

St Bartholomew Kirkwhelpington

Analysis of the Fabric and Archaeological Assessment

The Church in the early 19th century (from Hodgson)

Peter F Ryder

Historic Buildings Consultant

November 2002

Peter F Ryder
1 Ford Terrace
Broomhaugh
RIDING MILL
Northumberland
NE44 6EJ

Tel (01434) 682644

E mail: pryder@broomlee.demon.co.uk

St Bartholomew Kirkwhelpington
Analysis of the Fabric and Archaeological Assessment

Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Description	
	2.1. The Exterior	1-4
	2.2. The Interior	4-7
3.	Structural History	7-9
4.	The Churchyard	9-10
5.	Archaeological Assessment	10-11
6.	Bibliography	11

St Bartholomew Kirkwhelpington

Analysis of the Fabric and Archaeological Assessment

1. Introduction

The parish church of St Bartholomew stands in the centre of the village of Kirkwhelpington with the former vicarage, a house that incorporates some remains of a bastle or tower, on the west side of the churchyard. The church consists of an aisleless nave with a west tower and south porch, and an aisleless chancel.

2. Description.

2.1. The Exterior

The **West Tower** is c 6.8 m square externally, over walls 1.25 - 1.5 m thick, and rises to a height of 14 m. It is constructed of squared and coursed sandstone blocks; sections rebuilt in the late 19th or early 20th century (notably the upper parts of the belfry walls, and the massive buttress at the south-west corner) are in a greyer hammer-dressed stone. Evidence of the structural problems that have long plagued the tower is seen in the complicated array of buttresses, all rising to between 5 and 7 m above the ground. The original building had a pair of buttresses at each of the western angles, along with one in the centre of both north and south walls. Later medieval additions are the massive buttresses at the east end of each of these walls and a pair of smaller ones built into the angles between the original corner buttresses and the west wall. The northern of these has been largely rebuilt in the late 19th/early 20th century, when the massive clasping buttress was built that encases the original pair at the south-west corner. Yet another buttress-like feature, this time on the north, and set adjacent to the north-west corner buttress, is really a disguised flue from the boiler house, which steps inside the tower at belfry level. To the east of the buttress in the centre of the north wall, and immediately above the roof of the added boiler house, is a disturbed area of masonry of uncertain origin.

The tower has a two-part plinth with a roll-moulding above, which is very like the original plinth of the chancel; it is continued round the original buttresses (although on the pair at the north-west corner the roll moulding has been cut away). The other medieval buttresses have single-step chamfered plinths, and the more recent ones square off-set courses at their bases.

Tucked in between the western buttresses is the west door which has a four-centred arch with a continuous section of two steps, the outer with a narrow chamfer. On the south, sandwiched between the central and south-western buttresses, is an early-20th century square-headed window of two lights with four-centred heads, and sunk panels in the spandrels.

The second stage of the tower is lit by three small square-headed windows, with chamfered surrounds. One, now blocked, is on the south, to the east of buttress, another (which still displays sockets for a central bar) is in the centre of the west wall, and a third very small one at the east end of the north wall.

The belfry has a late 19th/early 20th century window in the centre of each wall, that on the east set higher than the others so as to clear the nave roof. Each is square-headed, with two trefoil-headed lights and simple panel tracery above, within a double chamfered surround;

there is no hoodmould. At a little below the level of the heads of these openings is an obvious but irregular break between the medieval masonry below and a restored section above; only on the north, to the east of the belfry opening, does the older fabric extend almost up to parapet level.

The embattled parapet is of ashlar, with a small square-section band at its base, and a moulded embattle coping; at each corner a small crocketed pinnacle rises within the coping

The south wall of the **Nave** is of roughly-coursed squared stone, the courses varying in height. To the east of the south porch there is a peculiar straight joint, or rather vertical series of three straight joints c 0.50 cm from the clasping buttress on the angle of the tower. The wall to the east of this joint, as far as the porch, has a chamfered plinth; higher up the wall a long slab spanning between the second section of straight joint and the tower angle has a chamfer on its lower angle, as if it formed the lintel to an opening in this position.

