

St Lawrence, Warkworth

Analysis of the Fabric and Archaeological Assessment

St Lawrence's parish church lies at the lower end of Warkworth village, on the south bank of the River Coquet. It is a substantial building containing some of the best Romanesque work in Northumberland, and consists of a nave with a west tower, a five-bay south aisle with a south porch, and a chancel with a vestry on the north.

The Exterior

The **West Tower** is built of squared stone, and rises in three stages, without buttresses but with a square stair turret that projects from the south-west angle. There is a steep chamfered plinth (its full height of four courses is only exposed on the north) and chamfered set backs below the lower stage windows, and between the three stages.

The lower stage has narrow lancet windows, with chamfered surrounds, on west, north and south; the windows of the second stage (on west and south only) are of similar proportions but have segmental-arched heads. The stair turret is entered from the south by a low square-headed doorway, its sill c1.5 m above the ground and reached by a straight flight of narrow stone steps. There has been much recent refacing of the turret, especially on the west. A triangular-headed loop on the south, immediately above the first-floor set-back, is all in new stone; further up in the same wall is a plain square-headed loop; the turret has a sloping top mid-way up the third or belfry stage. The set-back at the base of the belfry is broken by the clock face, which is supported by two shaped stone corbels. On the east side of the tower, towards the north end of the wall and not far below the belfry, old illustrations show a square-headed opening, perhaps a doorway, cutting through the original roof-line; it would have given access onto the low-pitched late-medieval nave roof. This was blocked in 1860 when a steep-pitched roof was reinstated, but the infill of its top right-hand-corner is just discernible externally.

On the north the second stage of the tower is devoid of any opening, although slightly to the left-of-centre is what appears to be the sill and lower jambs of a small blocked window; apparently truncated by a change to slightly-different stonework, suggesting a partial rebuilding from this level. There is a much clearer change in fabric, on all three exposed faces of the tower, about 1 m above the set-back at the base of the belfry; above this is a change to masonry with more elongate blocks, many of much redder sandstone. The belfry openings are pairs of broad lights two-centred arches; those on the west are walled up to half-height, whilst those on the east are overlapped by the present ridge of the nave roof.

Above the belfry two moulded over-sailing courses carry the parapet which is in a darker more olive-green stone. Behind the parapet rises the octagonal broach spire; this has a small ogee-arched doorway at the foot of its south face, with a raised surround that may have been moulded or ornamented, but is now badly weathered. Above are a series of lucarnes with trefoiled heads under small gablets; there are two in each principal face, and one at a level midway between them in the diagonal faces.

The **Nave** is one of the largest unaisled Romanesque examples in the North of England (27.6 by 7.7 m internally), and survives relatively intact except for its south wall. The greater part of the north wall is constructed of coursed ashlar, the blocks often almost square but the courses varying in height; the more-elongate blocks at its head represent the 19th-century heightening.

Broad pilaster buttresses articulate the elevation into five uneven bays. At the foot of the wall is a plinth with a 45° chamfer, aligned with the fronts of the buttresses and consequently of bold projection in the recessed bays between; the buttresses themselves have a second similar plinth directly above.

There are two string courses; the lower, forming the sill of the windows, is chamfered above and below, with a groove at the base of the vertical face. The upper, carried over the windows as a hood, is badly weathered, but seems to have had a billet moulding on its lower face, although this is only recognisable over the westernmost window. At the head of the wall, flush with the pilasters, is an oversailing chamfered course carried over the recessed bays by 19th-century ashlar corbels carved in imitation of the genuine remnants of a corbel table surviving (at a lower level) at the southern angles of the nave.

The five windows have narrow chamfered surrounds and arched heads that are nearer segmental than semicircular in form, and have been further distorted by structural movements. That in the westernmost bay is markedly narrower than the other four. Most have had their sills renewed, and all have had the two blocks of the string course that lie directly below them replaced in 19th-century ashlar.

The broad pilaster at the east end of the wall has a shallow rectangular projection, extending almost its full width, which accommodates the narrow stair giving access to a chamber above the chancel vault, now entered by a small square-headed doorway, clearly a secondary insertion, with its sill c 0.9m above the present ground surface (the original access was internal. Above is a round-arched loop with a chamfered surround; both sill and jambs look relatively recent restoration. The top of the projection dies back into the wall just below the 19th century heightening.

The western edge of this pilaster has been cut into by a small square-headed light, with a chamfered surround, inserted low down at the east end of the nave wall, with its head below the lower string. The principal window in this bay is unrestored, except for the replacement of two blocks of the string directly below its sill.

The wall has a series of what may be infilled putlog holes, which appear secondary as they are often cut into two or more stones; they occur at two distinct levels, in the third course below the lower string and the fourth above it, apart from a pair of rather different triangular holes (also infilled) just above the upper string on either side of the window in the third bay.

