

Diocese of Durham

**St JOHN the EVANGELIST
BIRTLEY
(2)**

Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991

QUINQUENNIAL REPORT
on the architect's inspection on

16 June 2023

Archdeaconry Sunderland

Deanery Chester le Street

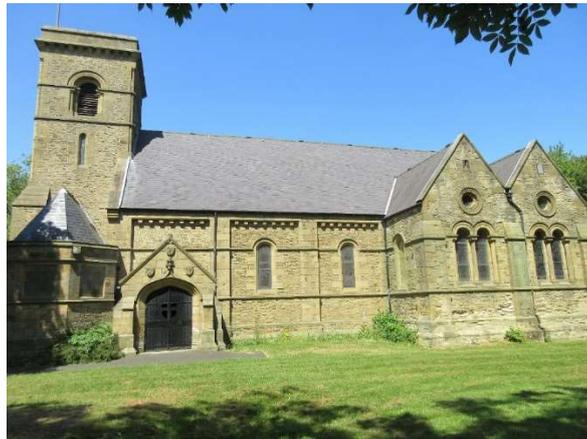
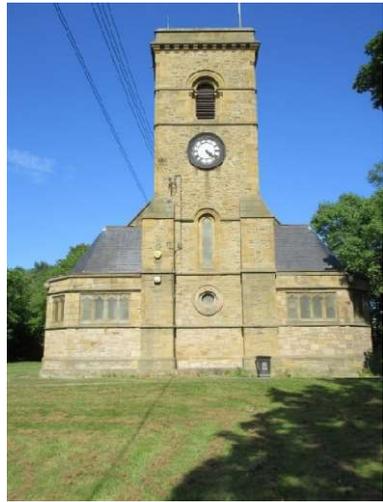
Listed building grade II

Birtley Conservation Area

Incumbent vacant



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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 basement chamber under the Chancel was not entered. The 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. Said to have been surveyed by specialist and the only asbestos identified is packing around disused pipes passing from the stripped former basement boiler room through the church floor. Being inaccessible and no risk unless the building is altered removal was not recommended. Any asbestos report would be best kept in the Log Book.

Brief description

3. St John's stands on a hill at the SE edge of Birtley between houses, two schools and a playing field. A Romanesque design 1849-50 by Pickering with narrow round arches with scalloped capitals. W Tower, Nave without Aisles, apsidal Chancel and N Sacristy. Two N Nave windows 1872 by Cottier of London.
4. Similar Romanesque Transepts (more daylight due to twin and return windows), organ chamber, perpendicular S Porch and two W Vestries with octagonal ends all added 1887. Fitted with pipe organ 1899, bells, clock and chimes 1911 and entrance gates 1919.
5. The churchyard has stone walls but very few head stones, being mostly cleared without record of burials. Mature trees, especially in an E extension. A church Hall and small car park on separate ground to the N.

Recent structural history

6. Since the war :
 - Churchyard closed and in the care of Gateshead MBC
 - Vaulted basement boiler room under the Chancel abandoned
 - Brick bund for former oil tank, now planted
 - 1960-65 reordering with Nave altar, platform in Nave and Transepts, modern oak communion rail
 - 1985 new heating installation
 - 1986 new lighting by high level floods
 - 1987 intruder alarm
 - 1991 new welsh slates on Nave and Transepts, omitting former Nave rooflight, Tower E face pointed
7. Main work 1993 – 2003
 - New 13A ring main, leaving existing lighting wiring
 - Tower and Vestries reroofed, Tower part repointed
 - Baptistery in Tower changed to lobby with glazed screen in arch, Vestries refitted as Vestry and Office
 - Boiler moved from Office to new 1st floor in Tower
 - New glazed oak internal Porch in Nave
 - New garden of remembrance
 - New welsh slates on Choir, chimney removed and Organ chamber recovered in flat stainless steel
 - Redecoration of Nave, Chancel and Sacristy walls
 - Organ overhaul by David Tindale 1999
8. Main work 2003 – 2017
 - 2007 glass from Sacriston church installed in the S Transept
 - Jan 2009 Smartwater applied to lead generally
 - Sept 2010 lead flashings at Organ roof stolen, refixed with Smartwater
 - June 2010 left hand entry door repaired with new hinge
 - Feb 2011 Porch painted and new Porch notice board
 - Nov 2011 lead at Choir Vestry gutter and one E apse gutter stolen, repaired with substitute
 - Dec 2011 lead at apse gutter stolen, repair with substitute and slate repairs
 - Jan 2012 repair after theft of lead flashings from Organ roof
 - 2013 Apse roof repair, rainwater pipe fitted, gullies cleared, electrical installation test
 - 2014 lead flashings stolen from S Vestry, Porch, Organ and Sacristy and substitute fitted
 - lower lightning conductor stolen and repaired
 - 2015 church lighting changed to LEDs on existing wiring
 - 2017 tarmac path outside Porch sloped up to its threshold for level access
 - clock serviced

9. Since last report

- 2018 leaking cold water pipe under Nave S side found and repaired
clock serviced (local authority expense)
- 2019 entry gates and porch gates painted
Organ tuned and air leak repaired
Path church – hall relaid, W and S churchyard walls repaired
Vestry and Sacristy roofs repaired
Electrical test report
- 2020 ‘Resurrection’ window in S Transept repaired and refitted
- 2021 Serious roof leak between Organ and Sacristy – flashing refixed at E wall of Organ
Church alarms replaced
New boiler
- 2022 Gutters cleaned out
- 2023 Flashing repaired in gutter between Organ and Sacristy.
Choir vestry gutter repaired

Summary of structural condition

- 10. The church is robustly built in good quality sandstone. Stable and mainly well maintained. Slow local erosion in parts. All apart from the Sanctuary and Sacristy reroofed to a good standard in recent years. Parts of the small Office and Vestry parapet gutters have deteriorated
- 11. Water damage of parts of high level paint and plaster. Some of it remains after past roof repairs, some shows poor maintenance of watertables and some is caused by damage and theft where the Choir N eave drains onto the Sacristy.
- 12. The narrow gutter or its flashings between Sacristy and Organ Chamber failed again during Covid, when water getting in was not noticed in the Sanctuary. The long timber lintel of the opening between them and the end of the truss holding up the Sacristy roof are both weakened by rot. The choice is now structural repairs or demolition of the Sacristy and infilling the opening in the side of the Organ chamber.

