

ST PETER'S CHURCH,
OLD EDLINGTON, SOUTH YORKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2005, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) were commissioned by the Churches Conservation Trust to undertake a programme of archaeological observation and recording (a watching brief) during ground works associated with the laying of new services and the creation of a new path through the churchyard at St Peter's Church, Old Edlington (NGR SK53259726).

Although the extent of the excavations was limited, the results have provided some new information. A sandstone drain exposed in the service trench to the east of the south-east corner of the chancel was probably of 19th century date, although it has since been abandoned and replaced by the three plastic pipes exposed to its west. Some limestone slabs uncovered in the central part of the service trench almost certainly cover a burial vault.

Some limestone wall footings uncovered in the service trench to the south of the porch are more difficult to interpret. It has always been assumed that the south porch was added to the church at a relatively late date, and the undated footings appear unrelated to this, or any earlier similar structure, or the church itself. It remains unresolved as to whether they form part of another detached structure or are associated with former drainage works or a burial chamber.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In July 2005, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) were commissioned by the Churches Conservation Trust (formerly the Redundant Churches Fund) to undertake a programme of archaeological observation and recording (a watching brief) during groundworks in the churchyard at St Peter's Church, Old Edlington, South Yorkshire (NGR SK53259726). These works were associated with the laying of new services and the construction of a new path.
- 1.2 The watching brief, which was undertaken in accordance with the Churches Conservation Trust's Archaeological Policy (Churches Conservation Trust 2004), was the third piece of archaeological work carried out by EDAS at the church since 1999 (Dennison 1999a & 1999b).

2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 St Peter's Church lies in the village of Old Edlington, some 10km to the north-east of Rotherham, in South Yorkshire (NGR SK53259726; see figure 1). The village is now rather small and has been eclipsed by the larger settlement of New Edlington, a former colliery village which lies a short distance to the north-east. The underlying geology is Magnesian Limestone overlain by a typical brown calcareous earth soil of the Aberford Association.

3 OUTLINE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 St Peter's Church is Norman in origin, and is listed as being of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, Grade I (Department of the Environment 1987, 28); the full listed building description appears as Appendix 2. It has been described by Pevsner (1974, 192) and is briefly mentioned by Ryder in his study of South Yorkshire churches (Ryder 1982, 91). The Churches Conservation Trust have also produced an undated booklet on the fabric of the church.
- 3.2 The South Yorkshire County Sites and Monuments Record contains some notes and photographs of the church, and there are additional photographs in the National Buildings Record held by English Heritage. There are also some late 19th and early 20th century accounts and architectural descriptions (e.g. Philipps 1874, 415-417; Anon 1874, 450-452; Anon 1912, 341-342; Glynne 1922, 179-180), while Hunter (1828, 96) and others have described some of the more important monuments and inscriptions.
- 3.3 As noted by the listed building description, the church primarily dates from the 12th to the 15th centuries and comprises a west tower, a 2-bay nave with south porch and north aisle, and a 2-bay chancel with a chapel in the overlap of the aisle. The main interest in the building is the south doorway which contains zig-zag and beak-head ornamentation; this was recorded in detail prior to a programme of stabilisation and consolidation (Dennison 1999a). Additional Norman stonework can be seen in the church, around some of the windows, the chancel arch, and above the north arcade.
- 3.4 Since the development of a new church at New Edlington, St Peter's church became neglected, and in 1966 the roof was removed by the diocese as a prelude to total demolition. The original furnishings were also removed, and the late 16th century font is now residing at Dunscroft. On 30th April 1971 the church was vested in the Redundant Churches Fund, and repairs and restoration works were initiated under the auspices of the noted church architect, George Gaze Pace. Various other

conservation work has been carried out in subsequent years (e.g. Dennison 1999a & 1999b).

