

Celebrating 850 Years of Norham Church

This booklet was updated on 15th April 2015

The origins of Norham Church

Norham is reputedly the place where, in 635 AD, St Aidan crossed the River Tweed (at Ubbanford) on his way from Iona to establish his monastery on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne. King Oswy made a grant of land for a monastery at Norham in 655 AD, and it's said that, when a stone church was built on Holy Island, the existing wooden structure was transferred to Norham.

Ecfrid, Bishop of Lindisfarne, built a stone church in Norham between 830 and 845 AD. The site of this church, probably to the east of the present church, is now occupied by a clump of yew trees. Viking raids on the Northumbrian coast resulted in the flight of the monks from Lindisfarne in about 875 AD, along with the coffin and body of St Cuthbert. It's been suggested that the monks travelled by sea and up the River Tweed to Norham, where they stayed for a time, before continuing the journey that eventually ended at Durham.

Norham (a corruption of 'North Durham') was the northern stronghold of the Bishops of Durham (the Prince Bishops). We know that a church still existed in Norham in 1082, since it was given by the then Bishop of Durham to the newly founded Durham Convent. But, in 1136/38, King David of Scotland destroyed the church together with the village and the castle at Norham. The Scots then occupied the land until it was retaken in 1157, and it seems likely that Bishop Puiset rebuilt both the church and castle sometime after that date.

Thus, 1165 is a reasonable but unconfirmed date for the rebuilding of the present structure of Norham Church. The 800th Anniversary was celebrated with a Service of Mattins on Sunday 24th October 1965.

Celebrating the 850th Anniversary of Norham Church in 2015

We'll be celebrating the 850th Anniversary of Norham Church with a series of events from Sunday 22nd March to Sunday 22nd November, some of which have been confirmed and some of which are still at the planning stage. Some of the events would have happened anyway, but have taken on a special significance in the 850th Anniversary year.

The programme of events is being co-ordinated by the Norham 850 Steering Group. For more information contact:

- The Revd Rob Kelsey (Vicar), Tel. (01289) 382325, Email robert.josephkelsey@live.com
- Ian McCreath (churchwarden), Tel. (01289) 386302, Email ian.mccreath1@btinternet.com

or visit www.norham.org.

What's happened so far?

Sunday 22nd March in Norham Church 'William Stephen Gilly: An Exceptionally Busy Life'

This is the title of a new biography about W S Gilly, who was Vicar of Norham for many years in the early nineteenth century, and actively campaigned on social issues in the local area and further afield. Canon Gilly is buried in the churchyard (though his grave is so overgrown that it's difficult to locate exactly), and there's a memorial to him in the north wall of the chancel.

Susan Curran, the book's publisher, started our anniversary celebrations with a very interesting and informative talk about the life and times of Canon Gilly, with particular reference to his time at Norham. Copies of her talk are available from Rob Kelsey.

Future dates and events

Sunday 3rd May

During the 10.00am First Sunday Service

Members of the Borders Group of the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS), who have been making a comprehensive record of the church fabric and contents of Norham Church for the past two years, will formally present their report.

Sunday 3rd May

4.00pm in Norham Church

An International Concert by Three Male Voice Choirs from Berwick, Germany and Norway

Tickets £7.00 (children free) to include refreshments

The combined choir is expected to be over 100 strong!

Saturday 9th May

Starting at 1.00pm at the Village Hall

Cost £5.00

In the 100th Anniversary Year of the Women's Institute, the Norham Group will be hosting some historic walks around the village, including Norham Church. Institutes from across Northumberland have been invited. A celebration afternoon tea, with entertainment provided by the Norham Village Band, will be held in the Village Hall.

Sunday 24th May

A Concert with the Yetholm Sinfonia Wind Soloists, directed by Geoffrey Emerson

7.30pm in Norham Church

Tickets £5.00 (children free) to include refreshments

The Yetholm Sinfonia is the only regular local orchestra, giving seven or eight concerts a year, usually in Kelso.

The concert will include some attractive late romantic music by composers such as Josef Suk and Jean Francaix, and will feature one or two local soloists.

Sunday 31st May

**A Service of Commemoration for
Piper Daniel Laidlaw VC, 'The Piper of Loos'**

Starting at 2.00pm at the Norham War Memorial

and moving to his place of burial in Norham churchyard.

Piper Laidlaw was awarded the Victoria Cross 100 years ago this year. He lived locally, and is the only holder of the VC who's buried in Northumberland.

This annual service takes place on the Sunday nearest to the anniversary of Piper Laidlaw's death on 2nd June 1950.

Saturday 6th June

2.00pm in Norham Church

Members of the Borders Group of NADFAS (see 3rd May) will give a talk entitled

**'Why we have recorded Norham Church
and its history and contents'**

Sunday 28th June

**A Concert by the Yetholm Village Choir,
directed by Geoffrey Emerson,
with the Yetholm Colliery Band and soloists**

7.30pm in Norham Church

Tickets £3.00 (children free) to include refreshments

The Yetholm Village Choir is a happy and successful group, which gives at least five concerts a year. Despite the name its singers come from as far afield as Ancrum and Berwick upon Tweed.

