Church of St. Cuthbert, Marley Hill

Diocese of Durham Archdeaconry of Sunderland Deanery of Gateshead West

Quinquennial Inspection Report May 2025

Vicar: Rev. Glen MacKnight



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	Quinquennial Inspection Report
Church	Church of St. Cuthbert, Marley Hill
	Diocese of Durham
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Date of	April/May 2025
Inspection	Fair/sunny weather

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Α	Brief Description of the Building
A1	Background and General:
	The site is located immediately to the north of the former mining settlement of Marley Hill on the east side of the A692 (originally a turnpike road) and to the south of Cuthbert Road, which serves new and original village houses. The church also served the adjacent village of Streetgate and the 'lost' villages surrounding Andrews House and Marley Hill colliery.
	Ordnance Survey Map Reference: NZ204581.
	General Description of Church
A2	The church was built in 1877, designed by C. Hodgson Fowler. The walling is of local sandstone with Welsh slate roofs. There is an aisleless nave, narrowing to a chancel/roof. The chancel roof extends over the vestry (monopitch) with a small gabled organ chamber and separate storage space, now housing new gas boilers and electrical consumer units.
A3	From Pevsner (2021 edition), "unexceptional Early English, lifted by a good west front circular window with quatrefoils porch with pretty arcade of five small shafted lancets".
A4	The Church is unlisted but should be considered a Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA).
A6	There is situated in the Marley Hill Conservation Area.
A7	The Conservation Area status confirms elements of protection of trees to the site.
A8	There are no ancient monuments or internments attached to the Church.
A9	There is an extensive churchyard bounded by a stone wall.

В	Scope of Report
B1	This report, the first undertaken on this Church by the writer, is based on findings of site visits, undertaken in April and May 2025. The weather was generally good and sunny. Viewing was made from ground level and with the aid of binoculars. No ladder inspection was made externally or into the roof void internally or the belfry.
B2	A photographic record was made internally and externally of representative views.
В3	There are anticipated roof voids in the nave and chancel, to which access was not available.
B4	The ground floor (boarded) flooring was not opened up or access panels found. Area carpeted throughout with the exception of the kitchen/WC areas.
B5	The accessible WC and kitchen sink utilise narrow-bore foul drainage to a new manhole at the northeast corner of the churchyard and then into a drain of the neighbouring house (as reported in the June 2020 QI). I am not yet aware of the depth, diameter or nature of this pipe and arrangements to share a domestic drain.
В6	Thanks are acknowledged for help given on the inspection days by the Incumbent and other members of the congregation.
В7	See Appendix 'A' in this report for a full description of limitations of the inspection.

## 1.0 Works Carried Out Previous to Report:

A previous inspection was carried out by Ian Ness in June 2020. This is the first inspection since that date, and the first by this current Inspector.

Since the last report a number of repairs are understood to have been carried out. The parish logbook is to be made available for inspection, but the following main items appear to be work over recent years:

- Low parts of chancel, vestry and bellcote pointed (1998)
- Some rot in timber floor, new rear carpet, slate patching (2000)
- Further floor repairs near lectern (2001)
- Broken drain in St. Cuthbert's Road repaired by Council, improving site drainage (2004)
- Reordering (2004)
- Under sink heater and tap replaced (2007)
- Window mesh replaced like-for-like (2007)
- Slate and gutter repairs after gales (2007 and 2008)
- Ground lowered and shoe fitted at rainwater pipe at nave southeast corner (2009)
- West gate repainted (2009)
- Gullies rodded and pressure jetted though street drains still not running freely (2009)
- Porch roof renewed with new timbers, slates and EPDM parapet gutter after rot (2010)
- Suspended ceiling added in porch (2010)
- 200 nave slates replaced, high level repointing (2010)
- Vestry re-roofed with new gutter after lead theft and damage (2011)
- New wall kitchen cupboards and window extracts uprated (2012)
- Vestry north wall repainted (2013)
- Island servery fitted (2014)
- New north gates (2014)
- Floorboards and joists at kitchen replaced again, with improved ventilation channels through solid former walkway and new circular vent holes through side stone walls (2017)
- New drain from middle of south gulley to ground, some 2.5m south of southwest tower (2017)
- 3 no. porch slates glue repaired with sealant after damage from fall of western cross (2018)

This report, and records of all future work undertaken should be filed in the logbook.

The inspection included the taking of a comprehensive set of photographs which are retained on the Architect's file for future reference, in addition to those included in this report.

