

Diocese of Durham

St MARY SEAHAM

(94)

Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018

QUINQUENNIAL REPORT

on the architect's inspection on

3 October 2022

Durham Archdeaconry

Easington Deanery

Grade I listed building
not in a conservation area

Incumbent - Revd Canon Paul Kennedy



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ARCHITECT

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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 and the history of the church is such that asbestos is unlikely to be present. However this report is not a survey under the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2012. The PCC may wish to see the guidance note on the Council for the Care of Churches website. If a survey is required and not previously done, a specialist surveyor should be approached.

Brief description

3. Isolated N of the town of Seaham Harbour, St Mary's is a remnant of the village of Seaham which was cleared for Seaham Hall, adjoining at W. In the middle of an exposed churchyard with a large former vicarage between the church and cliff. A low wall bounds a rectangular yard with numerous headstones. To S beyond a narrow dene modern houses stand on the site of the former Vane Tempest colliery.
4. A tall narrow Nave without aisles, divided from a slightly narrower later Chancel by a broad pointed arch, all covered by a continuous slate roof. A band of herringbone masonry at N Nave. Nave doors at S and N, giving into later S Porch and 19th century N Vestry. Square W Tower without buttresses. Nave, Chancel and Tower all have projecting embattled parapets. The Tower shows the Nave roof has been both shallower and much steeper in the past. The great age of this small church shows mainly in its proportions.
5. An archaeological assessment (Peter Ryder May 1999) sums up past excavations and records restorations and the opinions of successive historians on the age of the Nave. In sum, since the finding in 1913 of blocked high level windows like those at Escomb, Aird (1913), Pevsner and Williamson (1983) and Cramp (1984) have dated the Nave as late 7th or possibly early 8th century Saxon. While not disagreeing, Peter Ryder and Roberts (2021) find room for the alternative possibility that the Nave may be 'overlap' or early Norman of about 1100 in which case the high level windows must have been reused from an earlier church.
6. It seems that by about 1250 an early square Chancel had been enlarged to its present length, the Chancel arch inserted and the Tower added. The very large buttresses resisting the thrust of the Chancel arch (which caused the marked outward lean of the Nave walls) probably followed soon afterwards. The battlements may be 15th century.
7. An excavation and restoration in 1912-13 included replacement of most stones in the Chancel arch and the adding to the Chancel of a S and two E buttresses to resist spreading of the E end. A 1915 faculty allowed removal of all wall plaster and the exposed internal masonry was pointed in 1986.
8. Seaham and Escomb churches, perhaps of similar date, have similarities but differences produce contrasting characters.
The similarities are the size and proportions of the Naves, with small high windows at N and SW and two large inserted Victorian windows at SE. Both have exposed internal masonry and open pitched roofs. The main differences are that Seaham has a large Chancel arch, fixed box pews and a long Chancel with light limited by stained glass in the large Victorian Nave windows and the unpainted masonry walls.

Principal work since the 1960's

9. 1968 – Tower roof beams renewed
1970 – woodworm treated by Rentokil
1972 – sundial on Porch replaced
1979 – lean-to store against Vestry W wall demolished, Vestry W roof slope reslated
1983 – trench dug along the church S wall to drain water away from the foundations
1984 – Vestry repointed, gutters repaired
1990 – belfry louvres and beams holding the bells and Tower floor treated with preservative
1991 – all accessible roof timbers in church, Vestry and Tower sprayed against woodworm by Protim
1993 – repairs at Vestry doors, pulpit and Vestry floors, new polycarbonate protection
1993 – pressure warm air heating installed by Niche
1994 – gas lighting overhauled

- 1998 – walkway ramped up from Nave to Chancel
- 2000 – Tower metalwork including heating repainted
- 2001 – S roof stripped and new Westmorland slate laid with new lead weatherings at the parapets
S exterior of church repointed
concrete flag paths relaid
- 2002 - N boundary wall rebuilt, new oak gates
- 2005 – metalwork of heating in Tower repainted white hammerite
- 2008 – heating repairs and new control box
- 2009 – Porch reflagged,
handrails added at steps outside Vestry door
mortar fillets at Vestry chimney replaced
- 2010 – some pew doors replaced
- 2010 – Smartwater applied to roof lead
pulpit shelf repaired
woodwork in Tower painted
- 2011 – repair of three headstones
Porch gate and ironwork on main and Vestry doors repainted
- 2012 – Vestry door, metalwork at sundial, churchyard gate and noticeboard painted
minor repairs at flagpole and noticeboard
- 2013 – at gas warm air heating - burner unit, a length of corroded gas supply pipe, rusting hinges replaced
slate repair
- 2014 – electrical installation test report
repairs at churchyard boundary walls
glass and insides of protection cleaned
painting of churchyard gate and Tower steps, woodwork and metalwork
organ repaired and tuned by Harrison and Harrison

