust) and the vicarage fence. Rose beds, flag paving and on the Chancel wall plaques in memory of Far East Prisoners of War.
80. A well painted sign on the N gable.

### **Archaeology**

81. Consultation with the local authority archaeologist confirms that the church and site are not of archaeological importance.

### **General comments**

82. The church is an attractive design, well built and maintained and has been steadily improved.

## **PART THREE**

RECOMMENDATIONS in order of priority

### **For immediate action**

Refix lead flashing between Chancel and Nave 12  
Renew small rainwater pipe at SW wc 16

### **For completion within 18 months**

Prepare and paint Porch gutter, bargeboards and  
palings and gate at SE Garden 16, 23, 79  
Point open joints at some window cills 22  
Restain handrail in SE Garden 24

### **For completion within five years**

Obtain a Periodic Electrical Test report in 2021  
and keep in Log Book 58 and Addendum

### **Desirable improvements**

Spread the unused quilt over the Clergy Vestry ceiling 28  
If draughty improve the brush seals at both pairs of Nave doors 31  
Lag the hot pipes in the Boiler Room 54

### **Recommendations on Maintenance and Care**

Continue to paint the steel windows as needed 34  
Clean uprights annually 62

## **ADDENDUM to the SURVEY REPORT**

### **Required under the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT** This is a general report only, as is required by the Measure. It is **not** a specification for execution of repairs and must not be used as such. The parish is reminded that it will be necessary to obtain either the Archdeacon's permission or a Faculty if it is intended to make repairs for which an architect's specification should be sought. The PCC minutes must record that an application is being made for permission or faculty and a copy of that minute must accompany the application together with a full specification, drawing where appropriate and an estimate of the cost of the work. In any application for grant aid a full specification is always required.

**LOGBOOK** The parish has a duty under Canon F13(4) to keep a Log Book recording all work carried out on the building. I commend this practice to the PCC. Not only does it help the inspecting architect but it can prove a valuable aid to the parish.

**MAINTENANCE** Continual vigilance to guard against blockages in gutters and the rainwater system as a whole is needed. Every parish must find for itself a reliable procedure to ensure that gutters, ground gutters, gullies and drains are kept clean. It might be:

maintenance under contract by a local builder or handyman or

maintenance by church working party

Whatever system is adopted the problem remains to remember when to organise the work. Gutters and pipes should be checked at least twice a year. If the Log Book is used as a check list of action every year and kept as an up to date record this will itself act as a reminder.

**HEATING INSTALLATION** A proper examination and test should be made by a qualified engineer annually **and a written report obtained for the log book**

**ELECTRICAL** The installation should be tested every five years and immediately if not done within the last five years by a competent electrical engineer, that is a certificate holder of the National Inspection Council of Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC), a member of the Electrical Contractors Association (ECA) or of the National Association of Professional Inspectors and Testers (NAPIT) and a resistance and earth continuity test should be obtained on all circuits. **The test report should be kept with the Log Book.** The present report is based on a visual inspection of the main switchboard and certain random sections of the wiring without the use of instruments.

To check registration with NICEIC and ECA see [www.electricalsafetyregister.com](http://www.electricalsafetyregister.com)

**LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR** Any lightning conductor should be tested by a competent electrical engineer every five years (in addition to any recommendation in this report) in accordance with the British Standard Code of Practice. Records of the results and condition should be kept with the Log Book. Note that there is no general requirement for a Lightning Conductor.

**CHURCH WARDENS' INSPECTION** Although the Measure requires the church to be inspected every five years serious trouble may develop in between these surveys if minor defects are left unattended. It is recommended that the wardens should make or have made a careful inspection of the fabric at least once a year and arrange immediate attention to such matters as displaced slates and leaking pipes.

**PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES** 'One of the striking characteristics of the Gospel narratives is Jesus' concern for people with disabilities but sadly the Church has, in the past, given little attention to their needs. The design of our buildings has often proved a barrier to those who attend church services' (Chairman of the Church Buildings Council). The PCC are reminded that the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 places a duty on churches to review all practices and facilities and to take all reasonable steps to avoid discrimination against people with disabilities caused by physical features, bearing in mind the limitations often found in historic buildings

Useful advice and audit sheets are to be found in 'Widening the Eye of the Needle' published by the Church Buildings Council 1999 £10.95.

**INSURANCE** The PCC is advised that insurance cover should be reviewed annually to take account of any rise in the cost of rebuilding.