The south doorway, now within the south porch, has a two-centred arch of two orders, each having a filleted roll, between two hollows; there is a simply-moulded hood. The jambs are of the same section, broken only by moulded imposts with a line of nail-head; there are no bases, suggesting that the present floor level within the porch may be some distance above the original.

To the east of the porch an open drainage trench at the foot of the wall exposes a further length of the chamfered plinth, below a square-headed window of two trefoiled ogee-headed lights, with pierced spandrels. The inner order and head are restoration, as are the lower part of each jamb and the sill; the hollow-chamfered outer order is largely of older masonry. The central window is very similar; beyond this the plinth ends at the stub of a wall returning south, with immediately beyond it the base of the pier of a former arcade exposed at the foot of the wall; this seems to have been hexagonal, upon a circular base. Further east there is a rough projecting footing but no plinth, with above it an odd feature rather like a relieving arch, asymmetric in form, the rough voussoirs of which seem to be cut into by the sill of the easternmost window which is of the same form as the other two but entirely of late-19th century date. To the east of the arch is a straight joint low in the wall.

The south wall of the nave is in line with that of the chancel, but has its own angle quoins, which would seem to imply that the chancel has been widened. The lower quoins look as if they may have been replaced; below them a rather puzzling mass of masonry is exposed in the external drain; this seems to be the stub of the east wall of the earlier aisle and transept, but includes a large block, chamfered on both sides, set diagonally, as if it were part of the base of a diagonal buttress, although its chamfers probably relate to it being part of a grave cover or some re-used architectural feature.

The north wall of the nave has a clear distinction between the lower four or five courses of its main section, which are large well-squared blocks, and the less regular and smaller fabric above and in the eastern section; there is a thin course between them, which may mark the level from which the wall has been rebuilt or perhaps re-faced. This distinction is less clear to the east of the shallow buttress-like feature fashioned from the stub of the west wall of the former north transept. There is no sign of any plinth. The westernmost window is of two trefoiled ogee lights, and identical to the three in the south wall; it is entirely of late-19th century date; beneath it, and centred on its east jamb, are the jambs of a former north door, which according to Hicks (1894, 50) was originally square-headed. To the east is a blocked

square-headed window, its sill c 3 m above ground level, that looks of 17th or 18th century character. The central window is a lancet with a chamfered surround and a small square-section hoodmould, its dressings of tooled ashlar and entirely of 19th-century date. Towards the east end of the wall, beyond the buttress-like feature transept wall stub is a small lancet window that looks authentic medieval work¹. The angle quoins at the north-east corner of the nave are fairly irregular; their lower section at any rate looks like a rebuild..

The **South Porch** has a rather distorted round-headed outer arch with a continuous chamfer, under a sundial (dated 1764) set slightly obliquely to the wall-face, beneath the open-pedimented gable.

The **Chancel** is of roughly-coursed squared stone, with obvious 19th-century work in its uppermost courses. At the foot of the south wall is a 13th-century chamfered plinth with a roll-moulding above it, which returns south along the stub of the east wall of the former south transept, and rounds the bases of two small buttresses, one on either side of the priest's door. Near the west end of the wall is a large square-headed opening holding a 12-pane sash window, with jambs of 18th/19th century character that include some tooled-and-margined stone. Below are traces of the jamb and sills of a smaller opening, almost certainly a 'low side' window.

To the east is an intact lancet window with a chamfered surround, that seems wholly ancient, and below and slightly to the east a blocked priest's door with a four-centred arch and a very worn surround that seems to have been of stepped and chamfered section; its jambs seem to be coursed in with the adjacent walling. As the doorway looks of 15th-century date this would seem to imply that, at this point, the walling above plinth level is a 15th-century rebuild and the lancet window either a re-used feature, or one that simply follows an earlier style.² East again is a large stepped buttress of late-19th century date, which marks the end of the old plinth, although immediately beyond it are the remains of an earlier buttress base, patched up with re-used material; the final section of walling beyond this is of tooled squared stone, and seems contemporary with the buttress; it has a rough step at its base.