### 2.0 General Condition of Church:

The church is generally in good condition and well maintained, with the introduction of a new gas fired heating installation improving the comfort of the building, the interior of which is kept very clean and attractive, and has benefitted from an effective reordering in 2004. The previous QI report (2020) mentioned localised timber joist issues.

Wet conditions previously have left the graveyard saturated and small incidents of internal low level salts being liberated from plaster suggest this problem may have recurred in spite of what is understood to be a type of trench drain installation to the south wall.

	EXTERNAL INSPECTION
3.0	Roof Coverings
3.1	Generally: The roofs are blue Welsh slate of equal size throughout, all generally in good condition. Ridge tiles are half round terracotta to nave and chancel.  The porch had previously been re-slated with new slates and EPDM parapet gutter, with renewed timbers. The store/organ chamber roof has been recovered in slate with clay decorative ridges.
3.2	Nave roof: Generally sound to south pitch; small number of missing/slipped slates at ridge; two missing elsewhere.  Lightning conductor clipped through slates. Cover flashing to west elevation of bellcote missing.
	North pitch generally sound, one slate missing, one slipping. Some moss growth. Western ridge/gable cross missing.
3.3	Vestry roof: East and west slopes to gabled section have been recovered with imported blue/black slate. Monopitch section has also been recovered and plastic verge trim fitted.  EPDM to secret gutter to eastern pitch of gabled section.
3.4	Chancel roof: Generally sound as elsewhere, but on the north side 2 no. slipped slates and broken top sections of ridge pieces. EPDM flashing to west side of redundant stone boiler flue.
	South side has 1 no. cracked slate with sections of ridge top broken.
3.5	Bellcote: Stone drips over cover flashing (missing to western front).
4.0	Rainwater Goods and Disposal
4.1	Rainwater goods are moulded GRP gutters with plastic downpipes. All gullies clear on day of inspection.
	GRP hopper head to parapet gutter to porch – adjacent cast iron rainwater pipe should be regularly recoated.
5.0	Tower, Spire, Bells and Frames
5.1	Bellcote consists of an all stone tower with two bells, with single lightning conductor.
	Top section of watertabling has open joint. Local stone deterioration visible. Bells no longer connected but potential for restoration (south bell said to be cracked).

6.0	Walls and Masonry
6.1	<ul> <li>Exterior Walls:</li> <li>Generally, these are of squared local sandstone, rubble faced, with dressed quoins, buttresses, strings, plinths and openings</li> <li>Damp proof course is visible in vestry only</li> <li>Western gable cross fell in gale and is yet to be replaced</li> </ul>
6.1.1	<ul> <li>North elevation (nave):</li> <li>Clay air bricks (ventilating under floor void)</li> <li>There is no plinth, drip course or projecting sill to the two sets of 3-light lancet windows</li> <li>Pointing as elsewhere has been eroded or poorly replaced with strap jointing in strong cement mortar</li> </ul>
6.1.2	<ul> <li>South elevation (nave):</li> <li>Absence of a projecting sill or drip course has affected mortar joints immediately below window</li> <li>More significant areas of inappropriate pointing to sections of walling, and high relief stone faces, contribute to difficulty of effective pointing</li> <li>South elevation typically more vulnerable to weather effects on pointing. Original lime mortar being eroded</li> </ul>
6.1.3	South elevation (chancel):  O Dressed buttresses in good condition and window drip course present, protecting deterioration of stonework below O Pointing in fair to good condition
6.1.4	<ul> <li>East elevation:</li> <li>Dressed buttresses in generally good condition, drip course to 2 no. lancet windows with hood moulds above and to central elliptical window</li> <li>Mixture of strap pointing and flush</li> <li>Significant stone discolouration from rusting metal grille window protection</li> </ul>
6.1.5	<ul> <li>Chancel/vestry elevations:         <ul> <li>Redundant boiler flue chimney showing signs of salts at junction with roof</li> <li>Mixed pointing techniques as elsewhere – in fair condition</li> </ul> </li> <li>Angled head of north buttress showing area of delamination</li> <li>Catslide vestry area windows have absence of projecting sills with stone discolouration from rusting window mesh protection. Struck pointing in strong cement mortar in fair condition. Stone pattern suggests later addition to building</li> <li>Gable vestry/store elevation has 2 no. lancet windows without sills (rust staining below) and central rose window</li> </ul>
6.1.6	Porch:  Stonework detailing intricate with recessed 5 no. lancets with arcaded colonettes  Froding bedding planes to dressed walling to lancet surface, rubble stonework below poorly pointed in cement mortar  Rose quatrefoil window above has colonettes to either side with moulded semicircular hoodmould

