

THE REPORT

On

**2019 QUINQUENNIAL INSPECTION OF ST MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS,
HOUGHTON LE SPRING**

For

The Parochial Church Council

**Diocese of Durham
Archdeaconry of Sunderland
Deanery of Houghton le Spring (No. 4)**



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1.00 PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

1.1 This report has been prepared to meet the requirement of the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991.

1.2 Church:

St Michael & All Angels Parish Church
Church Street, Houghton le Spring DH4 4DN

Diocese of Durham
Archdeaconry of Sunderland
Deanery of Houghton le Spring (No. 4)

1.3 Key plan

- see Appendix 1

1.4 Inspecting Architect:

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1.5 Dates of Inspection:

- 23 October 2019
- Weather conditions: dry and sunny

1.6 Brief Description of the Church:

The site occupies a prominent elevated location adjacent to the main street near the centre of the town and consists of a complex of historic buildings which include the Kepier Hall (the former church Grammar School) and the Davenport Almshouses, as well as the parish church. There is a drive access through the church yard to these other buildings together with a main public footpath which links the area of the town to the east of the by-pass, with the Broadway and the main shopping area. This quinquennial inspection report relates only to the church.

The church lies within the Houghton Conservation Area. The church grounds are described as a tranquil sub-area with many fine trees in the heart of the historic core around which the town developed in later centuries.

The church is a listed Grade I and the Rectory Arch (Listed Grade II) provides a dramatic and somewhat imposing entrance to the church grounds from The Broadway (p.17

Houghton Conservation Area, Character Appraisal and Management Strategy, Consultation Draft, Sunderland City Council, March 2007).

A Grade II First World War Memorial (Listed 15 September 2016) stands in the south-west corner of the churchyard. The Portland stone memorial is c6m tall and takes the form of a great pylon. Unveiled on 7 November 1925 by the Earl of Durham it commemorates 236 local servicemen who died in the First World War.

The church, which is built of local sandstone with slated pitched roofs, consists of nave, north and south aisles and transepts, chancel, organ chamber, clergy vestry with upper meeting room, with modern choir vestry infill, square central tower and open south entrance porch.

(See also 'An Account of its History and Significance' by Dick Toy 2000)

1.6.1 Brief Description

Extracted from Pevsner, County Durham, the Buildings of England, Second Ed., 2002, Yale University Press, pp 329, 330

St Michael and All Angels. A big prominent church, with transepts and a crossing tower, formerly with a lead-covered spire, the only surviving parish church of this type in the North East. The existence of a Norman church is proved by one window in the chancel N wall (round-headed, with a roll moulding going all the way round) and, next to it, the door to the vestry with a small and rather dainty tympanum with two fighting intertwined animals and leaf scrolls. The original height of the Norman chancel can be seen outside in the masonry in the N side. The rest of the chancel, the transepts, and a good deal of the rest of the church is C13, with some parts moving on into the C14. In the chancel the finest feature is the S wall, with eight lancet windows, closely set, on the inside all shafted, their inner arch mouldings, with nail head decoration, oddly depressed. One such window also on the n side of the chancel. They all have plain hoodmoulds outside. E end strengthened by big diagonal buttresses at the angles, and by a pair of buttresses under the E window (similar to those under the N window of the N transept, which, however, lack copings). Transept E windows similar to the chancel windows, but more acutely pointed. On the W side of the transept the style is more advanced, with an early stage of tracery: coupled lancets and above them a quatrefoil. Outside, a distinctly classical mullion between the lancets and an odd-shaped hoodmould over, probably C17 and part of the Rev. Davenport's restoration. Unusual buttresses flank the end walls of the transepts; they start as angle buttresses and are stepped back from the corner higher up. Crossing tower on arches with C14 responds (see the capitals and the ogee-trefoiled chamfer stops on the W piers). Lower stage reconstructed in 1858-0 by *Dobson*, externally with traces of small lancet windows on the W and E. Upper stage of 1824-36. The arches to

