

ST CUTHBERT'S CHURCH,
FISHLAKE, SOUTH YORKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATION AND RECORDING

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On behalf of

The Revd. Eve Atherfold
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2006, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) were commissioned by St Cuthbert's Church Parochial Church Council (PCC), through their architect Mr Peter Gaze Pace, to undertake a limited programme of archaeological observation and recording during works associated with repairs to the roof of the south aisle of St Cuthbert's Church in Fishlake, South Yorkshire. The aim of the archaeological recording was primarily to record the remains of some early windows that had been revealed in the north wall of the south aisle.

The newly exposed windows clearly pre-date those of the existing clerestory of the south aisle, and so are earlier than the 15th century. Their location and spacing is suggestive of an earlier clerestory, their form perhaps indicating narrow lancet windows, possibly dating them to the earlier 13th century. Given that the lower part of the west tower and the nave arcades are also thought to date from the 13th century, it is tempting to see the windows as the remnants of a nave clerestory created at the same time, set above a south aisle that had a slightly lower roof level, as indicated by the chamfered drip course exposed during the repairs. The windows were partly destroyed when the existing clerestory was built in the 15th century, and the drip course concealed by the altered slope of the south aisle roof.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In March 2006, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) were commissioned by St Cuthbert's Church Parochial Church Council (PCC), through their architect Mr Peter Gaze Pace, to undertake a limited programme of archaeological observation and recording during works associated with repairs to the roof of the south aisle of St Cuthbert's Church in Fishlake, South Yorkshire.

2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 St Cuthbert's Church is located at the eastern end of the village of Fishlake, South Yorkshire (NGR SE65621318), close to the river Don and some 6km to the west of Thorne (see figure 1). The church is a Grade I Listed Building (see Appendix 1).
- 2.2 The aim of the archaeological recording was to record the remains of some early windows that had been revealed in the north wall of the south aisle, during repairs to the roof the south aisle. A site visit was made on the 5th July 2006. A number of drawings were made, including plans and moulding sections, and a number of digital photographs were taken, together with sufficient site notes to prepare a written description. With the agreement of the PCC, the small project archive, comprising written, drawn and photographic elements, has been deposited with the Doncaster Museum (site code SCF 06).

3 OUTLINE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 St Cuthbert's Church has featured in a number of regional architectural and other studies (e.g. Pevsner 1967, 201-203; Glynne 1921), whilst certain features, such as the Romanesque south-west doorway within the south porch, have been subject to more recent detailed investigation (Wood 2000).
- 3.2 The dedication of the large village church to St Cuthbert stems from the tradition that Fishlake formed the most southerly resting place of the body of the saint when it was carried by the monks of Lindisfarne Priory fleeing from Viking attacks on their abbey in the late 9th century AD (www.doncasterfhs.co.uk; www.langhorns.co.uk). Fishlake was included as part of the lordship of Conisbrough in the 1086 Domesday Survey but no church is mentioned; the village originally formed part of the parish of Hatfield. However, towards the end of the 11th century the second Earl de Warenne granted Conisbrough and its dependent churches to the Cluniac priory at Lewes (Hey 2003, 118).
- 3.3 It is suggested that the church's elaborate south-west Romanesque doorway, lavishly decorated with human figures, animals and leaves, dates to the later 12th century, and it may have been produced by the workshop responsible for the south porch of Malmesbury Abbey, reflecting the importance of the church at this date due to its association with St Cuthbert. The stone for the doorway may have been brought to the site along the river Don from quarries at Conisbrough (Wood 2000, 19-20).
- 3.4 As stated above, St Cuthbert's is large church, comprising a three stage western tower, an aisled nave and a chancel with north and south chapels; both nave aisles extend west to enclose the tower. The earliest surviving remains within the church are the south-west doorway noted above, together with the south doorway to the chancel, both of which are generally dated to the late 12th century. Although there has been some suggestion that the south-west doorway was originally erected at Roche Abbey and moved to Fishlake at a later date, the most recent study proposes