4 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The watching brief took account of, and followed, guidance produced by the local archaeological curators (the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service), the Association of Diocesan and Cathedral Archaeologists (ADCA 2004), the Churches Conservation Trust (2004), and the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1999).
- 4.2 The aim of the watching brief was to monitor the groundworks associated with the excavation of a new service trench and path through the churchyard, and to record and recover any information relating to any archaeological features or deposits which might be uncovered or disturbed. The service works consisted of the laying of a duct for a new electricity cable within a shallow narrow trench; the cable may be required at some point in the future to power a street lamp located next to the eastern entrance to the churchyard. The line of the service trench would then form the route for a new gravel path.
- 4.3 Prior to the start of the groundworks, the majority of the service trench alignment fell within grassed areas of the churchyard. The route did not cross any existing churchyard memorials or any obvious above-ground remains of former burial vaults.
- 4.4 All groundworks were undertaken using a tracked JCB mini-digger with a 0.15m wide toothed bucket. The trench for the duct was excavated to an average width of 0.25m and an average depth of 0.40m (see plate 1). The trench ran south-west for 18m from the eastern churchyard entrance (at 94.46m AOD), before returning to the west to run parallel to the south side of the chancel and nave, and then south-west again to the south of the porch. A second short arm ran south from the porch to join the main trench, which continued to the south as far as a gateway into this part of the churchyard (at 96.05m AOD). Once the trench was backfilled, the new path was created along its alignment by removing c.0.10m of turf across a strip 1.2m wide and then replacing it with gravel.
- 4.5 The archaeological watching brief took place on the 9th September 2005. All groundworks were levelled to an Ordnance Survey benchmark (95.87m AOD) located at the south-east corner of the chancel. The results obtained from the excavation of the trench (see below) meant that it was not necessary to monitor the limited groundworks associated with the creation of the new gravel path.
- 4.6 Each discrete stratigraphic entity (e.g. a cut, fill, or layer) was assigned an individual context number and detailed information was recorded on *pro forma* context sheets. A total of five archaeological contexts were recorded, and these are described in the following text as three digit numbers (e.g. 005) (see also Appendix 1). In-house recording and quality control procedures ensured that all recorded information was cross-referenced as appropriate. The positions of the excavations were marked on a general site plan, with more detailed plans and a section produced at 1:20 scale (see figure 2). A photographic record was also maintained using 35mm colour prints.
- 4.7 With the agreement of the Churches Conservation Trust, the project archive, comprising written and photographic elements, has been deposited with Doncaster Museum (site code OEC 05; accession number 2006.10).

5 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS (see figure 2)