The blocked north doorway is set in the broad pilaster between the third and fourth bays. It has a slightly-distorted semicircular arch of two orders, each with quite a narrow chamfer, springing from badly worn imposts that seem to have had a horizontal groove and a hollow chamfer beneath. The simple chamfer of the inner order is continued down its jambs, but the outer order is carried on jamb shafts with scalloped capitals and moulded bases, again much eroded. The impost band is continued around the raised vertical strip formed by the outer edges of the pilaster, which are continued up to the lower string, forming a square frame to the doorway arch; above the string is a sunk triangular pediment-like panel, its form echoing the early gable-headed openings seen in the earliest Post-Conquest work at Durham, Jarrow and Norton. Above the panel the upper string runs horizontally across the pilaster; higher up it appears as if the pilaster might itself once have had a gabled top; the r. slope seems to be visible, but later stonework makes the area hard to interpret.

The doorway is infilled by quite elongate blocks, characterised by a rough pecked tooling; they

may be as late as the 19th century. Below, the lower of the two chamfered plinths forms a rather disturbed threshold; curiously there appears to be a chamfer here upon the lower angles of the blocks as well – a puzzling feature, which might almost lead one to wonder whether the entrance to a later vault was contrived here.

West of the doorway the fourth bay is partly concealed by a massive secondary buttress which almost restricts its window, and overlaps the next pilaster as well. Above the window there is a line of very thin blocks, perhaps a levelling-up course for the 19th-century heightening. The buttress has a series of chamfered off-sets, and a steep chamfered plinth on its sides (concealed at the north end as the ground surface now rises away from the wall); it is constructed of roughly-squared stone (now badly weathered, more so than the earlier wall against which it abuts), and shows evidence of structural movements. There has been some 19th century refacing both low down and again near the top.

A second buttress is set against the western third of the fifth bay, a chamfered off-set on its east face preventing this encroaching upon the earlier window. The buttress has irregular chamfered off-sets on its north face like its eastern counterpart, but is built of rather better-quality squared stone, and has a narrower chamfered plinth (best seen on the west). Just above it is a moulded corbel which together with the broken stump of another c 0.60 m to the east, seem to be the only remnants of the original wall-head corbel table on this side of the church.

The west end of the nave is now largely covered by the later west tower; originally it had three windows; the springing of the arch of the upper string course as it rises over the northernmost window is exposed north of the tower.

The two strings round the eastern angles of the nave, then each steps down c 0.50 m to return eastward along the chancel walls. The upper parts of the gable are a 19th-century rebuild; old masonry survives to a rather higher level on the south, where a surviving section of the original eaves string-course can be seen to abut against a raised roof tabling for the original chancel roof, which had an eaves-line c 0.30 m above the present one. The moulded kneelers, gable coping and ring-cross finial are all mid-19th century, as is the circular window in the gable with its Romanesque-style, a typically Victorian over-egging of the pudding.

The broad **South Aisle** is of five bays, with the south porch covering the second and part of the third bays. The walls of the western bay are of squared and coursed whitish stone, perhaps 12th-century work re-used from the demolished south wall of the nave; however to the east of the porch the lower two third of the walls are of large blocks of squared light-orange sandstone, with the smaller whitish stone above. There are narrow stepped buttresses between the bays and set diagonally at the angles; the shallow plinth has two hollow-chamfered steps, and there is a hollow-chamfered string below the oversailing parapet, which has a moulded coping, and the stubs of finials or pinnacles above the buttresses; the parapet is broken by a number of large stone spouts.

The windows of the aisle all have flattened four-centred arches in surrounds, which are not coursed in with the adjacent walling, that have broad but shallow concave or casement mouldings. In all cases the frames are medieval but the tracery entirely 19th-century. The two windows in the west bay are each of three lights, with a transom at mid-height; the lights above and below the transom all have cinquefoiled heads, and the window in the south wall in addition has panel tracery above the upper lights. Both have hollow-moulded hoodmoulds with turned-back ends.

The three three-light windows in the south wall to the east of the porch, and the five-light east window, have neither transoms nor hoodmoulds; all have cinquefoil-headed lights with panel tracery over. The oversailing course at the base of the parapet is stepped up above the head of the east window.

The **South Porch** is built of good squared coursed stone, of near-ashlar quality; despite the difference in fabric, it appears of one build with aisle wall behind, having the same plinth, narrow diagonal buttresses, eaves cornice and parapet. Its outer arch, now coated in Roman cement, is of four-centred form, and has a moulding of two continuous hollows and a hollow-moulded hood with turned-back ends. Directly above is an 18th-century sundial, and above that a square-headed window of two trefoil-headed lights. The window looks wholly 19th-century, but the old moulded course below the parapet is stepped up over it. The parapet above has an old eroded finial cross with an open quatrefoil at its centre.

The side walls of the porch each have a chamfered square-headed window to the porch itself, and the east wall has a window to the room above, that has originally had a four-centred head, later cut square, within a square frame. There are traces of a corresponding window, now blocked, on the west. The east wall has a projecting rectangular stair turret at its north end, which looks of the same build as the porch although the plinth is not continued round it. The turret has a chamfered square-headed doorway on the east with above it a hollow-chamfered loop, and a buttress-like sloped slab cap.

