

Diocese of Durham

St Paul's HUNWICK Ch No. 181

Incumbent – Father David Spokes

Inspection of Churches Measure 1955

ARCHITECT'S REPORT

October 2020

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1.0 PREMISES IDENTIFICATION

Church: St. Paul's, Hunwick
Deanery: Auckland
Diocese: Durham
Date of Inspection: 07 October 2020
Weather: Changeable sun and cloud, windy.

2.0 PARTICULARS OF SITE (Location, adjacent buildings etc.)

The site, which is a traditional walled church yard stands towards the south end of this rather straggly village, near a bend on the main road which runs through the village and at a junction with a side road that leads to the former railway station. There are pedestrian accesses from both adjacent roads on the west and south sides. There is no vehicle access to the churchyard and wedding and funeral traffic has to park on the main road, which requires some parking restrictions due to the bend. The village primary school also stands directly opposite. The former vicarage now privately owned, lies immediately to the east.

3.0 PARTICULARS OF PREMISES (General Construction, layout etc.)

The church which is constructed in load bearing sandstone and slate consists of a nave with a south porch, an elongated chancel, shallow north transept and vestry which has a double pitched roof on the north side of the chancel.

4.0 REPAIR WORKS OR NEW WORKS SINCE LAST INSPECTION

(June 2015)

1. Loose or broken slates refixed or replaced
2. Lead valley gutter between chancel and vestry roofs repaired
3. External doors redecorated
4. Metal flue liner to central heating boiler renewed (previous flue found to be faulty) & gas supply pipework renewed to current gas safety standard.
5. External stonework repointed to transept gable and south side of chancel gable where penetrating dampness occurring, followed by redecoration of associated internal areas

5.0 SUMMARY OF GENERAL CONDITION OF BUILDINGS

The building is generally in good condition and is being well maintained. Externally, whilst structurally sound, the surface of the stonework is becoming slightly eroded in places, particularly on the south side. The majority of the work recommended for attention is of routine maintenance.

6.0 DETAILED CONDITION OF BUILDINGS

EXTERNAL FABRIC

6.1 General Structure

This is typical Victorian structure of load bearing sandstone with a trussed timber roof. Whilst there is some surface erosion of the stonework the building appears to be generally structurally sound with no obvious structural defects.

There are very slight vertical settlement cracks to the centre line above the internal vestry door and above each of the windows on the south side of the chancel and both sides of the nave. None of these cracks which were filled when the decoration was last renewed appear to have worsened since the last inspection.

6.2 External Wall Surfaces

These consist of squared and coursed rubble sandstone with dressed stonework to window and door openings and buttresses. The stonework whilst structurally sound is becoming more eroded particularly on the south side and to the east gables.

Particular defects are listed below: -

6.2.1 North Elevations

Vestry

Squared and coursed sandstone in good condition except for holes left from previous fixing plugs for rainwater pipe and where a small stone block has been infilled with sand/cement mortar.

There is a missing section of the projecting stone string course close to the chancel wall where there may previously been a rainwater down pipe and an eroded section immediately to the right of the vestry porch.

Transept

Generally sound except for slight surface erosion of the facing stonework around and above the circular window with very slightly lean horizontal joints under the mid gable coping anchor blocks.

Nave

Larger square sandstone generally in good condition with some erosion of individual stones particularly in the central bay where previous lean pointing has been repaired using a smooth sand/cement mortar. This mortar remains good.

General

All the projecting buttresses on this elevation are discoloured by a heavy red lichen growth.

The stone chimney on the vestry ridge has soft eroded stone to the upper section but appears to still be structurally sound. The chimney remains in use serving as a flue for the current boiler. The metal flue liner has been renewed during the quinquennium and it is assumed that the stone chimney was found to be adequately sound to permit the new flue and terminal to be installed.

6.2.2 South Elevations

Nave

Faced bedded sandstone, generally sound but with some quite badly eroded individual stones near ground level below the cill level, where the original lime pointing has been partially replaced with stuck cement pointing together with other areas of lean pointing. The underside of the west gable kneeler and quoin underneath is slightly eroded. The capstone to the corner buttress to the west gable has face lamination to both sides and has been repaired with cement mortar to the corners. The repair on the left-hand side is slightly cracked. The stonework required re-pointing to the vertical panel to the left and above the east most buttress and to the upper copings of the same buttress and this has been partially done but remaining earlier pointing is lean. There are also a few small weeds growing from the top of the corner buttress.

