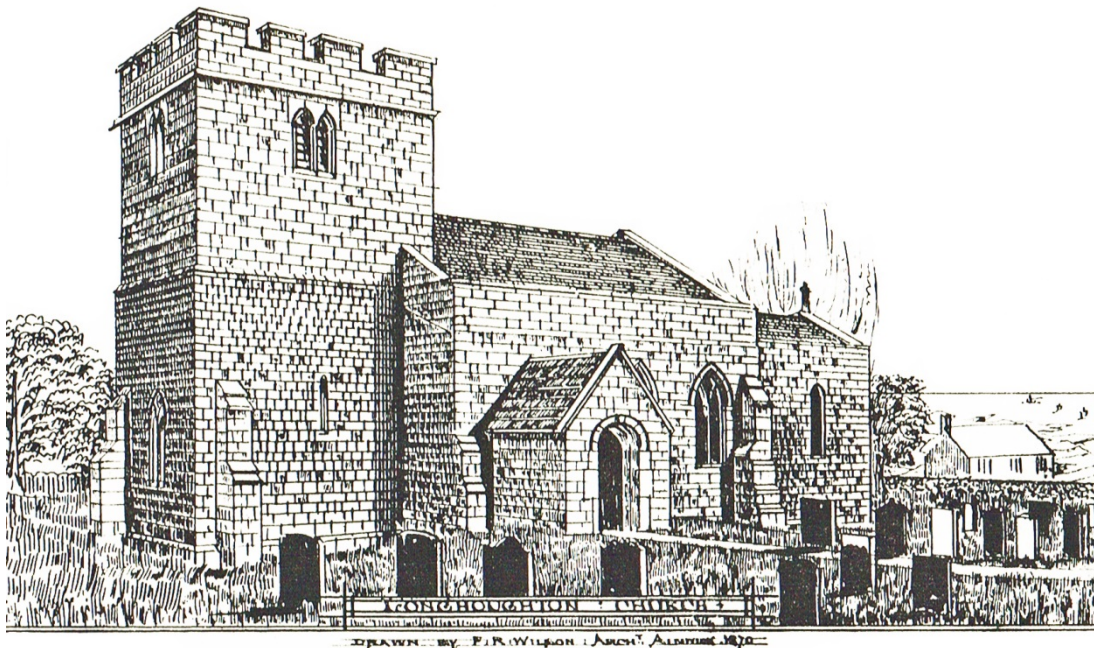


The Church of St Peter and St Paul, Longhoughton

An Archaeological Assessment

February 2014



South-west view after F.R. Wilson (1870)

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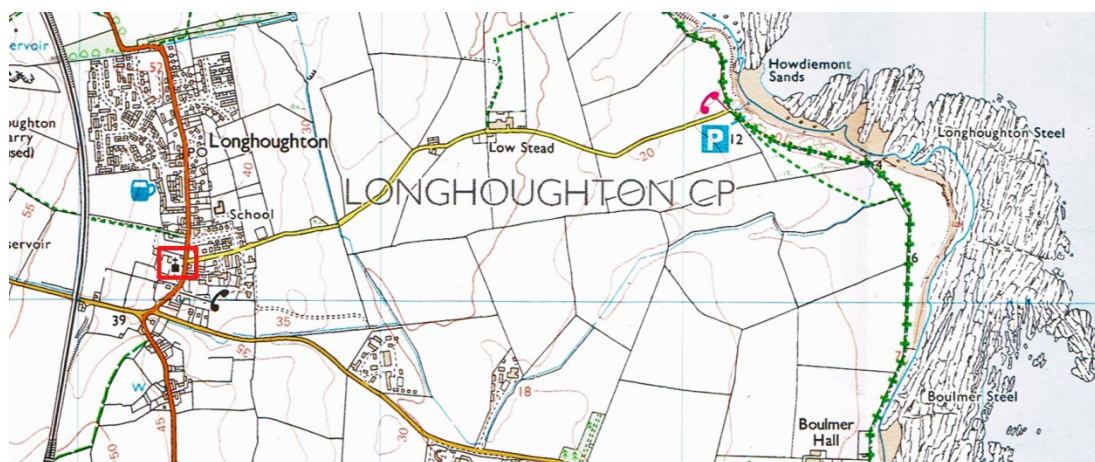
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SS Peter and Paul, Longhoughton

