

Diocese of Durham

ESCOMB
Saxon Church
(176)

Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991

QUINQUENNIAL REPORT
on the architect's inspection on

14 August 2017

Auckland Archdeaconry

Auckland Deanery

a grade I listed building
with grade II listed churchyard wall, table tomb and group of eight C18 tombs

not in a conservation area

Priest in Charge the Revd Elisheva Mechanic



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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. 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. 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 an Assessment rather than a Management Survey under the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2012. The PCC may wish to see the guidance on the Church Buildings Council ('ChurchCare') website.
If a management or demolition survey is required and not previously done, a specialist surveyor should be approached.

Brief description

3. Said to be one of only three complete Saxon churches surviving in Britain. Built about 675, probably with stone robbed from the Roman fort at Binchester on the opposite bank of the Wear. The roughly oval churchyard suggests influence of the Irish church. When the population declined the church fell into decay and for a period was a little used chapel. Even after a restoration in 1878 – 80 it remained a chapel until after improvements in the 1960's by Sir Albert Richardson (heating, lighting, new altar, floor coverings, seating and furnishings, relimewashing and insertion of clear glass) it became the parish church again in 1970.
4. Like other early Northumbrian churches this is two plain cells linked by the simplest possible tall arch. The Nave is 13.5m long, narrow (4.5m) and tall, the Chancel 3m square and only slightly less tall. Massive almost agricultural roof trusses and stone slates without gutters and pipes. Two small patches of wall painting not covered by the current limewashing. Red scroll ornament on the soffit of the Chancel arch. Incoherent painting remains high on the N Nave wall.
5. Excavations in 1968 found traces of a two storey W annexe of similar proportion to the Chancel and a chamber N of the Chancel. Neither bonded to the church walls. Also a small (relatively modern?) semi-basement W chamber against the W gable, perhaps for former heating, now loosely infilled.
6. A very unusual N Nave door with jambs morticed into the lintel as if in wood. Door and the original five small high windows (two each side and one high in W gable suggesting the W porticus was original) with deep internal splays.
7. At S a Saxon sundial stone built into the Nave wall, and a C17 sundial on the (probably C14) Porch S gable. Two small C13 lancets in Nave and Chancel S walls.
8. Three large C19th windows at E, S and W replaced in the 1878-80 restoration by R J Johnson.
9. Near the centre of a roughly oval churchyard with mature trees, scattered headstones and separately listed table tomb, tombs and wall. Gravel paths. A sublime combination of curved yard wall, trees screening the surrounding houses and plain vertical Church as if in a forest clearing.
10. A new Log Book seen. Generally the lack of records is not helpful to the parish's care. The 2013 report and a series by HLB Architects from recent decades is on file.

Bats

11. Whiskered bats reportedly roost under the Nave roof timbers, pipistrelle bats in the Porch. They continue to be monitored by Durham Bat Group and are not considered a problem by the parish. Minor cleaning is needed from time to time.

Recent structural history

12. Since the list description the outer Porch boarded timber doors have been changed to metal gates.

Last limewash about 15 years ago.

A Notice Board added outside the gate.

A Log Book started 2008 records that since the last report:

Two stone slates repaired at S Nave and bell rope repaired

Repair of small fallen stone at Nave SW corner, minor repairs at the disused N door and its stone surround.

Modern wooden Celtic cross erected in churchyard, new notice board

Summary of structural condition

13. Some rot in the Porch NE rafters due to a broken slate repaired in 2013 has stopped. Older rot in the Porch E purlin and other rafters has been varnished over and appears dormant.
14. Stable.
Broken stone at the bell needs replacement and the bell rehung, especially if rust has broken the stone.
Very minor cracks at the unbonded joints between Chancel and Nave and between Porch and Nave.
15. Stone decay may continue very slowly and rising damp remains a problem.

16. The 6th Legion stone and sundial at Porch appear stable, perhaps through expert conservation reported below.
The remaining internal wall paintings may continue to deteriorate extremely slowly.
17. Poor heating remains a problem to the congregation and visitors.