that both doorways, and their associated rubble walling, remain *in situ* (Wood 2000, 17; but see discussion and conclusions below). The lower part of the west tower and the nave arcades date to the 13th century, as did the original north chancel chapel (now an organ chamber), although this was later remodelled. The south aisle windows are late 13th century in date. There is evidence for extensive rebuilding/alteration during the mid 14th century, including the remodelling of the north chancel chapel, the chancel arch, the west arches of the north and south chancel chapels, the north aisle windows and the north doorway. The west tower, the west bays of the nave aisles which embrace it, and the clerestory are all 15th century in date (Pevsner 1967, 201-203; see Appendix 1).

- 3.5 Extensive restoration works were carried out in the mid 19th century during the incumbency of Revd. Canon George Ornsby (1850-1886). These works included a restoration of the chancel and the opening up of the west window of the tower. The roofs of the nave and the north aisle were renewed in 1955, and the south aisle was re-roofed as a temporary measure in 1961 (Anon 2003). Several other phases of work have taken place since 1990, with generous grant aid from English Heritage. In 1990 the tower was restored, which involved a new lead roof, the rebuilding of the corner pinnacles, and general repointing and stone replacement to the exterior faces. In 1995 there were stonework repairs and repointing to the south aisle, the south porch, the chancel and north aisle, the reglazing and renewal of window stonework to the south aisle, south chancel and north aisle, and the overhaul of the drainage system and rainwater goods (information from Peter Gaze Pace).

4 RESULTS FROM OBSERVATIONS (see figure 3)

- 4.1 At the start of the project, the roof of the south aisle comprised asbestos cement sheets and supporting timberwork (see figure 2). The removal of this material revealed a series of partially preserved windows in the south face of the aisle's north wall, which pre-dates the 15th century clerestory windows set slightly above them.
- 4.2 In general, only the sill and the very bottom of the jambs of each earlier window survived, all carved from Magnesian limestone and with plain chamfers (see plates 1 to 3). The windows were set within coursed squared rubble, markedly less regular than the ashlar of the existing clerestory, and are spaced at c.2.5m centres. The remains of five windows are visible; the spacing strongly suggest that there were originally six but that one has been destroyed by later alterations. Each window was c.0.60m wide internally. Some 0.07m below the base of the windows' sill chamfers (or 0.55m below the chamfered offset marking the base of the clerestory windows), a chamfered drip course was revealed; this had been disturbed in a number of places by the beams of the aisle roof.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 In the absence of any detailed architectural and archaeological study of the church, it is difficult to place the newly-exposed windows within their proper historical context. There are several questions surrounding the structural development of the church which would repay further study. Principal amongst these is the form of the Norman church. Although Wood suggest that it is likely that both early doorways (i.e. the south-west doorway within the south porch and the south doorway to the chancel) remain in their original positions (Wood 2000, 17), it is not clear if this is correct. Comparison with other Norman churches in West Yorkshire, for example (Ryder 1993, 25-36), suggests that the elaborate south-west doorway would have usually opened into the nave, not an aisle. Norman parish church aisles are also usually rather narrow, and there is no visible evidence in the interior of St Cuthbert's

for the remains of any Norman arcades. If one supports Wood's proposal that the early doorways remain *in situ*, a number of suggestions might be made but none are particularly convincing; for example, that the south wall of the south aisle might once have been the south wall of the nave. It is far more likely, as has been noted elsewhere, that the elaborate south-west doorway was moved to its current position in the medieval period, perhaps during the 13th century (Ryder 1993, 34). This need not mean that it originated elsewhere, but that it was simply reset by those undertaking alterations to the Norman church.

