

**INGRAM,  
ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS  
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT  
AUGUST 2020**



*South-east view*

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## INGRAM, ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

Ingram parish church consists of a four-bay nave with narrow aisles and a north-east vestry, a west tower, a south porch, and an aisleless chancel. It is built of squared stone of a variety of types, with Welsh slate roofs.

The **West Tower** has no buttresses<sup>1</sup>; there is a chamfered plinth (with a square step below it appearing at the north-west corner) and a steep chamfered set-back at a little above mid-height. Below the set back the masonry is of coursed squared blocks, many almost square and of 12<sup>th</sup>-century character; above the set-back the fabric is lighter in colour and with more elongate blocks. The lower stage has round-headed lights, with monolithic heads, set quite high on the north and south. Above the set-back there is a square-headed window on the west, and a similar one a little higher up on the south. The belfry openings are the same on all four faces, a pair of blunt lancets with chamfered surrounds, their heads cut into a single elongate slab. All four have sills of red sandstone, which look like 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration. The north wall of the tower has a straight joint only c 0.15 m from its east end, commencing c 4 m above the ground; does this represent the north-west angle of the original aisleless nave? This wall has no openings other than that to the belfry, but just above the set-back and roughly central to the wall is another odd straight joint, for a few courses, which would be difficult to account for if the tower was rebuilt, or completely refaced, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*Tower from south-east*



<sup>1</sup> F.R. Wilson (1870) *Churches of the Archdeaconry of Lindisfarne*, 92 shows a massive multi-stepped buttress at the north end of the west wall, of which there is no sign today.

*North side of tower**Tower from south-east*

The parapet is set on an oversailing hollow-chamfered course, directly above which is a projecting drainage spout in the centre of each face. There is a square-edged coping.

On the east, a little above the nave roof, is the tabling of an earlier roof of the same pitch, rising from the level of the chamfered set-back, to just below the belfry opening.

The lower parts of the south and west wall have quite a number of stones with small circular indents, which could be cup stones, or perhaps more likely impact points from musket balls/

The **Nave** and aisles are covered by a single roof. The nave is virtually the same width of the tower, so that its only external wall is its east gable, which rises some distance above the chancel roof and is of squared coursed stone, which looks old but must be largely 19<sup>th</sup> century as the 1870 drawings show a much lower-pitched roof to the nave. The gable, like that of the chancel, has a coping chamfered on its underside and a ring-cross finial on a cross-gabled base,

The external walls of the aisles are of coursed squared stone in a variety of colours including red, blue and fawn, quite a lot of blocks (including some of the angle quoins) have the look of being re-used material. The windows are all lancets, with double-chamfered surrounds in rough-faced-and-margined fawn sandstone. Despite their superficial appearance of antiquity – the plinth and the buttress to the west of the porch look especially convincing -everything is of 1877-9. Aisles and porch have a chamfered plinth, c 0.30 m above that of

the tower, and the eastern bay of the south aisle has a string, chamfered above and below, below the window.

The south wall of the **South Aisle** is of four bays, with the gabled porch projecting from the first; its outer arch is a two-centred one, double-chamfered, with a hoodmould chamfered above and below; the gable has a coping chamfered on its underside, and a plain cross finial. In the external face of the east wall, four courses above the plinth, is part of a medieval grave slab with a pair of shears. The next two bays, which have a stepped buttress between them, each have a pair of lancet windows and the eastern bay a triplet of equal height. The east end of the aisle has a single lancet.

The north wall of the **North Aisle** has a chamfered plinth but no string; there are three single lancets.

The south wall of the **Chancel** has a chamfered plinth, and a string, chamfered above and below, c 0.30 m above that of the adjacent aisle. It is of two bays, with a single and a double lancet of the same type as in the aisles; midway between their heads is a re-set piece of medieval cross slab. The east end is all of a distinctive pecked stone (also present to some degree in the side walls). The string course steps up slightly beneath the sills of a stepped triplet of lancets, which in this case have neatly-tooled brown ashlar dressings to the inner order, and a richly-moulded outer order (with a hoodmould with foliate stops) carried on shafted jambs that have moulded caps, mid-height rings and bases.