PART TWO

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EXTERIOR

Roofs

18. Sandstone flag slates at about 45⁰ without felt on boards with stone ridges.
At Nave lead soakers and cover flashings chased into grooves in the sides of crowstepped gable upstands or cover flashings extended over the slates.
Widespread moss, including all of Porch and N slopes, may cause very long term damage to the slate surfaces. Moss has been reduced at other buildings by slightly acid run off from exposed copper strips added under ridges.
19. **S Nave** fair, slight moss. Some narrow side laps could let in water in some conditions. One slate near upper middle rests on two heavy wire clips but seems secure at present.
20. **N Nave** slates almost fully covered by moss but seem well laid and sound. At E end moss under the lead flashing which extends over the slates.



N Nave

21. At **Chancel** lead soakers and cover flashings against the Nave gable seem sound. At E gable soakers covered by mortar fillets against stone watertable slabs.
At SE plants grow in cracks in the fillets and in open joints between watertables. The plants, reported since at least 2007, will widen the cracks and open joints which must let water in risking rot in the ends of the purlins and sarking boards.
Thorough overhaul of least the watertables (rebedding, repointing, new fillets over the soakers or, better, lead cover flashings) is due.



22. **S Chancel** slates uneven and some moss. Two at E held on thick lead strip clips. One by top E corner slipping and seems wedged in place by a stone under the next slate up.



S Chancel, plants in cracked fillets and watertable joints and wedged slate at top right

23. **N Chancel** better laid and seems sound but fully moss covered.
Inside no sign of leakage through the roof but no close access.

24. Widespread moss on the **Porch** slates which appear sound. Soakers and lead cover flashings against the Nave. Slightly torn at W despite their short lengths. Mortar fillets against the low S upstand, extent of cracks hidden by moss covering. The lead and mortar cracks may leak.



W porch



torn cover flashings against nave and decayed nave stone

25. Replacement of a Porch NE slate in 2013 seems to have stopped the rot then visible in the rafters but observation should continue.



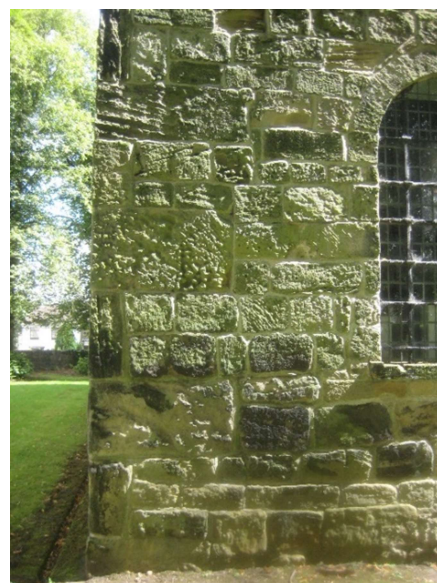
cracked fillet at SE porch (para 24)

Rainwater System, Drainage

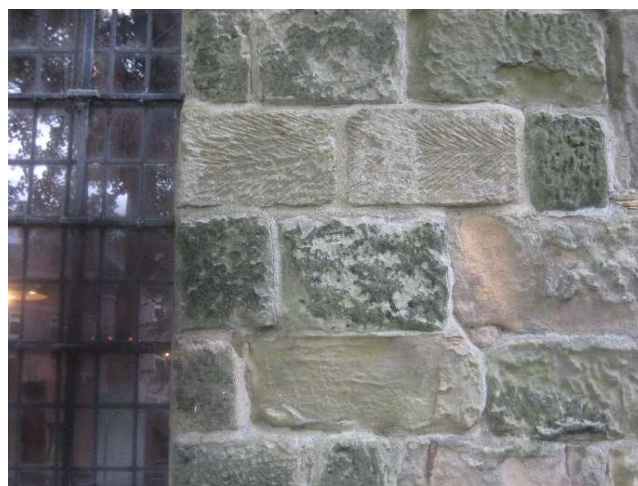
26. No rainwater goods. Rain drops from the slate tails to ground or into walls. Concrete ground channels lower than the general ground level. At the inspection the S gutters were clean, showing displaced cracks E of Porch and S of Nave and Chancel which merely spill the water back into the ground against the walls. The N gutters hidden by thick moss.
27. Gullies at both Chancel E corners and at SW corner of Nave, assumed draining to soakaways.
28. Past reports have recommended change from concrete channels and (hard to clean) soakaways to continuous French drains all around and extended away from the building to reduce the tendency for rainwater to create rising damp in the walls, added to by splash from the concrete. French drains are simple gravel filled trenches, perhaps lined with geotextile to keep out soil. Durham University Archaeology Dept gave information on the ground conditions in 1980.