Longhoughton parish church consists of a nave with a west tower, a three-bay south aisle (with a south porch), and a chancel with a vestry on the north flanked by a boiler room on the west and a store, now a toilet, on the east.



Location Map from OS 1:25000 Explorer Sheet 332. OS map licence 100045703

Historical Notes

The following notes are largely taken from the Northumberland County History account of the church¹. Longhoughton was originally a chapelry of Lesbury, and only became an independent parish after the Dissolution of the Monasteries – the first recorded vicar, in 1539, being Cuthbert Dawton, a former canon of Alwick Abbey. The earliest reference to the chapelry was between 1143 and 1152 when Eustace Fitz John, Lord of the barony of Alwick, gave it to the canons of Alwick. A c1567 survey of the manor notes ‘The chirche and steple of this towne is the great strength that the poore tenants have to draw to in the tyme of warre’; it also mentions that the church then had a leaden roof, and was in good repair. In 1792 Archdeacon Thorp had directed that the south wall of the chancel be taken down and rebuilt. Documentation exists for the reseating and repairs in the church in 1840-1844 (showing that there was a gallery), and a major restoration of the church was carried out in 1873 at a cost of £1,500, the architect being Thomas Edward Champion Streatfield².

The Exterior

The church is built of a variety of fabric types. The copings of the gables are all of 1873, and are of ashlar with a hollow-chamfer to the lower angle; the present roofs are all blue Welsh slate.

¹ Volume II (1895) Edward Bateson., 372, 390-394

² <http://www.churchplansonline.org/>



The **West Tower** is relatively massive and squat, and rises in two approximately equal stages, divided by a set-back. The lower stage is of coursed quite square blocks of sandstone, a fabric type characteristic of the 12th century. Most are red in colour (cf Lindisfarne Priory) but there is some variation, perhaps due to different beds in the same quarry. The upper stage is of slightly less regular squared stone, and quite different – more of a grey/fawn in – colour; in addition it has occasional larger blocks used as quoins, although most are simple the height of a single course.

The lower stage has a narrow chamfered plinth, only exposed on the west, again characteristic of 12th century work. Two stepped buttresses of grey stone are clearly secondary, rising only to a height of c 3.5 m. Both have weathered stepped plinths that appear ancient, although their upper parts may have been rebuilt. The west wall has had a window, apparently with an arched head, infilled in grey stone, with its sill c 2m above the ground, although there appears to be a slightly wider disturbed area below, all in red sandstone that may indicate an early door position. Within the infill of the window (which is shown as two-light one on Wilson's 1870 drawing) a narrow single-light one with a round-arched head has been formed³. There are similar single-light windows in both north and south walls at the same level, but these both appear ancient. At the east end of the south wall there is also an odd patch of rubble, low down, and higher in all three walls are infilled putlog holes in both stages of the tower. All three walls also show plates marking the ends of more recent tie-bars, two just below the set-back and two at belfry level.

³ A restoration of an original feature in this position, the rere arch of which survives.

The set-back is interesting; on north and south it is in the form of a steep chamfered offset, in the red sandstone; on the west it is rather deeper step, as if the chamfered course has been hacked back. On the side walls the chamfered offset ends just short of the east wall, which has no set-back at all

The upper stage of the tower has two-light belfry openings on north, south and west; each has two round-arched lights, divided by a moulded shaft with a cushion capital, Romanesque in style but in yellow sandstone ashlar, and of early 19th century date, but appear to be inserted into older walling; above the head of each is a projecting gargoyle. Above them is a moulded string course and quite a tall parapet with a crenellated parapet that has a moulded coping to the merlons; string and parapet are of 19th century date.