PART TWO

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EXTERIOR

Roofs

- 13. The apsidal **Sanctuary** has old diminishing westmorland slate, very large at the eave, narrow at the small radius at the top of the cone. A short stone ridge without the usual lead cap at a cone apex.
Most slates in bottom two courses are held on lead clips.
At S and SE two slates near eave slipped into gutter.
Several narrow slates at N side top are slipped sideways. A slater may be able to straighten and hold with a dab of silicon rubber. Otherwise sound and may serve a long time.
The former welded lead lining of the long level curved stone gutter has been changed to a substitute with metal drip edge.





14. At abutment to the low stone Choir E wall cover flashings over soakers. Minor cracks in cement pointing of flashings, which tends to shrink. Lower flashings substitute after theft. Upper flashings remain old lead.
15. The **Choir** was recovered in welsh slate 25 years ago. Slates sound despite thefts and replacements of cover flashings at the Nave gable. Vertical mortar fillets under the low E watertables appear sound. Stone gutters and single bottom outlets both sides. At S the thick lead gutter lining exposed to summer sun is too long by modern standard but no visible damage from thermal movement. Damp damage inside (para 97) may show silt sometimes blocks the outlet. The short N gutter a modern substitute lining. Its end seal to remaining lead on the face of the Organ chamber appears to have been remade. Its small bottom outlet used to fall into a narrow vertical pipe over the Sacristy slates, now missing. So water falls into the poorly pointed face of the Choir wall, worsening the plaster damage inside (para 97).
16. Lead flashings where the Choir abuts the Nave gable. Appear sound except the bottom of the N side was stolen from the Organ roof and changed to substitute. The bottom of the remaining lead is split and there are gaps in its pointing which seem to leave routes for water running down the render above.



Choir S gutter and mortar fillet against upstand over arch

Choir N gutter – eave slate missing

17. The apsidal **Sacristy** roof is smaller and lower than the Sanctuary. Its small radius makes the westmorland slates lie even less well. Stone ridge and carved stone finial. Its W valley flashing repaired since last report. At the hidden W side some odd sized slates, one slipped. Its small cone cap and ‘hip’ flashing are now substitute.



2008 – down pipe and (paint disguised) head flashing where Sacristy roof joins Choir



2023 – slate above Choir gutter, down pipe and Sacristy slate head flashing all missing



18. Between the **Sacristy** and the much higher later Organ chamber wall a box gutter drains the Sacristy and part of the Choir. It traps leaves and silt and is hard to reach past the Organ downpipe. This valley let water into the timbers below, causing current need for structural repairs (para 79). Previously lead, now substitute. Hard to see but the gutter appears complete and clean. The substitute flashing, previously loose from the Organ wall, now appears secure.
19. Damp in the Sacristy truss end, Organ opening lintel and plaster (para 79) and the difficulties of slating the convex roof shape and forming and cleaning a reliable gutter in the confined space all vulnerable to interference may lead the parish to consider not attempting repairs in the Sacristy. Other possibilities are:
 - Permanent demolition of the whole Sacristy and making good the exposed Choir and Organ walls
 - Reforming the Sacristy roof into a much simpler self cleaning lean-to shape
20. The **Organ chamber** flat timber roof is covered in sound stainless steel with standing seams, box gutter and outlet sump inside stone parapets. Box gutter and deep outlet sump clear at inspection. Blockage risks rot in the Organ chamber timbers and the Organ itself so clearance at least once a year is essential.
21. **Nave** reslated in 1990's. Ventilating ridge tiles and counterbattens vent it between new underlay felt and the roof boarding with limited eave ventilation. One slate remains missing over the SW Transept ridge and one near the SE Transept ridge slips.
22. To accommodate the slightly raised Nave and Transept slates the flashings at their gables were changed to lead chased into the tops of the stone water tables. Some pointing in the chases remains missing and may be a cause of the damp in the plaster and paint inside.
23. The Nave E gable N side lower lead flashing (accessible from the Organ roof) has been repaired after theft. The bottom flashing is now substitute, mortar pointed into the same grooves in the water tables.



Gaps in pointing at cover flashing in SE transept watertables

24. **Transepts** twin roofs as Nave but with lead valleys and stepped tapered lead valley gutters between. Valleys clear and appear well laid. Next to the Organ roof the Transept eave and valley has been patched with slates on wire clips. At W slope of N Transept an eave slate remains missing.
25. **Porch** slate, lead soakers and substitute cover flashings good.
26. **Office** and **Vestry** good natural slate with soakers in mitred hips. Scattered lead clips. Lead box gutters against the Nave gable and behind the Tower buttresses. Most slates good after repairs.
27. Lead gutters behind parapets with falls to single end outlets. Cover flashings with deterrent anti-climb paint. Some flashings substitute silicon pointed after theft.



28. The N Vestry W side gutter has been painted over with sealant.
The S Office S side gutter has been felted over.

29. *No access to **Tower** roof at this inspection so following adapted from 2013.*
A steep single pitched heavy gauge lead roof with drips and timber rolls. A lead burned hood on a ventilation shaft brought up from high level in the Nave.
A collar around the stainless flue had leaked slightly.



The narrow top S bay had slipped about 1" down slope and was pushed part way back in 2013.
No apparent fixings in lead tray or the upstand under the cover flashing. Needed suitable copper nail head fixings and a wider top flashing to cover them.

The top cover flashings are wedged into grooves in the top of the E coping but not pointed so may leak slightly, perhaps contributing to the stone erosion seen inside the top of the tower.

The deep box gutter has a simple outlet burned to a lead spout at the N side, falling onto the N buttress and Vestry roof. The arrangement works but in the past the Vestry has leaked.