- 5.1 Along the majority of the length of the trench, only two contexts were noted. Following the removal of the turf and a loose dark brown silt loam topsoil (001), which had an average depth of 0.10m, a light brown/orange sandy silt loam subsoil (002) was exposed, containing frequent inclusions of small angular pieces of limestone (see plate 1). The subsoil continued below the base of the trench in all areas and was consistent in appearance for the majority of its length, apart from to the south of the nave, where it contained gravel from a previous footpath, and to the south of the porch. In the latter location there had clearly previously been a path, and the sandy silt loam (002) contained frequent inclusions of stone and brick rubble.
- 5.2 Three structures were recorded within, and were partly overlain, by the light brown/orange sandy silt loam (002). To the east of the south-east corner of the chancel, an east-west orientated drain (003) was observed crossing the service trench. This drain had a total width of 0.30m; the lower section was formed by a single piece of brown sandstone dressed to give a concave profile to the upper surface, and this was capped by two more pieces of sandstone bearing prominent diagonal tooling marks. There was a deposit of mixed lime mortar and the light brown/orange sandy silt loam (002) adhering to the north side of the drain. A series of flat slabs set into the ground surface adjacent to the south-east corner of the chancel may mark a western continuation of the drain.
- 5.3 To the west of the drain, three modern plastic pipes were noted crossing the service trench to the south of the nave and chancel; all three served existing down pipes on the south side of the church.
- 5.4 In the base of the central part of the service trench, three flat limestone slabs (004), orientated east-west and with a total length of 1.50m, were exposed; the top of the slabs lay at 95.15m AOD. The slabs had some cream lime mortar adhering to their upper surface and a small gap between the central and eastern slab allowed a limited view of the feature beneath. This was a small chamber or vault, of approximately the same length as the slabs but slightly wider, and 0.70m in depth. The walls of the chamber were built of coursed squared limestone rubble set with a thickly applied sandy mortar. At the time of the watching brief, there was a c.0.10m depth of clear water in the base, covering some stone slabs, soil and several pieces of wood; no obvious fragments of coffin or human remains were visible, although the most likely purpose of the chamber is a burial vault.
- 5.5 To the south of the porch, a line of north-east/south-west wall footings (005) were exposed in the base of the trench (see plate 2). These footings had a total length of c.3.60m and an average width of 0.45m or less, and first became visible in the west-facing section of the trench some 1.2m to the south of the porch itself. The footings comprised creamy-yellow limestone rubble set with a pink/buff lime mortar and included one large piece of stone over 1.0m in length. The footings terminated at a stone set slightly above the rest of their length, possibly the remnants of an edge or other feature marking the end of the footings.
- 5.6 Only a few small pieces of disarticulated human bone were recovered from the service trench and these were immediately re-buried. No other finds were recovered by the watching brief.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Although the extent of the excavations at St Peter's Church were limited, the results have provided some new information. Despite appearances, the sandstone drain (003) exposed in the service trench is probably of 19th century date, serving the down pipes located on the south side of the nave and chancel. It has since been abandoned and replaced by the three plastic pipes exposed to its west. The limestone slabs (004) uncovered in the central part of the service trench almost certainly cover a burial vault; there are two vaults to the immediate south, both with surviving flat ledger stones.
- 6.2 The limestone wall footings (005) uncovered to the south of the porch are more difficult to interpret. As noted in a previous report (EDAS 1999b), it has always been assumed that the porch was added to the church at a relatively late date; Philipps notes in 1874 that the Norman south doorway was in an excellent state of preservation "owing to its having been protected from the effects of the weather by a more modern porch...". The footings exposed in the service trench did not appear to form part of any earlier porch structure, and indeed seemed to bear little relation to the church itself. At present, their date and function remains unclear - it is possible that they might be part of another detached structure or be associated with former drainage works or a burial chamber.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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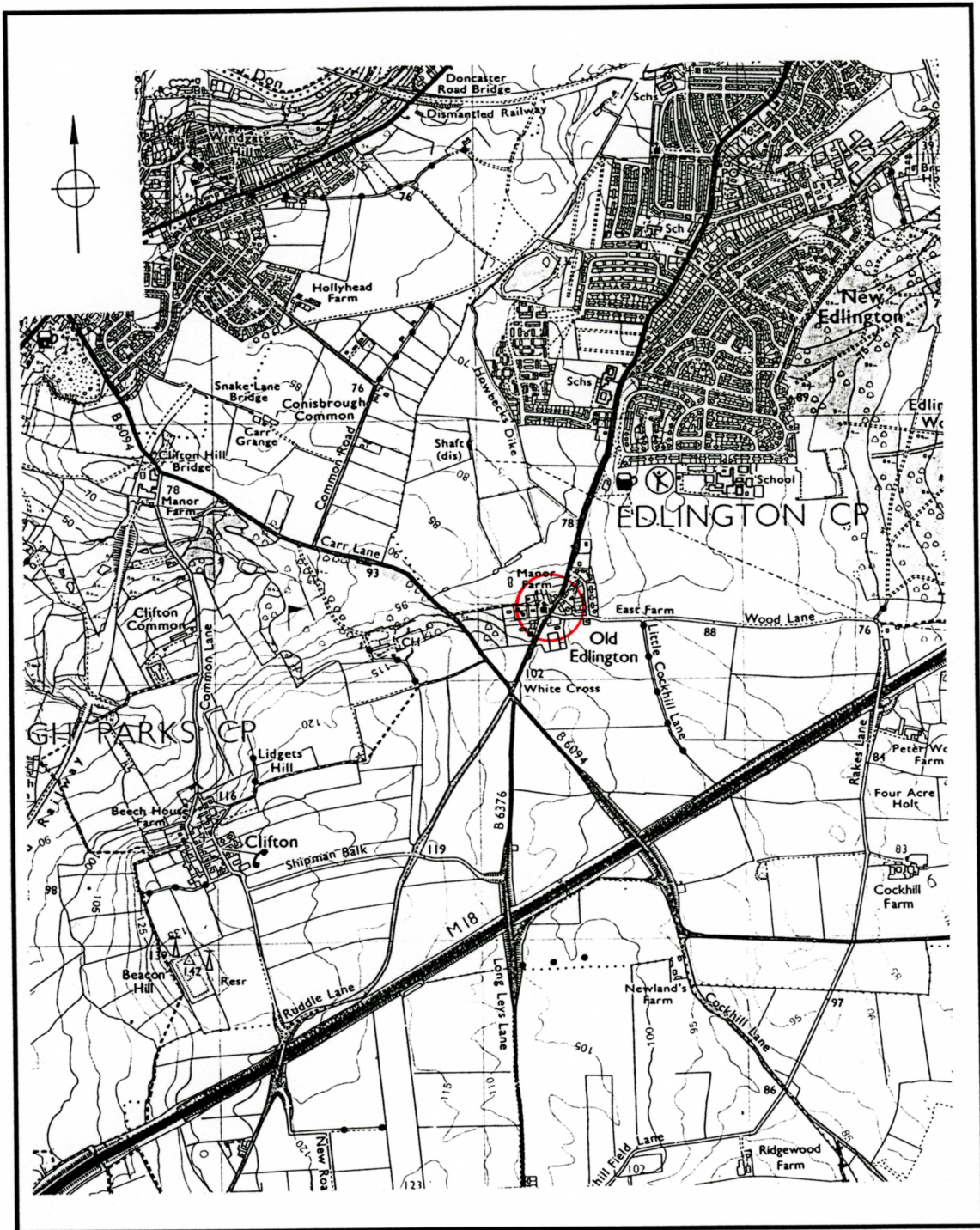
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8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

