

The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin  
**Stamfordham**

An Archaeological Assessment

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*The church from the north east*

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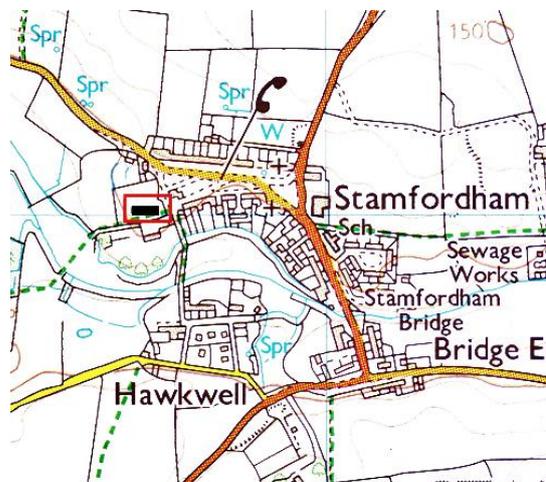
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## The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Stamfordham

Stamfordham, c 15 km north-west of Newcastle, is a classic Green Village, situated on the north bank of the How Burn, one of the headwaters of the little River Pont. The church (NGR NZ 07657201) stands at the south-west corner of the village, on a bluff looking out westwards over the marshy upper reaches of the valley, towards Fenwick and Matfen.



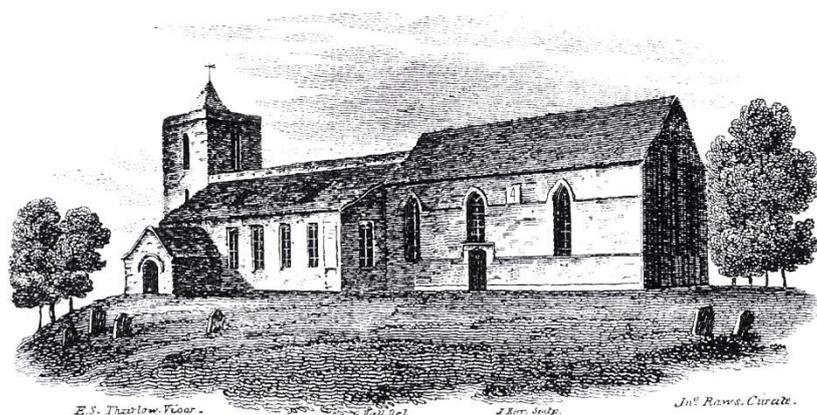
### Historical Notes

In the 1848 restoration of the church part of an Anglian cross shaft, now dated to the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, was discovered, proving there was an early church or monastery here. There is also probable Saxon work surviving at the angles of the nave. Actual historical references to the church are sparse. In the earlier 13<sup>th</sup> century John de Normanville (d.1242) granted the advowson of Stamfordham to the Bernard, [Prior of Hexham and his successors, who resigned it to the Bishop of Durham, in 1245, but to whom it returned in 1304 after the prior and Convent of Hexham petitioned Edward 1<sup>st</sup>. There appears to be little further documentary evidence pertaining specifically to the church until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the building was in poor condition.

### Location Plan

from OS 1:25000 Explorer sheet 316  
Ordnance Survey map licence 10005703

An 1823 engraving of the church by W.Davison, of Alnwick<sup>2</sup> (below) shows the tower with a low spire, the nave with a flat roof, a south aisle with four square-headed two-light



STAMFORDHAM CHURCH.  
North<sup>th</sup>

Published April 12 1823 by W.Davison, Alnwick.

windows to the east of the porch, and another in its east end, and a chancel much as now.

In 1834 Sir Stephen Glynne visited the building in

<sup>1</sup> Northumberland County History XII (1926) 279-280

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p.285

and wrote<sup>3</sup> ‘This church is an ordinary building in bad repair, consisting of a West Tower, nave, side aisles and Chancel, with much of the usual Northumberland and Durham character. The Tower has very thick walls and no West Door – some plain lancet windows and the southern belfry window a double lancet with central shaft – but partly renewed. The windows of the aisles are mostly modern. The Tower opens to the nave by a low pointed arch on imposts. The nave opens to each aisle by 4 pointed arches on octagonal pillars with square bases – the Western ones having foliated capitals – the Eastern responds are clustered small shafts – and the Chancel arch springs from similar corbels. At the E. end of the S aisle is a plain pointed niche with drain. The Chancel has at the East end 3 fine long lancets with rich mouldings continued all the way down. On each side of the Chancel 3 lancets upon a string course, a North door leading to the vestry has a depressed trefoil head. The South door is a late Perpendicular insertion. On the N. side of the chancel is a flat arch in the wall with fine flowered moulding, and beneath it the effigy of a knight, now hidden by an ugly tomb to one of the Swinburnes of 1527. In the S. wall is a fine trefoil niche with piscine, having excellent mouldings, also an arch in the wall and 2 monumental effigies, one an ecclesiastic, one a cross-legged knight. The font is an octagonal bowl on a similar stem surrounded by 4 small shafts. The interior is dark and there is a hideous west gallery’.