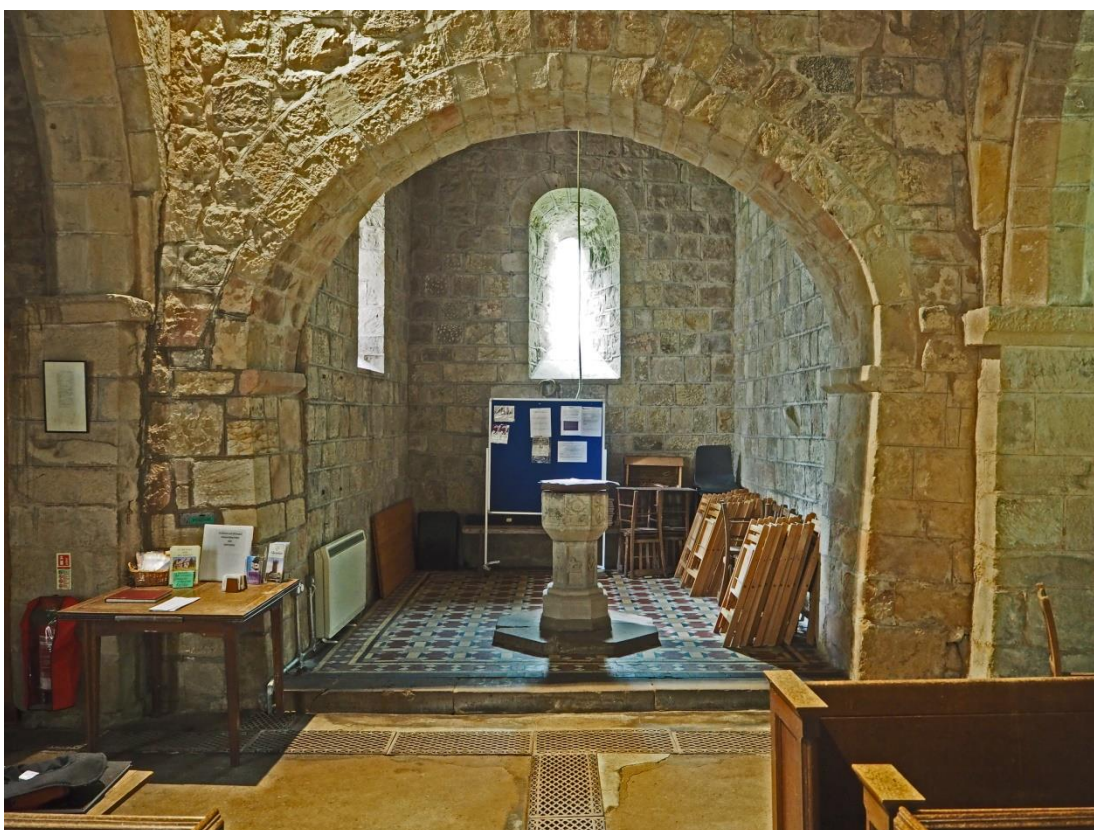
The chancel north wall has the same plinth and string as on the south, and a single lancet close to its west end. 2 m from the east end and four courses above the string is a block with what looks like a cup-mark.

The **Vestry /North Transept** now has a pent roof, continuous with that of the nave and aisles, and only projects a metre or so beyond the nave aisle. It lacks the chamfered plinth of the aisle and chancel walls, and is earlier. Its east wall probably retains medieval masonry although its small chamfered lancet has rough-faced-and-margined dressings of the usual 19th century type, and its north-east angle is capped by a truncated stack (now in poor condition), with sloping offsets on east and west faces. The north wall has a paired lancet of the usual form.

## The Interior

The **South Porch** has stone benches and a simple roof with rafters and a ridge board, and ashlar to the eaves. Re-set in the west wall is part of a medieval cross slab; another section in the east wall is unfortunately concealed by a modern noticeboard. The inner doorway of the porch is something of an oddity, in that what would normally be the external face is set on the internal face of the wall; this is a chamfered two-centred arch; the outer face, which looks more like a rear arch, has plain square jambs but a broad simple chamfer to the segmental-pointed head<sup>2</sup>. The rather attractive double doors (of early 20<sup>th</sup> century date) have heavy traditional ironwork.