- 5.2 Despite the current poor understanding of the complexities of the development of the church, a number of suggestions can be made regarding the windows uncovered by the repairs to the south aisle roof. The windows clearly pre-date those of the existing clerestory and so are earlier than the 15th century. Their location and spacing is suggestive of an earlier clerestory, and their form perhaps indicating narrow lancet windows, possibly dating them to the earlier 13th century. Given that the lower part of the west tower and the nave arcades are also thought to date from the 13th century, it is tempting to see the windows as the remnants of a nave clerestory created at the same time, set above a south aisle that had a slightly lower roof level, as indicated by the chamfered drip course exposed during the repairs. The windows were partly destroyed when the existing clerestory was built in the 15th century, and the drip course concealed by the altered slope of the south aisle roof. It is not known whether there are any corresponding windows on the south wall of the north aisle.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Ryder, P 1993 *Medieval Churches of West Yorkshire*

Wood, R 2000 "The Romanesque Doorway at Fishlake". *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* vol 72, 17-39

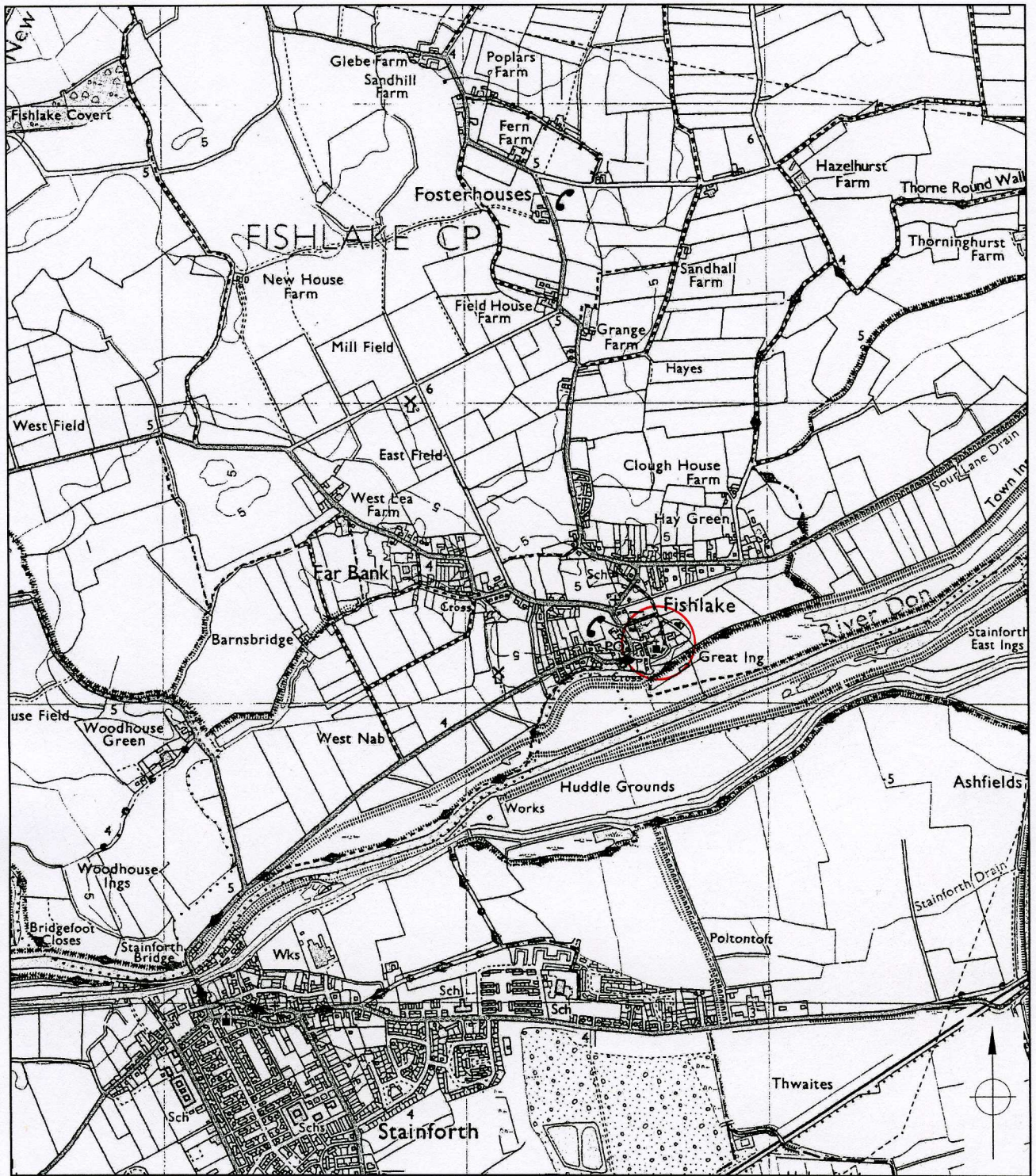
<http://www.doncasterfhs.co.uk/churches/fishlake.htm> (accessed 6th July 2006)