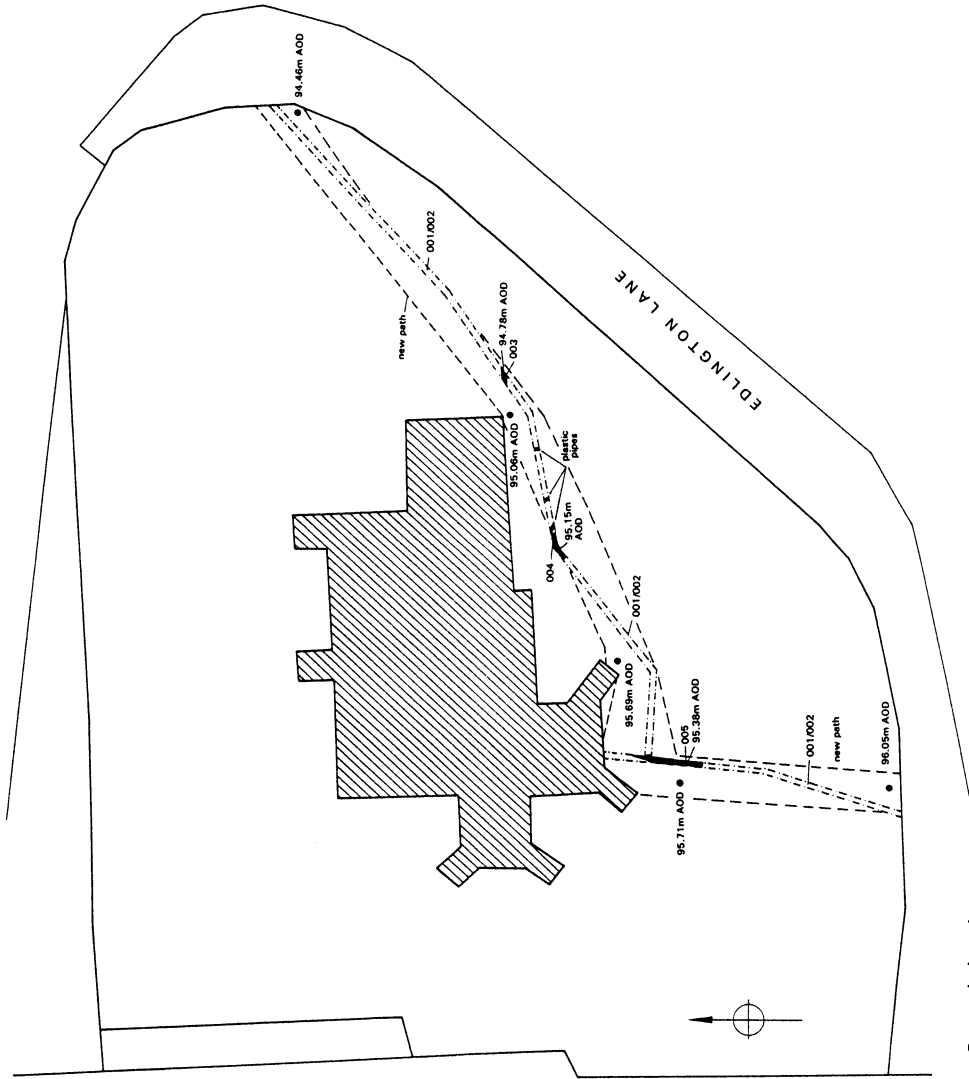
8.1 The archaeological watching brief at St Peter's Church was commissioned and funded by the Churches Conservation Trust. EDAS would like to thank the Trust, in particular their Conservation manager, Dawn Whitton, and the church architect Lee Holmes, for their co-operation in carrying out the archaeological watching brief. Thanks are also due to G L Beal of Mexborough, the main contractor for the works.