The north side of the chancel is set c 0.40 m inside the line of the that of the nave, and has no obvious features, although there are various disturbances in the fabric; a detailed examination might reveal significant features. It has a chamfered plinth, stepping down in level from west to east between two low buttress-like features; in their present form both plinth and 'buttresses' look entirely of 19th-century date, and differ considerably from the features shown on Hicks' plan. The plinth ends at a large 19th-century buttress, to the east of which the final bay of the wall all seems 19th-century rebuilding or at least re-facing.

The east end has stepped diagonal buttresses at its angles, and a stepped triplet of lancets enclosed within a four-centred arch outlined by a moulded hood with shaped terminals; its dressings are of ashlar with a light diagonal tooling and there is a further course of ashlar blocks outside the hood. There is a small rectangular vent above, under a coped gable that springs from moulded kneelers, and carries a cross fleury finial. All this seems of late-19th

1 See footnote 2.

2 A similar lancet on the north of the nave presents a similar problem; as it occupies the position of the arch to the former north transept it cannot possibly be in situ. Is it a re-set 13th-century feature, as the style would suggest, or a much later one that simply imitates, consciously or unconsciously, an earlier form.

century date.

2.2. The Interior

The lower part of the east side of the **Tower** is now within the nave. The tower arch is of two-centred form and of two orders, the inner of rounded section with a single line of large chevrons in bold relief on each side, the outer (towards the nave only; it is not clear whether there was ever an outer order towards the tower) with a roll flanked by deep hollows. The jambs each have an attached semicircular shaft to each order; the inner has scalloped capitals and the outer simpler block capitals with incised spirals at the angle. A considerable amount of the arch is late 19th or early 20th century restoration, including all of the outer order except a few mutilated voussoirs, the capitals (except for that to the inner order on the north) and all the jambs of the outer order.

The arch is now walled up flush with the western face of the inner order; in this blocking wall are a central square-headed doorway that looks all restoration, and, above a band of re-set architectural fragments, a blocked window-like opening visible immediately below the apex of the arch.

The basement room within the tower, now the vestry, has plastered walls, and a north-south vault of two-centred section. In the south-east corner is a stair projection with the lower part of its angle bevelled back; on its side face is a segmental-arched doorway, rebated externally, opening onto the stair. Set diagonally in the opposite (north-west) corner of the room is a fireplace with a chamfered basket arch and a stone mantel piece, chamfered on its lower angle. The west doorway has a segmental rear arch.

At the foot of the stair there is a considerable area of late 19th/early 20th century brickwork on the north and east of the well. The stair rises to a round-arched doorway into the second stage; this has a monolithic head, and is rebated for a doorway towards the tower, although there are rough sockets on the opposite (south) face of its western jamb, perhaps indicating some sort of additional barring mechanism that could close off the stair itself. Within the tower, two irregular steps lead up onto the rough stone floor, which is clearly the extrados of the vault beneath. Low in the east wall, its sill close to the present floor level, is a square hatch-like feature, blocked up, which must be the internal face of the small window-like opening visible from the nave; above and to the left, close to the north end of the wall, is what seems to be a rough socket infilled with whitish cement. On the south the internal opening of the blocked square-headed window is now walled up flush with the wall face.

The small window on the north has an asymmetric internal splay, almost as if its width might have been reduced by a thickening of the east wall. To the left, roughly in the centre of the wall, and at the level of the window head, is a loose block, perhaps marking an infilled socket, with directly above it a second more obvious socket. Within the north-west angle of the tower is a square projection, stepping back in size, that carries the flues from both the ground-floor fireplace and the external boiler house.

On the west the square-headed window has a timber internal lintel under a segmental relieving arch; straight joints on either side indicate that it may have formerly had a wider internal splay, reduced for reasons of structural stability. Above the rear arch is an area of walling that may have been rebuilt at some stage. To the left of the window head is a probable socket.