The internal walls of the church are all of exposed stonework, although modern ribbon pointing is unhelpful when it comes to a proper examination of the fabric.



*The tower arch*

<sup>2</sup> Honeyman in the Northumberland County History (XIV, 1935, ed M H Dodds) (465) – certainly the best published account of the church - sees this as a feature of 1804; if so it must have been re-set in 1877-90 when the aisle was added. Subsequent references simply to 'NCH'

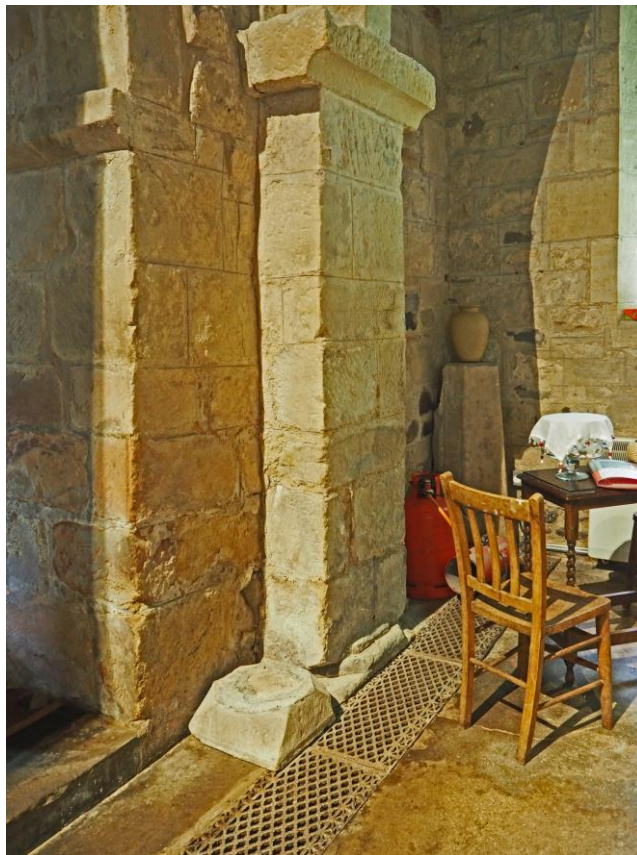
The arch into the **Tower** is a broad one, of slightly depressed semicircular form, and one square order (although towards the nave there is a concentric outer order of voussoirs); it springs from impostes chamfered on their lower angles, and the plain square jambs lean noticeable outwards. Towards the nave the wall above the arch shows rather irregular coursing, with some large blocks; has it been reconstructed? There are indications of a lower roofline to the nave. Towards the tower, there is a single course of blocks above the apex of the arch and then a set-back of c 0.30 m. In line with this on the north is a straight joint between the north wall of the tower and the rubble core of the west wall, whilst on the south a number of large blocks of the original outer face of the west wall project, showing that the cutting-back is a secondary feature.

The internal walls of the tower are of coursed stone, with many very square blocks (as on the exterior); the degree of restoration during the c1899 work is not clear; Honeyman (NCH 467) comments that 'unfortunately many old stones were re-tooled to match the new'. There is a clear straight joint between the west wall of the nave – which had been pointed before the tower walls were constructed (NCH 469). On the north, 1.5 m from the straight joint and c1.2 m above the floor is a stone with a boldly-raised diagonal rib. The windows on south and west have their sills set c 2 m above the floor, and slightly depressed semicircular rear arches, appearing authentic 12<sup>th</sup>-century work. The north wall, a little above the level of the east wall set-back, and a metre or so west of it, and c 1.2 m below the present ceiling, has an open socket, as if for a transverse beam, and there is a patch of mortar opposite which may conceal a southern counterpart.

The interior of the upper part of the tower (access to which entails importing a long ladder) has not been seen; Honeyman (NCH 469) describes squinch arches spanning each corner of the belfry, relating to a lost stone spire.