1844 sketches of the church<sup>4</sup> show the east end of the chancel, with the outer lights of the triplet having square heads, and the old font; a note states that ‘the taste of the debased age has tortured the building with sash windows’.

The 1847 faculty for the restoration<sup>5</sup> includes an 1845 report on the church by the architect for the restoration, Benjamin Ferry, which describes it as ‘shattered in its general construction’ and ‘unsafe to allow to remain in its present condition as any unusual severity in the approaching winter may hasten its destruction’. The arcades had been forced inwards by the heavy covering of the aisle roofs, and needed to be taken down and rebuilt; in addition ;the present galleries have tended to increase the evils’...’should the church be rebuilt these incongruous erections may be dispensed with’. He saw the tower as ‘much injured by early settlements’ but now quite safe. Notes with the faculty state that the ground level all round the church was to be lowered by two feet, and that the eastern angles of the chancel were to be taken down and rebuilt, and the flat heads of the outer lights of the eastern triplet were to be replaced by ‘proper arched heads’.

The faculty includes a ground plan of the church and some elevations; the plan shows tower, arcades and all of the chancel in dark blue, meaning that it was intended to retain these, although no vestry is shown, and the proposed elevation of the east end bears shows three equal-height lancets with a trefoil light in the gable above, quite different to the present one of three stepped lancets.

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<sup>3</sup> Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle, 3<sup>rd</sup> series III (1907-8)224-5)

<sup>4</sup> Woodhorn Archive, sketchbook ref SANT/BEQ/15/6 p.34-35.

<sup>5</sup> Woodhorn Archives ref DN/E/8/2/1/49

## Description

The church consists of a west tower, a four-bay aisled nave with a south-western porch, and a three-bay chancel with a north vestry. The north aisle extends rather further to the west than the south, partially embracing the tower. The roofs are all of shaped red tiles, with serrated tile ridges.

## The Exterior

The **West Tower** rises in four stages, each slightly set-back and divided by chamfered off-sets, the lower two slightly proud of the wall. The first off-set is c 2 m above the ground, the second at mid-height and the third just below the belfry, topped by an odd recessed course, above which a chamfered off-set carries the plain parapet. In the centre of the west side of the tower is a big stepped buttress with four-sloping set-backs, rising to the second off-set; in the angle between it and the tower wall to the south is an irregular projection, apparently part of some earlier feature – it might possibly represent the



south-west corner of the putative Saxon porch that pre-dated the tower. The lower stage of the tower has a lancet window on the south, immediately above the first off-set; its head is cut into a large block with an unusual stepped extrados; at the same level there is a blocked lancet in the western buttress. The second stage of the tower has a small lancet on the south, again with the peculiarity of its head being cut into a shaped block, this time of rough semi-cruciform shape.

There has been an opening on the west at this level, but it has been infilled except for a narrow slit utilising its south jamb; the original form of its head is not clear.

There are one or two puzzling features at belfry level. The uppermost chamfered off-set stops just short of the east end of the north wall of the tower against a couple of projecting blocks of the course above it, and it does not reappear on the northern part of the east wall (much of which is now covered by the high-pitched nave roof), although it is there on the south. The southern belfry opening is a pair of lancets, with roll-moulded surrounds and a shaft between, which seems to have worn remains of a capital. There are also remains of a hoodmould, the apex of which seems to have been removed by the recessed course. On the west and north are single lancets, again in roll-moulded surrounds; disturbed masonry shows that the western opening has been the northern of an earlier pair of lights; this stage of the tower has clearly been much shaken by structural movements and subsequently patched<sup>6</sup>. On the east the heads of a pair of lights are visible on either side of the ridge of the present roof, and these seem to have semicircular rather than lancet arches. The parapet has small square openings on the north, east and south.

### **The Nave and Aisles**

All the external masonry of nave, aisles and south porch is of 1848, with the limited but important exception of the corners of the south-western nave quoins in the angle between tower and south aisle. This is clearly in-situ work, and leaning outwards, so in the lower wall it is wholly concealed, but further up appears as a projection. The angle quoins are clearly substantial blocks of Anglo-Saxon character, and probably of megalithic side-alternate form, although this cannot be substantiated. It is likely that similar early fabric survives at each angle of the nave, but at the others it is totally concealed by later additions, although there is a short length of straight joint close to the south end of the east end of the north aisle, above the upper string course – no large quoins are visible, so it is difficult to know what it represents, although it must indicate the survival of some pre-1848 fabric.