Porch

There are some lean joints and eroded individual stones to right hand side above the doorway head and a section of face eroded stone above the doorway.

Chancel

Coarser squared rubble sandstone of a different colour to the nave. Generally sound with erosion of individual stones particularly towards the ground level and a few individual open joints with face eroded blocks to the upper corner buttress and with old face damage to the underside of the east gable kneeler block. Previous, ivy growth has been killed off adjacent to the east corner buttress.

6.2.3 East Elevations

Chancel Gable

Generally sound but with fairly extensive face erosion particularly on the north side. The south side was repointed prior to the last inspection (2015) and the lead abutment cover flashing refixed. The renewed pointing remains sound but the eroded, probably porous stonework may be providing a pathway for driving rain which is causing dampness on the inside face of the wall.

The west side of the base stone supporting the gable cross is slightly eroded.

It was previously noted that a coping stone on the north side which was very eroded had been replaced but it was not possible to inspect this side of the gable from ground level.

East Gable

Generally sound, but with erosion of individual stones particularly to lower 1m where the stonework has been re-pointed in the past with cement mortar. Previously open joints to each side of the gable apex had been repointed prior to the last inspection (2015). A small area of stonework under the apex stone with had eroded has been crudely patch repaired using what appears to be a cement mortar.

Vestry Gable

Generally sound with previous re-pointing as to the east gable, to the section above the window. There is slightly eroded stone to either end of the string course under the window where water runs off the adjacent buttresses. This indicates a relatively high moisture level in the stonework with an attendant accumulation of moss on top of the stone string course.

As with the north facing buttresses there is an extensive covering of red lichen to the faces of the corner quoins of the three east facing buttresses.

Porch - sound

6.2.4 West Elevations

West Gable

Square coarsed sandstone generally in good condition but with lean or open joints around the left-hand kneeler, the section under and to the jambs of the bell opening and slightly cracked joints around the right-hand kneeler. The latter does not appear to have worsened since the last inspection (2015).

The lower edge of the top coping on the right-hand side which was damaged has been repaired with a mortar patch which appears to be loose. The top coping on the left-hand side of the gable has also been previously patch repaired with mortar to restrain a cracked piece of stone to the underside and this may no longer be secure.

Transept

Generally sound. Previous ivy was killed off prior to 2000 but the plant stems remain attached to the masonry.

Porch -sound

6.3 Roof Coverings

These are of blue Welsh Slate throughout with modern concrete ridge tiles. The slating is generally in good condition, except for the following minor defects:-

6.3.1 North Elevation

Vestry

Generally sound with one clipped slate. There are patches of dried moss limited to one area directly above the position of the cellar steps which may be covering a broken slate.

Chancel

Where visible from ground level this appears generally sound.

Nave

Generally sound , except for a reported occasional small leak around the right-hand roof ventilator. One clipped slate under the left-hand ventilator adjacent to the valley gutter has slipped.

Transept East Side

Generally sound with some moss growth to vertical joints and the ridge tile bedding.

Transept West Side

Generally sound with 4 clipped slates. The cut slates on the left side of the valley are very uneven and may be loose at the top and there is a lead patch under the slating and overlapping the lead valley. The slates under the ridge at the south end are uneven.

6.3.2 South Elevation

Nave

Generally sound with a few clipped replacement slates mainly to the west end. The courses under the ridge are slightly tilted up with two missing , one broken and other possibly loose slates. The joint pointing or ridge bedding is missing in one place.

Chancel

Generally sound with a group of new clipped slates replacing a group of chipped slates adjacent to the chancel gable.

The lead flashing to the chancel gable was repointed prior to the last inspection (2015) and remains good.

Porch

Sound except for one lifted slate adjacent to bottom of lead valley on west side and moss growth to most of the vertical joints on the east side with one clipped slate and one mossed over indicating that it is de-laminated.

The pointing to the top of the lead flashing to the adjacent buttress on the west side is missing

Vestry

Unable to inspect from ground level.

6.3.3 East Elevation

Transept – see 6.3.1 above.

6.3.4 West Elevation

Transept – see 6.3.1 above.