The **Nave** is of four bays; the arrangement of north and south walls is virtually identical. Each has an arcade of three two-centred arches divided by a short length of unbroken wall from a separate eastern arch, which presumably served transepts. The three-bay sections of the arcade have sharp two-centred arches, each of two chamfered orders, springing from octagonal columns with moulded bases (set on square plinths) and capitals (mostly

somewhat damaged). The western responds are simple blocks of masonry with a heavy impost, hollow-chamfered on its lower angle, although, at the foot of each (and overhung by its faces) is a moulded semi-octagonal base corresponding to those of the piers. The eastern responds are formed by the west end of the unpierced section of wall, which is 1.75 m long on the south but 2.17 m on the north. These sections of wall have a continuous square topped band c 2 m above the floor, which inclines downwards towards the east, hollow-chamfered on its lower angle towards the nave, and forming the imposts of the responds at each end; below the band the wall is faced with squared blocks, including some quite elongate ones. From the outer faces of these blocks of wall narrow two-centred arches, of plain square section, span the reconstructed aisles; both are 19<sup>th</sup> century work.



*Western respond of north arcade*

The eastern (transept) arches are quite different. Although of around the same overall height, they have taller jambs, and are of segmental-pointed form, but again of two chamfered orders. Their western responds are very strange, rising above the impost band of the unpierced sections of wall, but conventional and of full height on the east. Detail differences between the arcades and transept arches are relatively minor. The western respond of the south arcade has remains of incised lettering, which Honeyman (NCH 466) interpreted as a 17<sup>th</sup> century inscription relating to a restoration of the church, later deliberately erased<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Extending over several stones on the east face of the respond; only a couple of letters are now visible, and they have more the look of being on a series of re-used blocks..



*Interior of church looking east*

On the south arcade, when the chamfers of the outer order converge above the pier, there is a stop in the form of an upright trefoiled bud; that on the western pier has been partly cut away but that on the eastern is intact. The eastern respond of the arcade has a swept set-back about a metre above the floor, and the western respond of the transept arch has an early sundial, with holes for a gnomon and pins, which, as it faces east, is presumably re-used. Above it the semi-octagonal shaft of the arch respond, and much of the arch itself, is in 19<sup>th</sup> century tooled ashlar; the taller eastern respond, with its moulded capital and base, looks largely authentic.

*Re-set sundial*





The north arcade is virtually identical, although there are differences in detail between the mouldings of the various capitals, which may reflect later re-cutting. The base of the tall eastern respond of the transept arch is hidden by a raised floor. This arch, and that at the east end of the aisle, give access to the **Vestry** which is largely occupied by the organ, which conceals a piscina, evidence that medieval fabric survives in the east wall.



*Eastern arch of north arcade, with transept arch beyond*

In the east wall of the nave the arch into the **Chancel** springs from imposts little more than 2 m above the floor; in general form it is similar to the arches of the three-bay arcades, with a two-centred arch of two chamfered orders, springing from a semi-octagonal jambs with moulded capitals and plain chamfered square bases. The southern capital is the more damaged, and most of the respond shaft below it is in 19<sup>th</sup> century stone. Immediately above the level of the imposts there is a slight overhang on both east and west faces of the wall, making the upper section thicker<sup>4</sup>, and above this in the north-east

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<sup>4</sup> This oddity is again seen in the arch spanning the west part of the nave at Doddington.

corner of the nave is a rather fine quadrant plan corbel, springing from a little moulded shaft, with lobed leaves carved on relief on its splay. It may have carried the north end of the rood beam; in a corresponding position on the south is a patch of infill where a similar corbel might have been removed.

*Corbel in north-east corner of nave*

On the west face of the wall above the arch are faint traces of an earlier roof-line to the nave; on



the east face there is a set-back at the level of the apex of the chancel arch, on its north side only, then above that are clear signs of an earlier chancel roof, of slightly shallower pitch than at present, with its ridge about 1 m lower.

In the aisles and vestry, all the windows have semicircular rear arches, with chamfers only to their heads, and level ashlar sills; the arch over the triplet of lancets in the south aisle rises to break the internal eaves line.

The chancel floor is set one step above that of the nave; the windows in its side walls have rear arches like those of the aisles, but the more elaborate eastern triplet has a chamfered inner order within a richly moulded outer that is carried on shafts with rings, mounded bases and capitals with nail-head. There is a semicircular-section string below the window sills, stepped up slightly on the east end. Above this, midway along the north wall is re-set the lower part of the low-relief effigy of a medieval priest.