8.2 The watching brief was undertaken by Shaun Richardson of EDAS. Shaun Richardson produced the fieldwork records and Ed Dennison and Shaun Richardson produced the final report and drawings. The responsibility for any errors or inconsistencies remains with Ed Dennison.

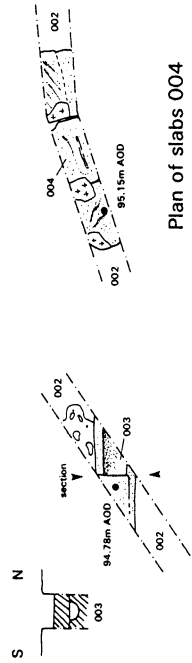


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PROJECT		ST PETER'S CHURCH, EDLINGTON	
TITLE		GENERAL LOCATION PLAN	
SCALE	1:25,000	DATE	MAR 2006
EDAS		FIGURE	1

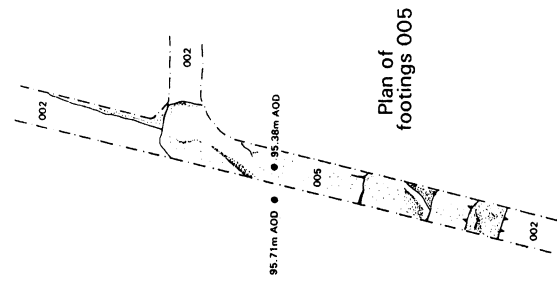


General site plan



Plan and section of drain 003

Plan of slabs 004



Plan of footings 005

PROJECT	ST PETER'S CHURCH, EDLINGTON		
TITLE	WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS		
SCALE	AS SHOWN	DATE	MAR 2006
	EDAS	FIGURE	2



Plate 1: General view of service trench, looking north-east.