6.4 Rainwater Disposal System

Eaves gutters and down pipes to all slopes, are of light grey UPVC, except for the down-pipe to the east valley gutter which appears to be asbestos cement. The latter appears to be cracked to the top and bottom pipe sections and the outlet shoe is loose. The hopper head was renewed in stainless steel prior to the last inspection (2015). The remainder of the rainwater goods are generally sound. The valley gutter to west side of transept has been renewed but 1 length may be too long.

The underground drainage had been cleared and repaired prior to the 2010 inspection and this appeared to be operating satisfactorily at the time of the inspection. However as leaves were beginning to fall at the time of the inspection most of the eaves gutters were filling up and there were small weeds growing in places where debris had accumulated.

One of the lower wall brackets to the downpipe to north side of vestry is not fully fixed to the wall.

6.5 **External Windows & Doors**

Windows – have leaded lights throughout and are generally sound. Eleven are stained including five modern designs and the remainder are of geometric patterns. Three windows on the north side plus the round transept gable window, the three lights of the east window, the two west windows and six on the south side have been over-glazed with polycarbonate. One geometric glazed panel on the south side of the chancel and four (2 south 2 north) to the nave are buckled. These do not appear to have worsened since the last inspection and appear to remain weather-tight. They are however not over-glazed.

Doors – These are all T & G boarded deal and are good.

6.6 **External Metalwork, Woodwork & Paintwork**

Paintwork

Doors

All good having been redecorated since the last inspection (2015).

Metalwork

Handrails to south external entrance steps are slightly rusty.

The bottom metal support cup and wall brackets to the flag pole are rusty but appear structurally sound.

Woodwork

The exposed woodwork to the pairs of roof ventilators on the north and south sides of the nave roof appear to be in need of attention and provided with a suitable surface protection treatment.

6.7 **Tower, Spire, Bells & Frames**

(Date Bell(s) last serviced: November 2005)

The stone bellcote was re-pointed and 1 coping stone replaced in 1989 but the horizontal masonry joints on the inside faces, particularly on the north side are becoming lean. The bell and its mountings were overhauled last in 2005.

The bell is regularly rung but the exposed ferrous parts are rusty.

INTERNAL FABRIC

6.8 Roof Structure

This consists of tied arched timber trusses set into the external walls and supported off stone corbels with dressed purlins and rafters all of which appear to be sound. The foot and brace of the truss in line with the transept which had been affected by dry rot was renewed in 1998, together with the projecting wall plate in the west wall of the transept.

6.9.1 Internal Partitions

There are none.

6.9.2 Internal Ceilings

These mainly consist of the underside of the timber roof sarking boards with skimed plasterboard ceilings to the sacristy and vestry. All appear to be sound.

The lower bay of boarding on the north side of the chancel was renewed following a dry rot outbreak in 1984.

6.9.3 Internal Walls

These are plastered throughout and are generally in good decorative order except for the upper area of the west side of the chancel gable which has been discoloured by penetrating moisture and a distinct water stain to the north wall of the transept gable under the left-hand purlin which is reported to be of recent origin. A previously discoloured area around the vestry door from the chancel which related to earlier wetting from a faulty valley gutter above, was repaired and replastered and remains sound.

There is a slightly uneven area of wall plastering on the south side of the nave which was either exposed by the removal of a section of dado rail or is a poorly executed replacement.

6.9.4 Internal Doors

These are of varnished pitch pine, including new doors to the Sacristy, and are in good condition.

6.10 Internal Decoration

This was comprehensively renewed prior to the last inspection (2015) and remains in good condition except for the area of discolouration to the west side of the chancel gable and the wet patch to the transept gable.

The upper part of the former organ chamber, which is now used as a store, remains undecorated.

There is evidence of condensation runs to the east and west walls of the upper area of the sacristy.

6.11 Floors & Balconies

Floors are suspended timber under the pews with clay tiles to walkways and the vestry. All appear to be sound except for some areas of cracked tiles at the west end and the central walkway. The chancel was levelled and retiled in 2001. The steps to the chancel and sanctuary are of white marble and are sound. The floor of the Lady Chapel has been carpeted, together with adjacent areas in the nave and a small area at the west end which serves as a children's area.