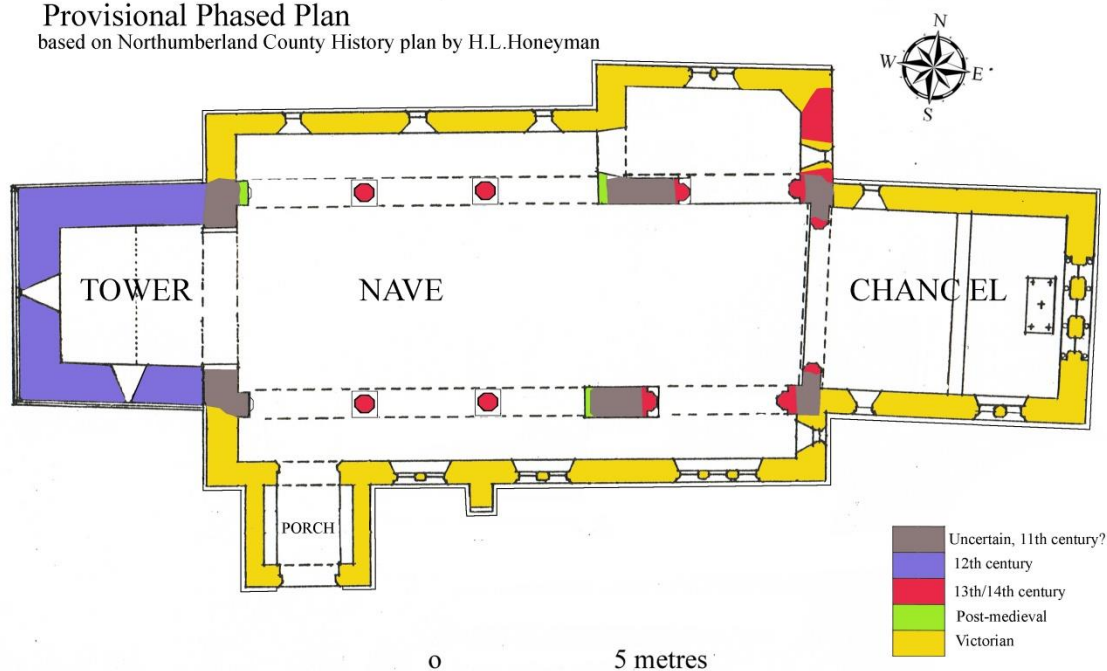
The roofs of the church are all of late-19<sup>th</sup> century date. That of the nave is of five irregular bays, with collar-beam trusses that have ashlaring to the eaves, and carry one level of purlins and a ridge board; the arch braces are carried on shaped ashlar corbels. The aisle and north chapel roofs have no principals, but again have ashlaring to the eaves. The chancel roof is of two bays, with a truss like those in the nave, and boarded eaves.

## Structural History

### ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, INGRAM

#### Provisional Phased Plan

based on Northumberland County History plan by H.L.Honeyman



*Provisional Phased Plan*

Most authorities admit to puzzlement when it comes to reconstructing the structural development of this church, and it is not difficult to see why... As already noted, Honeyman's account in the Northumberland County History seems the best attempt, but may be a little prone to conclusions which go a little way beyond the visible evidence. He sees the earliest portion of the building as the west wall of the nave to which he ascribes an Anglo-Saxon date, to which the lower part of the tower was added in the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century, the tower arch being inserted in the earlier nave wall. This can perhaps be queried; the nave wall has no Pre-Conquest features, and at 0.89 m is rather thick for such an early date. It is absolutely clear that the tower is an addition – it is not

bonded to the earlier wall at all - but the character of its masonry, its lower windows and its chamfered plinth all look 12<sup>th</sup> century work.

So is the tower arch an insertion?, Honeyman thought so, although admitting 'the architect was somewhat rash in making the tower arch of such a span' (NCH 463). One possibility that he does not mention, is that the arch is contemporary with the nave wall, and originally opened into a wider structure, replaced by the present tower. This would be difficult to parallel, but would seem a credible interpretation of the evidence. There is probably no need to postulate any date before 1100 AD.