The 1848 work is of roughly-coursed and roughly-shaped stone, which was almost certainly re-used from the earlier nave and aisle walls, with new dressings of finely-tooled fawn sandstone ashlar. The tops of the nave walls, exposed above the aisle roofs, are in effect a blind clerestory and are divided into four bays by ashlar pilaster buttresses which carry a chamfered oversailing eaves course.

The aisle walls have a tall steeply-chamfered plinth, all of ashlar, and two moulded bands, continuous on all three walls, one at the level of the sills of the windows and the other carried over their heads as a hoodmoulds; the side walls are divided into four bays by stepped buttresses, their uppermost portions shallow pilasters like those on the nave wall above, linked by an eaves cornice which in this case is carried on variously-carved brackets. At the east end of each aisle there are pairs of similar buttresses set back slightly from the angle, which is chamfered, with a broach stop at the base. The west end of the north aisle is unbuttressed, but the west end of the south aisle has a buttress near its south end. Each bay of the side walls has a pair of lancet windows in simple chamfered surrounds, with alternating-block jambs, and there are narrower but similar single lancets in the east wall; the west walls

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<sup>6</sup> Metal plates mark the ends of tie-bars, close to the west ends of the north and south walls of the second and third stages.

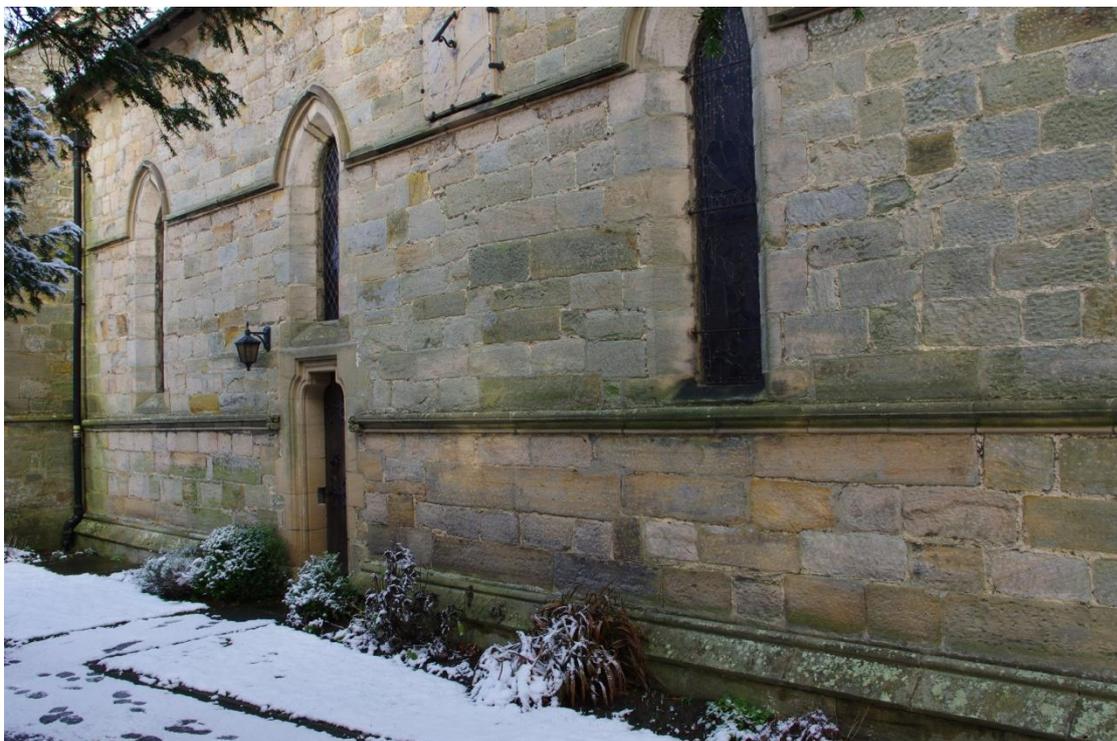
are windowless. The end walls have ashlar copings, hollow-chamfered on the lower edge, carried on deeply-moulded kneelers.

In the south wall, above the east wall of the porch and in the second course below the upper string, is a section of a medieval cross slab grave cover, re-used as a walling stone.

**The South Porch**, projecting from the westernmost bay of the south aisle, has a two-centred archway with a moulded inner order carried on attached shafts, and a double-chamfered outer order; there is a moulded hoodmould with mask stops, a lady to the west and a bishop to the east; there is an outer or relieving arch in roughly-shaped stone above the hoodmould. The gable above has kneelers and a coping like those of the end walls of the aisle, and a cross fleury finial.