There is now no floor at belfry level, the bells being carried on a series of beams. Access to this level has been by means of a square-headed doorway from the newel stair, now blocked up, with a small opening inserted in its blocking. Between the base of the second stage and the level of the head of this doorway the internal projection of the turret is rounded in plan, but above this it is quadrangular.

At belfry level all four walls show traces of earlier (and wider) belfry openings, set a little lower in the walls than their successors (and considerably lower in the case of the east wall). On the south only the eastern jamb of the earlier opening is visible; on the west there seem to be remains of both jambs with at the foot of the northern a large socket. On the north the west jamb of the earlier opening is clear with a ragged joint above a socket possibly representing the eastern. Above the present opening is a rough projecting block of uncertain function. At the head of the internal flue is an odd overhanging section of wall set c 0.3 m in front of the face of the remainder, that looks as if it might be a remnant of the original walling. On the east there is a small opening that seems to communicate with a void above the roof of the nave; further north is the internal north jamb of the earlier belfry opening. To the south of the present belfry opening, close to the stair projection, is a ragged joint which probably marks the southern edge of the rebuilt walling; between it and the projection the walling is scooped inwards in an odd way, possibly implying that the projection is a secondary feature.

During 2002 repairs to the tower, when the leading of the parapet gutter was removed an earlier stone-cut gutter was exposed, consisting of a channel cut into the blocks which project beneath the external face of the parapet to form the external string course, falling from the corners to a central outlet in the middle of each side. This has been covered over again, but was sketch-planned and photographed by the architect.

The internal wall faces of the **Nave** are of exposed stonework, above a panelled dado 1.55 m high. The south wall is of roughly-coursed stone. At the west end is a recessed panel of irregular shape, presumably indicating the junction of the rebuilt nave wall (15th century?) with the thinner stub of the western respond of the 13th-century arcade to the west. The south door has a roughly-pointed rear arch, somewhat mutilated to allow the opening of a pair of double doors. The westernmost window has a shouldered rear arch, its lintel probably a grave slab; the internal splay has been cut back to accommodate the present window, which is obviously rather wider than its predecessor. The eastern splay has two shaped blocks which look like the south side of a small niches with a pointed-arched head. The internal sill, which has obviously been lowered, is a relatively recent ashlar slab.

The central window again has a shouldered rear arch with old splay, and a cut-down sill formed by another re-set grave slab³. Directly above the lintel are some blocks with slightly-curved and chamfered edges that seem to be re-used pieces of earlier arches. 1 m to the east of the window, immediately above the dado, is a re-used stone that may be part of a 13th-century headstone. Midway between the central and eastern windows is a disturbed area in the wall. The internal surround of the easternmost window is all of late 19th/early 20th century

3 Nine medieval grave slabs in the church are illustrated and described in an article by the writer in *Medieval Cross Slab Graves Covers in Northumberland Part II Newcastle and the South-East in the forthcoming Archaeologia Aeliana 5th ser XXX (2002).*

masonry, and here again the sill is re-set medieval grave slab. At the east end of the wall are some large blocks low in the wall, and a flat-topped recess that partly accommodates the pulpit.

The north wall is of coursed fabric, with some large well-squared blocks, except in its eastern third; at mid-height there are a number of possible infilled sockets, perhaps relating to a former gallery. At its west end, as on the south there is a disturbed area c 0.80 m wide at the junction of nave and tower. The westernmost window is entirely of late 19th/early 20th century date, and has the head of a cross-slab re-set above its internal lintel. To the east of it is a blocked opening that might be contemporary with the wall, its sill c 2 m above the ground; its head and the upper part of its east jamb have been cut away by a later window opening, also now blocked; it is this later high-level window that is visible externally. The central window has a shouldered rear arch; the two corbels that carry the lintel (another grave slab) may be of 19th-century date and the splayed sides look to be hacked into earlier walling; the sills of this window and that to the east are set high, c 2.5 m above the floor. The topmost stone of its east jamb is a large re-used horizontal block, its upper face cut to a segmental curve, and moulded with a roll; above and to the east is a socket. 1.0 m to the east is the east jamb of an earlier window with its sill at a slightly-lower level; its west jamb seems to be on the same line as the east jamb of the central window. The easternmost window has a similar shouldered rear arch, one more with a grave slab as its lintel.