Walls

29. The masonry generally in good condition with sound flush lime pointing. At N Chancel and N Nave traces of former render.
30. A British Museum report Oct 1988 describes
- the N walls as widely covered in algae (still the case) and severely eroded implying that exposure and the slightly acid algae have weathered the ancient masonry.
 - the S walls as covered in a black sulphated dirt layer



31. Last repairs 1989 by William Allison Ltd were discrete minor mortar weatherings in scattered decay pockets, pointing of top of Nave E gable and of the Chancel watertables. and a small number of stone indents under and next to the W window with herringbone droved faces, perhaps to match faint traces of original broaching or to distinguish them for future historians.



1989 indents with droved tooling by W window

32. **Chancel Gable** fair except most watertable joints are open (para 21) and the bottom half of the S watertables are lifted off its bedding mortar. At S side plants grow in the joints and under the water tables. Minor open joints in wall under N watertables and N kneeler stone.
33. Pockets of decay in four large stones below cill level.
Slight crack about 1m long in joints vertically up from crown of window arch, unchanged.
Very slight vertical crack in joints beside two S window reveals stones and passing the end of the window cill and in four courses below, unchanged.
34. **S Chancel** and **E Nave** fair but minor holes in the Nave E gable pointing, especially at N side.
35. **S Nave** fair but minor open joints under and beside the main window and at top E corner. Four stones E of main window have lost all or part of surface. About twenty stones have deep decay pockets.



decay in random S Nave stones



S nave bottom E corner, corresponding to damp inside

36. **Porch** small rubble with large quoins with wide and narrow pointing, mostly in good condition but deep decay in one stone over sundial and minor decay pockets E of door. The gable may have spread very slightly (many mortar joints slightly cracked). Said in display to have no foundations, as often the case at added porches.



37. One arm of gable cross broken.

38. **W Nave** mainly good. One very large quoin and a stone close to it honeycombed by decay but appear stable. Other scattered surface and pocket decay some with mortar weatherings in the pockets. Pointing mostly good but deeply weathered at the exposed peak.
39. **N Nave** good except scattered open joints and slight face decay at some stones. One low stone between door and NE corner and one W of the door have lost their faces. Pocket decay at NE corner chest height. The list description suggests a carved tree R of the door, not clear. Roman Lewis holes in two large quoins.



typical N nave

40. **N Chancel** good. Very minor open joints under the eave. For infilling of the former N door see para 52.

Bellcote, Bell

41. A suitably simple arch shaped stone stands on two stone uprights. The N end of the arch and top of the N upright are both mortar patched. A single bell hangs from an iron bar which is housed into the S upright and passes through the N upright which is broken around the bar. The breaks may cause the uncertain sound. Broken pieces part missing, part hanging off further than at last inspection. Otherwise masonry weathered but seems sound.
42. The bell, said to be 16C, is tolled by curved iron lever and rope through ridge. The bell itself sounds uncracked and fair but not certain. Since the last inspection a mason checked and reported no fault with the mounting but the broken stone now needs repair.