The **Chancel** is constructed of coursed neatly-squared slightly olive-coloured sandstone, very like the nave. Its elevations follow the same scheme as the nave with pilaster buttresses, plinth, string courses and round-headed windows. The side walls are each of two bays; on the north all but part of the western bay is covered by the later vestry.

On the south the pilaster buttress at the west end of the wall has a small arch in rough stonework at its foot, which looks relatively recent and presumably relates to a drain or pipe. Almost all the stonework of the adjacent western bay is 19th-century restoration; the bay contains a priest's door with a round-headed arch of two orders, the inner with a chamfer that is continued down the jambs, the outer with a roll between two hollows, carried on jamb shafts with scalloped capitals; the hoodmould and imposts are of the same section as the strings. All of this, except perhaps parts of the outer jambs, is of 1860 as is the window above, and the corbel-table at the wall head, which has a form of tegulated or sunk-triangle ornament on the blocks between its corbels, between the corbels. An engraving of a south-east view (Wilson 1870, f.p.82) shows a broad two-light window with a segmental-arched head in this position with a square-headed priest's door below; both have the appearance of being post-medieval work.

The east bay of the south wall is more or less undisturbed 12th-century work; close to its west end is a very narrow blocked doorway, extending down to the plinth, and having a lintel straight on its lower edge but shaped to a shallow gable above, with a semicircular relieving arch over. The window over is of the usual type; the corbel table above has four old corbels, so weathered that they have lost their original form.

The masonry of the only part of the north wall of the chancel exposed, two-thirds of the western bay, is surprisingly well preserved; this is the only point at which unrestored sections of the string courses retain their original profile. The round-arched window has only the slightest of chamfers; the corbel table has two old corbels, and original sunk-triangle ornament on the blocks

between them, showing that the Victorian reproduction on the south is more or less correct¹.

The east end of the chancel seems to have been largely rebuilt above plinth level; the stepped triplet of round-headed lights is certainly all of the mid-19th century, as is the gable above with its circular window in a billet-moulded surround, and gable with kneelers carved with raised flowers, coping and ring-cross finial. Old illustrations (Wilson 1870, Northumberland County History) show a large Gothic-arched window here with Y-tracery dividing it into two broad lights that have intersecting Gothick glazing bars within them. Like the window in the west bay of the south wall it looks of late 18th or early 19th century date, although the outer frame may have been medieval.

The **Vestry** is rectangular, with a low-pitched roof gabled east-west. Its east wall is quite complex, with a chamfered-back c 1 m above the ground running from the north-east angle but dying out half way along the wall, short of a blocked square-headed doorway set hard up against the north-east angle of the earlier chancel. There is a square-headed window with a chamfered surround (and a grille of iron bars that look quite recent) and above it a window of two chamfered lancet lights, its mullion and the centre part of its head renewed.

The north wall is of coursed square stone with some very large blocks near the base; the masonry shows various irregularities and infilled sockets. The two lower windows are 19th-century paired lancets, although each has signs of the sill of an earlier opening beneath it²; above the western is chamfered lancet that seems medieval; further east a 19th-century stack rises from the eaves.

At the foot of the west wall of the vestry are steps down to the boiler room beneath it, which seems of no great age. Above these is an odd little window, formed by a single slab pierced by three narrow round-headed loops; despite its unusual form it looks to be 19th-century work, but immediately above it, at mid-height in the wall, is a chamfered lancet that seems convincingly medieval. At the south end of the wall, 0.5 m above ground level is an old stone spout, somewhat damaged, projecting from the wall.

The Interior

The internal wall faces of the main body of the church are all of exposed masonry, except for the vault in the chancel which is plastered apart from its ribs.

In the basement of the **Tower** the east wall is in fact the central portion of the original 12th-century west front; its two intermediate pilaster buttresses are exposed, although the northern is partly concealed by the brick flue (from a former boiler room beneath) that rises the full height of the tower. Between the buttresses the lower string has been cut away, as on the internal face of the wall, by the inserted round-headed opening. The window above has a narrow chamfer to its external surround, and the upper string carried up over it as a hoodmould. The first floor of the tower, of old broad boards, is carried on a number of old heavy north-south beams.

¹These sunk triangles are seen again on three blocks re-used in the east wall of the south aisle, between the north jamb of the window and the angle quoins of the 12th-century nave, and on three blocks in the internal face of the west wall of the aisle, just below the sill of the window. The writer initially interpreted these as pieces of a tegulated grave cover, but now considers them more likely to be parts of a similar eaves cornice, almost certainly from the south wall of the nave.

²The pre-restoration north view given in the County History shows each of these windows as a plain square-headed 12-pane sash.