The sloping lead covered hatch is not hinged and very heavy to lift and replace when standing on the ladder whose treads are not level. No handle or other help.

At inspection 2023 the heavy hatch was again found not fully closed. It might be recovered in durable but light stainless steel with hold down bolts.

Access so difficult that the decaying flag pole is unlikely to be used. Better replaced in GRP with better access.

Rainwater System, Drainage

30. Rainwater goods mainly cast iron with a little plastic at Choir Vestry, Office and Porch.
Visible parts mostly clean at the inspection after recent clearance. Some signs of pipe blockage. Some rust.
Sealing of gutter joints and general decoration needed soon.
31. **Sanctuary** cornice gutter appears sound.
Sanctuary and **S Choir** cast iron pipes and shoes over gullies. Corner gully is cracked and overgrown (plaster and stone damp inside para 97)
32. **S Transept** E pipe too close to wall to paint fully. S gully choked and W gully a simple broad tube let into the ground. Shoe not directly over so must soak ground. Now very overgrown.

33. **W of N Transept** as Nave, one cast iron downpipe to a broken dish gully which must soak the ground. Whole wall gets wet (salts outside, paint damage inside) showing a gutter fault. Should be replaced or at least lined to prevent leakage.



W of S Transept now fully overgrown by brambles

34. **N of N Transept** rusting cast iron hopper and pipe with three offsets, cracked and blocked gully.
E of N Transept cast iron gutter and pipe, one length too close to wall to be repainted fully.
35. In Transepts flaking paint at middle of N and S walls suggests either both hoppers overflow when not cleaned or water gets in at the patches of poor pointing below both hoppers (paras 55, 56) or through open coping joints.
36. **Nave N & S** recently cleaned painted ogee cast iron gutters on wall brackets, one cast iron downpipe each side with shoes over earthenware gullies. Rust at gutter joints.
S Nave gutter and pipe appear sound but the bottom of the pipe is cut into the plinth so impossible to paint.
37. **Porch** deep plastic half round gutters on fascia brackets, square plastic pipes.
Office lead outlet to plastic hopper and pipe in narrow space next to Porch. Plants now so overgrown that ground channel invisible.



38. **N Vestry** plastic hopper and square pipe has been blocked (and damp damage on the stone and inside para 97). Check flow in rain and clear if needed. Gully blocked.
39. **Organ chamber** lead outlet to cast iron hopper and pipe to a blocked gully shared with a cast iron pipe from the Sacristy in the cleft between them. At **Sacristy** curved and straight cast iron gutter with E pipe to a gully shared with the Sanctuary N pipe. The pipes fair but some rust and fixed too close for full repainting. Concrete ground channel.
40. Gullies large earthenware dishes, mostly with iron grills, most choked or broken.



Most gullies are choked or broken, so rainwater more likely to soak into the ground and subwalls, adding to rising damp instead of running away safely to soakaways.

41. No surface trace of rainwater drainage. A dry brick chamber 700 x 700 x 1000 deep with iron plate cover SE of the Chancel with a channel to an unknown pipe may be a combined soakaway for all gullies or they may go to individual soakaways. Now full of rubbish.

Tower, Bells, Clock

42. A low top stage with timber cross beams for a former centre flag pole base. Top of open wooden duct in SE corner. Weak floor boards. Eroded stone inside NE corner including a very deep void at the top corner.



Top stage – under the slipped roof lead and under the roof hatch



43. Bell stage with six chimed bells by Taylor of Loughborough bolted to three painted steels built into the stone walls. Paint part fair, part rusty again. Repainting now would be a wise use of money.
44. Three louvred round head openings with wire mesh inside. Timber floors and ladders seem sound but poor access in the narrow space between bells and floor and polypropylene chime pulls. Sample ends of softwood floor beams and flooring examined below appear sound.
45. Clock stage – two small lancets, cast wired glass. Whitewashed stone walls. Tilted ladder to bell stage. Hand chime frame remains. Round cast iron glazed clock dial bolted outside W wall with compact fluorescent lights inside. Timber packings inside dial decayed but iron frame refixed to steel straps. Clock and chime mechanism in a wooden case. Potts of Leeds 1911, electrified 1963. Clock drive replaced 2005 and auto-restart fitted.
46. Twin wall flue passes through large hole in heavy boards on beams over.
47. Modern Boiler stage reached by a (stiff) aluminium loft ladder and hatch. Boiler on frame on concrete flags on timber floor. Pressure vessel and heat exchanger. Some pipes lagged but more could be including pouch on pump. Vertical iron ladder to clock stage with hoops at high level which improve safety but are not ideal.

Walls, Buttresses

48. Squared sandstone with dressed quoins, copings, strings and dressings. Flat buttresses flush with projecting eaves courses on good moulded corbels. Most stones sound, some decay pockets. Some old lime mortar pointing. Most wide walling joints well pointed with prominent exposed gravel. No noticeable cleaning damage.



49. Many saplings against Sanctuary and Choir walls, some now large, need to be removed permanently.

50. **Sanctuary** good. A low opening through N side with chase down to gully.
 Some stone erosion at the narrow lower S panel where mortar spreads across the stones.
 Minor delamination of face bedded dressed stones in the buttresses.

51. **Choir** good except
 - Some watertable joints appear open, perhaps causing the high level plaster decay inside
 - The low upstands over the Sanctuary have poor pointing and stone decay (plaster damage over arch)
 - Some open joints and stone decay below the SE window.



Choir E



Organ E wall

52. Plants grow in open joints in the E wall of the **Organ Chamber**.

53. The E end of the **Nave** is rendered above window arch level, which may not keep out all driving rain.
 The mid height SE panel good, pointed in 1999. At the lower panel cement pointing spreads over the stones and there is minor stone decay.

54. **S Transept** fair after local stone replacements and pointing in 1999.
 All across the S side decay in a band of stone from plinth top to chest height suggests rising damp (perhaps concealed by dado inside). No apparent change.