Historic Masonry Elements

43. Following a report by the British Museum Oct 1988 cleaning and consolidation of the inscribed roman LEG VI stone and block with raised rosette (both N Nave) Saxon Sundial (S Nave) and early 17C Sundial (Porch gable) was apparently done 1989 by Seamus Hanna (his quotation Nov 1988). He described the Saxon Sundial as believed to be the oldest in its original position. Gnomons missing from both sundials.
44. A further Hanna report April 2001, not seen, was mentioned in the 2007 quinquennial report.
45. The Porch sundial is not built in but lead backed and slightly offset from the wall, perhaps for correct orientation. Held on four stainless steel clips. One side weathered but otherwise fair.



46. The LEG VI stone is protected by a slightly projecting stone.

Window and Door Openings

47. E window good, two ancient cracks in cill. S Chancel good.
48. S Nave - Lancet fair except a large decay pocket in one reveal.
Two small round head windows good. Heads cut from massive stones.
Large arched window good except both bottom reveals decaying slowly.
49. Porch – Small side windows good but rubble cills poorly weather resistant.
Door arch good except pointing at keystone becoming poor and surface decay at both very large reveals under arch springs.
50. W gable – large window good except very minor crack in cill and course below.
Smaller Saxon window in peak, over ridge mark former W cell, good.
51. N Nave - Two small square head windows fair.
Door opening (with morticed lintel) fair. The weathered vertical top and bottom W jamb stones have been refaced in repair mortar since the past inspection. The short horizontal mid bonding reveal stone remains sound. Plain stone thresh at ground level without weathering or draught seal.

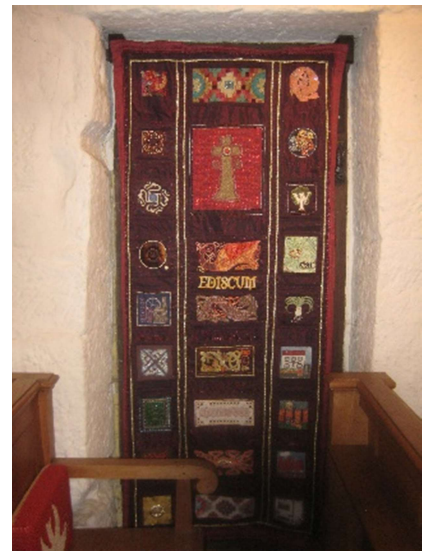
52. N Chancel – at blocked priest's door the lintel and both jambs, especially top of E jamb and mid point of W jamb are decaying back slowly. The third blocking stone from bottom was replaced in 1989. Two other blocking stones have deep decay pockets.



External Iron and Wood

53. Porch square headed gates painted steel and frame, well pointed to the stone and fixed to a timber inner lintel. Made into doors with polycarbonate sheet applied inside, making painting and cleaning difficult. Deadlock and latch with knobs.





54. N door and frame stout oak. Its W frame was exposed to the weather by stone decay, now more protected by repairs. Good stained repairs of the bottom of the door. Rot was due to wet leaves lying against both frame and door which need to be kept dryer by frequent clearance.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERIOR

Roof timbers and Ceilings

55. In **Nave** and **Chancel** massive unsawn timber trusses and purlins needed for the heavy stone slates add to the special character of the interior. Horizontal sarking boards. In the short Chancel trusses against gables take the roof load instead of it bearing on the gable masonry. Dendrochronology dates timbers about 1480. No access but no visible defect except woodworm holes. Recorded treated against woodworm 1985 by Durham Bat Group. Checks against new worm (new wood dust on the pews in the flight season May-September) would be prudent though given the height roof to pews it may be too dispersed to see.



Nave



Chancel

56. At **Porch** dressed and varnished softwood long purlins, ridge, rafters and sarking (Victorian?) all appear sound though the top of the E purlin, some rafters and a few board edges have some past rot varnished over and are soft to a probe. There is some sign of past board replacement. The dry rot fruiting bodies seen 2013 between the 2nd E rafter from Nave and the boards have died back since the 2013 slate repair. Condition of tops of boards unknown.

57. From records:

All Porch timbers treated 1979 with insecticide and the rafter feet injected with fungicidal fluid.

In 1996 white fungus was reported near the top of one rafter.