Recent structural history

10. Since the last inspection the Log book records:

- 2015 minor pulpit repairs
churchyard gate repaired
heating serviced and repaired
- 2016 Vestry outside door painted
churchyard gate varnished
- 2018 heating burner unit replaced like for like
one gaslight repaired
one external and four inside lights replaced
one headstone removed after storm damage
churchyard gate and Porch door repainted
middle part of external noticeboard replaced
- 2020 gas pipe relaid through churchyard (with archaeological oversight), including find of human skull
- 2021 flag pole repaired
- 2022 minor organ repair

Summary of structural condition

11. The building appears at rest except the top of the Tower where cracks at the W side and NW corner show minor spread of the upper masonry.
12. In the Porch decay of the inner faces of the stone walls, roof arches and especially the entrance arch continues, with signs that high winds create vortexes eroding pockets in the stones.
13. Corrosion continues at the painted steel heating ducts and its suspensions in the Tower. The new burner unit is exposed to the same salt air.
14. There is no sign of further woodworm damage after spray treatment of the roof and Tower in 1970 and 1991, though there was no close roof access.

PART TWO

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EXTERIOR

Roofs

15. On **Nave and Chancel** continuous diminishing green westmorland slate with clay ridges. Underfelted on sarking boards laid with wide gaps.

At N side a few are held on lead clips and two have been replaced in thick grey. A split slate over the mid Chancel and another just W of the Chancel arch could leak in storms. One by eave at E end of Nave has slipped into gutter.

New at S side laid in 2001 are in good order except one near Tower slipped into gutter.



Slipped slate at NE Nave



Slipped slate at SW Nave

16. At the E gable sound lead soakers and cover flashings. At the Tower abutment black painted lead cover flashings are well dressed into the joints.

17. Wide lead parapet gutters step down to sumps and lead outlets centred on the Nave and Chancel. The heavy gauge lead is well laid and seems generally sound. At N a crack across the Nave E gutter bay has been well soldered. The S gutter lead and chutes all sound.
18. Lead cover flashings are combined with damp courses under the merlons and with weatherings over the embrasures where the lead is disguised with black anti-climb paint, now weathering away.
19. **Vestry** slate without felt. Purple welsh at W without mortar torching, westmorland at E, torched. Two E are on lead clips and there are very minor breakages. Mortar fillets around both sides of the chimney have minor cracks, a sign of the gable and chimney separating slightly from the Vestry.
20. The **Porch** stone slabs are set on arched stone cross ribs. Some slabs very large. The slabs, without side laps and said to be interlocked, remain sound. Slight surface decay continues especially at the largest W slab. Minor holes in the pointed joints both sides with plants at E.



Rainwater System, Drainage

21. Sound cast iron hoppers, downpipes and shoes at Nave and Chancel. Round pipes held well off walls easing painting of the backs. Now rusting and needing good preparation and painting. Tower pipe onto N Nave slates. The upper pipes, lead hoppers and chute linings are covered in anti-climb paint.
22. Plastic 'cast iron' at W side of **Vestry**, gutter ponded due to poor level. No gutters at low **Porch** eaves (may contribute to the stone decay inside).
23. At E end flag paving sloping away from the walls drains into the churchyard. Elsewhere rainwater pipes discharge into concrete ground gutters draining to gullies. At N Nave the concrete is cracked and broken despite attempted repair, letting water into the foundations which risks rising damp.



24. Not all gullies are clear. It is not easy to clear drains to soakaways but they should continue to be cleared to keep the building as dry as possible.

Walls, Buttresses

25. Mixed sandstone and limestone. Larger squared at lower Chancel, random elsewhere. Small plinth.

26. **E gable** plain limestone with some low sandstone, sound and well pointed though upper joints very wide due to past spread, apparently stopped by the S buttress. Two more E buttresses of 1913 sound. Some low sandstones decaying.

27. At S side of the gable one bottom and one mid watertable joints are open. Cracks below suggest very slight movement of the kneeler stone caused by poor bond. Slight vertical cracks in joints between the top of the N lancet and the gable coping. The watertable joints should be pointed.

28. The 1913 buttresses are dressed stone with narrow joints, part fair but more than 50% joints open. If left stone decay will follow, so the open joints should be raked out and carefully pointed with lime putty.