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<http://www.langhorns.co.uk/langhornline/holchurch.html> (accessed 6th July 2006)

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

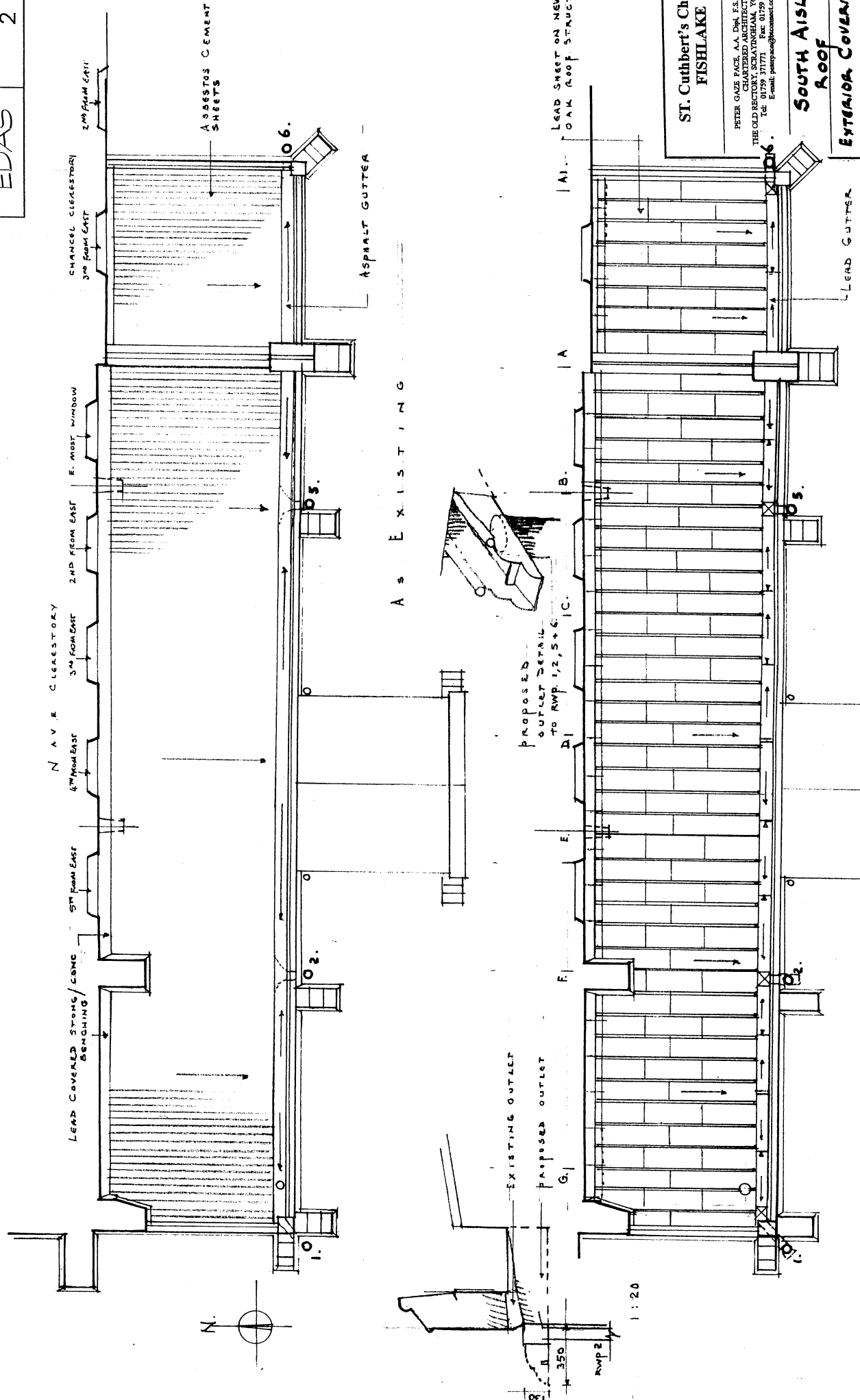
- 7.1 The archaeological recording at St Cuthbert's Church was commissioned by the church architect, Mr Peter Gaze Pace, on behalf of the Parochial Church Council, and was funded from the roof repair budget. EDAS would like to thank all concerned, including the Revd. Eve Atherfold, for their co-operation in carrying out the archaeological work. The on-site recording was undertaken by Ed Dennison and Shaun Richardson of EDAS.