The lower part of the tower is clearly earlier than the upper, which Honeyman thinks could be of the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century; the twin lancets of the belfry are paralleled at Eglington church, Crawley Tower, and the Gatehouse of Alnwick Castle. It might conceivably have replaced an earlier timber belfry.

Then we come to the nave, where Honeyman is equivocal as to whether the arcade responds and the lengths of wall between them and the transept arches are of early medieval date, or result from a post-medieval repair and remodelling. The western responds of the nave are a key point here, with moulded semi-octagonal bases peeping out from beneath plain square responds. To see these as being inserted as part of an unfinished remodelling of early medieval work seems far fetched<sup>5</sup>; far more likely they survived some late medieval destruction, and were retained when the upper parts of the responds were crudely reconstructed. The lengths of wall between arcades and transept arches would then seem to have been re-cased (in very similar masonry) at the same time. Crude impost blocks/bands with chamfered lower angles are seen again at Lesbury, but again it is difficult to date them.

Honeyman (463) surmised that the early nave probably had transeptal chapels, pre-dating the present arcades and arches which he dates to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but to two separate phases – the chancel and transept arches, and the arcades, the details of which 'are less orthodox and less refined'. His dating here is probably correct, so that by the late 13<sup>th</sup> century – and the outbreak of hostilities with Scotland, the church was of its greatest extent, with three-bay

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<sup>5</sup> Strong evidence against this is shown by the re-use of fragments of an inscription (south arcade west respond) and the early sundial (south transept arch west respond)

aisles to the nave, transepts and quite lengthy chancel. Honeyman (465) suggests that the north transept served as a chapel for the family resident at The Clinch, and the south for the family living at Reaveley

There is little doubt that the church suffered over the long period of the Border Wars, although the only historical reference is to four webs (rolls) of lead being torn from its roof by men from Teviotdale in 1587<sup>6</sup>. Prior to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century works the tower arch was walled up, with only a small door in its blocking, a feature seen again at Bolam, Hartburn, Kirkwhelpington, Newbiggin and Whittingham, and interpreted as an attempt to make the tower into a safe refuge<sup>7</sup>.