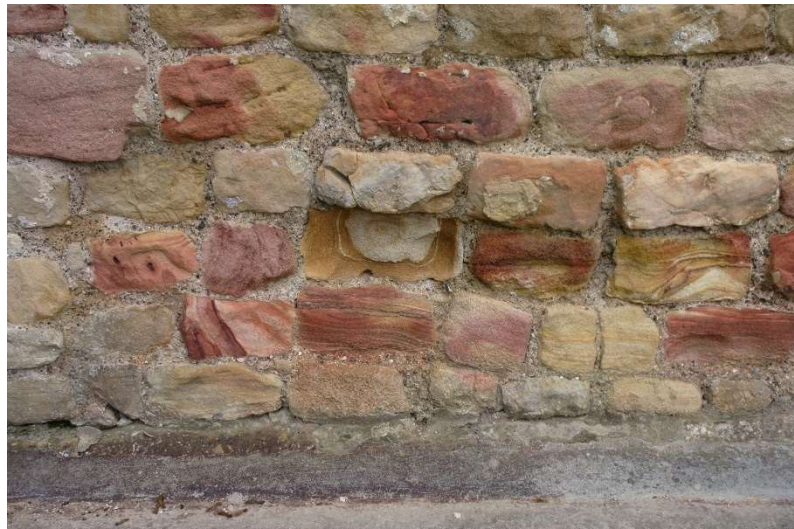
29. **S Chancel** mainly sandstone, similar. Decay in several of the concave corbel course stones under the parapet. Ten sandstones are eroding slightly. Well pointed.

30. In the great S buttress four decaying stones on E side and minor open joints at E and S.

31. **S Nave** mostly red sandstone with isolated eroding surfaces and one over the Porch pocketed by decay. Well pointed. Top bowed out at E but stabilised by the massive limestone buttress. The leaning wall is dished to the inserted Victorian windows.

32. Stone debris in the ground gutter due to continuing decay. Worst at bottom E corner where some stone renewal may be needed in say a decade.





33. Erosion of the large sandstone tablet between the windows continues. Crude cement mortar patches do not preserve the decayed top carving. The lettered surface may be totally lost in a decade or so. The text is known from histories.

The loss could present an opportunity for a completely new monument or work of art.



2010



2022

34. **Porch** mixed stone, good condition outside. It appears to be stiffened by reinforced concrete beams sunk into the inside face of the gable just over the arch and side walls at eave level. Minor cracks between Porch and Nave are unchanged and the Porch appears stable.



35. Two ancient chamfered stone arches and a modern stone A frame against the Nave support the stone roof.

36. Deepening erosion inside. Surface decay especially in E seat and the course above (a hole at one joint is getting larger) and at W between the slit opening and the seat. All reveals at both slit side openings are decaying. Salts inside the W wall suggest soaking by driving rain, perhaps worsened by the small eave overhang without gutter is hastening decay.



West



East

37. Most severe is erosion of the sandstone reveals of the round arched gateway which are deeply pocketed. Stone fragments like flour lie in each pocket with more on the flag floor. Wind swirling through the arch and side slits must make vortices in each stone pocket, the loose fragments grinding deeper into the stones. More joint mortar has been lost, opening the joints and exposed more stone to erosion. In addition to stone repair there is a case to fit thick glass in the side slits to reduce wind scour.





38. Some roof rib stones show surface decay and minor spalling especially at the outer rib.





39. A modern replacement sundial over the arch is now cracked vertically at its rusting iron gnomon. Over it an 18th century stone tablet with a broken swan neck pediment, inscribed with a verse (half lost due to loss of surface, unchanged) though it is recorded. The remaining stone surface is blackened and illegible. See also paragraph 133.
40. N Nave sound, some mortar spread over stones. Herringbone course at head height, part hidden in Vestry. Lesser buttress at E end with a plant in one open joint. Moss on plinth shows the wall base remains damp.
41. Vestry small limestone rubble whose bond is poor. Cracking of the N gable is slightly worse. Vertical cracks in the gable both sides of the chimney down to chest height and close to the N ends of both E and W walls, corresponding to plaster cracks inside. Open joints in Vestry gable watertables. Cracks in the mortar fillets both sides of the sound chimney (last renewed 2009). All show slight spread of the whole gable.



42. **N Chancel** good condition. A very slight crack in the pointed-up vertical crack at poorly bonded masonry close to the E end buttress, no action required.

Tower, Bells

43. A simple two stage square battlemented stone Tower without buttresses. Inside the visible timbers and masonry are sound except cracked joints in the W wall. Alternate tread ladders throughout, soundly built but awkward to use. Minor decay of the bottom of the top ladder middle string is unchanged.

44. Tower roof low ridged asphalt falling to deep asphalt lined E and W box gutters. Asphalt upstands and lead cover flashings at the low parapets. At N & S the asphalt is dressed over the crests of the embrasures and under the merlon stones. A fibreglass hatch with a cord stay and rusty hinge plate. Asphalt weathered but looks sound except a minor crack at a N upstand has been covered with sealant and cracking at stone movement (see below).

45. E gutter mid outlet to cast iron hopper and pipe over the Nave roof ridge.
NW outlet to short lead chute without rainwater pipe, spilling water down the Tower masonry.