### **The Chancel**

The south wall of the chancel is of coursed squared stone, including some very elongate blocks (up to c 1 m in length); at the east end, above the lower string, is an area of quite different pecked stonework. There is a 19<sup>th</sup>-century ashlar plinth, topped by a roll moulding, and deeply-moulded strings at the level of the sills of the three lancet windows, and forming a hoodmould to their heads. The lancets are quite large, and have broad chamfered surrounds; the central one has its sill at a higher level, being set above the priest's door, which has a deeply-moulded shouldered arch in 19<sup>th</sup>-century ashlar; the lower string is terminated in a foliate boss on either side of it.. Immediately to the east of the doorway a walling stone with '1727 / BD 1727' incised may be part of a headstone, and fixed to the wall between the central and eastern lancets, above the upper string, is a fine sundial dated '1768' with the text 'while we have TIME/ let us do good unto all men.'



*The south wall of the chancel, looking west*

The east end of the chancel has stepped buttresses set slightly back from each angle, and two taller ones on either side of the central lancet of the eastern triplet; the plinth and lower string are continued from the side walls, but the three stepped lights have individual hoodmoulds. The lower wall, between the plinth and string, is of coursed squared stone; the mid-section of the wall is of ashlar and the gable squared stone again; the gable has kneelers and coping like those of the aisle and porch, and is topped by a ring-cross finial.

The north wall of the chancel is all of coursed pecked stone; there are three lancets, as on the south, with a projecting vestry set between the central and eastern. The dressings of the lancets look of 19<sup>th</sup>-century character, although their dressings do not course in well with the wall fabric; there is only one string course, below their sills. On the east of the vestry the plinth has a moulded top, as on the south and east; to the west it is a simple chamfered one like that of the aisles. Close to the west end of the wall, directly above the string is a small fragment of a medieval grave slab.

### **The Vestry**

This has a steeply-gabled north end with a shouldered and chamfered doorway, with a trefoil light above, whilst on the east is a window of two shoulder-arched lights. The best feature is the chimney stack capping the north-east angle, which has a tall octagonal shaft carrying a lantern with a trefoil-headed vent in each face, under a pyramidal cap. The side walls have a chamfered oversailing course to the eaves. There is a boiler room beneath, reached by a flight of steps down on the west, to a much-eroded chamfered square-headed doorway.

### **The Interior**

The interior of the church is plastered, except for exposed dressings.

Inside the **South Porch** there is a stone paved floor; various carved stones have been set into the side walls, two pieces of cross slabs and a slab (from a tomb?) with two angels holding shields on the west, and a cross slab on the east. The roof is of two bays with arch-braced trusses set centrally and against the end walls, carried on moulded ashlar corbels.

The inner doorway of the porch has a two-centred arch with a double hollow chamfer; internally the opening has a segmental-pointed rear arch, with the internal sill string carried over it as a label

At the west end of the **Nave** the tower arch is a relatively small opening of steep Tudor-arched form, and of one square order, springing from imposts chamfered above and below, which are continued as a hoodmould which has a slightly ogee apex. The dressings have a parallel tooling of late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century character. The nave arcades are each of four bays, with broad segmental-pointed arches of two chamfered orders, with a hoodmould towards the nave chamfered on its lower angle, springing from octagonal piers set on quite tall square plinths. The western responds are of semi-octagonal form, the southern having a square base and the northern a taller semi-octagonal base; their moulded capitals are either re-cut or restoration. The western piers are distinguished by their quite elaborately carved capitals with foliage ornament; the northern is clearly 19<sup>th</sup> century work but the southern,

although very well preserved, is markedly different in character and would appear to be medieval. The other capitals, and the bases (some of 'holdwater' section) all vary slightly in form and proportions, and are probably old work re-cut. The eastern responds are more elaborate, having triple shafts (the central with a fillet) carrying a moulded capital, and springing from smaller shafts which in turn seem to have risen from stone screens which would have once closed off the eastern bay of the arcades. Then stub end of the southern screen survives, showing it to have had a steep roll-moulded coping, although lower down the respond has been cut back to a plain square-edged pilaster. The northern respond, partly concealed by the pulpit, was probably of similar form, but the lower section has been more harshly cut back.

The western arch of the south arcade is of odd asymmetric form and almost looks to have been widened; the manner in which the arch springs diagonally from the capital is most odd. It is difficult to see Ferry reconstructing it in this form, and thus raises the question as to whether the entire arcades were taken down and rebuilt as is generally thought.