6.2	Internal walls:
	Generally painted plaster and in good condition, with timber painted wainscoting to chancel
	areas
	<ul> <li>Two areas with issues:</li> <li>Hairline cracking above west door and chancel arch</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Hairline cracking above west door and chancel arch</li> <li>Flaking paint, most markedly in north gable (vestry) – this may result from moisture</li> </ul>
	penetration from external wall surface, or more recent paint coatings being incompatible
	with earlier paint
7.0	Doors
7.1	West porch doors:
	Two doors, with northern door not used. Both doors original and will require regular recoating.
7.2	Vestry door (gabled):
	Original and requiring regular recoating.
7.3	Boiler/basement door:
	Original and requiring regular recoating.
7.4	Internal doors:
7.4.1	From porch:
	Two-leaf with self-closer, original, unpainted timber.
7.4.2	Accessible WC:
	Outward opening flush door, appropriately sized.
7.4.3	Screen from kitchen/WC foyer to nave:
	Timber glazed screen with solid side panels and lower section, with central pair of half-glazed doors.
7.4.4	Door to vestry:
	Original, solid timber.
7.4.5	Doors to vestment cupboards:
	8-panelled, painted (original).
7.4.6	Doors to (gabled) vestry:
	4-panelled, painted (original).
7.4.7	Door to Organ Chamber:
	Panelled (original).
<u> </u>	

	INTERNAL INSPECTION
8.0	Windows
8.1	Windows throughout the principal church are direct glazed, stained, or handmade glass.
8.2	There is metal mesh protection fitted across the face of openings to main windows to south, north and east elevations. 3 no lancets to kitchen/foyer area, north side are unprotected. Vestry and gabled vestry have heavy metal framing to mesh.
9.0	Ground Floor and Finishes
9.1	Nave floor: Suspended timber floor with recent carpet to walkways. Previous report indicated issue of inadequate ventilation causing (wet?) rot in kitchen area. This was tackled in 2004 reordering, and again in 2013 and 2017. No evidence of recurrence.
9.2	Chancel floor: Carpet with edge lipping in good condition. Stone steps show historic settlement.
9.3	Vestry floor: Carpeting on timber floor.
9.4	Porch floor: Entrance matting.
10.0	Roof Structures and Ceilings
10.1	Nave roof: Consists of five arched tied timber trusses with wagon ceiling. No visible hatch to void above.
10.2	Chancel roof: Consists of two arched timber trusses with wagon ceiling.
10.3	Vestry roof: Structure concealed (catslide section/suspended ceiling).
10.4	Porch roof: Structure concealed (suspended ceiling).
10.6	Church ceilings: Chancel and nave painted plaster wagon ceilings with moulded, unpainted timber ribs.
11.0	Fittings, Fixtures and Furniture
11.1	Organ:  A two manual pipe instrument with 17 playing stops by FC (Francis Clough) Nicholson of Newcastle.  Since this title was used between 1863-1897, it is likely that this is the original instrument. Exposed gold-plated pipes with cornice below. Varnished pine case with square panels and trefoil decoration. There is a plaque indicating subsequent (recent?) maintenance by John Lightbrown & Sons of Newcastle.

11.2	Pulpit: The reordering has included modern American oak chancel furniture including lectern, font, altar table. There is a Bishop's Chair of Victorian origin.
11.3	Seating: There are oak-framed green upholstered chairs throughout; residue stored in the porch (north are).
11.4	Font: Portable modern font by Chris Winn.
11.5	Altar and Rails: The altar table is raised by one step and the chancel by two steps. There is no altar rail.
11.6	Reredos: Plain, pleated curtain below a carved, lettered timber frieze with brass cross centrally positioned to the curtain.
12.0	Heating Installation
12.1	System fully renewed in 2004. Twin wall gas boilers with flues through north lobby wall. Exposed gas meter between boilers. Copper pipes to twin panel steel radiators throughout, including north lobby and porch. Timer, room thermostat, thermostatic radiator valves all present.
12.2	Empty basement boiler room dry and well ventilated. Ceiling part-vaulted under vestry. Disused stainless steel flue and terminal remains on stone chimney.
13.0	Electrical and Lighting Installation
13.1	Single phase intake at lobby with 63mA protection. Two meters and distribution board with six ways and sub-main to kitchen distribution board. Surface MICC wiring in recent alterations, mixed metal clad and plastic switches and 13A sockets.
	Surface trunking for wiring in lobby and vestry. Older pull-out fuses in distribution board in vestry for lighting and boiler room.
13.2	Electrical Test Certificate: Test report to be made available and kept within Log Book.
13.3	Lighting: Five-arm pendant lights with low energy globes suspended from truss ties, switched in pairs, and low energy linear uplights on truss ties to give the option of reduced lighting on occasion – simple and effective.
	Chancel attractively lit by 8 no. unseen tungsten floods, two downward and two up to ceiling from chancel arch, and 4 no. from reveals of eastern lancets upwards and onto altar. 1 no. not working.
	In vestry, 12 no. recessed downlights present, 4 no. not working. Fluorescent strip in lobby.