The tower basement has a boarded door set c 0.40 m above that of the stone floor at the foot of the newel stair at the south-west angle, which is accessed by a shoulder-arched doorway. A few steps up the newel the external doorway is broken through the south wall; a number of the individual treads of the stair have been restored in concrete. The second floor is entered by a plain square-headed opening that never seems to have been rebated for any doorway. Around 1.8 m above the first floor there is a marked set-back on north, south and west walls, which would appear to mark the level of a removed floor³; the stepped internal sill of the west window at this level is cut down well below the level of this set-back. Below the set back on the north, c 1 m from the brick flue that rises at the north-west corner, is a length of straight joint that is difficult to explain unless it relates

The east wall represents the external face of the upper part of the 12th-century west end; the heads of the two pilaster buttresses seen below are visible at floor level, with two shaped corbels between them, carrying a string course chamfered above and below; above this the wall face is set-forward to the level of the front face of the buttresses, and appears to remain of undisturbed Romanesque fabric to the full height of the stage. There is now a wooden 'balcony' within this stage, set a little above the level of the removed floor; at balcony level the southern window has a roughly-shouldered rear arch.

The second floor of the tower, the base of the belfry, is carried on four heavy north-south beams, which have received the additional support of four 20th-century girders laid east-west immediately beneath them. There is a slight set-back on north, west and south walls just below the old beams, and beneath this, in the centre of the north wall, a single small and rough corbel

The newel stair continues to the belfry to which it opens by a plain square-headed opening; it is clear externally that the present belfry is either an addition or a rebuilding, and this is evident here as well from the manner in which the last few steps of the newel disappear into the wall. The belfry is of importance in that the medieval bell frames still survive; these are of rather unconventional type, but basically consist of two parallel pits orientated north-south, with sills, (concealed by the modern floor), long heads, and posts with heavy arch braces from posts to head (Pickford type 6N). At the foot of the east wall is a bench-like feature⁴, supporting a timber plate from which two posts rise to a beam at the level of the heads of the frames⁵. A short modern ladder gives access to a platform carried on top of the frames, from which a small doorway opens onto the parapet.

The spire is carried by a segmental squinch arch spanning each corner of the belfry; its interior has several series of rough corbels and beam sockets, which would appear to be related to its constructional phases.

The north and west walls of the **Nave** are of squared and coursed stone with diagonal tooling typical of the 12th century, and have string courses similar to those on the exterior, at the levels of the sills and heads of the round-arched windows. Each of these windows has a rear arch of

³Or possibly a level from which the tower has been rebuilt; see description of external face of north wall.

⁴Possibly the top of the surviving 12th-century west end and perhaps representing a pre-tower bell-cote.

⁵Possibly the had beam of a third eastern pit, now redundant.

two orders, the inner chamfered, and the outer, which has a roll moulding, carried on jamb shafts with scalloped capitals and moulded bases; some of these rear arches are considerably distorted in form.

There have been three such windows in the west end, the outer now blocked by the side walls of the tower, and the central one having had its sill considerably raised by the insertion an opening beneath it, which breaks the lower string, re-used blocks of which are returned as its impost moulding. The opening, technically a tower arch as it has no rebate for any doorway, has its jambs cut square with the wall and a semicircular head without any moulding or decoration. The wall above the windows is plain except for two head corbels which carry the westernmost tie-beam of the 1860 roof, with which they appear contemporary.

The internal face of the north wall of the nave wall is of good-quality ashlar, generally with a light diagonal or vertical tooling; it is not clear how much this is a genuine survival of the original finish or the result of later re-cutting. There are two string courses, each square-topped, with a groove at the bottom of the vertical face and a chamfer below; the lower forms the internal sills of the windows (considerably below the level of the external openings) and the upper forming in effect an impost band for their rear arches, which are of two orders, the inner square and the outer roll-moulded and carried on jamb shafts with scallop capitals and moulded bases, well-preserved in contrast to the eroded external dressings, although the arches themselves are cracked and distorted. The internal splay of each window head is rendered and lined to simulate stonework; the steeply-sloped internal sills are also of render. Westward from the window of the second bay an offset develops, five courses above the upper string and immediately above the window rear arches; a further five courses above this a course containing a number of eroded blocks seems to mark the top of the original walling. The 'Romanesque' corbels that carry the wall posts of the Victorian roof are immediately above this. In the western part of the wall, from the fourth bay window, a second offset develops above this course.

Close to the east end of the wall is a blocked square-headed doorway, the original access to the stairway up to the chamber over the chancel. The render concealing its brick infill is lined to simulate ashlar. There has been a slightly-recessed tympanum under a semicircular or segmental arch above the lintel, but this has been partly cut away by the inserted window, which has a deep splay to its east jamb whereas its west is set square to the wall – clearly the opening was intended to shed light on the east wall of the nave, where an altar may have been situated. The internal lintel of the opening is of 19th-century ashlar; a pre-restoration drawing shows a shouldered rear arch. Immediately to the west of the blocked door, below the internal sill of the window, are the remains of another opening, perhaps an aumbry, now infilled with 19th-century diagonally-tooled ashlar. Below this, and extending for some distance to the west, is an area of darker-coloured stone, which must relate to some previous fittings (perhaps a dado). Just beyond the end of it, and a little west of centre of the easternmost Romanesque window, is a shallow vertical cut in the wall face that aligns with a slot cut through the lower string, which must again relate to some lost fitting. The string now ends beneath the east jamb of the original window, and was presumably cut away when the later square-headed one as inserted.