In 1997 woodworm was reported at foot of the W rafter 2nd from nave (perhaps damage before the 1979 treatment) and rot was visible in the W rafter 3rd from entry.

58. In sum in the past the Porch roof has been attacked and weakened by both worm and repeated rot but seems to remain strong enough at present. The slates, flashings and fillets must be kept in very good repair and the timbers checked annually for any new outbreak which might be enough to justify widespread timber replacements and perhaps full reroofing.



rot bodies 2013



Porch E side

2017

Chancel Arch and Internal Masonry

59. High arch with chamfered imposts and ancient painting under the arch. Unfortunate dark cement pointing of some joints among the painting.

Minor stone damage from rising damp maximum 20cm high on N side of arch.

60. Very minor cracks at crown of E window and diagonally below the E window cill and in joints of four courses under S end of the cill.

Slight vertical cracks at Chancel SW and NW corners including L of the blocked door suggest very slight separation of the Chancel from the Nave, probably no more than seasonal movement.

All appear unchanged at least since 1991 report.

61. In Nave over W end of inner porch lintel a vertical hairline crack about 2m long in the masonry joints.

62. Under W window cill S end diagonal cracks in joints down behind frontal box. Very slight cracked joints in crown of arch and five courses above, not visible outside.

63. Some damp at bottom of Nave SE corner (rising damp or stone decay outside para 35) and very slight damp under the W window behind the frontal box/pew.



Door

64. Porch inner door wide framed oak in oak frame, good condition. Only draught stripping is a bottom brush.



Limewash, Ancient Painted Decoration

65. The historical interior limewashing was lost until the 1965 restoration. Last recorded limewashing 1986.

66. Now whole interior limewashed in fair condition but widespread cobwebs and dust needing at least vacuuming to roof level.

- Exceptions are some damp damage:
 - Nave NE and SE corners at low level
 - Nave W end low level
 - Around blocked Chancel door
 - Base of Chancel E gable



67. The Porch limewash is now behind good clear polycarbonate display screens with stainless steel wire and lighting. The display would have to be dismantled in any relimewashing.

68. High on the N Nave wall a patch of ancient painted decoration survives on part plaster or wide lime pointing around unpainted stones, the whole framed by the limewashing. Arch and Wall painting both subject of a conservation report 2005 by English Heritage, appended.



Ventilation, Glazing, Protection

69. The two S lancets have fly mesh outside steel ventilation hoppers with missing control cords and probably fixed shut.
70. All clear leaded glass so attractive views in and out. Good but at E one cracked, at N side E light one broken and plated over. All glass dirty inside and out. No protection.
71. Painted ferramenta outside all lights except Porch. Paint needed soon.

Floors, Rails

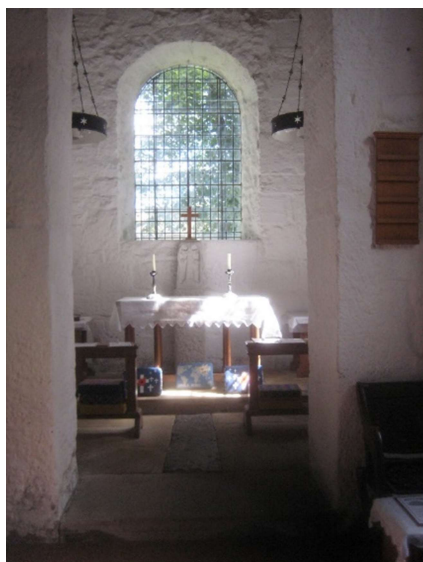
72. At Chancel plain sandstone step at arch (minor loss of surface at back edge) and at altar platform. Sandstone flags except a strip of Frosterley Marble 'grave cover' on the centre line with chipped edges. Good except minor loss of surface along sandstone N edges.



73. Two small free standing oak communion rails.
74. In Nave nylon carpet partly on felt underlay on rubber underlay, all about 20 years old, on flags which seem dry where carpet lifted. Small area exposed cobbles at NW corner.
75. Porch good level sandstone flags, repaired 2001 with reused flags. Door thresh and three stone steps down into Nave, painted nosings.