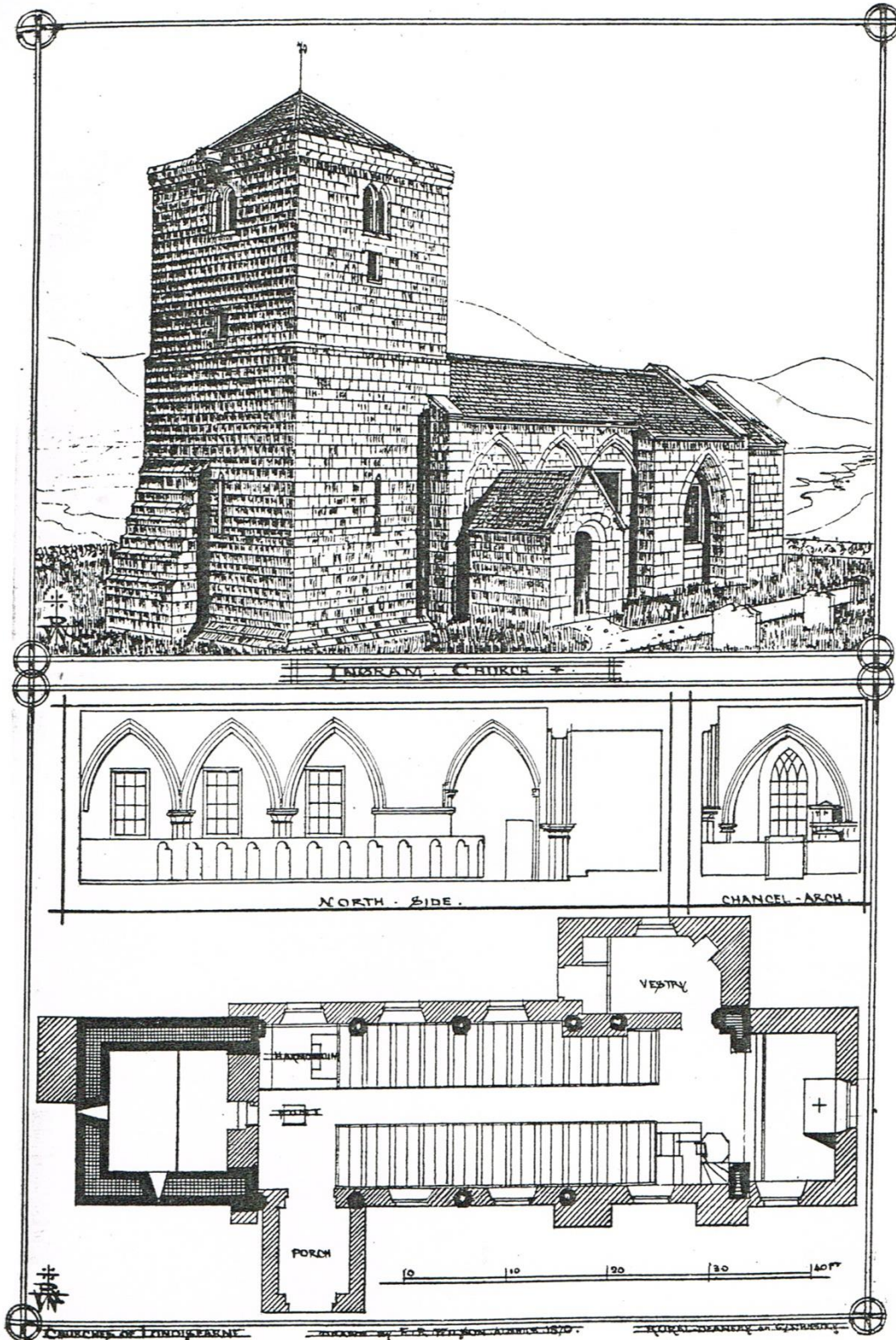
In 1663 the church was described as 'ruinous and destitute' although Honeyman (465) suggests that renovation work had already begun as the font is dated, surprisingly precisely, to March 11<sup>th</sup> 1662. The partial cladding and reconstruction of the nave arcades probably dates to this period. Rather surprisingly the church does not seem to have been reduced in size at this period; that took place rather late, as an increasing number of historical references show. In 1736 Archdeacon Sharpe ordered that the tower be buttressed, and in 1792 comes an order for the stone arches over the aisles (presumably meaning vaults; 'aisles' at this date could equally refer to transepts) to be replaced by slates<sup>8</sup>; there was also a reference to there being three windows on the east side of the north transept, which gives an idea of its size.. Then in 1804 the south aisle (and presumably transept as well) were removed, as well as the stone spire on the tower. In 1825 the Rev Joseph Hodgson visited the church, and noted that the north aisle measured 9.2 x 2.4 m, and the chancel 11 x 4.6 m. At some time after his visit (and before 1870, when Wilson planned the church) the north aisle was demolished, the north transept reduced to no more than a vestry (which it is today) and the chancel reduced in length to a mere 2.4 m.

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<sup>6</sup> Bain, J (ed) (1894-6) Calendar of Letters and Papers relating to the affairs of the Border of England and Scotland. Vol.1, 535)