The east side of the tower, above the nave roof, shows interesting evidence of two earlier roof-lines. The earlier is steeper than the present roof; it commences c 0.50m above the present eaves level, and rises to the level of the string course below the parapet, below which is a central gargoyle/spout – there are indistinct traces of a blocked opening below this (more clearly seen internally). The lower line, only visible on the south, is of a lower roof with a shallower pitch, but with its ridge set well to the south of the present one, and in fact central to the span of nave and aisle together. This is the roof shown on Wilson's 1870 drawing, which shows the south aisle as having an outer wall almost twice its present height.



Only the north wall of the **Nave** (above) is exposed externally (along with a little masonry at its south-east corner). The north wall has a variety of fabric types, and its development is difficult to read. The lower c1.5 m of the wall is of coursed rubble, ending to the west in an

irregular straight joint in line with the external east face of the tower. About 2m above ground level is one possible large quoin, then above that an area of coursed close-jointed masonry that continues a little further west; then, c 1m below the nave eaves, comes a straight joint rising c2m, set about 0.30 m west of the external east face of the tower, with an L-shaped block at its bottom. The set-back at the top of the first stage of the tower ends at this joint, and is not continued around the north-east angle.

About 2m from the west end of the nave are the lower jambs of a blocked doorway, made up of quite large but irregular blocks, with nothing to give a clue to its date; it is not clear whether it is an insertion. The upper wall is largely of well-squared blue/brown stone, the courses varying in height; this all seems to be fabric of 1873 and the three windows appear to be contemporary with it. They are trefoiled lancets, with surrounds of diagonally-tooled yellow sandstone ashlar, with relieving arches of roughly-shaped voussoirs to their heads. At the east end of the wall, above the boiler room, is an upstanding area of older less regular masonry.

The south-east angle of the nave is exposed in the angle between south aisle and chancel. There is one megalithic quoin at the base, and one can see where a second narrower quoin above it has been removed; above that the line is lost.

The **South Aisle** clearly has ancient masonry in its end walls, and in the stepped buttresses – the eastern broad and irregular - at each end of its south wall. The west end has a chamfered plinth, and a 19th-century window with a four-centred arch enclosing two trefoiled ogee lights with a quatrefoil in the spandrel, under a moulded hood with turned-back ends. On the south, to the east of the porch, a cemented drain hides any plinth, and the wall is of coursed blocks, quite large in the lower courses, of uncertain date although clearly older than the two windows. These are each of two trefoiled lights, with some odd cuts in their dressings that suggest that have been modified; it looks as if they may have been altered when the height of the wall was reduced in 1873. The east end wall has a 14th-century window of two trefoiled ogee lights under a square head, with a shallow sunk panel in the spandrel – similar to the window in the surviving fragment of the medieval manor house at Amble. The sill and mullion are restoration. Directly above is the monolithic head of an earlier lancet window, and above and a little to the north is what appears to be a short straight joint. Further up at the north end of the wall and just above the level of the chancel eaves is what looks like the chamfered sill of a window, which may have lit a gallery within the taller pre-1873 aisle.

The **South Porch** is set close to the west end of the aisle; its west wall is only c10cm from the south-western buttress. It is largely built of close-jointed squared stone, but there is older less regular fabric in the lower metre or so of each side wall. The outer arch is a plain round-headed one with a slightly-raised keystone, with plain square-section unrebutted jambs, of 18th century character.