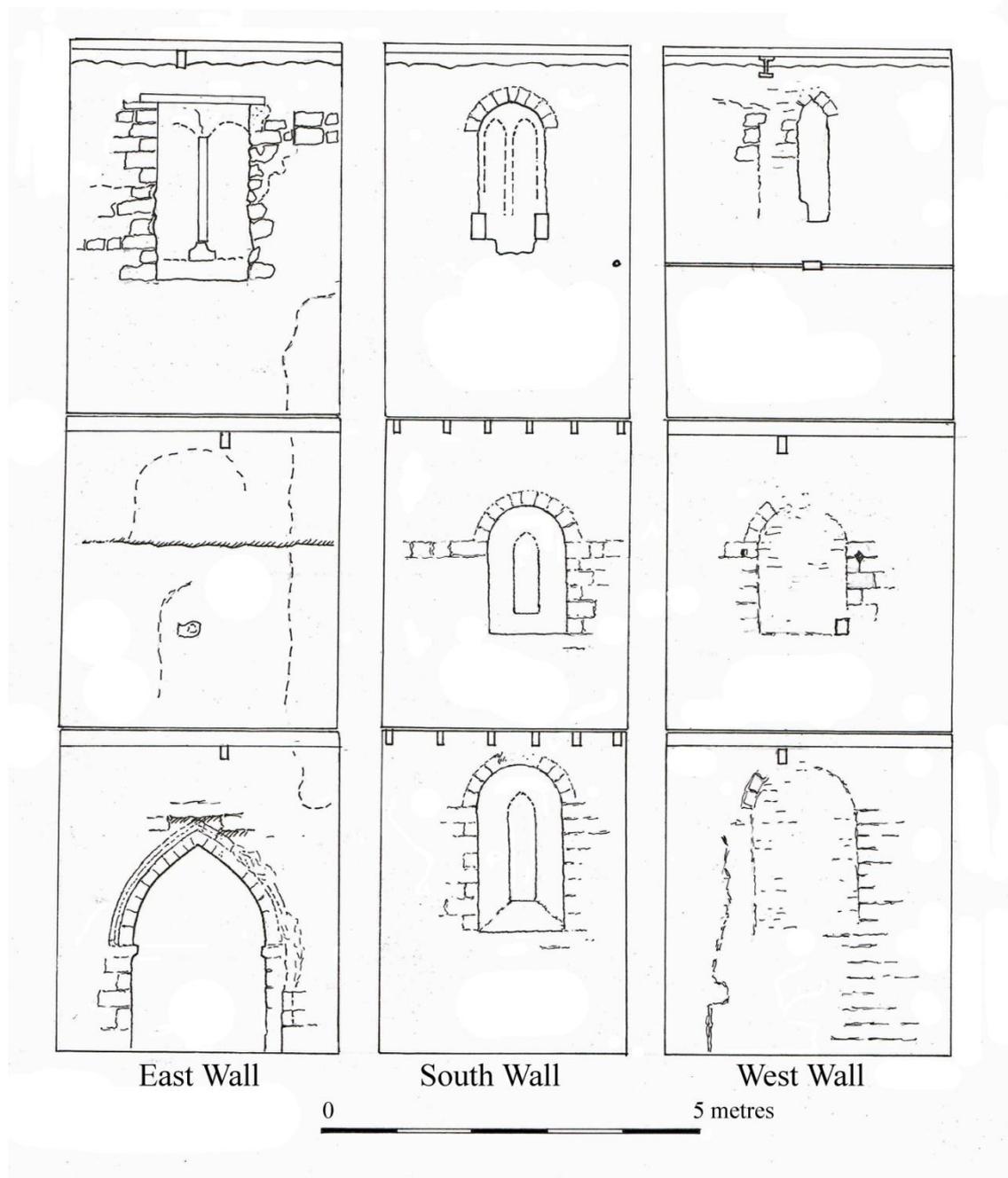
*Interior looking east*

The nave roof is of four bays, with trefoil-cusped trusses springing from carved ashlar corbels, with an intermediate pair of plain principals in each bay, carrying one level of purlins and a ridge.

The **Tower** is entered by the arch in the west wall of the nave, which contains a pair of modern boarded doors; on the other side of these the opening is in a very different form, and not easy to make sense of. The impost band in its unrestored forms, is square above and hollow-chamfered below, but very decayed, especially on the south. The inner order of the arch which springs from it, of simple square section, looks either restoration or re-cut, but the outer 'order' was left untouched. This begins above the north jamb as a normal hoodmould, chamfered below, but by the time it reaches the apex of the arch the wall face

has bulged forward and overhangs it raggedly by 10cm or more, making it very clear that the present arch is an insertion in older fabric. This hoodmould/outer order is much damaged on the south side of the arch, where the whole wall thickens and the jamb steps out, as if to take a full outer order; this step has a broad chamfer starting a little above the floor, but as it rises this is so badly damaged (apparently by fire) that the whole profile of the arch is lost.