46. Fibreglass flagpole with four stainless steel wire stays and anchors into the asphalt.
A shroud has been fixed around the flag pole base.

47. Before the 2010 inspection spreading of the Tower masonry had split the middle of the W gutter asphalt upstand where a parapet joint had opened about 10mm. Lesser splits due to stone spread at the NW corner. Both have been cement mortar pointed, now part missing. Further opening suggests very slow stone movement continues.



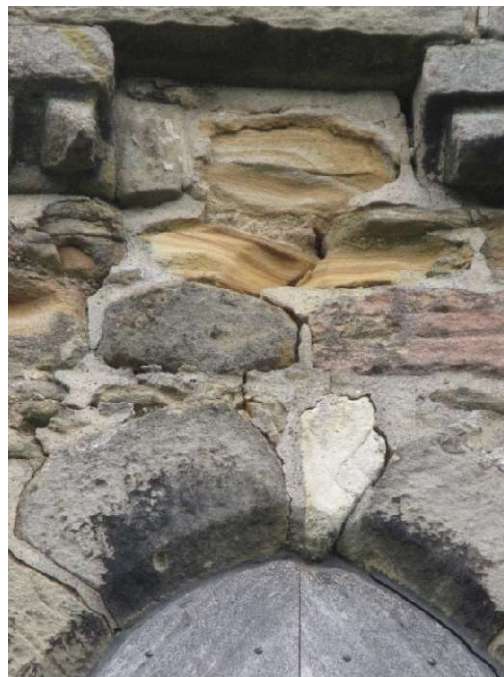
Split asphalt upstand and opening joint
between parapet stones at middle of W side



Splits between parapet stones and asphalt upstand
over rainwater outlet at W end of N side

48. Plain roof boards on damp proof membrane wrapped under the gutter boards. Modern joists on a centre ridge beam propped on the thick walls. Timbers appear sound.

49. At Tower walls movement cracks in some joints and slight recession of stones behind hard pointing can be difficult to distinguish but both are happening.
50. Externally random mixed stones, most pointing good. Parapet stones are mixed modern and ancient.
N side – stone and pointing fair. Unchanged slight opening of the 2nd perpend joint from W end in the course under the battlements.
- E side** – fair, some high level joints and a few stones over ridge decaying. Stable.
 The disused steep roof drip course is complete.
- S side** – some high level joints are open. In parapet course under the battlements the 2nd perpendicular joint from the E corner is open and the older course below is cracked suggesting slight spread at the corner.
 Random stones in top third are decaying back – some behind hard pointing.
- W side** – pointing generally fair but scattered open joints especially at high level and down the S side of the louvres. Decay at small stones under the parapet and at scattered stones all levels of the S half, especially at low level. Some pointing is too hard.



Internal recess and decayed external stones over W arch



Opening of internal arch over W louveres W side cracked joints between louvres over window

Opened joints in and above the arch of the louvred opening up through the parapet. Here the naturally poorly bonded masonry over the tall opening is further weakened by a deep internal recess over the arch, behind the fixed ladder to the roof, leaving the wall perhaps only one stone thick over the arch. The recess seems to have been left open and the wallhead unbonded when a former roof beam was removed.

At mid level outside slightly open joints between the two openings (from upper louvres down to Baptistry window) and corresponding hairline cracks inside in joints at peak of the window arch show the spreading of the W corner masonry extends down to Tower mid height.

51. The internal recess just under roof level and over the W louvres is one of five large pockets in the E and W wallheads which must remain where three former beams were removed. A sixth has been filled.
52. The structural tying over the W louvres is further weakened outside the internal recess by some decay around an open joint. This is the only recess close over an arch and the only one without lintel stones over to add some bond. Thus the natural line of weakness in the Tower structure caused by the tall openings is made weaker still by lack of tie at wallhead level. This is the cause of the spread seen on the roof (para 47). In the past such spread might have been stopped by an external iron strap all around the top of the Tower. Nowadays the usual solution is to tie the walls with concrete lintels or drilled anchors over louvre level to stabilise the Tower W corners.
53. Most of the top stage is occupied by the intake and burner box of a direct gas fired air heater which blows down from the Tower into the Nave. Steel angle and hollow section hangers are clamped to timbers which support the base of the flag pole and heater trunking. The steel components are very exposed to salt laden air and hard to maintain in the confined space. Increasing rust shows through the paint especially on the tops, the threaded steel suspension bars and angles.
In contrast the aluminium casing of the new burner box is sound but begins to show some discoloration. It has external components on one side which are again very exposed to salt air.
The steel gas supply pipe was renewed but is primed only.
54. The steel components are strong enough at present but will continue to rust unless very thoroughly treated. The recent burner box may again have a limited life.
55. Two small 13th century chiming bells with wooden headstocks and wheels are mounted on cross beams. Sound but iron straps are rusted.