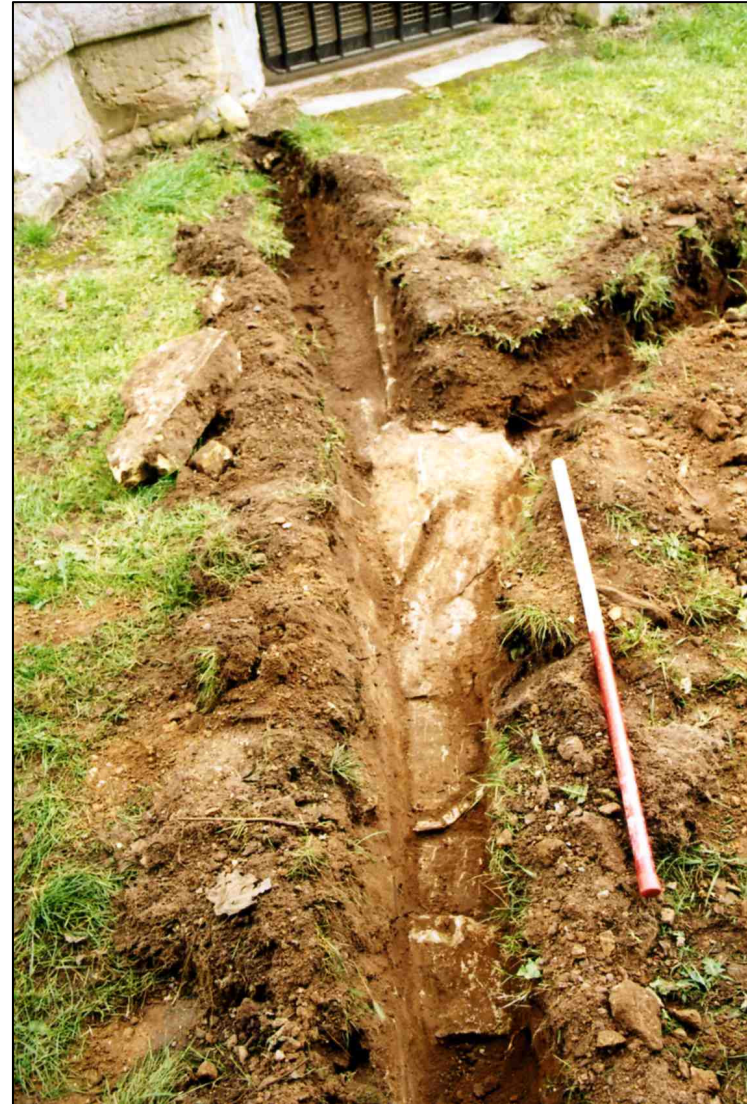


Plate 2: Wall footings (005) to the south of the porch, looking north-east.

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONTEXTS

- 001 Turf and loose dry dark brown silt loam topsoil, 0.10m thick.
- 002 Subsoil of loose light brown/orange sandy silt loam, minimum 0.30m thick.
- 003 East-west orientated sandstone slabs forming drain, 0.30m wide and at least 0.20m thick.
- 004 Three limestone slabs, 0.25m wide, top of burial chamber 0.70m deep.
- 005 NE/SW aligned wall footings, 0.45m wide, extending for 3.60m in trench.

APPENDIX 2

APPENDIX 2: LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Location : PARISH CHURCH, EDLINGTON LANE (west side), EDLINGTON, DONCASTER, SOUTH YORKSHIRE

IoE number : 334816

Date listed : 05 JUNE 1968

Date of last amendment : 26 NOV 1987

SK59NW

4/88

EDLINGTON LANE
(west side), Old Edlington

Church of St Peter

I

Church in the care of the Redundant Churches Fund. C12, C13, C14 and C15. Ashlar magnesian limestone, lead roofs. West tower, 2-bay nave with south porch and north aisle, 2-bay chancel with chapel in overlap of aisle. Tower: altered C12 base; Perpendicular belfry stage. Offset diagonal west buttresses have chamfered plinths, moulded bands and carved heads near their tops. Perpendicular 2-light west window with head-carved hoodmould stops. Scalloped band and string course beneath belfry stage having unlouvred, 2-light pointed openings with hoodmoulds; string course with north and south gargoyles beneath embattled parapet with four crocketed pinnacles. Nave: gabled porch has diagonal buttresses and moulded arch with hoodmould; stone benches within and C12 south door having zig-zag and beak-head ornament carried down the jambs. Tall C12 round-arched window to right has shafted jambs. C12 mask-carved corbel table beneath parapet heightened by Perpendicular embattlements. North aisle: quadrant-moulded north door with pointed arch and hood; on left are 2 large buttresses with moulded plinth, offsets and gablets also 2 double-chamfered 2-light windows with tall rounded lights beneath square heads. Chancel: lower and narrower. Blocked C13 priest's door with shouldered lintel; pedimented wall monument on its right. Square-headed windows of 2 ogee-headed lights. Mask-carved corbel table on south side beneath low parapet. Matching 3-light window beneath shallow east gable. Interior: double-chamfered tower arch, the inner order on corbels. Early C13 north aisle arcade has cylindrical pier, matching responds and square capitals to double-chamfered arches. C12 chancel arch: 2 orders with columns, shafts, carved capitals and zig-zag ornament. String course round east end of chancel linked by carved bosses to hood of trefoil-headed piscina in south wall; north window has moulded ledge on 3 brackets with cusped panels between; hollow cornice with leaf carvings. Double-chamfered arch to north chapel has semi-octagonal responds and hoodmould. North aisle: section of corbel table to north wall of chancel and to east end of nave. Wall monument to east of chapel arch has plinth with skull on die beneath corniced panel flanked by drops, supporters to corniced panel over bearing heraldic device. C16 floor slabs in nave. Cross slabs with 2 figures in chancel floor.

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