The rear arch of the north door is quite tall; the lower string, which is set well below the springing of its head, has been continued across the infilled opening in 19th-century ashlar. The central few voussoirs of the original semicircular arch have been replaced at some time by a single horizontal block. The lower part of the infill of the opening is rendered.

Below the western jamb of the fourth-bay window is a major structural crack, beyond which a length of the lower string has been roughly hacked back flush with the wall. There are a number

of infilled sockets in the next panel of walling; one immediately below the string (immediately to the east of a brass plaque to Stephen Thompson d1886) and another above, one partly infilled by a brick set vertically, and a pair higher up and further west. Above these are two vertical slots cut through the upper string.

There is another serious crack below the window in the fifth bay; above it and a little to the west is a block in the lower string that looks like 19th-century ashlar but has a mason's mark – so is this simply a shallow re-tooling? Nearby in the western splay of the window is another mason's mark which looks quite genuine.

The newel stair at the north-east angle of the nave is now reached by the small external doorway; from inside the stair it can be seen that the blocking of the original doorway is brick, and unlikely to be older than the mid-19th century. The stair rises as a spiral, then more shallowly in a narrow (c 0.40 m wide) slab-roofed passage, which angles to continue in the thickness of the east wall of the nave, above the chancel arch. It ends with a hatch c 0.70 m square in its east wall which provides a rather awkward access into the roof space above the chancel vault, and a small and irregular opening in its south end that links to the quatrefoil loop above the chancel arch (see below).. An old illustration (County History) shows a blocked round-headed doorway high in the external face of the east wall of the nave, so that the present hatch must be of 19th-century date. Viewed from the chancel roof, below the hatch is a cut in the wall for the low-pitched chancel roof replaced in 1860⁶, and below that a ragged off-set in the wall, immediately above a neat step or ledge which may have carried the timber floor of the original upper chamber. The roof-space is now floored by the rubble extrados of the vault; between its bays, where a metre or more of the internal face of each sidewall is exposed, are a pair of sockets (that in the south wall now blocked) that are difficult to explain unless they relate to a tie-beam that pre-dated the vault.

The nave roof of 1860 is of 10 bays, and of trussed rafter form with scissor braces; the tie-beams are carried on wall-posts, with solid quadrant brackets, the posts resting on pseudo-Romanesque carved corbels.

The 15th-century south arcade is of five bays, the westernmost considerably narrower than the other four. The piers are of quatrefoil plan, with small additional shafts in the angles; the bases and capitals are moulded, and the piers (except for the westernmost) rise from square plinths; beyond each respond the wall thickens⁷, the step having a chamfer to its full height. The responds are in effect half piers; the eastern shows some interesting features; towards the nave its base has been roughly cut back, but towards the aisle there is a projecting lower course with a bevelled edge, probably the original plinth of the 12th-century nave; in its upper surface, adjacent to the respond, are a cut socket and a groove, possibly a drain, which might conceivably relate to a former piscina in this position. The base of the western respond is largely concealed by the organ. The arches are moulded with a series of broad hollows, and have hoodmoulds, again with hollow mouldings. In the spandrels above the first and second piers (from the west) there are raised stone shields, now plain, and just below the wall-plates there is a moulded oversailing course, towards the aisle cut back over the westernmost bay.

The east wall of the nave has a string-course, of the usual section, forming the impost of the

⁶Showing that the masonry up to this level must be original; the wall above (including the hatch) looks to have been largely re-faced.

⁷This is presumably a surviving section of the 12th-century south wall.

chancel arch, which was originally semicircular but has been forced into a virtually four-centred form by settlement. The arch is of two orders; the inner has a broad demi-roll flanked by hollow chamfers, and the outer a roll flanked between two hollows. The broad hoodmould is in two parts, the inner bearing incised fan-like motifs, and the outer a moulding which in section comprises a pair of triangles with a line of small balls between. Both orders of the jambs have half-shafts with cushion capitals. Above the arch is a small quatrefoil loop, of 19th century date, linking to the mural passage that gives access to the chancel roof.

On the north of the chancel arch is a 14th-century image recess with trefoiled ogee arch and moulded surround. At the south end of the wall, immediately above the string, is a semi-octagonal corbel that must have taken the south end of the rood beam; there is a rough cut out above, in the adjacent section of the south wall.

In the **South Aisle** the south doorway, inside the porch, has a four-centred arch, with two hollow mouldings and a raised roll between that has springs from moulded bases, but has no capitals. The casement-moulded hood has turned-back ends. The rear arch is of segmental-pointed form with a chamfer to its head only. The windows of the aisle have flattened Tudor-arched rear arches with shallow casement mouldings, similar to but slightly deeper than those of the external surrounds. There is no evidence of any opening communicating with the parvise over the porch, although evidence might be concealed by old painted panels hung on the wall above the south door. There are two piscinae in the eastern part of the south wall, the first, set between the fourth and fifth bay windows, has a semicircular chamfered arch and traces of a cut-back bowl; a little further east, immediately west of the fifth window, is an infilled socket c 0.5 m above the level of the window sill. This presumably relates to a former screen which must have formed the reredos for the altar served by the first piscina. The second piscina, to the east of the fifth (easternmost) window has a flattened four-centred arch and a shallow bowl, its hoodmould having been chiselled back.