The **Chancel** contains a variety of fabric types- the earliest appears to be small coursed rubble in the lower courses of the western third of the south wall, followed by roughly-squared stone in the lower part of the remainder of the wall; the upper wall is of squared stone that appears to be of 1873. The east wall is of close-jointed squared stone in irregular courses, as is the eastern section of the north wall (the western is covered by the vestry); there are ragged straight joints close to the east end of each side wall indicating that there are at least two phases; both are probably post-medieval. No plinths are visible. Towards the west end of the south wall is a pair of lancet windows, with a single one further east, all with yellow ashlar dressings of Victorian character. The east end has a triplet of round-arched lights in similar fabric, set high, the central one considerably taller than the others, in simple chamfered surrounds. There are a pair of slit vents in the gable, which has a discoidal cross finial. Set between the north and central lights is the upper part of a small medieval cross slab grave cover, bearing an incised cross pate and the upper part of a pair of shears⁴. At the same level to the south of the southern light is a chevron-moulded voussoir of 12th-century character. The north wall has a single lancet window, probably of 1873, clearly inserted in older walling; there is a possible blocked opening directly beneath it near the foot of the wall.

The **Vestry** of 1873 is built of coursed squared stone, very like the upper part of the north wall of the nave; its north end has a two-centred doorway with a quarter-round moulding, and to the west of it a window of two cinquefoiled ogee lights under a square head, with a hoodmould that has turned back ends. The gable above has a trefoiled finial, and set back on either side are the ends of the two contemporary pent-roofed outbuildings – the boiler room to the west (overlapping the nave) and a store (now toilet) on the east, both with plain square-headed doorways.

The Interior

The interior of the **South Porch** has a stone-flagged floor, and old stone benches with wooden tops; the roof has simple collared rafters with ashlar to the eaves. The inner doorway is of 19th-century date, and has a two-centred arch with simple mouldings; above it is a plaque recording a £25 grant from the Incorporated Church Building Society at the time of the 1873 restoration, which is recorded as having increased the capacity of the church by 17 extra seatings. The wall in which the doorway is set is of quite irregular masonry, and above its head is a timber strainer beam.

Apart from the west end of the nave and the interior of the tower, the internal walls of the church are largely plastered, except for exposed dressings and the lower part of the east wall of the chancel.

⁴ Part of the surface is about to spall away, and the stone is in urgent need of some conservation treatment if a large part of the design is not to be lost.

The large and impressive arch into the **Tower** (right) is set on jambs of simple stepped plan⁵ below an impost band, which is chamfered on its lower edge, and extends the full width of the west end of the nave (its northern section having been somewhat hacked back). The semicircular arch is of two orders, the inner with a big half-roll to its soffit, between broad hollow chamfers, the outer square towards the tower but towards the nave, having an angle roll and a deep hollow. c30cm above the top of the arch is a deep off-set, with the gable wall above that being plastered⁶. Towards the nave the dressings of the arch show remnants of plaster, and also of possible wall paintings –see the yellow colouration on the upper parts of the south jamb.



The internal walls of the lower stage of the tower are of the same coursed red sandstone as the exterior. On the west the outline of the earlier blocked doorway is clear, infilled in whiter sandstone; the internal jambs of the present single-light window have been reconstructed in the same material but the actual rear arch, of rubble within a single ring of voussoirs, seems original. The windows in the side walls seem largely original. The internal wall faces show putlog holes, like those in the external walls, and also a row of large infilled sockets immediately below the level of the internal sills of the windows. Above the sockets, which presumably indicate a gallery floor, a vertical dark stain indicates the line of a former partition c 0.30 m east of the window in the north wall, with more plaster adhering to the section of wall to the east of it.

Access to the upper stage of the tower is now by a trapdoor set centrally against the west wall. The upper stage of the tower is open to the roof; the single bell is carried on two heavy north-south beams set to the west of the belfry openings in the side walls. The walls are of coursed stone, quite heavily mortared, except for the southern third of the west wall which looks to be of better-quality closer-jointed masonry, with a discontinuity to the north that may simply be the result of structural movements at some time. The three belfry openings have steeply-sloped internal sills, jambs set square to the wall and timber lintels; in the east

⁵ Some 19th-century accounts see the jambs as Saxon and the arch as Norman, presumably because they differ in section. In fact they are clearly of the same build.