the aisles are of a date with the crossing arches. Nave arcades of four bays. Piers with four filleted major and four minor shafts. Moulded capitals and double-chamfered arches; c. 1300.* The W responds more elaborately moulded than the rest. But perhaps most remarkable about the church are the big five-light W and E windows, mid-C14 and in the Dec style which is so rare in the county. W window reticulated. The flowing tracery of the E window possibly derives from Durham Cathedral. C19 tracery in the four-light N and S transept windows. The small, detached, two-storeyed and embattled Chapel of the Guild of the Holy Trinity, S of the chancel and connected by a passage, is late C15 (funds left in 1480), see the Perp two-and three-light windows (some renewed) with straight heads of depressed pointed arches. The lower room was for meetings, the upper one for the chaplain. Now parish rooms and featureless inside. The aisle windows belong to the restoration of 1858-9. – VESTRY. C19. – FONT. Octagonal, on a square base. C13 or C14. – MONUMENTS. In the S wall of the S transept, worn late C13 effigy of a cross-legged knight with shield held high up (cf. Pittington), in a segment-headed C13 recess (projecting noticeably outside) with a continuous filleted moulding, - Cross-legged knight with mail coif, sandstone: C. 1300. – Brass to Margery Belassis † 1587. Small plaque with a group of kneeling figures (s transept). – Bernard Gilpin, the Apostle of the North, rector of Houghton-le-Spring, † 1583. No effigy; just an uncommonly big tomb-chest, its sides decorated with large panels with squares and circles.

* The whitewashing throughout and the roof give the interior a curious, slightly early C19 appearance. *Philip Hardwick* made plans for the new roof in 1831. He probably also heightened the tower, and his is the richly Dec N transept N window.

1.6.4 The last quinquennial inspection was carried out by Geoffrey Purves in September 2014.

1.7 Access and Limitations

- This is a summary report; it is not a specification for the execution of the work and must not be used as such.
- The professional adviser is willing to advise the PCC on implementing the recommendations and will if so requested prepare a specification, seek tenders and oversee the repairs.
- The PCC is advised to seek ongoing advice from the professional adviser on problems with the building.
- Contact should be made with the insurance company to ensure that cover is adequate.

- The repairs recommended in the report (with the exception of some minor maintenance items) will be subject to the faculty jurisdiction. Guidance on whether particular work is subject to faculty can be obtained from the DAC.

Access was available to all internal areas including the basement boiler house. For this report, the pitched roof was inspected from ground level.

This survey is concerned only with the general condition of the Church and the maintenance and repair of the fabric. The building should comply with current statutory obligations in respect of Fire, and Health and Safety, to comply with the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991.

The drainage below ground from the rainwater gullies was not tested but appears to function satisfactorily. This is subject to the routine maintenance of existing gullies and rainwater goods.

- **Fire Safety Advice can be found at**
<http://www.churchcare.co.uk/churches/guidance-advice/looking-after-your-church/health-safety-security/fire-precautions>
- **Electrical Installation**
Any electrical installation should be tested at least every five years in accordance with the recommendations of the Church Buildings Council. The inspection and testing should be carried out in accordance with IEE Regulations, Guidance Note No. 3, and an inspection certificate obtained in every case. The certificate should be kept with the church log book.
- **Heating Installation**
A proper examination and test should be made of the heating system by a qualified engineer each summer before the heating season begins, and the report kept with the Church Log Book.
- **Lightning Protection**
Any lightning conductor should be tested at least every five years in accordance with the current British Standard by a competent engineer. The record of the test results and conditions should be kept with the Church Log Book.
- **Asbestos**
A suitable and sufficient assessment should be made as to whether asbestos is or is liable to be present in the premises. Further details on making an assessment are available on <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/churches/guidance-advice/looking-after-your-hurch/health-safety-security/asbestos>
The assessment has not been covered by this report and it is the duty of the PCC to ensure that this has been or is carried out.
- **Equality Act**
The PCC should ensure that they have understood their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Further details and guidance are available at <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/churches/open-sustainable>
- **Health and Safety**
Overall responsibility for the health and safety of the church and churchyard lies with the incumbent and PCC. This report may identify areas of risk as part of the inspection, but this

does not equate to a thorough and complete risk assessment by the PCC of the building and churchyard.