55. **Both Transept gables** have green streaks and minor open stone joints around and below the centre hoppers. Joints at the top of the buttresses below the hoppers are also open. May cause enough leakage to flake the paint inside (para 35).
56. Also likely to contribute to the paint damage inside may be open joints across and down the watertables. Not fully visible at the inspection.



S Transept - open joints between hopper and top of buttress.



N Transept similar and open joints in top of buttress



Gradual stone decay below the N Transept roundels



Open watertable joints at SW Nave – others similar

57. **S Nave** lime pointing is eroding back but seems serviceable. Scattered minor stone decay.
Nave W gable has small pockets of stone erosion but is fair overall. At least one watertable joint is open at SW (above plaster damage inside).

58. The **Porch** buttressed ashlar gable with carved shields seems to have little or no bond to the side walls. The vertical corner joints have long been open, especially at W which is visibly slightly wider than at last inspection and also open inside. Mortar fillets on the roof are pulled out of the gable watertables. It is common for porches to have poor foundations and for their gables to lean out. This gable continues to rotate away from the side walls, especially at the W corner. A possible factor is poor drainage of water from the Office roof close to the Porch W side softening the ground under its founds. Closer examination would show whether simple straps can be fixed between roof timbers and gable to resist further leaning. Other narrow joints in the ashlar are open. Some decay in rubble side walls.



Crack at SW of Porch 2013



2023



Porch SW roof fillet pulled out of Gable copings



Porch SE – minor crack

59. **Office** walls good.

60. The **Tower** ashlar parapet stands on a wide cornice. Five square drip string courses lower down. Well pointed and in good condition including the parapet inner face seen in 2013. Parts of the W side pointing is darker and wider than elsewhere. Scattered decay pockets at mid height at S and W.

61. At **N Vestry** some decay at the lower mould of the upper string course. Some N stones decaying back behind hard cement ribbon pointing which is breaking away from the lime mortar behind and should not be replaced. Scattered open joints should be carefully pointed in lime mortar.

62. **N Nave** and **N Transept** mostly fair with mixed pointing. Minor holes where ribbon pointing lost. Open joints in Transept water tables, dressed string courses and buttresses. At low level and in buttresses failing ribbon pointing promotes very slow stone decay. Scattered open joints should be raked and pointed soon. Scattered very slow stone decay below Transept roundels.

63. The **Organ chamber** fair. Its parapets vary in thickness and have composite copings made up of reused stones including old window sills, relaid on damp proof course about 2000.

64. Curved **Sacristy** walls good with prominent gravel in pointing.

Window and Door Openings

65. **Sanctuary** – four small curved lancets with engaged columns. Good except tops of columns cracked at N window and decay at sills of N and S altar windows.

S Choir – similar paired windows, good condition except some open joints and mortar patching of sills.

66. **E of S Transept** – plain lancet good condition, plain arched door good but some decay at plinth.

67. **S of S Transept** – paired lancets good externally but open joints in sills and string under sills.

Internal decay at the E pair sill.

The cause may have been poor drainage from the glass before the present protection.

68. The arches of the W pair are slightly spread with slipped keystones. Open string joints below show very slight spread of the Transept.

69. **W of S Transept** - plain lancet. Sill fractured. Stone repair should be combined with repair of the poor glass and plaster.

70. **S Nave** - windows good but some pointing missing. Patch pointed where the protection is fixed.

Porch good except eroded sill at W quatrefoil window and minor decay at two jambs and one shaft stone outside the inner Porch doors and at the outer arch in a spring and a reveal below it.



71. **Vestry** and **Office** tracery, mullions and sills obscured by clouded polycarbonate. Stone sound except minor damage at two Office mullions and Office W sill crudely repaired with mortar. Vestry door surround good but most ashlar joints open and some salts and surface decay at lintel (another sign of probable rainwater pipe blockage).
72. **Tower** louvres, lancets and round window all sound except W lancet has surface decay at top of arch, perhaps caused by previously open hoodmould joints.
73. **N Nave** and **W of N Transept** – simple round arched lancets in good condition though some joints in reveals and hood moulds are open. Nave patch pointed where the protection is fixed. Minor decay in the Transept W sill and two window reveals.
74. **N of N Transept** – two round windows with chevron moulding over pairs of lancets with engaged arcades. Stone good but most joints are open. The bottom mullion stone between the E lancets decays.
Organ chamber – two lancets and plain arched door, all fair.
Sacristy - a lancet disfigured by barbed wire.

External Iron and Wood

75. The roof space is vented by slots in the four transept peaks. Bird mesh except missing at one S vent. Tower louvres complete.
76. Porch metal gates well designed for the opening shape and for security.
 N Vestry door and frame draught stripped and sound. Door needs paint.
 Organ door appears sound but is fixed shut so not checked. Broken handle. Metal barred inside. Paint poor.
 S Transept door appears sound but needs paint and the weathermould decays.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERIOR

Roof timbers

77. The **Sanctuary** short open pitched roof on purlins spans onto two stone arches. The apsidal E roof is built off the last arch and two heavy stone ribs. The structure is concealed by plaster.
78. The **Choir** roof is one king post truss with curved braces on wall corbels. No visible defect.
79. The **Sacristy** small ridged and apsidal roof is open with plastered rafters. Straight and curved exposed purlins on a single king post truss at the apse centre.
 After the gutter leak (para 18) the truss W end under the box gutter is much softer than previously due to further rot. No visible movement at present but **structural failure** is now a possibility at any time.
 The truss rests on wooden lintels over former double doors between the Sacristy and Organ chamber. New fungal bodies on the lintels appear dried out but the lintels must also be weakened.
 If the Sacristy is not demolished the lintels should be replaced with concrete or steel and the truss end repaired, either with a timber splice or a steel shoe by specialist contractor.