⁶ With the painted inscription 'Decorated with love July 2004'

wall is a square-headed recess at the same level. The low-pitched gabled roof structure (concealed externally behind the tall parapet) is of no great age; set east-west, it is of three bays, with king-post trusses carrying a ridge board and one level of purlins, the trusses having taking struts, supporting the purlins, nailed to their faces. A ladder rises to a dormer on the south giving access to the parapets.

In the **Nave** the south arcade is of three bays, with two-centred arches carried on octagonal piers with simple moulded capitals, and responds in the form of semi-octagonal corbels; it appears relatively unrestored and of convincingly medieval appearance. The arches are of two orders, the inner with a broad and the outer with a narrow chamfer; towards the nave there is a hoodmould chamfered on its lower angle. There are some odd detail differences between the two piers; both have bases with 'holdwater' mouldings, but the western stands on a square plinth, whilst the eastern has a plinth that is octagonal above and square below. The western pier is made up of five blocks and the eastern of seven. Towards the nave the outer order of the arches overhangs the capital of the western pier but not the eastern. It is not clear whether these discrepancies result from miscalculations when the arcade was inserted into an existing wall (a common procedure) or whether one pier (the western?) has been rebuilt at some stage.

On the north side of the nave the three 1873 windows have chamfered pendant rear arches, and level ashlar sills with their front edges chamfered; a band of exposed ashlar blocks flush with the wall runs just below the springing of their rear arches, and links (approximately) with the impost band of the chancel arch.

Within the **South Aisle** the openings in the south and west walls all have 19th-century ashlar dressings, and all have segmental rear arches with chamfers to the heads only. The windows have level sills, that of the one in the west wall having a chamfered edge. The window in the east wall is more interesting; it preserves the head of the semicircular rear arch of the original 13th-century lancet, which has with splayed voussoirs, rather like those of the windows under the tower; it was later cut to a shouldered form when the internal jambs were widened to accommodate the present two-light window of 14th century date.

The nave has a roof structure of three bays with hammer beam trusses, the ends of the hammer beams carrying shields each with a raised letter 'V', springing from lobed ashlar corbels; there is also an ashlar band below the wallplate. The trusses have arch-braced collars and carry a collar purlin, with scissor bracing above. There is a single purlin on each roof slope, with windbraces, and ashlaring to the eaves. The aisle roof is contemporary, and again of three bays; more elaborate ashlar corbels carry posts to the principals, which have collars carried by further corbels above the arcade; there is ashlaring to the eaves, a hollow-chamfered wall plate, and a single purlin.

In the east wall of the nave the arch into the **Chancel** is quite lofty and of slightly stilted semicircular form. The much patched jambs (virtually all of their western angles are

restoration) are of plain square plan, with various infilled sockets; above an impost band chamfered on its lower margin (which is extended for the full width of the west face of the wall) the arch is of a single square order, with a separate series of voussoirs to each face of the wall, with a little rubble core exposed between. To the south of the arch is an irregular square-headed squint aligned on the altar, plastered over.



Interior looking east

The internal features of the chancel are all of 19th-century date, except for two recesses, set low down at the east end of the south wall; the broader western recess has been termed a sedilia but in its present position is much too near the floor; the smaller eastern recess has a simple pointed arch, and could have been a piscina, although there is now no sign of any bowl. The larger recess is set in a slightly recessed area of fabric, which would seem to point to it being an in-situ remnant of the medieval building rather than simply a re-set feature, although if this is the case (and if it is indeed a sedile) then the floor must have been around a metre lower than at present. The arch to the vestry/organ chamber is of segmental-pointed form and of two chamfered orders, dying into the jambs, which have a chamfer with broach stops c 0.50 m above the floor. The western window in the south wall has its two lancet lights enclosed by a single broad segmental-pointed arch, with a chamfer to the head, and a level sill with a chamfered front edge; the single -light windows at the east end of both side walls have similar detail. The window in the north wall has part of its sill set forward as a moulded semi-octagonal projection, as a credence table. East of the windows exposed ashlar bands at two levels link to the top and bottom of the ashlar frieze on the east wall, which has an incised diaper pattern with a moulded string above, and a central