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PROJECT	
ST CUTHBERT'S CHURCH, FISHLAKE	
TITLE	
GENERAL LOCATION	
SCALE	DATE
NTS	JUN 2007
EDAS	FIGURE
	1

PROJECT	ST CUTHBERT'S CHURCH, FISHLAKE		
TITLE	DETAILS OF ROOF REPAIRS		
SCALE	AS SHOWN	DATE	JUN 2007
FIGURE	EDAS		2



As Existing

As Proposed

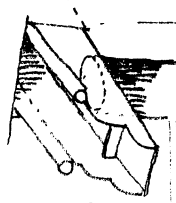
**ST. Cuthbert's Church
FISHLAKE**

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**SOUTH AISLE
ROOF**

**EXTERIOR COVERINGS
AS EXISTING + PROPOSED**

FEB 05. DWG. 25.



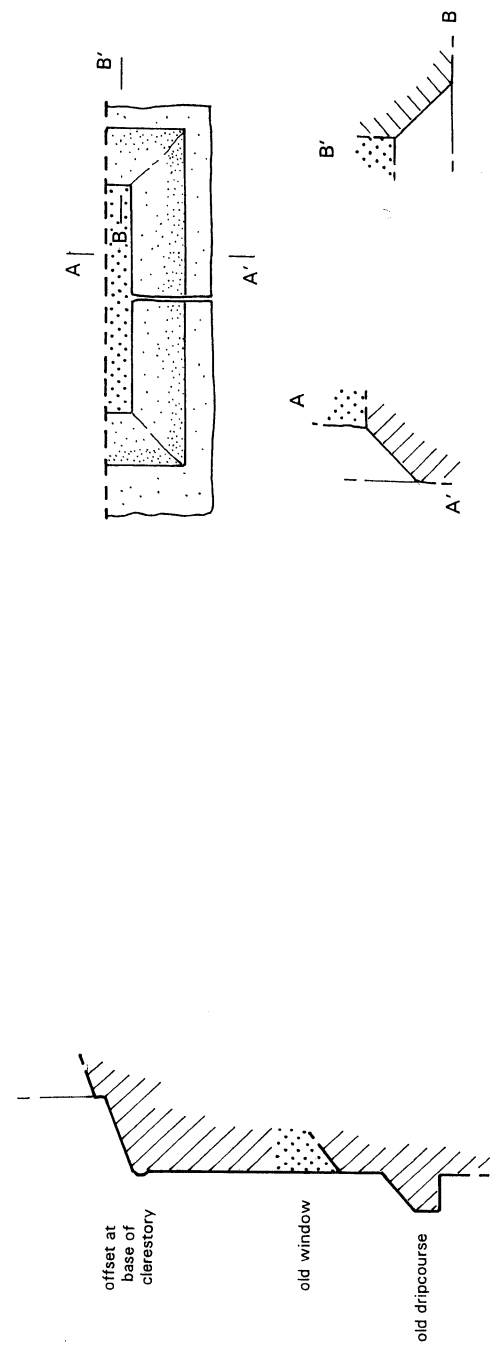
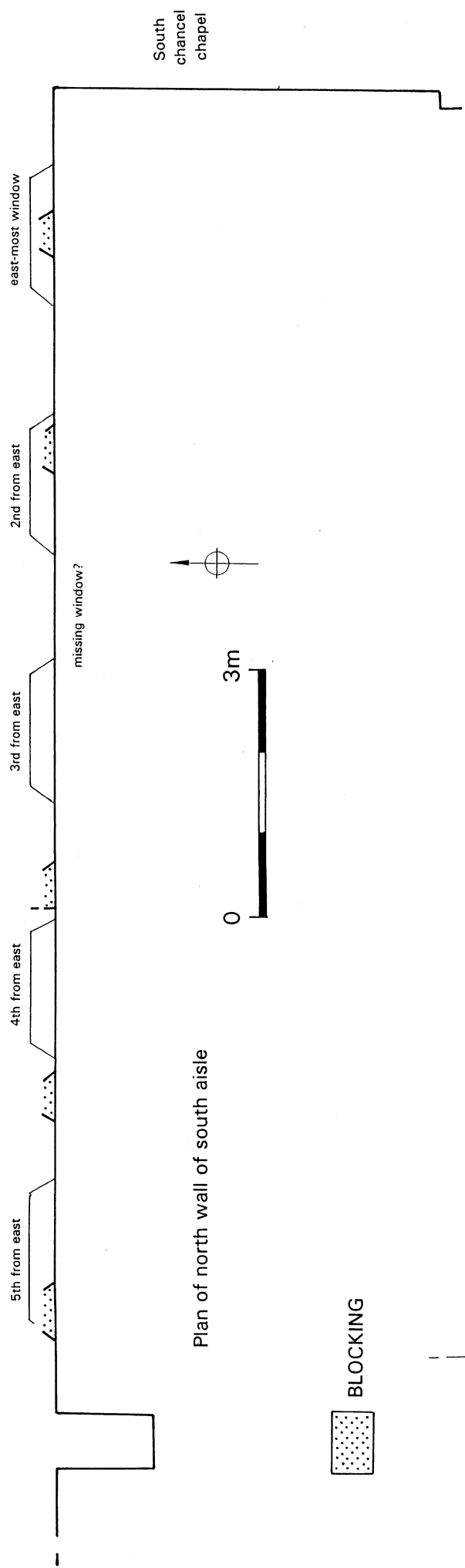
PROPOSED
OUTLET DETAIL
TO RWP 1, 2, 5 + 6

EXISTING OUTLET
PROPOSED OUTLET

1:20



Nave - clerestory



Relationship of old window to clerestory offset

0 0.5m

Elevation of base of east-most window with profiles

PROJECT ST CUTHBERT'S CHURCH, FISHLAKE	
TITLE OBSERVATIONS	
SCALE AS SHOWN	DATE JUN 2007
EDAS	FIGURE 3



Plate 1: Exposed easternmost window, looking NE.



Plate 2: Exposed easternmost window, looking N.



Plate 3: Detail of exposed easternmost window, looking N.