In the north east corner of the nave is an exposed footing that looks to relate to an earlier chancel arch immediately to the east of the line of the present one. It is stepped in plan, as if to accommodate a jamb shaft, and may be of 12th century date; the corresponding base of the southern respond may be concealed beneath the pulpit.

The nave has a late 19th or early 20th century roof of nine bays; it has moulded tie-beams with arch braces to wall-posts that rest on simple quadrant-section ashlar corbels. There are foliage-carved bosses at the centre of each tie, and short moulded braces to the ridge; each bay has a panelled boarded ceiling divided by the ridge, purlins and a central rafter, all moulded.

The internal walls of the **South Porch** are of roughly-coursed stone, without any features other than a piece of a weathered cross slab set in the east wall.

The arch into the **Chancel** is of two-centred form, and of two orders, the inner with a broad chamfer and the outer (plastered over towards the chancel) with a narrow one, springing from semi-octagonal responds with moulded capitals; the base of that on the north looks to have been altered, whilst that on the south is concealed by the pulpit.

During September 2002 the lower part of the internal face of the south wall of the chancel was stripped of its plaster, and a number of structural features exposed and recorded, prior to re-plastering.

The large sash window near the west end of the wall has an asymmetric internal splay, the east jamb being splayed more broadly than the very roughly-cut western; above the lintel of the window the outline of an earlier arched head is visible through the plaster. Below the window were the jambs of a blocked opening, presumably the internal recess that contained the low-side window. Its western jamb was set very slightly to the west of that of the window, the eastern just east-of-centre of the window. To the east of this were a series of irregular cut-

outs in the ashlar facing of the wall, of uncertain function. The internal sill of the lancet window was a large slab, perhaps yet another re-used grave slab, that also formed the lintel of the former priest's door below. This had a shouldered rear arch internally, its centre a little to the east of that of the lancet above. The rear arch was blocked by bricks set on edge, many having a sunk frog stamped 'LBSB Co'; a removed brick allowed a glimpse into what had been a recess or cupboard formed within the blocked door, plastered round internally.

Further east, close to the doorway was a disturbed patch of masonry (possibly an earlier position of the altar rail?) then the sill and lower jambs of a window were exposed, with a square socket immediately to the west. At the east end of the wall are a pair of sedilia with chamfered trefoiled arches springing from a central circular shaft with a moulded capital and base; on the west the chamfer is simply continued down the jamb, whilst on the east the arch springs straight from the end wall.

The triplet of 1883 lancets in the east end each have shouldered heads.

The only feature on the north of the chancel is a large triangular-headed recess, to the west of centre, containing the mid-18th century monument to Ganen Aynsley, in an egg-and-dart surround, under a broken pediment set on Corinthian pilasters.

The chancel has a flat plaster ceiling with a moulded cornice that does not extend as far as the east wall; it terminates above the west end of the sedilia, the eastern end of the ceiling sloping up to clear the heads of the eastern windows.

3 Structural History

Kirkwhelpington church is remarkable, even in Northumberland, for the number of vicissitudes suffered by its fabric that are demonstrated in the present building. The overall structural sequence of this troubled history is fairly clear⁴ and can be correlated with other churches in the area; lack of architectural evidence means that it remains difficult to date some of its phases.