80. The **Organ** roof is simple concealed flat joists, seen in the past to run N-S.
81. The open **Nave** roof has four principal king post trusses on hammer beams and with five with curved braces on high corbels over the lancets and arcades. Heavy raised ties with iron straps. Ridge, two purlins each side, common rafters and roof boards all appear sound but are too high to examine. The trusses must be stiff and the walls thick enough that heavy buttresses are not needed.
82. **Transept** roofs are double pitches of collared rafters heavy beams under the valleys and curved braces which also transfer Nave roof thrust to the outer walls. No sign of defect although plaster damage next to the S end of the S beam (inside hopper) suggests damp in the wall may risk decay in the beam and brace.
83. **Vestry** and **Office** timbers hidden above flat ceilings.
84. In **Porch** heavy rafters and purlins.

Ceilings

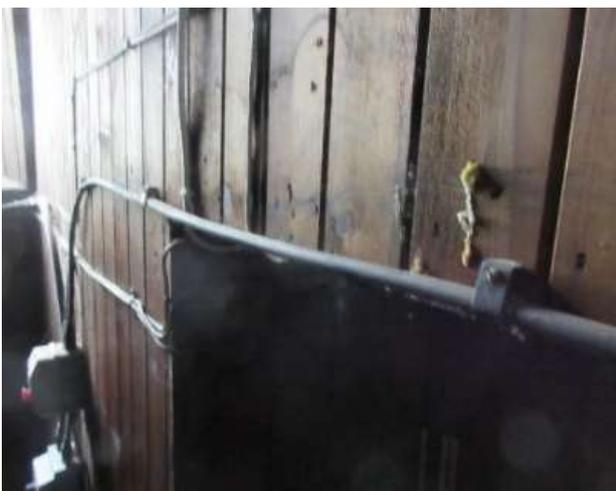
85. **Sanctuary** apse curved painted plaster, now discoloured.
Sacristy painted plaster, now failed at W due to the gutter leak.
Organ chamber ply under lath and plaster, some water marks at the NE corner and along the E side left after past leaks.
86. **Porch** stained exposed boards. **Inner Porch** and **Tower lobby** sound painted plaster.
 In **Vestry** and **Office** squares of painted plaster in painted moulded timber ribs.
 At **Vestry** W edge paint flaking
 Painted timber ceiling meant for Baptistery remains in Boiler stage of Tower.

Chancel and Sanctuary Arches, Arcades

87. All stone sound though slight efflorescence and loss of stone at bases of the S Transept column and Transept NW, SE and SW responds (the half columns built into the walls). The cause is evaporation of rising damp (close to broken or sometimes blocked gullies outside). The drains need regular maintenance to reduce damp inside.
88. Chancel and Transept arches chevron moulded with billet moulded hood moulds. Sound although keystone at Chancel arch has dropped VERY slightly in the past. Made more prominent by dark 'pointing' spread across stones. Sanctuary arch (scotia and roll moulds only) has similar at two stones. Such movement in arches is common due either to early settlement or slight seasonal movement and not a cause for concern unless it progresses.
Tower arch sound.

Partitions, Doors, Panelling, Screens

89. A small dark oak rood cross and screen with perpendicular tracery.
Arch between N Transept and Organ part filled with good oak screen.
90. Sacristy door painted boards in round head frame without architrave. Plastic handles and night latch, neither working.
Office and Vestry doors are good stripped pine, frames and boarded in round arches. Holes where former bolts and night latches removed.
91. In Tower arch modern oak framed glazed screen with etched cross.
92. Well made modern lacquered oak framed glazed inner Porch. Four brass screws missing from latch.
93. Inside the outer Porch a pair rebated round arched doors, black painted flush boarded, nails and hinges.
94. Oak faced ply dado panelling in Nave and Transepts part hidden by platforms. Oak cover strips and cap moulding. Cap cut for pipes rising to convector heaters mounted on walls.
95. Organ chamber N and E boarded full height except the S end of the E wall (around the opening into the Sacristy) which is brick with part plaster. Thick salts show the wall has been very wet. The salts and dirt should be vacuumed away to keep them out of the organ although difficult in confined space.



E wall of Organ chamber

Plaster, Decoration

96. Tower lobby stone white masonry painted with natural dressed stone arch and door dressings.
On W wall good painted panels - Lords Prayer, Apostles Creed, Ten Commandments.
97. Remaining walls painted plaster, sound apart from:



- at SW corner of **Choir** plaster damp and damage at six adjacent arch stones (rainwater pipe and gully para 31)
- at top NE corner of **Choir** a large patch of plaster damage and at both faces over the arch between Choir and Sanctuary large patches of plaster damage and loss, all much worse than previously (para 15)



- under the **Sacristy** radiator decay in plinth stones and plaster appears to be rising damp



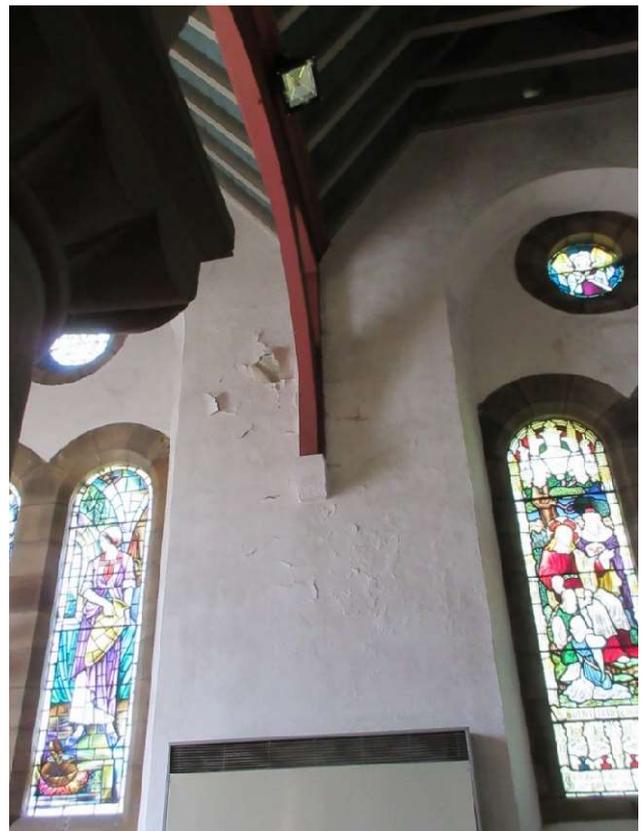
- at **S Transept** W window paint and plaster break down slightly worse including over arch
- plaster and extensive paint damage by the S end of the **S Transept** beam and down the wall including corbel decay mid height