Reredos, Furnishings, Organ

76. Plain oak table altar. An ancient limewashed carved cross on a rough cut stone pedestal against the E wall behind the altar. Oak credences.



77. Twelve oak pews with arms, front desks and high backs at the back pair, recorded stripped and polished 1995. A millennium hanging inside the N door provides a small patch of colour.
Ancient octagonal sandstone font, bowl very worn but sound.
78. Small single manual pipe organ at W end designed and made by Nigel Church 1977, light oak case, in regular use.

Heating

79. A small electric floor standing radiant panel at front of Nave. Loose fan heater by back pew.
Electric heater panels fixed to back of each pew with trailing flexes and loose multi sockets from limited wall sockets. One side only controlled by a timer switch.



80. The church is especially difficult to heat, having a small occupancy and floor area but large air volume due to the height and large uninsulatable roof and wall surface areas. On some days the poorly heated interior is colder than outside. In parts of the winter services move to the village hall.
81. The present arrangement of electric panels immediately facing the congregation makes sense as a strategy to get radiant heat directly to the people but does not warm the fabric which becomes a cold radiator in winter.
82. If the electrical supply is sufficient, further opportunities are either an electric heating mat under the carpet or under a new higher stone floor on insulation on the present floor
OR further radiant heaters in the pendant light fittings pointing downward in Chancel and Nave.
83. Electric blowers over the Porch outer door may direct hot air outward not inward.

Electrical

84. Rising supply in the Nave SW corner. RCCD protection at the distribution board.
Installation estimated over 40 years old so probably from the 1965 restoration, with alterations (distribution board and some wiring) about 10 years old.
An installation Condition Report done in February 2016 by a NAPIT member (see Addendum) assessed the installation as 'unsatisfactory', recommending mainly:
- Replace distribution board with RCBOs
 - Improve earth bonding and meter tails
 - Split the load to the heating panel circuits and eliminate the extension leads
 - Trace and correct crossed polarity fault at remote sockets
 - Trace and rectify low insulation readings at several circuits
 - Rewire pendant lights to eliminate single core cables
 - Replace corroded and damaged sockets and light switches
85. Surface metal twin and single 13A sockets, orange clad pyro wiring from under the edge of the carpet.
In Chancel two rusted single 13A sockets (only one live) on corroded MICC in floor joints.
In Nave six singles and three doubles.

86. Effective lighting by simple bespoke circular metal pendants for down and up light, mainly down by design of mid reflector and because they hang low. Lamps inside the metal hoops, now mix of GLS and low energy. Six fittings in Nave, two in Chancel. Total seven lamps not working.

87. Time switch for floodlighting by large lights fixed to trees (three at S, one at N), installed 1989. No longer used due to the running cost and some cables cut.



Lightning Conductor

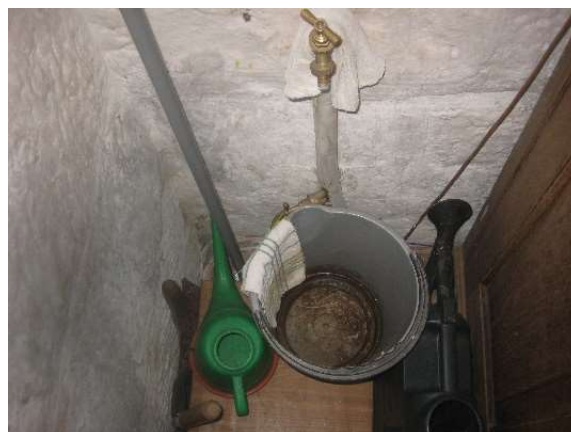
88. None.

Fire Precautions

89. 6 litre foam extinguisher, still marked 'new' in November 2011 so long overdue for annual service. Another 2 kg CO₂ last serviced Feb 97, feels empty.