I The Norman Church

The only evidence for this is in its chancel arch. The footing of the northern respond of this remains in situ at the north-eastern corner of the nave; the corresponding footing on the south may well be concealed beneath the pulpit. There is a high degree of probability that the present tower arch is in fact the chancel arch carried by these footings, taken down in the 13th century when the present chancel and chancel arch were erected, and re-erected (as a two-centred rather than a semicircular arch) at the opposite end of the nave. From the surviving footings (and the fact that it is unlikely that the central axis of the church would have been shifted) it seems reasonable to suppose that the 12th century nave was the same width as at present; there is no evidence of its length. What appears to be surviving 'early'⁵ masonry at the west end of each nave wall is rather thinner than the present nave walls, and might argue for a western extension coeval with the 13th century remodelling.

4 The version given here differs little from that succinctly outlined by Hicks (1894)

5 ie predating the rebuilding of the nave walls in the 15/16th century.

II The 13th Century

The 13th century is the great period of rebuilding and enlargement of parish churches in Northumberland, before the outbreak of the ‘three hundred years’ war’ with the Scots in practice brought down the curtain on anything other than the barest repair and maintenance. At Kirkwhelpington what may have been no more than a simple two-cell nave-and-chancel church was recast with in the Early English style with a long and fully-aisled nave (probably of four bays), a west tower, and an elongate chancel that might possible have been provided with a north vestry. The old chancel arch was removed and re-used as the new tower arch, its replacement being set slightly to the east of the position of its predecessor.

III The Later Medieval Period

The church seems to have suffered severely, presumably at the hands of the Scots; Hick saw evidence that it had been burned at least once, and badly damaged. There is no historical record of this, but severe raids were taking place at the end of the 13th and in the first half of the 14th century. Of the time that elapsed between this ‘general destruction’ and a reconstruction tentatively dated to the late 15th or 16th century, there is no record. Some features, eg the west door of the tower, would fit with this broad date but others, like the south door of the nave, and possibly also the lancet windows in the nave and chancel, may be 13th-century work re-used. The diagonally-set slab at the foot of the south-eastern quoin of the nave is a hint that there may have been a diagonal buttress here, which implies a structural phase in between the loss of the south aisle and the construction of the south transept. At any rate, the aisles were taken down, and either then or later replaced by transepts, the chancel partially rebuilt (with larger buttresses on the north) and the west tower extensively altered; the western porch (the foundations of which were recorded by Hicks) may have been added at the same time.

IV Post-Medieval Changes

The post-medieval history of the church has also been marked by significant structural loss, as at some unknown period both transepts were removed, perhaps more likely the result of dereliction than violent incident. Evidence of their removal was obviously clearer when Hodgson wrote; he refers to the lower walls of the north transept were taken up ‘on removing the earth from the north side’⁶ by order of Archdeacon Thorp in the early 19th century. The chancel was evidently shortened at some time as well; it is not clear whether this took place at this stage, or as part of the earlier medieval destruction.

Hodgson (204) records that Sir Walter Blackett of Wallington (1700-1777) gave £10 towards the building of a gallery; the blocked square-headed opening set high in the north wall of the nave, and the range of sockets in the internal face of the wall may relate to this.

At some time in this period the 15th-century windows in the nave lost their tracery and were converted into sash windows.

VI The 19th Century.

As often, the 19th century spanned several phases of repair and restoration, some better

6 Presumably to facilitate drainage

documented than others. Hodgson refers to repairs to the tops of the walls in 1805, when the lead roof was replaced by one of Westmorland slate. Hodgson gives a print (see front cover) showing the church, seen from the south-east, as it was in the early 19th century. On the south of the nave are three large square-headed sash windows, and on the south of the chancel, which is clearly rather shorter than at present, a fourth sash window (still extant) and a lancet; the chancel has prominent kneelers of late 17th or 18th century character at its east end, a relatively small square-headed east window, and diagonal eastern buttresses.

The remodelling of the eastern bay of the chancel would seem to have taken place in 1883⁷; although Hodgson's print seems to show the chancel as shorter than at present, the dimensions he quotes shows that this is not the case; the presence of the 13th century sedilia at the east end of the south wall suggest that the 1883 work entailed re-facing rather than rebuilding the walls.