56. The ground floor Baptistry stone walls are bare with traces of whitewash. Varnished ceiling boards are cut out for the heater blower grill. Chamfered arch to Nave with four large nail heads carved at each bracket.

Window and Door Openings

57. E Chancel – two good limestone round headed lancets with dogtooth hoodmoulds and decayed horizontal connecting mould.
58. S Chancel – three lancets, two with plain round heads cut from single stones which may be saxon from the S Nave reused in the extended Chancel. Cills patched with slate and mortar, loosening at the centre light.
59. S Nave
Two Victorian yellow sandstone traceried windows good except slight surface erosion and one split beginning under the E sides of the arches and hood moulds and down the E reveals. Joints opening. Some decay in both one piece mullions, especially at bottom of W mullion.
One long and one short lancet with plain round heads, carved inside. Very ancient, sound.



Para 59



Para 64

60. Tower – three louvred belfry openings and a W lancet, sound except slight spread of arches (para 52).
61. N Nave – two long and two short ancient high level lancets, W with brick arch, others with round heads cut from single stones.
62. N Chancel – two long lancets, heads cut from single stones, E slightly pointed, cills patched with slate and mortar.

External Iron and Wood

63. Three tall belfry openings with wooden louvres of 2003. Sound plastic mesh inside.
64. Plain painted steel Porch gates now severely rusted.
At Vestry a good oak frame and bead moulded door, dark stained.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERIOR

Roof timbers

65. All timbers except parts of the gutter framing are exposed and ventilated inside. Plain king post trusses, three in Chancel, five in Nave. Ridge, two purlins each side. Rafters birdsmouthed over purlins at wall heads. Wide gaps between sarking boards. Trusses on wall plates and props on walls. Bottom purlins propped on wall plates. Some traces of former lath and plaster ceiling.
66. Small parts of the lower N sarking boards are missing exposing the roof felt inside. Some felt hangs loose.
67. Gutter framing propped on the wall plate and walls. Gutter lead part visible inside at gaps in boards, some of which are recent renewals. Other parts have been raised, perhaps to improve falls and air movement inside.

68. Parts of the wallplate and props are affected by woodworm which was treated. No sign the damage weakens timbers nor of present activity. Report any sign of wood dust when cleaning furnishings in early summer when any beetles will leave the wood.
69. Surface salts on some timbers seem left by past damp. No visible damp now.
70. Vestry truss and rafters appear sound (seen from hatch).

Ceilings

71. Roof exposed in church. At Porch stone slabs on ribs.
72. In Vestry flat painted plaster sound except slight cracks along both eaves, especially at E, in NE corner and down SE corner to door head corresponding to spread of walls (para 41). No insulation.

Chancel Arch, Masonry

73. Arch stones mainly replaced in 1912. Arch and wall over seem sound except on Nave side N end of hoodmould and its carved head end has been cut off. The S end is ancient.
74. Lath and plaster removed from walls (and ceiling?) about 1915. Exposed stone repointed in 1986 and generally sound but scattered stones show minor surface decay behind the pointing which is hard grey cement mortar. Its hardness promotes decay because it is less porous to vapour than the stone.
75. One stone at the Chancel N side just above choir stall remains part covered in green algae and seven others at the E end of the N wall between floor and chest height have traces of green. There is no clear cause or apparent damage. Perhaps locally the core bond tends to draw water to the inside.
76. Salt efflorescence at some joints at the Chancel side walls and parts of the Nave (notably the SW corner).

Doors, Panelling

77. Vestry door well made 4 panel, boarded at Nave side, black stained. Carpeted step prevents closure. Porch inner door oak boarded outside with ornate strap hinges, nine flush panels inside, Suffolk latch two shoot bolts, disused rim deadlock.
78. Between the box pews and Church walls (irregular gap since the plaster was removed) horizontal laths scribed to the masonry prevent ventilation between wood and damp stone. Despite this most panelling appears sound. Patches over some decay in the skirting and lower wall panels under both N Nave windows and at S next to the Porch E wall suggest the walls may be or have been damper here. Now a small decayed panel at low level between the two large S Nave windows.
79. Damp may also have encouraged the worm which damaged the front four N pews at low level. Rainwater drainage must be cleared, maintained or improved to keep the walls dry.



80. In Vestry plain stained Victorian dado panelling. At least against the earlier Nave wall (between the two doors) decay has weakened a panel which is now broken through. Other panels likely to be affected.