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 1: LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Location : CHURCH OF ST CUTHBERT, CHURCH LANE (east side), FISHLAKE, DONCASTER, SOUTH YORKSHIRE

IoE number : 334582

Date listed : 24 NOVEMBER 1966

Date of last amendment : 24 NOVEMBER 1966

Grade : I

SE61SE

FISHLAKE

CHURCH LANE
(east side)

7/8

24.11.66

Church of St Cuthbert

Church. C12 south door, also C13 but mostly C14 and C15. Ashlar magnesian limestone, lead and Welsh slate roofs. West tower overlapped by aisles to 5-bay nave, lower 3-bay chancel with south chapel and north organ chamber in continuation of the aisles. In Decorated and Perpendicular styles. Tower: 4 stages. Chamfered plinth and 2 moulded bands; offset angle buttresses. C13 west door with pointed arch and hoodmould beneath large, transomed, 5-light window with cusped lights, traceried head and hoodmould. Above south aisle are carvings of a bird and crown. 3rd stage has west niche with statuette of St. Cuthbert beneath a crocketed pinnacle. String course below paired 2-light belfry openings with louvres, hoodmoulds and dividing buttresses. Iron-faced west clock across string course beneath embattled parapet with 8 crocketed pinnacles; gargoyles to north and south. Nave: chamfered plinth and moulded band; offset buttresses between bays, the east buttresses larger and with gablets. Buttressed and gabled south porch on left with restored outer doorway having shafts and semicircular responds to pointed arch with hoodmould; remarkable C12 south door within has columns to round arch of 4 orders heavily carved with foliage, heads, animals and figures (described at length in Pevsner, p201, plate 5). 3-light windows, that against tower with Tudor-arched head, that to right of porch with square head, the window beyond with reticulated tracery and pointed arch. C13 west window to south aisle has lancet lights beneath carved hoodmould. North aisle has 2 bays rebuilt in thinly-coursed stone; deeply-chamfered north door in a gabled portico set below a buttress; tall square-headed windows with cusped heads, that to bay 5 with Decorated tracery. Both aisles have oversailing course beneath parapets with roll-moulded copings and west pinnacles. Tall, Perpendicular, clerestorey windows of 3 lights beneath pointed arches with hoodmoulds. Cavetto-moulded course with gargoyles beneath embattled parapet with crocketed pinnacles and cross to east. Chancel; C12 round-arched priest's door in rubblework panel on left, buttress to right with square-headed window of 5 ogee lights beyond; restored Perpendicular 3-light windows over. South chapel, in aisle, has diagonal buttress with gargoyles and cusped 5-light windows to south and east; north organ chamber similar. Decorated east window of 7 lights with curvilinear tracery and hoodmould. North wall has blocked, 2-bay, C13 arcade with buttress across eastern bay and triangular-headed 4-light window in west bay. Interior: 3 treble-chamfered tower arches. C13 aisle arcades with circular piers and capitals to double-chamfered arches, treble-shafted west responds, south-east respond with shafts and half-octagonal pier. C15 nave roof with 1 boss and traces of ceiling in western bay. C14 moulded chancel arch and quadrant-moulded west arches to chapel and organ chamber; Tudor arches into the chancel. C13 arcade to former north chapel. C15 chancel roof with cambered tie beams, purlins and carved boss. Octagonal font: C14, on 2-step plinth with figure niche beneath canopy on each side; probably C18 wooden cover with bird finial. Mostly C19 fittings: earlier rood screen with mullions and ogee-headed opening. Royal coat of arms 'GR 1754' near north door. Monuments: large tomb chest against chancel north wall to Richard Marshall (d1505) - plinth and side panels with inscriptions and carvings of books, chalices, tools, scales etc; no brass inlay remains. Nearby a carved stone frame with inscription to Robert Simpson (d1704); opposite a broken-pedimented wall plaque to Rev. John Gibson (d1768) and wife Margaret (d1759). Brasses in south chapel to Hannah Perkins (d1669) and Richard Perkins (1673). N. Pevsner, B.O.E., 1967.ed.

Source: Images of England website (www.imagesofengland.org.uk)