The 1892 works described by Hicks entailed alterations to the roof and the creation of an external drain, which exposed so much of archaeological interest. Some of the features seen at this date, ie the west ends of the nave aisles, and the footings of the western porch of the tower, were at least in part destroyed at the time; the remains of the buttresses he shows on the north side of the chancel (one of which, beneath the present 1883 buttress, might have been the stub of a vestry wall) were also destroyed or buried, the visible features here being entirely the work of the restorer, apparently to roughly match those on the south of the chancel rather than replicate the .

Alterations to the tower (construction of the parapet, the belfry openings and perhaps also the window on the south of the basement) and the nave windows may have taken place in 1896, to judge from the fact that the nave and tower were 'restored' at this date, as recorded on the font.

7 'The chancel was restored three years ago at the expense of Sir John Swinburne' History Topography and Directory of Northumberland T F Bulmer ed. 1886 edition.

4. The Churchyard

The church is set towards the west side of the older part of the sub-rectangular churchyard, with a block of buildings extending into the south-west part. There is an irregular raised area on the south of the nave, which probably in part covers the buried remains of the south transept and south aisle, and another raised bank just inside the boundary on the western part of the south side. There is an extension to the eastern part of the north side, made during the incumbency of the Rev. Robert Hedley (1904-1936; information on notice in porch). The oldest monuments seem to be a number of 18th-century headstones, with the usual death's heads and crossed bones (cf the good collection at Hartburn); to the north of the church most of the monuments are of the 19th century.

5. Archaeological Assessment

Despite its many and varied alterations, Kirkwhelpington church remains a building of considerable archaeological importance with much significant evidence still concealed, both below floors and the external ground surface, and in the standing fabric. Recent renovation work to both the tower and the chancel walls has been accompanied by archaeological recording, which has assisted in the interpretation of this intriguing building.

The fabric of the church is so complex, with fragmentary features, and so much re-used material, that extending the full drawn record of external and internal wall faces, already made for the tower⁸ to the full building is desirable. The description given in this assessment should only be regarded as of a provisional nature.

It is difficult to assess the survival of archaeological deposits and structural remains beneath floor levels; generations of burial, and of underfloor heating systems, will, as usual, have occasioned some a considerable amount of disturbance. However, any disturbance of floor levels should, as in the case of any medieval church, be carefully monitored. This also goes for any further removal of plaster from internal wall faces, ie in the chancel (the nave walls being bare). In the case of exposed fabric, significant re-pointing works should also be accompanied by archaeological recording; the removal of mortar afford an opportunity for proper photographic recording of fabric and re-used material.

In many cases perimeter drains around churches have been cut without any regard for the underlying archaeology, and valuable information has often been lost. This was not the case at Kirkwhelpington, even though the drain was created over a century ago, as Hicks made and published what was by the standards of his time, an excellent record. Without this, we would have been able to reconstruct very little of the history of the church. However, the drainage trench did result in the destruction of many of the features that Hicks recorded; it is not clear what happened on the north of the chancel, where a plinth and buttress-stubs crudely replicating what was present on the south were created, replacing the genuine and quite different features shown on the drawings. Beyond the drain, substantial remains of aisle and transept footings must survive, especially on the south⁹. A remote sensing survey, which would certainly be a useful exercise here, should help to quantify these.

6. Acknowledgements

⁸ The Tower of St Bartholomew's Church, Kirkwhelpington. A Provisional Historical Report. October 1999. P F Ryder/The Archaeological Practise, University of Newcastle.

⁹ Hodgson (204) refers to the lower parts of the walls of the north transept being 'taken up' in the early 19th century, but this need not mean that the footings have been removed.

I should like to acknowledge the help and cooperation of Robin Dower, of Spence & Dower Architects, and also of the Archaeology Practise of Newcastle University in the 1999 study of the church tower.

7. Bibliography

Hicks, W.S. (1894) Notes on the Recent Discoveries at Kirkwhelpington Parish Church. Archaeologia Aeliana 2nd ser. XV, 47-51

Hodgson, J.F. (1827) History of Northumberland. Part II, Vol.1. 203-4