Plaster, Decoration

81. None except painted plaster at the Vestry walls, now with minor cracks noted above.

Ventilation

82. Red subfloor airbricks at Vestry E and N. No need for other ventilation at this exposed church.

Glazing, Protection

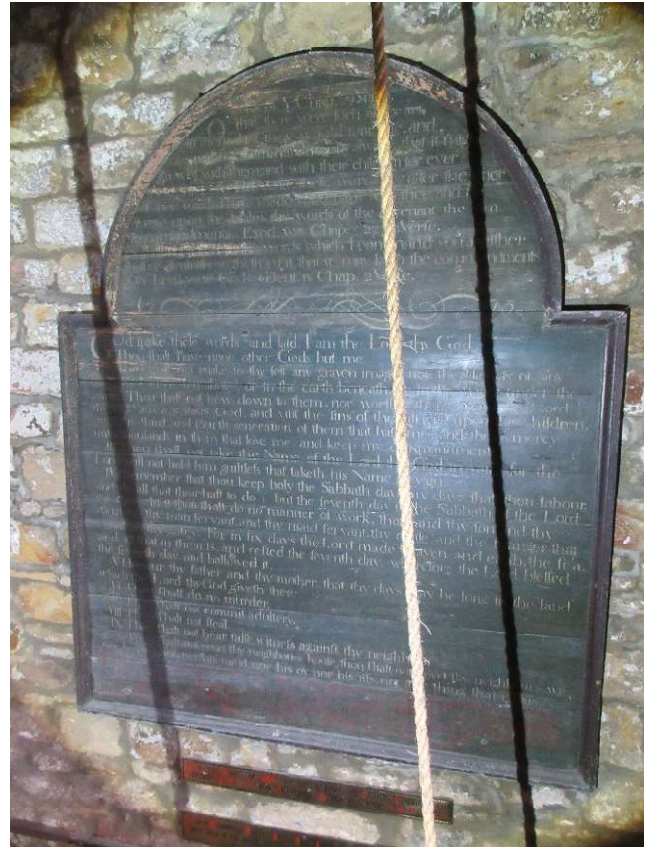
83. E pair lancets - 1853 Bethune memorial, highly coloured, five roundels in each, some bowing but sound. Four internal iron bars. A small hole at the top of the S light.
84. Chancel three S and two N lancets – all large white quarries. Internal saddle bars. Top panel of SW lancet is cast glass and slightly distorted inward making a small air gap where the panels butt together. Other glass mainly rolled, a few clear float. Sound. Some dirt inside and out.
85. Nave S two traceried windows – 1908 Angus Bethune memorial, sound well painted Kempe and Co. Closely spaced external saddle bars.
86. Nave S high lancet – white quarries, three round lenses, yellow margin all appears in good condition but dirty.
87. Nave S tall lancet – white quarries, rolled upper, clear lower, good condition but dirty glass and protection.
88. Baptistry – 1989 Bainbridge memorial by Mike Davies, vivid red, white and blue symbolic of water and fire, good condition but a little dirty.
89. Nave NW lancet – white quarries, sound but very dirty.
90. Nave N two high lancets – as S but some cracked margin glass with small hole in E. Both dirty inside.
91. Nave NE ‘The Sower’ 1923 some distortion. A small broken piece at left arch spring lets in cold air. A crack in text at bottom.
92. All glass well protected by clipped, ventilated polycarbonate sheet. Shape of openings slightly lost because sheets cut bigger than glass. One fixing loose at the damaged mullion at a Nave traceried window. All clouded by sun, especially at Chancel and S tracery. Heavy metal mesh at Vestry sash window.

Floors, Rails

93. At Porch stone flag paving sound, slight fall outwards.
94. Tower upper floor sound timber.
At Baptistry stone flags and a brick slightly uneven but fair overall.
95. Box pews, stalls and organ all on plain wide board platforms which have been renewed on the S side. No visible ventilation but no sign of trouble in the tops of the boards. Risk of rot if the walls are wet.
96. Nave walkways are carpeted on irregular stone flags and an iron grill over a former heating pit at the crossing (said still to contain an abandoned coal stove). Coir matting inside the Porch door.
Ramp up to Chancel where carpet changes to blue at walkway, steps and altar.
Exposed paving in the Choir is irregular stone flags.
97. At Vestry two layers of loose and nailed carpet tiles on suspended floor two high steps higher than Nave, ventilated at N and E.
The floor is uneven and soft in parts especially at the SE matwell, despite past repairs, suggesting further decay due to insufficient ventilation and damp rising in the Nave N wall.
98. Communion rail sound plain oak on balusters, said to be 1840 originals moved from St John Seaham Harbour when it was extended.