St Mary's Church, Stamfordham  
Internal Sketch Elevations of Tower



The east wall of the lower stage of the tower, above the arch, is of coursed but quite irregular fabric, in contrast to the other three walls which are of better-coursed diagonally-tooled stone

which, together with the near semicircular rear arches of the south and west (blocked) windows is of typical 12<sup>th</sup>-century character. At the south end of the east wall, high is, is what looks like an infilled socket (modern cables come through here, so it could be relatively recent) but above it is a slightly recessed column of disturbed masonry which rises to c 1.5m above the floor of the third (belfry) stage of the tower; it is difficult to say whether this is the result of structural movements, or just possibly the removal of the south wall of an earlier and rather narrower tower or storeyed porch (see Structural Development section)

A steep ladder stair rises northwards against the west wall to a trapdoor in the first floor, which is of relatively recent timberwork. At first floor level, as on the ground floor, the south and west windows have neat semicircular rear arches of 12<sup>th</sup>-century character.; the latter, now blocked, has a socket cut into the uppermost block of each jamb. A short length of beam projects from the lower right-hand corner of the blocked opening, set at the same angle as the splay of the jamb. On the east wall there is a rough setback c 2.50 m above the floor, fading into the wall at its north end. Above and below it are indistinct traces, perhaps of openings, although heavy pointing confuses matters – in addition there is much stored material here, hiding parts of the wall. 1.6 m from the north end of the wall and 1.2 m above the floor is a stone with a roughly circular socket cut into it.

An old ladder rises to the second floor, all the timberwork of which is again recent. Here there is much of interest. On the east the original belfry opening now forms a large recess, its sill 1.8 m above the floor, now holding a slatted wooden framer. Behind this the outer face of the opening (now infilled with rubble as it is largely covered by the steep-pitched Victorian roof of the nave) has been a two-light window which still has its central mullion still in place, and depressed round arches to its lights. The inner jambs of the opening, cut square to the wall, are of interest. The lower part of the northern is of very rough fabric, as if crudely cut through a pre-existing wall, in contrast to the upper half which is faced in well-squared fawn sandstone of 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century character. The south jamb is of more irregular stonework. The opening now has a timber lintel which looks relatively recent, although with older ones behind; just below this level and c 0.50 m from the south wall is a short length of straight joint difficult to explain.

In the south wall of the belfry is an opening with its sill 2.2 m above the floor, c 2 m high and 1 m wide, with its jambs set square to the wall and a two-centred arched head, all formed in squared fawn sandstone, clearly contemporary with the twin-lancet external opening and of 13<sup>th</sup> century character. The opening in the west wall has been of the same type, but its southern half has been blocked up - this is more clearly visible inside than out – and the remaining northern part has a very irregular arch made up of re-used stones. The opening in the north wall is of similar character but has always been a single light.

Inside the **Aisles** the internal sill string is continued round all the walls; the windows all have pendant rear arches in the form of a single chamfered rib, and beneath the easternmost in the south wall of the south aisle is a re-set piscina with a simple pointed and chamfered arch over a rounded recess containing a circular bowl, with drain, its front edge slightly projecting from the wall. Re-set in the adjacent east wall of the aisle is a damaged medieval stone reredos.

The aisle roofs have arch-braced half-trusses carried on moulded ashlar corbels. The west end of the north aisle is occupied by the elaborate 1623 tomb of John Swinburne of Black Heddon.

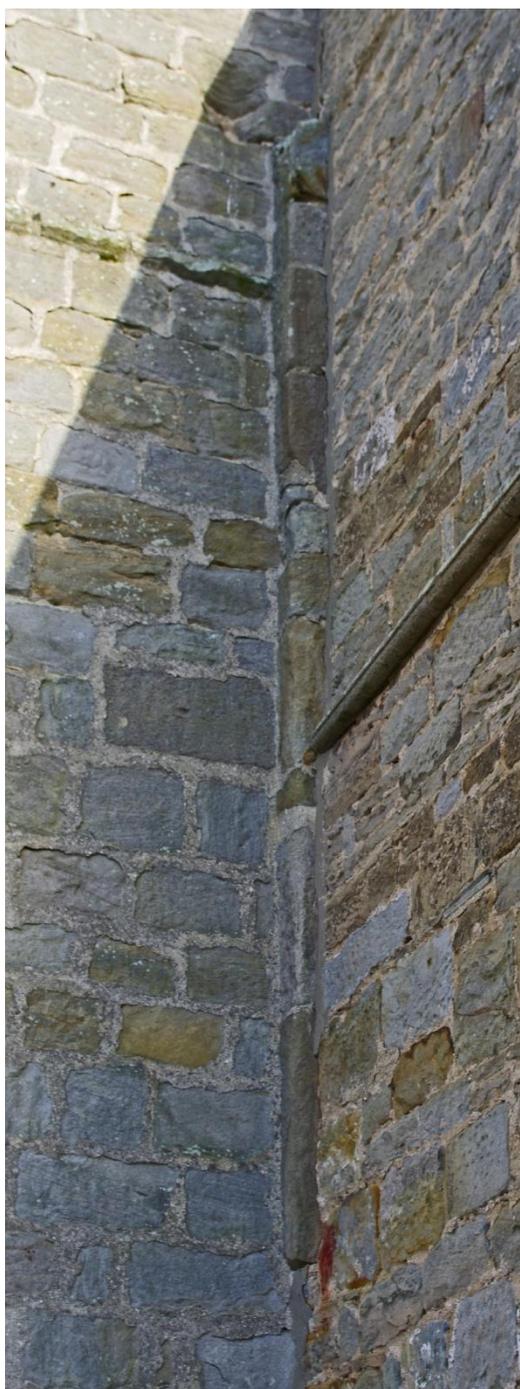
Two steps lead up from the nave into the **Chancel**; the chancel arch springs from responds very like those at the east end of the arcades, except that the triple shafts spring from a horizontal moulding which has been cut away at its east end, presumably to accommodate a chancel screen. The arch itself is a pointed one of two chamfered orders; on the east the chamfer of the outer order is continued to a lower level and ends in broach stops.