Lightning Protection:
Single air rod at bellcote. Cable clipped to stone and between slates. Galvanised protection at low level.
Replaced in PVC-covered 8mm aluminium after attempted theft. Lest known test, May 2007, gave an
earth resistance of 35.6 ohms, more than the maximum 15 ohms recommended by insurers EIG (see
addendum)
addendamy
Security
The doors appear to be adequately locked.
Windows have a variety of protection, and metal grilles face fixed to stonework or in (corroded) metal frame.
Fire Precautions
There is provision of dry powder extinguishers in the church. These must be maintained, and annual
testing should be continued. A carbon dioxide extinguisher must only be used on electrical equipment and the organ.
Note: Avoid using dry powder extinguishers (see Archdeacon's newsletter 2006).
Vestry door should only be indicated as a fire escape route when external door is unlocked and clearly accessible.
accessible.
Vestries and Toilet
Vestry:
Single wash hand basin, storage units, freestanding safe. Vestry is plastered and in generally good condition except for slight damp staining to suspended ceiling tile and surface deterioration to left hand side of chancel door and exposed truss end.
WC's/Kitchen:
Accessible WC at northwest including folding baby chance shelf.
Stainless steel kitchen sink.
Shared undersink water heater and pumped macerator drainage.
Kitchen:
Disabled Provision and Access
Sistance i Totision and Access
Principal access to the church from driveway is level. From north where parking is possible, there are wide gates and a sloping tarmac path in good condition, passing round to level access at higher southern porch door.
Footpath from west remains difficult due to two steps by gate. Western tarmac path sound but narrow. Further narrow path to vestry to where there are 5 no. steps up to the door, open jointed stonework below stone slab landing.

suitable ramp for access to the chancel/altar area. Level access throughout except for 2 no. steps to chancel and vestry.
chancel and vestry.
North porch door not in present use has 6 no. good stone steps with handrail, manageable by the infirm.
Those suffering auditory disabilities have been provided with sound reinforcement but no hearing loop.
An access audit should be considered to comply with the Equality Act (2010), and it is recommended that Churches obtain the publication "Widening the eye of a Needle" by John Penton published by Church House Publishing (1999).
Bats
There were no reports of bats in the church or churchyard.
Memorials
First and second northwest memorials refixed at the nave screen beside the painted names of Great War dead from the mine, on repositioned chancel screen.
There have been no interments within the building.
CURTILAGE
Churchyard and Environs
There have been no recent interments within the site curtilage.
The principal access to the site if from the north. The church drive is in tarmac and in good condition.
The churchyard is closed and maintained by the local authority. The site is bounded by a 1200mm stone retaining wall in generally fair condition, with some movement from the vertical on the northern boundary.
Historic issues of ground waterlogging to south and east side not evident in extended dry period (Spring 2025).
Log Book
Log Book records remain to be examined, and relevant building repair/replacement works undertaken in the last 5 years should be added to item 1.0 of this report when available.
Previous Reports
1. June 2020 Ian Ness