Reredos, Monuments, Brasses, Furnishings, Organ

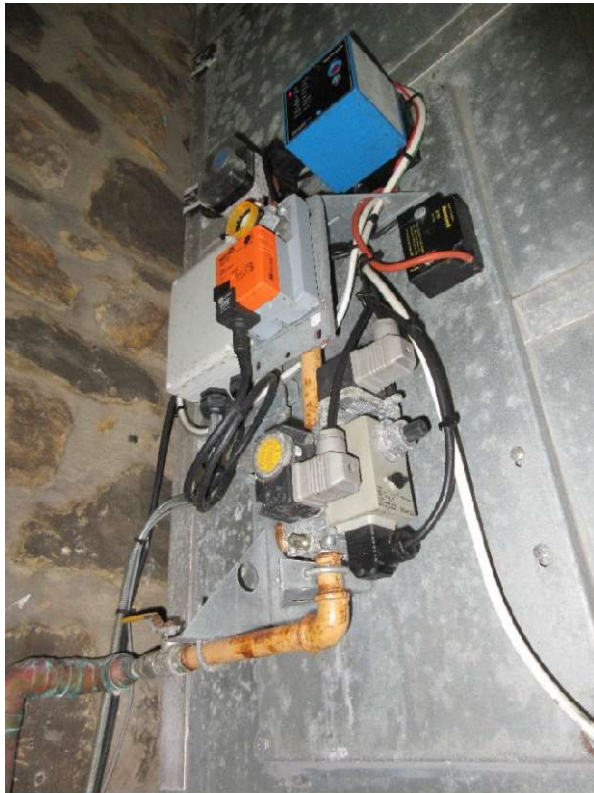
99. Reredos panelling with robust carved leaf cresting. Vine carved oak altar. Brass processional candles and cross dated 1995. Iron candle sticks.
100. Octagonal timber pulpit with carved round arch decoration '1579', combined with lectern. Good. Slight worm damage appears historic but to be observed.
101. Box pews and box stalls in grained softwood in generally good condition but some decay (para 70).



102. A circular stone pedestal font with a 1997 maple cover. A Jacobean cover is set aside. Painted Ten Commandment board 1755 in the Baptistery.
103. Marble and mosaic Great War memorial and three brasses in good condition. Five stone tablets in Chancel in good condition except Marchioness of Londonderry 1920 slightly crumbled at edges of frame and paint lost from lettering. The tablet appears to be artificial marble composition.
104. Small organ by 'Positive Organ Co. Ltd' London. In use, maintained and said to be in good condition. A small electric blower with a trailing lead to a socket.
105. At Vestry a table is built into a settle fixed to W wall and too inaccessible to examine. The W wall is vulnerable to damp due to high ground level without airbrick but the gutter has been improved.

Heating

106. A large gas meter in the Vestry cupboard and supply to a direct fired warm air heater, renewed 3 years ago, fitted into the Tower. Air drawn in at the belfry louvres is forced down through a grill in the Baptistery ceiling into the Nave. Electronic controller in the Baptistery. Thermostats in the SW and NW nave corners with black surface cables. Discrete and simple to use. System said to be effective for the occasional use to which the church is put.



107. The unprotected metalwork of the ducting and suspensions exposed to salt-laden air for over 20 years continues to corrode.
It may be worth determined stripping of paint and rust, treatment with rust inhibitor and high quality repainting to keep it going perhaps another twenty years. If not tackled the rust may lead to heating failure.
108. Supplemented by an electric tube heater under a rear pew with wire guard and red pyro supply cable drop down the stone wall.

Electrical

109. Two phase supply to meter housing by churchyard wall then underground to a distribution board in Vestry.
A very simple installation in red sheathed pyro cabling along the wallheads with surface drops to fittings.
The red cables stand out against the stonework especially where gathered to drop to a hole to the Vestry.
110. The last known periodic test report 2014 estimated the installation as (now) more than 40 years old and 'satisfactory' overall but with
Some deterioration due to age
One 'potentially dangerous' observation (test button on DB main switch RCD does not work)
Nine observations 'improvement recommended'

111. Four metal twin 13A socket outlets protected by RCDs (at reredos and SW Nave (for the organ), two in Vestry).
112. Light by thirteen PAR38 spots in the Nave and six in the Chancel (one Chancel, seven or more than half in Nave not working) all fixed at wall heads under the trusses. Two high level floods in the Baptistry. Simple and effective in the tall church with some proper focus on the altar and font. As PAR lamps become hard to obtain long life LED lamps may be better substitutes.
113. Four supplementary suspended gas mantle fittings in occasional use.
114. In the Tower pyro wiring to strip light and a spur for the heating. Outside lighting by a bulkhead in the Porch and two old down floods (orange high pressure sodium?) at each side of the church.

Lightning Conductor

115. None.

Fire Precautions

116. Good provision of extinguishers, all tested October 2021:

Vestry	2 kg CO ₂
Porch door	6 litre foam
Baptistry	6 litre foam
Tower upper level	2 kg CO ₂

Water and Sanitary facilities

117. None. Water is carried in.

Access and use by people with disabilities

118. A gently sloping flag path leads from the gate to the Porch where a low step down from a stone thresh to the Nave floor is a minor problem. Space inside for wheelchairs is very limited. Steps up into the box pews are not ideal for ambulant infirm but improvement is not practical unless the box pews are removed (similar to Escomb).
119. Two high steps up into the Vestry at both outer and inner doors make access poor for clergy and others, though improved by external handrails.