Water and Sanitary facilities

90. Only a cold water polyethylene supply rising in NW corner of Nave to a lagged internal stand tap. No gully or drain under tap.



Access and use by people with disabilities

91. Reasonable access for the infirm and wheelchair users from gate by short steep ramped flags and tarmac to gravel path and Porch but three steps down into Nave without handrail prevent at least chair users from getting in. A temporary ramp would serve chairs but space is then very limited. Raising the floor for heating improvement would also help access to small extent. A suitable new path to the N door would allow level access.

Security

92. Naturally secure due to the high windows and ferramenta. Both Porch doors are stout and lockable (outer deadlock, inner night latch). Intruder alarm. The N door seems the weak spot to determined entry.

93. Floor safe for collection money only. Small safe in cupboard for part of the silver.

94. The church is effectively open to all in daylight hours because visitors freely collect the key from a house. In fact insurers' present advice tends to be that security is best served by keeping churches unlocked in daylight hours.

Churchyard, boundary, signs, paths, trees

95. The wall, trees and church make a very attractive combination and amenity for the village but no tree preservation order. The trees believed all planted about 1880 and it may be time to anticipate losses by planting more to fill future gaps, unless it is planned to reduce tree cover.
96. Grass and gravel paths good but large stone chippings at NW may be difficult for wheelchairs. Some top dressing of small chippings may be enough to reduce mud in church.



97. The separately listed curving wall retains parts of the churchyard above the surroundings and is generally sound. Plants grow in SE parts of the wall and isolated copings at E and NE. 19th century stone gate piers weathered but sound.
98. Maintained by the County Council who are said to test the headstones bi-annually for safety. Three now lie flat. Some lean but are judged safe.
Listed Robson Elliott table tomb appears sound apart from slightly open joints. Another is collapsed.
99. Modern metal framed lockable information board outside wall. Good stained oak sign on concrete legs inside gate. Good benches.

Archaeology

100. The church and its site are of highest archaeological importance and the County Archaeologist should be consulted early if significant works are considered.

General comments

101. A place of rare quality, as a place of worship and for its historical interest. The parish looks after it well.
102. Roof repair is needed at the Chancel. The Porch slates and their flashings must remain in good order to guard against further damage at its timbers, which need frequent observation.
103. Repair of the broken masonry at the bell is needed.
Replacement of the most decayed stones at the Nave bottom SE corner and general change to French drains could help to reduce damp inside.
The remaining stone decay seems not to need repair at present and the cracking needs no more than periodic observation.
104. The sparse but high quality fittings are essential to its character. The Porch display is well judged.
105. By and large the church avoids clutter which could so easily diminish these small spaces but the risk remains, especially at the W end.
Any heating improvement should be very discrete, hence the suggested underfloor or radiants hidden in the pendant lights.

PART THREE

RECOMMENDATIONS in order of priority

For immediate action

Replace broken stones at the bell and rehang bell	14, 41, 42
Rebed & repoint Chancel watertables and wall under, add stainless cramps if practical and refix loose slates	21, 22, 32
Replace cracked mortar fillets at Porch	24
Replace failed lamps	86
Service fire extinguishers	89

For completion within 18 months

Fix copper strips under ridges at N sides and both sides of Porch	18
Renew ground gutters and clean soakaways OR change to French drains	26 – 28
Rewire with more sockets for existing heating	79
Improve heating and electrical installations	4, 16, 17, 80 – 85, 91, 105

For completion within five years

Point holes in Nave E gable	34
Prepare and paint ferramenta	71
Remove plants and point open joints in churchyard wall	97

Desirable improvements

Conserve the arch and wall paintings as 2005 report	4, 59, 68 and Addendums
Vacuum clean the limewashing	66
Clean all glass	70
Improve path surfaces and add path to N door for wheelchairs	91, 96

Recommendations on Maintenance and Care

Maintain a full Log Book including all past reports	10, 12
Report further sign of rot in the Porch timbers	13, 25, 56 - 58
Report any trace of new woodworm	55, 57, 58
Consider future of trees	95

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 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

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.