At the head of the south wall is a hollow-chamfered oversailing course just below the wall-plate. The low-pitched aisle roof is of ten bays; the cambered ties are moulded on their soffits, and carry a moulded ridge, purlins and wall-plate. The big shaped brackets beneath trusses 2,3,4,5,6, look C19, as does the moulded bracket for the truss against the east end wall.

During the 2009 works scaffolding allowed a close access to this structure, and the removal of boards showed that the visible timbers were in fact technically a ceiling, with a low-pitched pent roof above. On the north an irregular series of vertical posts (c 0.60 m high but varying from between 100 and 300 mm in diameter) recessed into a wall-face of very rough stonework carried a roof-plate made up of a series of timbers, scarfed together in a variety of ways. Some of these were clearly re-used pieces; the plate in turn carried the rafters of the present roof. The roof superstructure falls into two distinct parts; the eastern, in which jowelled softwood struts (19th century?) rise from joists to carry a purlin and the western in which simpler straight struts rise from the ceiling frame to rafters. It was not easy to ascertain exactly which elements of the ceiling/roof frame date to the construction of the aisle c 1400, and which to subsequent periods, either of general remodelling or of periodic response to the continuing structural problems suffered by the buildings.

The **South Porch** has a quadripartite vault with moulded ribs springing from corbels at the corners, and a blank shield on the central boss. There are old stone benches at either side. The only access to the upper floor of the porch, the parvise, is through the external turret on the east. This contains a newel stair (renewed in concrete), which has clearly been cut into the earlier porch wall, the line of the original external face appearing as a straight joint, and the internal

face of the wall rib of the porch vault being exposed alongside. The parvise has bare stone walls; the square-headed doorway to the stair, set at the north end of the east wall, has a hollow chamfer to its south jamb and a plain one to its lintel. Hacked-back masonry and blackening indicate that there was once a fireplace in the north-west corner. The mutilated internal jambs of the two-light window on the south clearly indicate that this is a widening of an original opening, probably of a single light. The blocked window in the west wall now forms a splayed recess, in which a small wooden cupboard is set. The low-pitched roof of the porch is carried by eight cambered tie-beams, of plain square section.

The **Chancel** is of two bays. The wall face is set back slightly at the level of the string course which forms the sills of the windows, and from which the wall-shafts; single at the angles and paired between the bays, rise to carry the quadripartite vault, which has its diagonal ribs richly ornamented with zigzag; the arched rib that divides the bays is however more simply moulded. The windows have rear arches of two orders. the inner square and the outer roll-moulded and carried on jamb shafts; the skewing of their splays is explained by the Northumberland County History as resulting from the builders' problems centring their openings to both internal and external wall-bays. The capitals of the vaulting and jamb shafts are all of cushion type, in contrast to the slightly more elaborate scalloped capitals of the shafts in the nave.

Virtually all the stonework of the western bay of the south wall, including both priest's door and the window above, is of 19th-century date; the door has a segmental rear arch with a chamfer to its head only. An aumbry-like recess has been formed in the upper part of the internal opening of the early priests door in the eastern bay, with an added chamfer to its surround; there is a second similar recess near the east end of the wall, with a chamfered surround that looks to have been re-cut in the 19th century.

On the north of the eastern bay, the shouldered doorway to the vestry looks all c1860; the wall to the east of it looks to have been re-faced, but has some odd irregularities in its coursing; at its east end is another old square-headed aumbry, in a chamfered surround with cuts that suggest that it a door was once fitted.

The three windows in the east end, with their shafted jambs and moulded rear arches, are all of c1860, but at either end of the wall are older attached shafts (with cushion capitals), now carrying a moulded arch of roughly four-centred form that spans the whole width of the wall; the outermost few voussoirs at each end look ancient.

The present chancel roof, above the vault and only accessible via the narrow stair in at the north-east corner of the nave (see nave description) is of 1860, and of three bays. A pair of wall-plates rest on the top of the side walls, and support the tie-beams of king-post trusses; both head and feet of the king-posts are jowelled, and they carry two levels of purlins and a ridge board.

The floor of the **Vestry** is raised four steps above that of the chancel, and its internal walls are now bare of plaster, although their lower parts are hidden in places by modern furnishings. On the south is the external face of older chancel; the window in the eastern bay remains as a glazed opening; its hoodmould has been formed by the upper of the two string courses, most of which remains, although the part above the window has been cut back. The lower section of the pilaster buttress to the west has been cut away, in part to accommodate the present vestry door; in the short section of wall exposed to the west of this there is a small socket, just below the 'ghost' of the hacked-back lower string-course.