6.12 **Glazing & Ventilation**

The glazing is all in good condition and includes 1 new (1999 by Septimus Waugh), 4 recent and 3 re-leaded windows. All 14 stained lights are protected with polycarbonate sheet externally. There is a build up of cobwebs and dirt visible to the west windows

All original wall ventilators are sealed up to each internal window cill and two roof ventilators which are connected to the 2 pairs of external roof vents do not operate, but the church appears to be reasonably well ventilated although condensation has affected the west gable and high level walls of the vestry in the past

The parish have a policy of running the central heating for periods of the majority of days during the winter and this helps to ensure that a more comfortable and healthy building environment is maintained within the building..

As there are no separate external ventilators which can be seen to vent under the suspended timber floors, it is assumed that the mid-height external ventilators which originally provided fresh air to the internal cills, also provide ventilation downwards and under the suspended floor, and that this facility is still existing.

6.13 **FIXTURES & FITTINGS**

6.13.1 **Furniture & Fittings**

The pews are of pitched pine and are generally in good condition. A number of pews have been removed from the transept, front and rear the nave and the exposed areas carpeted. With the re-ordering of the chancel, modern loose furnishings in ash which includes a small nave altar have been introduced.

There is a carved oak lectern and carved and painted high altar. The font is a small stone pedestal type located at the west end.

All furniture and fittings are in good order.

6.13.2 **Organ and/or other musical instruments**

The original pipe organ has been replaced most recently with a Viscount Vivance 30 two manual electronic instrument. The former organ chamber has been converted to a sacristy at ground level and the organ speakers located on a new attic floor above.

6.14 **Monuments and/or peculiar features**

There are 2 brass plaques and one marble memorial, together with small carved stations of the cross ranged around the nave. An attractive, impressive wall hanging designed by David Cort, made by ladies in the parish, hangs on the west wall.

There is a Statue of Our Lady and Jesus as a young boy designed and carved in limewood by Ken Lakey.

SERVICES

6.15 Heating System

(Date of last service: Nov 2019)

This consists of a gas fired low pressure (Ideal Falcon GTS) installed in 2008, serving existing large bore cast iron pipe-work. The system is regularly serviced and is reported to be in good working order. There is a stainless steel liner, recently renewed, installed in the original stone chimney. The boiler room is relatively dry and clean, but is used for storage of a few pieces of redundant furniture. The room is however separated from the building above by a concrete ceiling.

6.16 Electrical System

(Last Tested: October 2020)

Except for the power distribution wiring which is in MICC cable, all the distribution boards and all the lighting installation was renewed in late 2000. The installation is protected by MCB fuses and ELCBs, and is tested regularly, most recently in October 2020 when it was found to be in a satisfactory condition. The testing of portable electrical appliances (PAT) is also done annually.

6.17 Lightning Conductor

(Date of last test: Not Applicable)

As the original installation was sub-standard it was removed with approval of the buildings insurers as not being required.

6.18 Fire Precautions

(Date of last test of extinguishers: Feb. 2020)

1 No Co2 adjacent to organ console.
1 No foam type in porch renewed in Feb 2005.
1 No AFFF foam type in Vestry.
1 No Co2 in Vestry.

6.19 Sanitary Facilities

There is a sink in the vestry. Previous proposals to provide a servery area for refreshments at the west end of the nave were not implemented but as there are no toilet facilities in the building consideration is being given by the parish to the provision of suitable facilities, possibly accommodated in an extension on the north side of the building.

6.20 Security Situation

The church does not appear to be unduly prone to vandalism and is overlooked on three sides by residential property. This includes the former Rectory located immediately adjacent to the east side which has been sold by the Diocese, but which continues to be used as a private dwelling. Side doors are bolted from the inside and the main entrance is secured with a security mortise lock.

6.21 Disabled Persons Facilities

Access

Short flight of steps from south gate where car parking is possible, with metal handrail.

Level access at main site entrance from west gate where vehicle drop-off is possible.

Level access within churchyard to main church entrance and level floor up to chancel step where the altar

is normally positioned. The timber flooring under the pews is also level with the tiled walkways.

Sound

There is a sound reinforcement system with an induction hearing loop within the building. The installation has been renewed within the quinquennium.

Sight

The natural and artificial lighting levels appear to be adequate.

Toilet facilities

There are none available in the building for either disabled or non-disabled persons but consideration is being given to addressing this situation (SEE 6.19 above).

6.22 External Areas

The churchyard was closed by an Order in Council in 1976 and is now maintained by the County Council.

The access paths from the south and west gates have been re-laid with concrete paving so as to be level with the porch floor and are in good order.

West Gates – were renewed with a forged metal modern design prior to 2005.