tripartite carved panel with a cross flanked by the alpha and omega. Below are four courses of exposed stonework, and above is the eastern triplet, which internally have shafted jambs, and a semicircular enclosing arch with chevron ornament and scalloped capitals to its jamb shafts.

The chancel has a boarded wagon roof with a single truss defining the sanctuary, with wall-posts and arch braces. There is a moulded ashlar cornice to the eaves, below the wall-plate.

Inside the **Vestry**, and behind the organ, the window and doorway in the north wall both have chamfered segmental rear arches, and the window a level chamfered sill. At the north end of the west wall is an ashlar fireplace with a segmental-pointed arch and a hollow-chamfered mantelpiece, with above it a wall safe by Jacob Cartwright of West Bromwich.

Discussion

The earliest analytical account of the church is by Wilson⁷, useful in that he provides a plan and drawing of the church before Streatfield's restoration,. He saw the chancel arch and the jambs of the tower arch as Saxon, the tower as 'Transitional' the south aisle as 'Early English' and its east window as 'Decorated'; he also recalls a great fire 'within memory' after which a new upper storey had been given to the tower. The County History account⁸ sees the chancel arch as Anglo-Saxon, with the lower stage of the tower being of the late 11th century, with the aisle being added c1190 and the upper stage of the tower in the 13th century. The Taylors⁹ class the chancel arch as 'Saxon-Norman'.

The best evidence of Saxon workmanship – but not necessarily date – is the one surviving basal quoin at the south-east corner of the nave; most workers have been led to see the chancel arch as of Pre-Conquest date through its contrast with the tower arch which is fully-developed and quite high-status Norman work, but in itself it has no distinctive pre-Norman features, and is similar to others in churches that are usually thought of as of early Norman date.

It would seem reasonable to suppose that the chancel arch, and the crude rubble masonry that survives in the lower courses of walls defines a simple church of nave and short chancel of c1100 or possibly a little earlier. The west tower may not be that much later, but is a far more sophisticated construction. Its relationship with the earlier nave is unclear; towers were often built on top of the west gables of earlier naves, but here the nave walling was probably too thin – and of too poor quality – to support such an addition, so that all four tower walls were built independently. There is no sign of the quoining that one might have expected at the west end of a Saxon or Saxon-Norman nave, and there is no clear evidence of the actual relationship between nave and tower – whether the tower was built outside the original west end, or whether it replaced a demolished western section of the nave. It is

⁷ Wilson, F.R. (1870) Churches of the Archdeaconry of Lindisfarne, 140-141

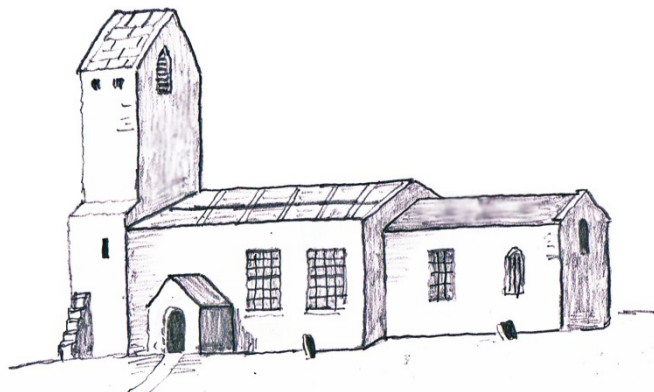
⁸ p396-7

⁹ Taylor, H.M & Taylor, J. (1965) Anglo Saxon Architecture, Vol.I, 324-325

difficult to make sense of the junction between the tower and nave fabrics on the north, and the addition of the aisle conceals their relationship on the south.