- **Bats and other protected species**

The PCC should be aware of its responsibilities where protected species are present in a church. Guidance can be found at:

<http://www.churchcare.co.uk/shrinking-the-footprint/ways-to-take-action/wildlife/bats>

Sustainable buildings

A quinquennial inspection is a good opportunity for a PCC to reflect on the sustainability of the building and its use. This may include adapting the building to allow greater community use, considering how to increase resilience in the face of predicted changes to the climate, as well as increasing energy efficiency and considering other environmental issues. Further guidance is available on <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/churches/open-sustainable> and <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/shrinking-the-footprint>

2.00 **Executive Summary**

Since my last inspection in 2014 the PCC have continued to care for the building. An ongoing process of repairs and maintenance works have been undertaken both internally and externally. Routine maintenance issues such as cleaning gutters are regularly monitored, and necessary repairs are picked up quickly and remedial work undertaken in an expeditious manner. Externally the grounds are maintained to a high standard and the building is an important landmark within its community. Generally, I consider the building to be in better condition than was the case in 2014.

The building is an important Grade I Listed church. A major reordering project was undertaken in 2008 and over the last decade the incumbent, churchwardens and PCC have diligently ensured that emerging maintenance items have been dealt with in a timely manner. This has included significant repairs to some areas of the external stonework, as well as repairs to areas of the slate roof, internal ceilings and replacement of the heating boilers. This policy has continued during the last quinquennial period.

Obviously, the life of the church, the activities taking place within the building and the day to day management items related to these issues, continues to evolve and change and the work done on this building reflects the needs of these activities. As is often the case, keeping the building dry is most challenging on the north side and this is reflected in the current repairs underway, particularly with gutters and downpipes.

All those involved in the upkeep of this building should be commended as the church is well cared for by members of the PCC and the congregation.

3.00 Work undertaken since last Report

Information from the log book as follows: -

Date	Description of Work
13.8.15	Recovering south aisle roof and repairs to rainwater goods by MGM cost £34,000 plus fees
20.5.16	Fire Alarm Service by TSM cost £200 plus VAT
N/A	Burglar Alarm Service
25.4.16	Disabled access door sensor reset by Door Services NE Ltd

4.00 Report on condition of the fabric

This report is based on findings of visual inspection of available and accessible areas. Voids were not opened. It is restricted to the general condition of the building and its defects.

The report provides basic statements of Condition and Recommendations for Remedial Work and it is not intended to be taken as a specification for the execution of any work.

The report follows on from the last quinquennial report which is dated December 2014 (this inspection was carried out on 23 October 2019).

4.1	Log Book The log book has been inspected and extracts (from the date of the last Quinquennial Inspection) are listed in section 3.00.	M
4.2	Drainage It is understood that all surface rainwater is connected to underground drainage systems but on the north side this may not be connected to the mains drainage. Historically there have been concerns about the underground drainage, but no issues have been reported during the last quinquennial period. The present arrangements, although not necessarily fully and accurately recorded, are working satisfactorily. During this inspection no problems with the external rainwater traps leading to soakaways were apparent. The rainwater system including gutters, downpipes and gullies were generally clean. The churchwarden, during this inspection, pointed out a potential improvement to surface water drainage on the north west corner of the church close to the external steps leading up to the tower. Consideration is being given to laying cobbles in this area to assist maintenance and improving the appearance as well as reducing the risk of accumulation of dampness in the present surface.	M E
4.3	Glass Little or no change was observed in the condition of all windows and stained glass. The last QI report recommended 'commissioning an expert report on the condition of all windows and stained glass in the church during the period of the next quinquennial period'. This advice remains in place. Some external stained-glass windows have polycarbonate protection.	D