- at top of **S Transept SE corner**
- at **N Transept NW corner** and over and under the **W window** efflorescence of salts and paint poor (salts outside)
- at **N Transept NE corner** some mould on the paint (winter condensation on the coldest masonry)



N Transept W corner



- at top of **Nave E gable** slight paint damage
- at **Nave W gable** slight plaster damage
- at **Nave NW corner** and each side of next truss grey marks, perhaps slight water or mould marks
- over the **Vestry W window** the paint is water marked and the edge bead rusted due to past leaks
- over **Vestry** outer door rusty edge bead, paint lost down E side and some damp in plaster in LH cupboards (rainwater pipe para 38)
- at **Office** under the S cill and slight L of the SE window



98. Good paint colour at roofs. Trusses, braces and purlins deep salmon. Rafters off white. Sarking boards blue green.

Ventilation

99. Subfloors ventilated at:

Vestry and Office

Transepts (two clay in each)

Nave (two on S side, at N one only at W end, kept open by kerbs added to keep back soil)

Barely adequate at Nave.

None visible at the Organ chamber but there is no sign of trouble on tops of visible boards.

100. No deliberate room ventilation. The slight condensation shows the church is sometimes under ventilated, perhaps especially during Covid closures.

101. The boiler room in the Tower is vented through the Vestry and Office roof voids and by air gaps above and below which may provide enough combustion air.

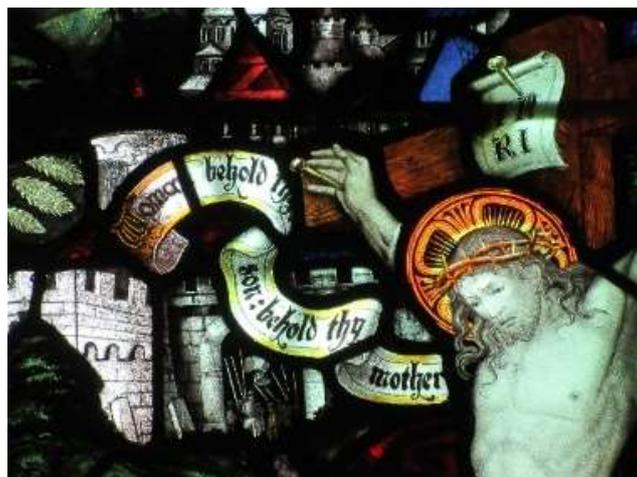
Glazing, Protection

102. A wide variety of glass in mixed condition. Some fifteen years ago glazing improvement began with fitting of glass from Sacriston church and new ventilated protection in the S Transept.

103. Varied polycarbonate sheet at all glass except one round Transept window. Most clouded by age and sunlight and some is dirty both sides further reducing daylight. The older sheets are mortared into stone reveals which prevents removal for cleaning, blocks ventilation (needed to prevent summer heat damaging the leads), may draw water into the stone and often cracks allowing dirt and insects into the void.

104. Sanctuary and Choir

E over altar- very dark 1890 Yeld memorial Crucifixion by Kempe. Good colour and painting. Part of darkness may be dirt.



N & S curved lights – white hand made quarries in good condition. A plate records one (both?) is a 1950 substitution for Victorian memorial glass, perhaps to improve light at the altar. Both sound, dirty inside.

SW and Choir – changed after 2010 from badly damaged stained to white reamy quarries to match with variety of lead spacing.

All clear ventilated polycarbonate moved away from the glass, in brass clips.

105. **Sacristy**

Double sheet aged polycarbonate, very dirty and unsightly. Plywood over hopper, with bars and barbed wire.

106. **Organ**

Two lancets, white quarries, yellow margins. Fair condition but very dirty. Loose polythene sheeting hung inside one. Clouded mortared polycarbonate.

107. **S Transept**

E – white diapers well matched to four saddle bars. Ten broken but intact. Very dirty. Clouded polycarbonate mortared close to the glass.

SE – round window over pair 1914 Brookes memorial ‘He is risen. He is not here.’ Excellent painting. Repaired with some repainting since last report
Good ventilated polycarbonate protection

SW – round window with white and yellow square quarries. Pair main lights with renewed white reamy quarries framing pair 1962 Stanley Scott glass moved from Sacriston 2007. The mainly white glass lights the Nave altar.

Clear ventilated polycarbonate moved away from the glass, in brass clips.

W – modern float glass white diapers, except hopper and arch infill without leads. Seven broken diapers let in water, several other minor cracks. Very dirty and slightly bowed. The glass and damaged plaster reveals look very poor. Clouded polycarbonate mortared too close to the glass.
Rebuilding on a new stone sill is needed.

108. **N Transept**

W – white diapers, 3 minor cracks, lead well matched to bars, glass sound but very dirty

NW – very dirty round light over pair 1940’s memorial, good bright design and condition, cleaner than others in church

NE – fine painted angel in round light over pair 1926 Fleet memorial, undistinguished Victorian. In RH two painted repairs not well matched, sound but becoming dirty.

All protected by ventilated polycarbonate, good except two lead connectors slipped.

109. **Nave**

SE and SW – 1851 Henry Hunt memorials by Wailes. Saddle bars widely spaced to suit round designs in diaper background which weakens the lead structure. They were seriously bowed but have been rebuilt with bonding of cracked glass and removal of repair leads. Now sound and fixed in new bars.

NW – recent Northumbrian glazing, good.

N centre – excellent Cottier & Co. 1872 ‘Twas an Angel’ good condition but dirty.

NE - Cottier & Co. ‘I am the Good Shepherd’ good condition but very dirty. One piece cracked. One lead polycarbonate connector slipped out.