The upper part of the tower also poses problems. It is clearly of later date as its fabric is totally different, and its walls do not sit squarely on the 12th-century lower stage. The chamfered off-sets at the top of the phase one side walls would seem to imply that there was a contemporary superstructure of some form, but on the west the off-set seems to have been crudely cut back, and the upper wall is set back behind the line of the original; on the east too there is a big off-set, now internal above the tower arch, and from the manner in which the chamfered off-set of the side walls ends it almost looks as if the whole east wall might have been rebuilt.

Unfortunately the upper stage of the tower seems to retain no datable features. The only evidence we have of its medieval or early post-medieval form is Davison's print of 1825¹⁰, which shows quite an extraordinary structure, a tower considerably higher than at present, topped by an east-west gabled roof of stone flags, with a pair of low square-headed openings below the eaves on the south, and a larger one in the eastward-facing gable. The 1567 reference (see p.1) makes it clear that the church tower at this date was seen as a defensible refuge, which goes some way to explaining the stranger appearance of the



structure; there is also an interesting parallel to the tower of St Peter's Church at Bywell, in Tynedale, which at one stage seems to have both had a gabled roof, and a range of low square openings in each side of the belfry. The date of this upper stage remains uncertain, but would presumably post-date the outbreak of hostilities with Scotland in the later 13th century.

Sketch after Davison's 1825 print

Returning to the medieval development of the body of the church, the County History dating of the south aisle has been dated to c1190 is probably broadly correct, although possibly a little over-precise. It seems possible that the chancel was extended at around the same period – as many other chancels were in the later 12th or 13th centuries – and evidence of such an extension survives in the lower courses of the south wall. However, other later medieval alterations have probably been lost in post-medieval repair and Victorian restoration, other than the buttresses of the tower and south aisle which looks of general late medieval (14th/15th century) character and were probably a response to structural

¹⁰ Woodhorn archive ref SANT/BEQ/18/7/3/203, another copy at SANT/PHO/ALB/3/154

movement. The squint on the south of the chancel arch may well be a later medieval feature as well.

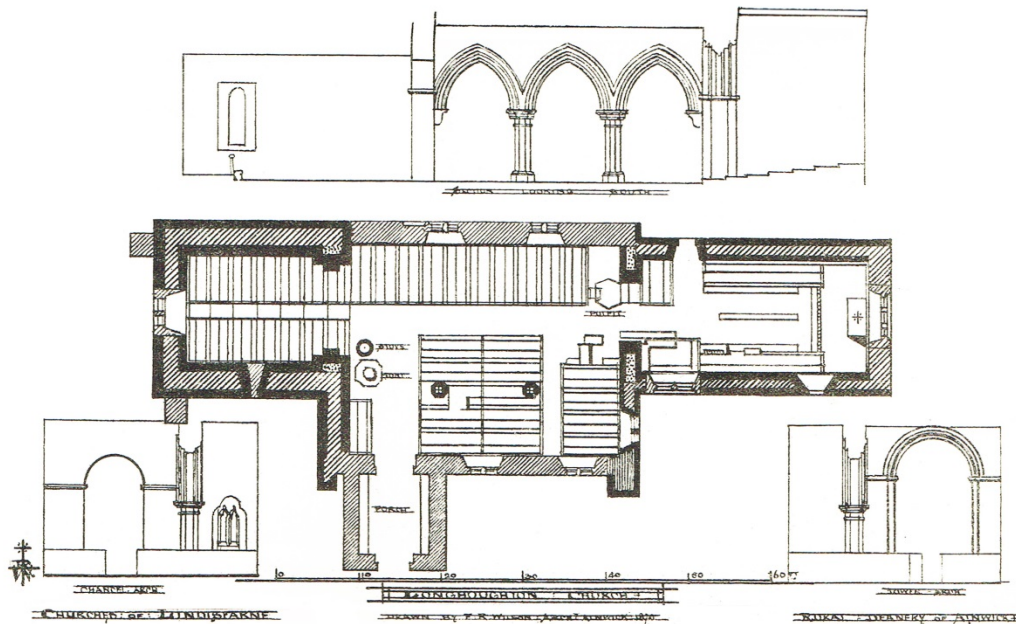
In the post-medieval period there appears to have been considerable repair and rebuilding to the chancel, one phase of which probably tallies with Archdeacon Thorp's 1793 request that its south wall be rebuilt. At some date, possibly in the late 18th century, the south aisle was heightened and a new roof formed, spanning both nave and aisle, replacing the steep-pitched nave roof, the line of which can still be seen on the east side of the tower. This new roof (the line of which is also visible) had a lower pitch and a ridge-line set some distance south of the original. The reason for the heightening of the aisle was probably so that a gallery could be housed within it; what may be the sill of a window which lit such a gallery survives near the top of the east wall of the present aisle. The porch may be of earlier post-medieval date, remodelled in the 19th century.