	PRICE
URGENT WORKS REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ATTENTION - Category 1	
None	
WORK RECOMMENDED TO BE CARRIED OUT DURING NEXT 12 MONTHS - Category 2	
Clean out all guttering/gullies etc.	£150.00
Check/remedy joints in guttering, missing elements, apply biocide to algae/moss growth	£100.00
Check all downpipes for cracks/fixity and replace as required	£100.00
Check on number/placing of fire extinguishers and upgrade as required after Fire Risk Assessment is undertaken	£150.00
Investigate cost of lighting replacement with LED lamps (high level tungsten floodlights)	£700.00
Check on safety testing of electrical systems, including requirement for hearing loop	£100.00
WORK RECOMMENDED TO BE CARRIED OUT DURING NEXT 5 YEARS - Category 3	
Undertake comprehensive window survey, checking on airtightness, corrosion condition of leadwork, missing glass (northern elevation) etc. Replace existing corroding window protection	£500.00
Investigate water tabling haunching, roof condition: high level inspection	£500.00
Prepare schedule of pointing in association with above and elsewhere	£6,000.00
Remedial internal works to former boiler room.	£200.00
WORK TO BE CONSIDERED BEYOND 5 YEARS - Category 4	
Complete repointing schedule	£4,000.00
ITEMS RECOMMENDED TO IMPROVE ENERGY EFFICIENCY - Category 5	
See above (replacement of high-level tungsten floodlights)	
WORK REQUIRED TO IMPROVE DISABLED ACCESS – Category 6	1
Provision of hearing loop	

#### NOTE

Churchwardens should be aware of their responsibility under the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991 which includes guidance to routine maintenance and inspection of Church property.

'A Guide to Church Inspection and Repair' published by the Council for the Care of Churches can be obtained from SPCK bookshops.

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## Pearson Park Entrance Archway, Hull:

Winner, AABC Conservation Award (Highly Commended), Civic Trust Awards 2022 Listed Status, Institution of Mechanical Engineers, Engineering Heritage Awards 2020

Wyndham Park Visitor Centre, Grantham:

Winner, Best Public Service Building, LABC Building Excellence Awards 2019

**Bentley Park Pavilion**, Doncaster:

Winner, Best Restoration and Conversion, LABC Building Excellence Awards 2015

West Park, Goole:

Finalist, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Chairman's Awards 2015

Wesleyan Reform Church, Ashington:

Finalist, LABC Building Excellence Awards 2017

#### **APPENDIX A: General Conditions etc.**

#### A. General:

This report is not a specification for the execution of works and must not be used as such. It is a general report only as required by the Inspection of Churches Measure 1955.

The Architect has indicated in it such maintenance items, if any, which may safely be conducted without professional supervision.

Conservation and repair of Churches is a highly specialised subject if work is to be conducted both aesthetically and technically in the best manner, without being wasteful in expenditure. It is, therefore, essential that every care is taken to ensure that no harm is done to the fabric or fittings and when the Parochial Church Council is ready to proceed it should instruct the Architect accordingly, when he will prepare specifications and schedules and arrange for the work to be carried out by an approved Contractor under his direction.

Costs on much of the work or repairing Churches cannot be accurately estimated because the full extent of damage is only revealed as work proceeds, but when the Architect has been instructed to prepare specifications, he can obtain either firm prices or considered approximate estimates, whichever may be appropriate.

The Architect will be glad to help the Parochial Church Council complete an appeal application to a charitable body if necessary, or to assist in applying for the essential Faculty or Archdeacon's Certificate.

### **B.** Scope of Report:

The Report is based on the findings of an Inspection made from the ground and from other easily accessible points, or from ladders provided by the Parochial Church Council, to comply with the Diocesan Scheme under the Inspection of Churches Measure 1955.

It is emphasised that the inspection has been purely visual and that no enclosed spaces or inaccessible parts, such as boarded floors, roof spaces, or hidden timbers at wall heads have been opened up for inspection. Any part which may require further investigation is referred to in the appropriate section of this Report.

### C. Cleaning of Gutters etc.:

The Parochial Church Council is strongly advised to enter into an annual contract with a local builder for cleaning out the gutters and downpipes twice a year.

### D. Pointing and Masonry:

Wherever pointing is recommended it is absolutely essential that the procedure in item (a) of this appendix be adhered to as without proper supervision much harm can be done to the fabric by incorrect use of materials and techniques.

## E. Heating Installation:

Subject to any comments to the contrary in Section 21.0 of this Report, the remarks in this Report are based only upon a superficial examination of the general condition of the heating installation, particularly in relation to fire hazards and sightliness. The installation and maintenance of any oil-fired equipment should be in accordance with current editions of the British Standards Code of Practice CD 3002 and British Standards BS799.

NB: A proper examination and test should be made of the heating apparatus by a qualified engineer each summer, prior to the start of the heating season and the report of such examination should be kept in the Church Log Book.

The Parochial Church Council is strongly advised to arrange a regular inspection contract.