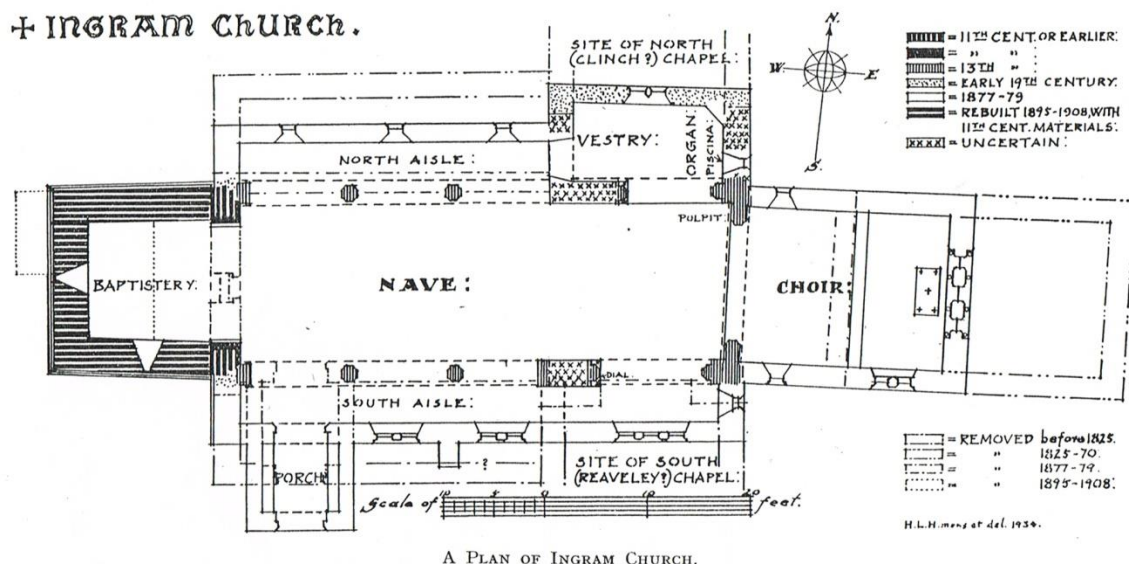
<sup>7</sup> Brooke, C (2000) Safe Sanctuaries: Security and Defence in Anglo-Scottish Border Churches 1290-1690

<sup>8</sup> There is other evidence to suggest that it is the transepts that were vaulted. Hodgson records there being a solid wall between the north aisle and north transept, which would make more sense if the latter were vaulted, as Wilson's drawing shows an arch set in front of the eastern part of the south wall of the nave, which looks like a slice of the truncated south transept, complete with its vault.



Wilson's drawings (1870)

Wilson's drawings show the church reduced to its least extent. A major restoration came in 1877-9, under the Rector James Allgood, in the tragic context of its being a memorial to the rector's wife and two sons killed in the Abbots Ripton rail disaster of 1876. The nave aisles were reinstated – although much narrower than their predecessors, and the chancel was rebuilt again but only to half its medieval length, all in an 'Early English' style which Honeyman (467) opines 'not lacking in dignity but somewhat in originality'. The need for further works became evident twenty years later with structural failure in the tower, which was underpinned in concrete and rebuilt section-by-section, the facing blocks being numbered to allow their correct reinstatement. New stones were 'darkened' to match the old, so the present convincingly ancient appearance of the tower may be somewhat misleading. The same is true of the main body of the church; of the external walling only a scrap of the east wall of the north chapel is genuinely medieval, but the restorer either re-used old stone or finished the masonry to give it the weathered appearance of genuine medieval fabric, which is aesthetically a success but does not help, a century and a half on, in reading the complexities of the fabric.



A PLAN OF INGRAM CHURCH.

*Honeyman's plan, showing extent of previous phases of the building*

## **Archaeological Assessment**

This is an ancient church, perhaps of Pre-Conquest origin, and so any works which impinge on the historic fabric, or below-floor and below-ground deposits, require archaeological vigilance. Deposits and structural remains beneath the floors of the building, despite (as usual) being affected by both generations of burial, and a Victorian underfloor heating system (there is a boiler room beneath the vestry), remain of importance, so any disturbance of them should be accompanied by at least an archaeological watching brief. The same is true for external works close to the adjacent perimeter of the church, as it is known that the footprint of the medieval building was considerably larger than the present one. Honeyman's plan (NCH 464) shows the missing sections, and it is almost certain that remains of their walls survive under the turf, in fact the position of the east end of the original chancel is still quite evident as a break of slope c 6 m, outside the present east end.

When it comes to the above-ground fabric, all wall faces are now bare (albeit encumbered by unhelpful pointing) so there are no concerns regarding historic plaster and mural decoration. Any actual disturbance of the fabric itself will require monitoring, and if re-pointing of the medieval sections of wall (arcades and tower) is carried out, a record of their stonework made when the pointing is removed.

Two lesser matters should be noted. A modern noticeboard in the south porch conceals a medieval grave slab, placed there by the Victorian restorers and intended to be seen; it would be helpful if this were exposed to view again. The upper stages of the tower appear to be only accessed occasionally, when a long ladder must be brought into the church; these have not been examined. If a series of photographs were taken the next time someone is up there, some minor revisions to this report could be made.

**Peter F Ryder August 2020**