110. Good modern ventilated polycarbonate at all Nave.

111. **Vestry and Office** sound white diapers, yellow border, open hoppers, dirty.
 Large sheets of very clouded polycarbonate across mullions and tracery mortared into stone rebates with steel nails driven into stone joints and single screws into mullions. Bottom edges mastic bedded into metal angles set into the mortar. Drilled vent holes at the hoppers. Sheets scratched at nails.
 The mortar does not seal so dirt in the void on glass and sheets. Some Vestry mortar has dropped out.
 New ventilated UV resistant polycarbonate cut to each glazed opening would reveal the tracery design and improve daylight.
112. **Tower** lobby round light with sound pale coloured leaded glazing, dirty, clouded polycarbonate mastic sealed to stone. Boiler stage clear diaper leaded, ventilated polycarbonate.
 Clock stage wired glass with ventilated polycarbonate.

Floors, Rails, Stairs

113. In **Sanctuary** reddish patterned fitted carpet over mixed plain and encaustic tiles and stone steps hidden but seem sound.
114. Original oak communion rail with central swing section loose on hinge. Screws in end grain will always work loose. If used a better design should be found.
115. Sacristy part carpet on concrete. Steps at door part worn stone, part carpeted pipe box.
116. The Choir stalls stand on worn softwood board platforms with two steps and a very worn carpet runner. Black and red diagonal tiles on solid extend under the stalls. Two cut tiles missing, five broken. Red carpet centre runner. Some loose tiles under carpet.
 Heating trenches with cast iron grills, visible in short lengths at E and W pass under the platforms where the grills are missing. Now used as heating and electrical ducts.
117. Floorboards under Organ are so covered by organ and storage that no assessment possible. No subfloor ventilation but a cut out at NE corner for the water riser may provide a little air movement. The 1993 report said boards lifted at the N wall showed wall plate decay and joist end deterioration.
118. Plain red carpet on 1962 Nave podium and steps up to Transept podiums. Mixed pieces of carpet on chipboard at Transepts. Graceful wide oak Nave communion rails.
119. Nave suspended softwood boards under pews with solid centre walkway and W end. The subfloor voids may connect through the centre walkway or the minimal airbricks would not prevent rot. However short board infills along N and S walls suggest past decay.
 Patterned red carpet on solid and on suspended floor and around front of altar podium.
120. Clean-off carpet on solid in inner Porch. The outer Porch floor is sloping grano, serviceable but cracked roughly patched next to the worn stone thresh. Renewal in natural stone flags would improve.
 Vestry, Tower lobby and Office maroon carpet tiles on hardboard on suspended floors (except mosaic on solid at tower). Good flush clean-off matting at Vestry door.
121. Loft ladder to upper boiler room is effective. Further access up Tower by vertical steel hoop ladder and steep ladders is for the fit only.

Monuments, Brasses, Furnishings, Organ

122. Slightly incongruous exposed aggregate concrete high altar with slate top under artificial grass, brass frame exposed at corners. Curtained recessed aumbry in NE of apse. Four brass candlesticks. Processional cross. Choir and clergy stalls in the Choir are poppyhead oak installed in the 1930's.
123. Two manual organ by H E Prested of Durham, modest oak case and pipes 1899. Said to be in poor condition.
124. 13 pairs of simple unfixed pine pews in Nave, not much back support, varying lengths, located by blocks. In S Transept four oak pews and frontal.
 Oak Nave altar, pulpit and communion rail all with red leatherette upholstery, facings or kneelers.
 Two oak Pugin chairs. Many loose plastic and upholstered metal chairs in Transepts with keyboard.
 Worn vestment chest in S Transept. Lacquered cupboards in Vestry, mixed timbers.
125. Several brasses recording persons, gifts or removals from church. Two sound marbles plaques.

Heating

126. Gas central heating, reported in good order. Meter in Office cabinet, gas riser through Office roof with safety cut-off at new boiler on Tower first floor. Freestanding twinwall flue to stainless terminal above Tower roof. Pump and part lagged circuit pipes in Tower to void over Office.



127. Two pipe circuit with variety of heat emitters. In Office timer, switch for fan convectors and frostat. Boiler thermostat, no room thermostat. Used Sundays only and said effective but expensive.
128. Two column radiators behind the high altar, exposed pipes around Apse (with step over at Sacristy door) and down into Choir trenches where insulated pipes are tapped for two large finned tube radiators under S benches, twin convector at N bench and very small panel radiators fixed to the clergy stalls. Two intrusive fan convectors fixed to E face of the Chancel screen may be noisy. In Sacristy twin panel radiator.
129. At the podium perimeter stamped grills (now covered by carpet) over twin steel heating pipes, a twin panel radiator on oak panelling each side of the Chancel arch and a high level fan convector at each Transept.
130. In the Nave two 700 x 3000mm white twin panel steel radiators on the oak panelling and four fan convectors on the walls above the panelling. Pipe risers and trailing cables to the convectors and along the skirts. All intrusive, the convectors are noisy and their warm air output must mainly go into the roof.
131. Twin panel radiators in Vestry and Office, two cased radiators in Tower lobby with pipes dropped into solid floor and up ducts to boiler room.
132. Heating said to work but some comment that it is not sufficient in coldest weather. Real improvements (better radiators in place of the awkwardly placed convectors, Tower pipe lagging) are possible. Pipe and pump lagging would make a cheap start.

Electrical

133. Three phase overhead intake to boiler stage of Tower, serving 'Church' 'Community Hall' and 'Main Church Hall'. Distribution board in Organ chamber. Installation now 35 years old. Test report May 2013 described the system as good overall with no observations.
134. Most visible wiring is surface MICC. Mixed metal and plastic sockets. MICC supply in Sacristy to former water heater now blanked off. Old round pin sockets remain in parts.
135. Wiring to the wall convectors is loose pvc/pvc, looking unfinished. A few disused conduits, cables and pendant fittings remain.
136. Brass and opal glass pendants in Porch and Tower lobby. Recessed low energy lights in Office and Vestry ceilings. Batten holder in Sacristy. Aumbry light, switched.