4.4	<p>Chancel No change in the condition of the stonework.</p> <p>The Milton tiles on the chancel floor are in reasonable condition but the south wall of the chancel has been coated with a cementitious coating, which is beginning to break down and revealing decorative tiling. The Belassis Tomb also lies against this wall. Consideration should be given to restoration of this area with an expert report being sought.</p> <p>The chancel also houses a series of stained-glass windows.</p> <p>The timber choir stalls are in good condition. The organ is located on the north wall of the chancel with an organ loft behind.</p> <p>Consider repair and restoration of tiled floor at east end of chancel, as recommended in previous 2014 QI report.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">E</p> <p style="text-align: center;">D</p>
4.5	<p>Nave Since the last quinquennial inspection, the south aisle roof has been repaired. Both the external slating and internal plaster finishes have been repaired.</p> <p>Generally, the nave was in good condition and is at the core of church activities and services. The chancel arch has an electrically operated screen with a suspended digital projector, which is regularly used.</p> <p>The porch entrance doors have been repaired with finger protection added to the jambs. The space is well maintained and is clean and tidy. The large west window was installed in 1983.</p> <p>The decorative timber ceiling over the junction of the nave, chancel and transepts looks to be in good condition.</p> <p>No repairs or redecoration have been carried out on the main nave ceiling and the north aisle ceiling since the last inspection, and at some point, this maintenance will need to be addressed.</p> <p>Handrails have been fitted to the steps leading from the south east corner of the nave into the choir vestry.</p> <p>A WC was added in the south west corner of the nave during the 2008 reordering works. A corresponding storage cupboard is located in the north west corner of the nave.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">D</p>

4.6	<p>Tower</p> <p>During the inspection the churchwarden said that further maintenance of the internal rainwater downpipes had been undertaken. The tower is generally in sound condition at the upper levels but the lower levels, particularly in the north west corner, are in poorer condition. An exception is that there is evidence of dampness in a beam along the south side of the tower immediately under the roof. This should be carefully monitored. The approach steps from ground level up to the entrance door into the bell ringing chamber are in shade and subject to moss and dampness causing potentially dangerous access for bell ringers. Also, the handrail is not in good condition. Carry out periodic cleaning of the steps and maintenance the handrail. Clear vegetation from the north transept west face gutter (see section 4.12).</p> <p>Internally the bell tower contains a number of historic documents and photographs recording bell ringing events over the last century. A steep timber staircase leads up to the space containing the bells, wooden headstock and bell frame. The internal wall surface is in poor condition due to long term damp penetration. Consideration should be given to brushing loose material from the wall and recoating with a lime wash paint.</p> <p>The clock is also located at this level which is regularly maintained and in good working order. Continuing up steep timber steps leads to the access hatch on to the tower roof, giving excellent distant views across the county, including to the tower of Durham Cathedral. Consideration should be given to fitting a safety handrail around the perimeter of the tower roof. The lead covering has been patched and examples of interesting graffiti can be seen scratched into the lead surface.</p>	<p>M</p> <p>M</p> <p>D</p> <p>D</p>
4.7	<p>South Transept</p> <p>There were no apparent problems externally with the slates and gutters.</p> <p>Internally there is evidence of dampness on the west face at a low level. This should be periodically monitored.</p> <p>The south transept also contains a large wooden statue of Christ and the restored brass Belassis plaque.</p>	
4.8	<p>North Transept</p> <p>The north transept was altered during the 2008 significant programme of reordering. This included forming a new mezzanine floor to provide an exhibition and teaching space, with a lower multi-purpose area also including an altar so the space could be used as a small chapel.</p> <p>At the lower levels of the north transept there is significant dampness issues, which should be monitored. Loose surface debris should be</p>	<p>D</p>