On the west the mid-height lancet and odd little three-light opening below share a common

shoulder-headed rear arch, 19th-century ashlar at mid-height in its splays suggest that two superimposed openings have been knocked into one.

On the north, a 19th-century fireplace in the centre of the wall is concealed behind modern fittings; a column of ashlar blocks in the wall above clearly relate to its flue, although the manner in which the older fabric alongside this on the west has been roughly hacked into is puzzling, and might relate to a cut-away cross wall. The pair of two-light windows each have widely-splayed internal jambs and 19th-century timber lintels; the jambs of the western are all of 1860, but those of the eastern look older. Above the western a medieval lancet has a simple shouldered rear arch; above and slightly to the left of the eastern is what looks like a small infilled wall cupboard or aumbry. At the extreme east end of the wall is a column of hacked-back masonry.

The lower window in the east wall has a medieval shouldered rear arch; the recess of the blocked doorway to the south is occupied by a wall safe. The upper window also has a simple shouldered arch.

The Structural History of the Church

I The Saxon Church

There is documentary evidence of a significant early church at Warkworth; Ceolwulf gave a church here, which he had built himself, to the Lindisfarne community in 737. The two headstone crosses and grave marker now in the chancel are of later Saxon date, perhaps in the 11th century (Cramp 1984 230-231).

During the 1860 restoration, the footings of the east end of an earlier church, seen as pre-Norman, were recorded, set at a slightly skew angle to the present building. It is possible that parts of the footings of the north nave wall, recorded in a series of 1968 trial pits, also belong to an earlier building. To these can be added the footings of the porticus recorded in 2008 (see separate report), which aligned with the structure recorded in 1860.

II The 12th Century. A High-Status Church

The present church was built as a high-status and elaborate building from the start, shown by its dimensions and its rib-vaulted chancel. The County History account suggests that the construction of this building may correlate with the gift of the church of Warkworth by Henry I to Richard de Aurea Valle c 1110-1120, but more recently it has been pointed out (Pevsner et al 1992, 612) that the ribbed vault of the chancel, with its zigzag decoration, is unlikely to be earlier than similar work of c1130 at Durham Cathedral, which would put the building of the church into the period after its grant to the Augustinian priory of Carlisle in 1132.

The high-level chamber above the chancel is of considerable interest, with its quite elaborate, albeit constricted, access via the stair in the north-east corner of the nave. Brooke (2000, 149-150) considers it a defensive feature, but some sort of ritual function, either as a treasury, or housing relics, seems more likely.

It seems certain that the Romanesque church of nave and chancel was completed by the time of the sack of Warkworth by the Scots in 1173, when either a hundred or three hundred villagers were killed in it; some accounts suggest that the church was burned, but if this was the case one might have expected evidences of fire in the fabric.

III The 13th Century

The west tower has been dated to c1200, probably replacing an earlier bellcote (which would appear to have been retained as its eastern wall). There is some puzzling evidence of rebuilding in its north wall, and also a hint that the newel stair which now gives access to the 14th-century belfry originally continued to a higher level than at present. It would seem reasonable to suppose that the tower of c1200 would have been provided with a proper belfry, although this might have conceivably have been of timber.

The lancet windows in the vestry would seem to point to its being an addition of 13th century. Its original internal arrangements are uncertain; the positioning of the windows would seem to point to there having been an upper floor, possibly the residence of a priest or anchorite.

IV The 14th Century

The present belfry stage of the tower, and its spire, appear to be of 14th century date. Structural problems would appear to have commenced prior to this date, as can be seen from the manner in which the belfry and spire are vertical, whilst the tower below leans markedly away from the west wall of the nave. It could have been these problems that prompted the removal of the original belfry. The two large buttresses, built to counter the outward lean of the north wall of the nave, may be roughly contemporary with the tower. Another 14th century feature is the cusped recess on the north side of the chancel arch, which probably relates to the usual medieval proliferation of chantry chapels and their altars within the body of the building.

V The 15th Century.

The final medieval addition with the addition of the south aisle. Some workers have seen this as of mid-15th century date; others (eg Bailey et al 1988, 128 and Salter 2002, 75) see the arcade as of the 14th century and the aisle itself, or at least its windows, as a century later. Knowles sees that as evidence of the 'munificence of the third Earl of Northumberland' and a little later in date than the castle donjon (now seen as c1400). Alnwick, another parish church sheltering beneath the umbrella of a great castle belonging to the Percy family, saw an almost total rebuilding in the Perpendicular style. At Warkworth they contented themselves with adding a broad aisle. The low-pitched nave roof bearing 'certain armorial devices' of the Percies was probably also contemporary (Wilson 1870, 85) The south porch seems to be of one build with the aisle, although it poses some puzzles; the upper chamber or parvise appears part of the original design, yet its stair turret is clearly a later addition. There is no sign of any link between the parvise and body of the church, so access must always have been external, presumably through a doorway in the present position, reached by an external stair or ladder. Evidence recently seen in the south aisle roof structure suggests that the aisle originally had a shallow gabled roof, altered to a pent one when the clerestory (which consisted of five square-headed two-light windows) was added at some later medieval date.