137. Main lighting by LED down floods at five corbels at each side of the Nave with two more eastward in each Transept, four in Choir and two in Sanctuary. Surface MICC cables and metal switches neatly fixed. Adequate light. The upper walls, upper Chancel arch and roof are not lit which is a pity and no light reflects to soften the shadows. No special emphasis on altars, pulpit or screen cross.

A past experimental LED uplight showed uplit roof timbers could be attractive.



former Uplight trial

138. Speakers on corbels, microphones and induction loop. Intruder alarm. Phone in Office.

Lightning Conductor

140. Copper vane at Tower corner, copper tape through parapet and down NW corner, appears complete. Earthing improved 2006 with five additional earth rods. Last test December 2014 after part theft, repair and fitting of two new earth rods 'Satisfactory' 11 ohms resistance. New test advisable soon. See Addendum.

Fire Precautions

141. A break glass key cabinet by the locked S Transept external door.

142. Extinguishers all serviced March 2023:

Tower lobby	6 litre water
Tower lobby	2 kg CO ₂ with warning ' <i>corrective action required</i> '
Organ	2 kg CO ₂

In case of proposal to change note the insurer EIG advises dry powder extinguishers should remain confined to boiler rooms and kitchens because discharge (including accidental and malicious) in church risks serious damage to organs and delicate surfaces due to the powder being corrosive.

143. A pricket stand on the Nave carpet. No matches.

Water and Sanitary facilities

144. Stainless basin in Office, cold only, drains through subfloor onto grass.

In Sacristy stainless sink and drainer, cold tap.

The metered and lagged water service rising behind the Organ is said to be a branch from the Hall.

Access and use by people with disabilities

145. The step and paving at pavement gates are worn unevenly. The path from car park is narrow but level and adequate. At the Porch the tarmac path has been lifted for 'level access' to an uneven stone thresh at the Porch gates. The two pairs of inner Porch doors are not wide enough for wheelchairs to use unaided.

Access to the Nave communion rail is good but then limited by two steps up to the dais and one down to the Chancel.

No wc except in the nearby Hall.

Security

146. Heavy padlock at Porch metal outer doors. Five lever mortice roller deadlocks at strong original Porch doors, Vestry and Office.

Deadlock and bolt at the S Transept door. Steel bars at Sacristy window. Floor safe in Sacristy.

The windows would be the weak point to a determined intruder.

Churchyard, boundaries, signs, paths, trees

147. The closed churchyard is maintained by Gateshead MBC. Main yard grassed with a few mature trees and a handful of headstones. Tarmac paths to the doors, adjoining Hall and to a Garden of Remembrance with benches.

At E beyond a ruined stone wall an extension yard with a few standing headstones, most now propped at the walls. It is more wooded and enclosed.

Being in a Conservation Area any work to trees will require consent from the Local Authority and Faculty.

148. The 'Hall' stone near the Garden of Remembrance has been reset. Almost all others removed.

149. A kerbed 'Barclay' grave close to the Sanctuary is disrupted by saplings still growing through it despite an attempt to cut them above ground level.

A 'Pearson' stone is flat and its kerbed grave is sunken and scattered. Two others similar. All impossible to mow so becoming overgrown.

All saplings throughout (all graves and at walls) need to be dug out to prevent damage and any new seedling pulled out every year.

150. Sign at the middle of the W side, now poor condition and illegible.



151. A low W wall retains the yard above Birtley Lane. N half covered by ivy. S including SW pier recently repointed well.

152. The former iron boundary railings set into the W copings have gone, leaving two good stone gateposts. The wrought iron gates and curved side screens are stable after recent repainting. Former overthrow for a light is now missing.

153. The remaining stone walls differ. The N is sound but lacks pointing where not overgrown. Saplings grow too close at NE. The E wall is about half collapsed and a metal paling fence has been put up on the playing field alongside. S wall repaired and fair.

Archaeology

154. The local authority archaeologist indicates that the church and site are not of archaeological importance.

General comments

155. Most of the interior is lively and attractive. Some uplighting might be helpful.

156. The parish is to be commended for its continuing maintenance and the improvement efforts. Plaster and paint repair is overdue but must follow repair of slate and pipe at N side of Choir and thorough maintenance of the walls above.

157. Glass cleaning would make a big difference to St John's light inside.

158. Daylight in the Chancel has been improved but it may still be under used. If new use for the Choir is needed the practical advantages of demolishing or reforming the difficult to maintain Sacristy should be taken into account when rethinking the Choir.

159. If possible the variety of furniture and carpets should be reduced and the heating made more effective and discrete.

PART THREE

RECOMMENDATIONS in order of priority

For immediate action

Decide whether to demolish or repair Sacristy	12, 17-19, 74, 79, 105, 158
Remake gutter lining N of Choir including missing slate and downpipe onto Sacristy slates	15, 97
Investigate leak at gutter W of N Transept and remedy	33
Rake out plants and repoint open joints in Organ E wall	52
Point joints in top of Transept buttresses and walls above	56, 62, 82

For completion within 18 months

If Sacristy to remain make structural repairs at Truss and Lintels and refit slate and lead head flashing	17, 79, 85
Replace missing slates at Nave and SE Transept	21
Rake and repoint all open vertical and horizontal watertable joints	22, 51, 56, 57, 62, 82
Renew all broken gullies including clear overgrowth	31, 32, 34, 40, 87, 97
Remove saplings against walls	49

For completion within five years

Derust rainwater goods with gutter joint sealing and general decoration	30, 36
Prepare and paint bell steels	43
Repair the damaged lime plaster and paint when walls dried	97, 156

Desirable Improvements

Recover Tower roof hatch with lighter material with hinges and bolts	29
Complete lagging of hot pipes and pump at boiler	47, 126, 132
Strap Porch gable to roof structure	58
Reglaze S Transept E and W windows including new stone W sill	69, 107
Repair and reletter W sign	150

Recommendations on Maintenance and Care

Clean whole rainwater system including gullies at least once a year	20
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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), a member of the Electrical Contractors Association (ECA) or of the National Association of Professional Inspectors and Testers (NAPIT) 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.

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.