South Gate - was renewed in a similar design in 2001.

Churchyard - mown grass throughout with some fine spruce and deciduous trees.

A large deciduous tree has been removed adjacent to the west boundary and an adjacent grave stone has fallen over and broken, perhaps in the course of the tree felling work.

There are a few standing gravestones and memorials, a number of which, particularly to the north east area are leaning, but are assumed to be regularly tested for security by the Local Authority.

Boundary wall of random rubble stone is generally sound except for lean or open joints particularly on north side. The south wall acts as a retaining wall as the churchyard is at a higher level than the adjacent highway and this was bulging in one position to the east of the side gate but is now repaired. However it remains badly cracked at the south-west corner with the mortar pointing of the coping stones cracked and loose in places. The stone rubble wall on the east side is partially covered with ivy.

6.23 Areas not Inspected

(This may not be an exhaustive list)

Under floor voids.

Roof voids.

Roof and wall areas not visible from the ground level.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 ITEMS REQUIRING ATTENTION IMMEDIATELY

7.1.1 Rain Water Disposal

- (i) Clear leaves and weeds from eaves gutters and check that ground level gullies are clear.
- (ii) Fix loose downpipe bracket to north side of vestry

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

7.2.1 Roof coverings and rainwater disposal

- (i) Replace broken or missing slates to south side of nave and refix loose slate to north side of nave
- (ii) Check if moss covered slates to west side of porch and north side of vestry are sound or replace.
- (iii) Check that slates adjacent to the top of the valley gutter between the transept and the nave are adequately fixed or refix.
- (iv) Renew missing mortar pointing to top of lead flashing to west side of porch.
- (v) Replace existing asbestos downpipe at west end with a non-asbestos pipe of similar diameter

7.2.2 External Walling

- (i) Check security of the mortar repairs to the top copings in the north and south sides of the west gable and repair/replace as required.
- (ii) Remove weeds from tops of buttresses and clean out and repoint any open joints using a lime mortar.
- (iii) Remove moss build up from the top of the stone string course on the east wall of the vestry.

7.2.3 External Metalwork

Clean and decorate rusty metal to :-

- (i) Bell mechanism and re-grease all moving parts
- (ii) Flagpole support brackets
- (iii) Handrails to south entrance steps

7.2.4 External Woodwork

Check, repair/replace and decorate with a micro-porous external wood finish the exposed timber surrounds to the pairs of roof ventilators on the north and south sides of the nave roof.

7.2.5 External Areas

- (i) Repair/rebuild section of cracked boundary walling to south-west corner of churchyard and repair loose sections of coping course to south side.
- (ii) Repair and re-erect broken gravestone to west boundary
(Note: these works maybe the responsibility of the County Council)

7.3 ITEMS TO BE ATTENDED TO WITHIN THE NEXT 5 – 10 YEARS

7.3.1 External Walling

Repair and repoint all lean/open or cracked stonework joints to west gable including around left-hand and right-hand kneeler blocks, section under the bell opening and jambs of bell opening using suitable Lime mortar.

7.3.1 **Internal Walls and Decoration**
 When areas of the chancel and transept gables affected by penetrating dampness have dried out remove all loose or damaged paint and plaster and repair/renew with lime based plaster and breathable emulsion paint.
Note : should any part not fully dry out or become more affected by dampness, obtain further advice from the Inspecting Architect on any necessary further repair or remedial work which may be required.

7.4. **ITEMS WHICH ARE DESIRABLE BUT NOT ESSENTIAL**

Glazing

Remove clean and replace polycarbonate overglazing to west windows to remove cobwebs and dirt.

7.5 **ITEMS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION**

7.5.1 **Internal Ceiling/woodwork**

Check condition of timber ceiling and roof timber work adjacent to the north end of the west roof ventilator, for water/rot damage and repair as required.

8.0 **ESTIMATION OF COST OF REPAIRS AND OTHER WORKS**

8.1	Items Requiring Attention Immediately	£250.00 - £350.00
8.2	Items to be Attended to within the next 12 – 24 Months	£1500.00 - £2000.00 (excluding boundary wall)
8.3	Items to be Attended to within the next 5 – 10 years	£4000.00 - £5000.00
8.4	Items which are desirable but not essential	£350.00-£400.00
8.5	Items for further investigation	£300.00 - £500.00 (excluding any work found to be required))

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