Inside the chancel there is a moulded sill string which seems 19<sup>th</sup>-century restoration in its present form; on the south the western section of it (beyond the priest's door) is set at a slightly lower level; on either side of the door it terminates in foliate bosses, and on either side of the vestry door in cruciform stops. The priest's door has a shouldered rear arch with a double hollow chamfer, and the vestry door a shouldered arch with a chamfered surround, but quite elaborate mouldings to the shoulders. There are two steps up into the sanctuary, which has segmental-arched tomb recesses on each side. That on the south, a little to east of the priest's door, has a chamfered inner order and swept moulding to outer, and now holds a knight's effigy. The northern recess, to the east of the vestry door, has a more elaborate moulding including dog tooth and holds a priest's effigy. At the east end of the south wall is an elaborately-moulded piscina with a trefoiled arch that seems largely restoration, although the octofoil bowl is old. On the east wall the string course is set at a slightly lower level; the richly-moulded surrounds of the three lancets above seem at least in part old. The boarded wagon roof is of 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

### **Structural Development**

Despite its partial rebuilding in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, this is an extremely interesting church which has not received the antiquarian attention it merits. The discovery of an 8<sup>th</sup> century cross shaft during the 1848 restoration (now in Durham Cathedral) points to an early ecclesiastical settlement (perhaps a monastery) but the surviving Pre-Conquest fabric in the present building has received little attention, other than some mention of a 'Saxon arch' in the tower. The most obvious Pre-Conquest feature is the megalithic quoining at the south-west angle of the nave, just visible in the angle between the tower and south aisle. It would seem likely that similarly early fabric survives at the other three corners of the nave, but is now concealed externally as the north aisle extends west to partly embrace the tower, and the chancel is appreciably wider than the nave. The proportions of the nave – almost exactly 4:1 internally – and its thin side walls (c 0.60 m) are both characteristically Anglo-Saxon, and could well indicate a Northumbrian church, perhaps as early as the late 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century, of the same era as Jarrow, Corbridge, Monkwearmouth and Hexham. The whole west wall of its nave may survive, and may have had a western porch (cf Corbridge and Monkwearmouth) attached; the set-back seen on the east side of the first floor of the tower seems unrelated to any floor level in the present tower, which would appear to have been constructed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, with its belfry added in the 13<sup>th</sup>. There same wall shows possible evidence of a removed wall returning west just inside the present south wall of the tower; was this the south

wall of a narrower porch? There is also the odd projecting masonry at the foot of the west wall of the tower, on the south of the added buttress, which might just possibly represent the south-west corner of such a porch. This putative earlier porch may have suffered from structural problems; one of the functions of the 12th-century tower was to buttress the older west end, which was clearly leaning outwards by this time, as can be seen both internally, and externally in the overhang of the south-west quoins. Other early features may well survive in the west wall, but are concealed by plaster towards the nave, and heavy pointing within the tower.



*Nave South-West Quoin*

It seems likely that the 13<sup>th</sup> century arcades were pierced through the side walls of the Saxon nave, so that early fabric would survive above them, but records of the 1818 restoration seem to indicate that these were taken down and rebuilt, at least in part; the odd distorted form of the western arch of the south arcade would be an odd feature for even the most fastidious Victorian restorer to replicate, so it may be that early fabric survives above this, but as both faces of the wall are plastered it is impossible to tell.