	<p>periodically brushed and removed. As the chapel is an enclosed space increased ventilation would help to stem the rising dampness.</p> <p>There is also upper level dampness evident on the east face, probably due to water penetration from poorly maintained gutters. Some of the gutter joints are leaking shown by clear pattern staining on the stonework below. These gutters should be inspected and repaired or replaced.</p>	D
4.9	<p>Organ Chamber No change from the last quinquennial inspection report, as follows: - This roof is of a much shallower pitch and is laid with even sized slates which generally appear to be sound. There is evidence of some dampness to the abutment with the access tower.</p> <p>The organ blower chamber is roofed with AC corrugated sheeting and is showing evidence of moss growth. This should be cleaned off periodically.</p>	M
4.10	<p>Choir Vestry Walls are generally in a satisfactory state.</p> <p>The gas boilers installed in 2012 continue to function satisfactorily. The electrical switch panels are located in the choir vestry.</p> <p>Clergy Vestry Constructed from large squared ashlar blocks generally in good condition, beginning to erode on the upper sections with some erosion of the upper surfaces of capping stones to castellations. Some erosion to the upper surfaces of the moulded splayed sections of corner buttresses.</p> <p>Internally the wall surfaces are in poor condition with significant areas of damp penetration and deterioration of the surface finishes. A small independent gas fired boiler heats the space. The clergy vestry acts as the church office and contains a large photocopier, printer and general supplies of administrative material.</p>	
4.11	<p>Heating Installation 2 no. new gas boilers were installed (2012) and enclosed within a new timber screen in the choir vestry. The system is regularly serviced (last service 10.7.19) and continues to operate satisfactorily.</p>	M
4.12	<p>Exterior of the Church The external stonework is largely composed of squared and coursed rough faced sandstone. Over the last decade extensive stone repair work has been carried out, particularly on the west and east gables, together with further work on the north and south sides of the nave. The main external envelope of the church is now in satisfactory condition and is wind and watertight, except that problems have been identified with the gutters</p>	

	<p>and down pipes on the north face of the nave and south transept. At the time of this inspection, the church wardens were investigating remedial repairs to these issues. Also, clear vegetation from gutter at junction of north transept and north west corner of tower.</p> <p>Roofing Ensure that all gutters are regularly cleaned (ideally each spring and autumn).</p> <p>The roof is laid with diminishing courses of a relatively thick slate and generally appears to be sound. Some of the crested ridge tiles have been either replaced with uncrested sections, or else the crestring has been lost, and these and one or two of the original ridge tiles have open joints to the bedding. There are minor repairs to carry out including a missing slate on the north face of the chancel roof.</p>	M
4.13	<p>Perimeter Walls Generally, in sound condition. The church grounds are entered by a driveway through a stone gateway leading up on the south side of the churchyard to a small parking area at the east end.</p>	
4.14	<p>Church Grounds There has been no change since the last quinquennial inspection which reported as follows: -</p> <p>The churchyard area consists of open grassed areas with some planted beds all maintained in good order by the local authority. The external boundary walls mostly act as retaining walls because of the change in level and appear sound. The town war memorial stands in the south west corner of the churchyard.</p> <p>All the paths, including access to the south porch have been resurfaced in natural stone with new walls and railings as part of a comprehensive environmental improvement scheme carried out by the Local Authority. The vehicular road is tarmac.</p> <p>As already noted, the Rectory Arch is Listed Grade II. This crenulated arch was originally located on the other side of the road, with a gatehouse to each side, and was dismantled and rebuilt in its new location in the 1940s when the old Rectory's high boundary walls were removed. Amongst the shields affixed to the arch is that of the Gilpin family which features a wild boar (extracted from Houghton conservation Area consultation draft, Sunderland City Council, March 2007, p 17).</p> <p>A Grade II First World War Memorial (Listed 15 September 2016) stands in the south-west corner of the churchyard. The Portland stone memorial is c6m tall and takes the form of a great pylon. Unveiled on 7 November</p>	