Wherever practicable, subject to finances, it is recommended that the installation be run at a low setting throughout the week, as distinct from being 'ON' during services only, as constant warmth has a beneficial effect on the fabric, fittings and decorations.

### F. Electrical Installation:

Any electrical installation should be tested every quinquennium and immediately if not done within the last five years (except as may be otherwise recommended in this Report) by a competent electrical engineer or by the Supply Authority and an insulation resistance and earth continuity test should be obtained on all circuits. The engineer's test report should be kept with the Church Log Book.

Where no recent report or certificate of inspection from a competent electrical engineer (one who is on the Roll of Approved Contractors issued by the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting) is available, the comments in this Report are based upon a visual inspection made, without instruments, of the main switchboard and of sections of wiring selected at random. Electrical installation for lighting and heating, and other electrical circuits, should be installed and maintained in accordance with the current editions of the Institution of Electrical Engineers Rules and more specific recommendations of the Council for the Care of Churches, in the publication "The Lighting of Churches".

## **G.** Lightning Conductors:

As a defective conductor may attract lightning, the lightning conductor should be tested every quinquennium in accordance with the British Standard Code of Practice (current edition) by a competent electrical engineer and the record of the test results, conditions and recommendations should be kept with the Church Log Book.

Conductors on lofty spires and other not readily accessible positions should be closely examined every ten years, particularly the contact between tape and vane rod or finial. If the conductor tape is without a test clamp, one should be provided above ground level.

### H. Maintenance between Inspections:

Although the Measure requires the Church to be inspected by an Architect every five years it should be realised that serious trouble may develop between surveys if minor defects such as displaced slates and leaking pipes are left unattended.

## J. Fire Insurance:

The Parochial Church Council is advised that the fire insurance cover should be periodically reviewed to keep pace with the rising cost of repairs.

At least one fire extinguisher should be kept in an easily accessible position in the Church, along with an additional extinguisher of foam CO<sub>2</sub> type where heating apparatus is oil fired.

# **APPENDIX B: Photographic Survey:**



P1 (2353): South elevation nave, localised inappropriate pointing, exposed original mortar with coal



P2 (2352): South elevation nave, additional underfloor ventilation/mortar gaps



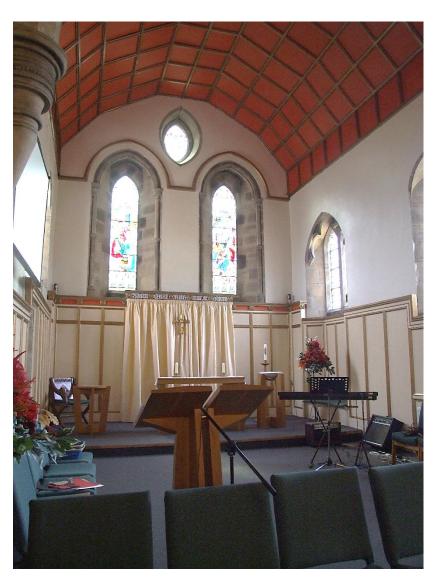
P3 (2456): Glazed screen between kitchen/foyer and nave



P4 (2453): Low level damp/salts to right hand side of entrance door



P5 (2458): Low level damp/salts to left hand side of south wall



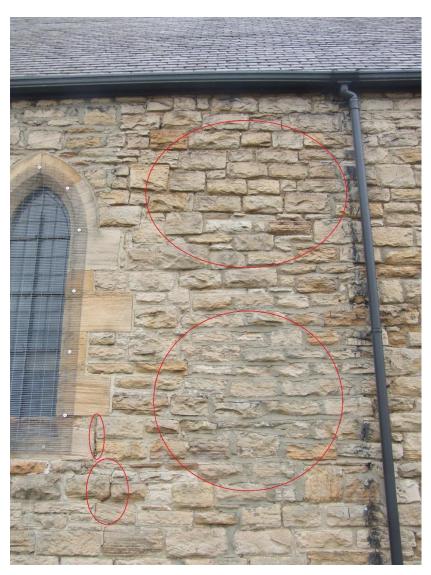
P6 (2465): Well appointed, reordered chancel area



P7 (2474): Catslide vestry, historic water staining to exposed rafter



P8 (2476): Gabled vestry, peeling paint at high level



P9 (2509): South elevation nave, open jointing/ poor pointing



P10 (2517): Detail of high relief stone surface and eroded pointing



P11 (2537): Western porch, eroded stonework/open joints



P12 (2539): Well maintained churchyard, southern area

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