This brings us to the Davison's 1825 print which shows this new roof (apparently leaded) and two big square-headed sash windows in the south wall of the aisle. A smaller sash is set near the west end of the south wall of the chancel and an arched window further east, whilst the east window seems to be a small one set high in the wall, but it is not clear if the illustration can be relied on as regards detail – for instance the ancient stepped buttress near the south-west corner of the tower is shown, but those supporting the aisle are omitted.

A pencil drawing dated 1836¹¹ inspires a little more confidence than Davison's print, and shows the tower in its present form, implying that the conflagration remembered by Wilson must have taken place c1830. It also shows the taller nave and aisle – in fact the line from which the aisle wall was raised is hinted at – with two plain square-headed windows in the aisle east of the porch, and two quite small windows, the eastern arched, on the south of the chancel.

Further changes seem to have taken place around 1840, when in addition to the documented gallery works (p.1) it would seem the building was Gothicised. Wilson's 1870 drawing (see cover) and plan show the result; the drawing (a south-west view) shows that the heightened south aisle remains, but the two windows east of the porch are now Gothic-arched ones of two lights, and there is a similar Gothic window in the west wall of the tower. The plan shows the aisle with its east but no west window, two two-light windows on the north of the nave, a two-light windows in the east and at the west end of the south wall of the chancel wall; the shading implies that all of these were of recent date. A narrow window at the east end of the south wall of the chancel, and a doorway at the west end of the north wall, were shown as medieval features. No gallery or gallery access is shown.

¹¹ SANT/BEQ/15/3/13/A



Plan after Wilson (1870)

Then came the 1873 restoration by Streatfield, which left the church as it stands today. The south aisle was reduced to more or less its original height and many windows replaced; the upper parts of the nave north wall, and much of the chancel, were rebuilt, and the present organ chamber/vestry constructed.

Archaeological Assessment

As in many medieval churches, the creation of an underfloor heating system in the 19th century will have disturbed underfloor deposits to some extent, but much of value may remain. Any works entailing opening up floors, within the main body of the church should be subject to archaeological monitoring. Similarly, plaster on above-ground wall faces may well conceal either earlier structural features or possible remains of earlier mural decoration, and any disturbance here should also be monitored, although it is clear that the upper parts of the nave and chancel walls are largely post-medieval rebuilds.

One particular note; the section of medieval cross slab built into the external face of the east end is spalling badly and about to lose a significant part of its design. This may be considered worthy of some remedial conservation work.

Acknowledgements

I should like to thank Mr Andrew Willmott, churchwarden, for his enthusiasm and assistance in providing documentary material and arranging access to both church and belfry.

Peter F Ryder, February 2014

**SS PETER AND PAUL, LONGHOUGHTON
PROVISIONAL PHASED PLAN**