	1925 by the Earl of Durham it commemorates 236 local servicemen who died in the First World War.	
4.15	<p>General</p> <p>Development of a planned maintenance strategy. For a church of this size and significance it would be beneficial for the PCC to have a planned approach to the project management of issues such as renewal of energy efficient light fittings, other ecologically advantageous matters such as boiler efficiency and a routine review of health and safety issues.</p>	M
4.16	<p>Health and Safety</p> <p>Test Certificates Ensure that all test certificates are kept up to date and valid for electrical and heating services.</p> <p>Fire Extinguishers There are 9 fire extinguishers in total throughout the church - 5 CO2 and 4 water extinguishers. These are positioned as follows:-</p> <p>Bell tower ringing chamber one CO2 and one water First floor office one CO2 next to door Choir vestry One Water next to doorway to Choir Stalls and one CO2 next to Vestry entrance door Choir Stalls next to organ one CO2 Steps from Choir Vestry to Chancel one water Main Door one Water. Disused boiler room one CO2 at entrance</p> <p>Lightning conductor Installed and in working order.</p>	M

Schedule of Repairs

As can be seen from the list of work carried out since the last inspection the Churchwardens and PCC have implemented regular repairs and maintenance of routine defects.

Schedule of Maintenance Items

Item	Category	Estimated Costs
Consider repair and restoration of tiled floor at east end of chancel, as recommended in previous 2014 QI Report.	D	£2,000.00
As previous 2014 QI Report - Consideration should be given to commissioning an expert report on the condition of all windows and stained glass in the church during the period of the next quinquennial period.	D	PCC to obtain quotations
Repairs and redecoration to main nave ceiling and north aisle ceiling to be addressed	D	£1,500.00
Long term damp penetration to internal wall next to staircase in bell tower to be brushed and recoated with lime wash paint	D	DIY
Install safety handrail around perimeter of tower roof	D	PCC to obtain quotations
Monitor significant dampness in north transept at both high and low levels. Periodic brushing and removal of loose surface debris to be carried out. Consider increasing ventilation to lower chapel space	D	DIY
Inspect and repair/replace gutters on north transept – causing upper level dampness	D	PCC to obtain quotations
Consider laying cobbles to external north west corner of church to reduce risk of moss growth and slip hazard, together with improving appearance	E	£1,000.00
Consider restoration of south wall of chancel – cementitious coating breaking down revealing decorative tiles. An expert report should be sought.	E	PCC to obtain quotations
Monitor condition of damp roof beam along south side of tower	M	DIY
Carry out periodic cleaning of the steps, maintenance of the handrail and clear vegetation from the north transept west face gutter.	M	DIY
Ensure that all test certificates are kept up to date and valid for electrical, heating and fire extinguisher services.	M	£700.00
Continue to maintain entries into the Log Book.	M	DIY
Periodically clean off moss growth from organ blower chamber roof (corrugated sheeting)	M	DIY
Ensure annual inspection of heating/gas is carried out	M	

Ensure roof and gullies are inspected and maintained regularly.	M	DIY
For a church of this size and significance it would be beneficial for the PCC to have a planned approach to the project management of issues such as renewal of energy efficient light fittings, other ecologically advantageous matters such as boiler efficiency and a routine review of health and safety issues.	M	PCC to commission as necessary

Category:

A - Urgent, requiring immediate attention

B - Requires attention within 12 months

C - Requires attention within the next 18 – 24 months

D - Requires attention within the quinquennial period

E - A desirable improvement with no timescale

M - Routine maintenance (i.e. clearing leaves from a gutter). This can be done without professional advice or a faculty. This item also includes periodic inspection of structural cracks (which at present appear to be stable).