VI Post-Medieval Changes

In the post-medieval centuries, the church escaped any major structural changes, although there were the usual alterations to fittings and furnishings, with the insertion of box pews and panelling; the walls were whitewashed, and there was a gallery (Wilson 1870, 85). The large windows in the south and east walls of the chancel, perhaps inserted in the 14th or 15th century, appear to have been remodelled as well, along with the priest's door below the former.

VII The Restoration of 1860 and Subsequent Changes.

The Victorian era brought a wave of church restorations all across the country, and Warkworth did not escape; a major programme of works took place in 1860, the Newcastle architect John Dobson (not known for his sensitivity to medieval fabric) being responsible for the nave and Ewan Christian the chancel. Both architects acted, as was common at the period, to return parts of the church to their 'original' form. Dobson destroyed the late medieval clerestory and nave roof, substituting the present high-pitched 'mean and paltry' (Knowles) roof, following the old roof-line visible on the tower; he also renewed the tracery in the aisle windows. Christian acted similarly in the chancel, reinstating what he presumed was the original 12th-century form of the south wall and east end, and also re-medievalising the vestry by substituting paired lancets for its sashes. He followed Dobson in re-instating a high-pitched roof, sadly destroying the original high-level round-arched doorway from the mural passage and stair, and rebuilt the east gable with its spurious circular window.

Less than forty years later Knowles (1898, 178) found it 'impossible to speak without regret at what was done', it was 'needless to say how much the church has suffered by these ignorant and destructive alterations'.

A ground plan of the church and its furnishings as it appeared shortly after the restoration is given by Wilson (1870 ii).

Subsequent alterations have been much more minor. In 1877 the present tiled floor in the chancel covered an old slabbed floor 'paved with grave stones, some of them enriched with coats armorial' (Knowles 1898, 182).

Archaeological Assessment

Apart from the recording of the foundations of the earlier building seen in 1860, no direct archaeological investigation seems to have been carried out in the church prior to the 2001 works. However, a 1968/9 survey of the nave by G.E.Charlewood and Curry, Architects, carried out in relation to structural repairs to the north wall, gives details of three trial pits dug at its base. A 'foundation wall' or off-set around a metre wide was seen at two points on the internal face of the wall (see drawing provided); it is not clear how this feature relates to the foundations recorded in 1860. Whilst this information is valuable, it is unfortunate that specific archaeological recording was not carried out at this time; another opportunity would seem to have been missed in the 1970s or 1980s when the south aisle was re-floored in Caithness stone.

During the installation of a new heating system in the church in October 2001 an archaeological watching brief was carried out by the Archaeological Practice of Newcastle University (AP 2001). The works inside the church were largely confined within the footprint of an existing sub-floor heating system; three small areas outside of this were excavated archaeologically. One of these, in the eastern part of the south aisle, revealed 19th-century heating ducts and sleeper walls for pews removed in the mid-20th century. An external trench on the north of the vestry revealed possible footings of a former diagonal buttress at the north-east corner of the vestry, and evidence of a post-medieval vault adjacent to the vestry north wall.

Turning to the church as it stands today, it is clear that this is one of the most significant medieval parish churches in Northumberland. Whilst its overall structural history is relatively easy to read, the extant fabric still contains much minor detail that has not been properly appreciated or

understood. Some features such as the bell frames have not been properly studied; these are a rare medieval survival, and merit a full record being made.

The walls of the church are largely bare of plaster, which makes an assessment of the archaeological potential/vulnerability of the building a little more straightforward. It goes without saying that in a church of this importance, any disturbance of the above ground fabric will need archaeological monitoring, and this of course also applies to works that disturb the floors, where it is more difficult to assess the survival of archaeological material. The 2001 watching brief provided some information of 19th-century heating ducts and sleeper walls, but did not impinge on earlier material. However, it is known that earlier structural remains survive beneath the east end of the nave; any opportunity to re-examine these would be most valuable.

Externally, there is evidence of the cutting down of ground levels and construction of drains around most of the external perimeter of the church. This will have affected the survival of significant archaeological deposits (eg layers of masons' chippings) adjacent to the external wall faces; it is worth noting that the drain on the south of the south aisle seems to be set well forward of the wall face, allowing a better chance of the survival of such deposits here.

It is probably worth mention a dowsed survey of the church (Bailey et al 1988) that indicates the footings recorded in 1860 as representing the thick-walled chancel of an aisleless church with the north wall of its nave partly underlying that of the present building (which would tally with the off-set footing recorded in 1968/9 works). The survey also recorded a structure on the north of the vestry which might tally with the evidence for a vault there seen in 2001⁸, and a porch outside the north door. However, the two apsidal east ends shown, one beneath the centre of the chancel and one beyond its east end, look very unlikely, and the substantial remains of the northern porticus seen in 2008 were not picked up,.

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⁸The side walls of this are in fact visible on the surface.

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