The character of the stonework of the tower (especially on the internal wall faces) and the semicircular rear arches of the windows of the lower stages is unequivocally Romanesque and presumably of 12<sup>th</sup> century date. The external heads of the two windows on the south are unusual in two respects. One is that both are cut into shaped blocks of semi-cruciform form, a real oddity closely paralleled at Warden in a tower that is of late Saxon character (11<sup>th</sup> century?), so have they been re-used? The heads however have lancet arches, unlikely before 1200 – possibly this is a secondary up-dating, made when the belfry was either added or remodelled in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Three of the belfry openings clearly date from this phase, but the fourth, on the east, is a real puzzle. It survives intact, but partly concealed externally by the high-pitched roof of 1818. Inside an old wooden slatted frame prevents it being closely inspected; from what can be seen, it has a central shaft or mullion with an odd shaped base, and rather depressed round arches to the lights, a form that could either be of 12<sup>th</sup> century date, or

perhaps much later medieval. The internal north jamb shows two clear structural phases, neat-squared stone above very rough fabric, but which comes first? Was there a 13th century opening that had its sill cut down into Saxon fabric beneath to form a much larger opening in the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century, or was there an early opening at a lower level that was heightened in the 12th or 13<sup>th</sup> century to create the present opening? . The much-mutilated tower arch is probably 13th-century as well, to judge from its two-centred form, although the impost, of what survives of them, look more like 12<sup>th</sup> century work.

Leaving these puzzling matters, one comes to the phase of medieval work for which Stamfordham is best known, the 13<sup>th</sup> century, in Northumberland a period of relative peace and prosperity before the long wars with Scotland began in its closing decades. All over the North of England the 13<sup>th</sup> century was a period of rebuilding and enlarging chancels (cf Bywell St Peter, Ovingham) and Stamfordham is, or was, one of the best. Although Benjamin Ferrey initially thought that the chancel did not need to be rebuilt, it looks as if he did reconstruct the north and east walls, renewing or replacing their old features. Despite this the chancel is very much in its 13<sup>th</sup>-century form. The nave arcades are similarly relatively authentic, even if taken down and reassembled and the capital of the western pier of the south arcade is a good piece of stiff-leaf sculpture, easily distinguishable from its northern counterpart which must be Ferrey's.

From the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century come five centuries that have left no architectural evidence, quite a common absence in Northumberland churches given their troubled later medieval history, and the reluctance of Victorian restorers to allow any 'debased' features – in which they included most post-medieval work- to survive. The tower clearly suffered some



vicissitudes at a relatively early date, resulting in structural movements that needed the addition of a western buttress, and the walling up of several openings, to counteract them. How much this damage was exacerbated by deliberate damage during some Scots raid is uncertain, but two pieces of evidence point towards this being a possibility. One is the clear evidence of fire on the west face of the south respond of the arch, and the other is the fact that Benjamin Ferrey's 1845 plan does not show any tower arch, but a narrower doorway, set south-of-centre, rebated on its eastern face, ie towards the nave, so that it could be secured from within. Walling up of tower arches to convert the tower into a defensible retreat occurs in several Northumberland churches (cf Hartburn).

*1844 sketch of Chancel*

It is clear that the church was also altered in the post-medieval centuries; many windows had been converted into sashes. The square-heads of the flanking lights in the eastern triplet shown in the 1844 sketch were probably also later alterations, to facilitate easier glazing. Galleries were also inserted, as both Glynne and Ferrey regretted. All this was swept away in 1848 by Ferrey's scheme, which was said by some to have left the church 'over-restored' (Nikolaus Pevsner) but this is a little unfair, if one accepts his word of the structural necessity for major works, the universal desire at this time to return buildings to an idealised medieval form, and the excellent quality of the work had carried out.

### **Archaeological Potential**

Stamfordham, with its potentially 'early' Anglo-Saxon origins, is clearly a church of considerable archaeological importance. The complexity of its structural history means that evidence of earlier building phases almost certainly survives beneath the present floors, and in the churchyard adjacent to its walls, although as usual sub-surface deposits and structural remains will have been disturbed by the usual centuries of burial and the construction of an underfloor heating system

Any works that entail disturbance of underfloor deposits will require at the least archaeological monitoring; this also goes for works in the churchyard. It should be borne in mind that, especially in the immediate vicinity of a church building around which accumulated ground levels may have been reduced (to reduce damp problems), articulated burials may be encountered at relatively shallow depth.

The internal wall faces of the church are largely plastered. In the case of the west wall of the nave and the south wall of the chancel, probably the only major areas of medieval masonry to survive in the main body of the building, it is possible that earlier plaster, and possibly wall paintings, are concealed. Any substantial disturbance or removal of plaster in these areas ought to be accompanied by a detailed inspection to ascertain whether remains of early plaster or pigment survive on the wall faces behind, and to allow proper archaeological recording to take place of either plaster or the complex fabric of the walls themselves.

The tower is obviously of peculiar interest and complexity, so any works here should be accompanied by detailed archaeological recording – note that the drawings provided with this report are no more than sketches.

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