Security and safety

120. Security is good. Most windows are high and narrow.
A very heavy padlock at the Porch gates. Twin 5 lever mortice deadlocks in the heavy Vestry door.
121. The safety of the uneven carpet on the walkways and the alternate step ladders into the Tower is not ideal, especially at the Baptistry where the ladder has no side rail.

Churchyard/Grounds, boundaries, signs, paths, trees

122. Scattered good headstones of many ages. Simple concrete flag paths. A metal sign with good lettering. A blue plaque fixed to a gate pier refers to 'Seaham Conservation Area', a non-statutory nature conservation area.





123. By the Nave S wall the top of a brick vault rises from the ground next to a cracked stone reading 'Entrance to the vault'. The exposed bricks and pointing are sound.
124. A separately listed (grade II) medieval stone coffin stands S of the Chancel. Its cracked lid is repaired. In 1999 Peter Ryder advised it be moved inside but there is no room unless the box pews are removed.
125. The churchyard is bounded and part retained by low stone walls varying in height and materials. No part is so well built or so ancient that the walls appear to have historic or archaeological importance. Two simple gate piers with oak gates in fair general condition but splits in the top rail of one and some rust at the fittings of both.
126. At E the wall retains the yard above the garden of the former vicarage. Its S end is low with curve for a former carriage turn. The yard level rises to N until the battered wall retains the yard some 1.5m above the garden. The wall has been reset in parts, cement pointed both sides rather crudely and given an all concrete flag coping topped with steel railings.



Outside of churchyard S wall in 2015 – now overgrown

127. S wall is rubble, much repaired and capped with insitu concrete and flags. It retains the yard about 1m above a steep bank and has been raised, perhaps to prevent falls. The masonry is pointed inside in cement mortar. Outside overgrown.

128. W wall now fully capped with mixed old insitu concrete and recent concrete flags. Pointed both sides.

129. The most public N wall was rebuilt with new stone copings and recessed pointing in 2002 and is sound. Paving slabs retain the banked yard inside the gates.

Archaeology

130. This is one of the earliest churches in the diocese and both land and building are of high archaeological importance. Proper consultation would be needed if significant works are considered.

General comments

131. St Mary's has become isolated from population and is exposed to severe weather. It is in mostly good condition and the small congregation are to be commended on their care and maintenance,

132. Inside, the exposed irregular stone walls are slightly at odds with the regular box pews installed when the church was plastered. The stone also makes the interior darker and colder than painted plaster might. There is a case for replastering on modern lathing. Alternatively the white painted stone interior of Escomb, another Saxon church, shows the effect of white finish in a similar church, though limewash alone would not be prudent at the very exposed St Mary's.

133. Plaque over sundial - In response to a request in 2015 for advice on the decay the DAC said options to be considered were

- leave the stone unaltered
- take advice on minimal conservation of the stone as found from an expert conservator
- retain the stone but also make a modern version, not attempting to copy the original. Either keep the new stone in reserve for when the old stone needs replacing or replace now and keep the old stone in the church

134. The movement in the Tower masonry and asphalt remains so slight that it is not clear that structural tying is justified at present but it must be kept under observation. When necessary, a full scaffold will be needed which for economy should also be used for a close examination of all Tower masonry and replacements and repointing as needed.

PART THREE

RECOMMENDATIONS in order of priority

For immediate action

Refix two slipped slates	15
Clear gullies, ground gutters and drains where possible	24
Obtain new periodic electrical installation test report	110 and Addendum
Renew failed lamps	112

For completion within 18 months

Prepare and paint rainwater hoppers and pipes and fittings at churchyard gates	21, 125
Point open joints in E gable watertables, kneeler and dressed stone buttresses	27, 28
Shotblast Porch gates, galvanise, pickle, paint and refix	64

For completion within five years

Strip, treat rust and repaint steelwork in Tower	13, 53 – 55, 107
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Desirable improvements

Rebuild or extend Vestry with better tied structure, insulation, floor level with Nave and ventilated	19, 41, 72, 80, 82, 97, 105, 119
Refix slates at cill of S Chancel centre window	58
Renew all window protection in UV resisting polycarbonate, clean glass	84 - 92

Recommendations on Maintenance and Care

Watch for new beetle dust in summer months	14
Clear gullies at least once a year	23, 24

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) or a member of the Electrical Contractors Association (ECA) 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

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.

The British Standard earth resistance is 10 ohms but the insurer EIG regards 15 Ohms as acceptable.

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.