The evening will consist of a midsummer miscellany of words and music.

Saturday 25th July

2.00pm in Norham Church

Members of the Borders Group of NADFAS (see 3rd May) will give a talk entitled

'The stories behind the memorials in Norham Church'

Saturday 8th August

**A Service to Commemorate Mary Sumner,
Founder of the Mothers' Union**

6.00pm in Norham Church

The Norham Mothers' Union comprises members from Norham, Carham, Cornhill, Branxton and beyond.

All are welcome to attend this service, whether male or female, MU member or non-member.

Tuesday 8th September

A Concert by the Weighton Waytes

7.00pm in Norham Church

Tickets £7.00 (children free) to include refreshments

The Weighton Waytes is a community choir from Market Weighton, at the foot of the Yorkshire Wolds. They sing a mixture of sacred and secular music from medieval to modern times, and will include a set of African music – including African drums – in their programme.

For more information visit www.weightonwaytes.org.

Sunday 4th October

A Harvest of Thanksgiving for Norham

10.00am in Norham Church

On the first Sunday of October, Norham Church hosts a traditional Harvest Thanksgiving Service every two years, and a Harvest of Thanksgiving for Norham (involving local groups and organisations, and giving thanks for all the good things that happen in the parish) on alternate years. This year, the Harvest of Thanksgiving will focus on the organisations and activities of benefit to children and young people in and around Norham.

The High Sheriff of Northumberland for 2015 is Lucy Carroll, who lives and works in the parish and sings in Norham Church Choir. The High Sheriff's duties include giving 'active support and encouragement to ... young people' and 'promoting the voluntary sector within their communities.' Lucy will take part in the Harvest of Thanksgiving.

Saturday 12th September

2.00pm in Norham Church

Members of the Borders Group of NADFAS (see 3rd May) will give a talk entitled

'The stories behind the windows in Norham Church'

Between 4th and 11th October

A Flower Festival will be held in Norham Church

We hope that children and young people will be involved.

More information will be available nearer the time.

Sunday 25th October

The 850th Anniversary Service

10.00am in Norham Church

At this service:

- Bishop John Packer, the Honorary Assistant Bishop of Newcastle, will preside and preach.
- A chalice made to celebrate the 1300th Anniversary of St Cuthbert, given to Norham Church by Bishop Martin Wharton, the former Bishop of Newcastle, will be used.
- Norham Church Choir will sing a special piece of music.
- Members of the Borders Group of the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS) will give a presentation.
- Lucy Carroll, the High Sheriff of Northumberland will attend and take part.
- Representatives from Durham Cathedral are likely to be involved.
- We will look not only to the past but also to the future of Norham Church, as a building, as a congregation, and as part of the wider community.

Sunday 8th November

**A Remembrance Sunday Concert
by the Andante Chamber Choir**

4.00pm in Norham Church

Tickets £5.00 (children free)

**Proceeds to the Veteran's mental health charity,
Combat Stress**

The busy Borders Andante Chamber Choir sings a huge range of a-cappella music from plainsong and polyphony to pop. Last year the choir premiered new works by Goldie and Grayston Ives, singing in Glasgow Cathedral and the abbeys at Dunfermline, Melrose and Dryburgh.

The sacred sequence for Remembrance Sunday will be built around movements from the 1605 Requiem of Tomas Luis de Victoria, contrasted with songs & motets from 16th, 19th & 20th centuries.

Sunday 22nd November

**A Pre-Advent Carol Concert by St Salvator's Chapel Choir
from St Andrew's University**

Time to be confirmed, in Norham Church

Tickets £7.00 (children free) to include refreshments

This concert will mark the culmination of Norham Church's 850th Anniversary celebrations.

Other activities

Sometime during the Anniversary Year

Children from Norham Church of England First School will visit Norham Church for a guided tour, as part of their learning about 'Places of Worship.'

Longridge Towers Junior School will visit Norham Church and churchyard for a morning or afternoon of activity and enjoyment.

We'd like to invite other groups and organisations to make a special visit to the church for a particular activity or a guided tour. Please let us know if you'd welcome an invitation!

Sometime between September and November A Fundraising Concert for Repairs to the Organ Time to be confirmed, in Norham Church

The performers will be Lucy Cowan and friends, with Julian Bonia as organist.

The concert will include a Haydn Organ Concerto and Vivaldi's A minor Concerto for Violin and Orchestra

A high quality, Norham Church 850th Anniversary mug will be available to purchase, either as a keepsake or for everyday use.

We hope to find ways of raising the profile of Norham Church, which, for such a significant building (it's sometimes called 'the cathedral of the north') is relatively tucked away. Many people who live in the area and/or drive through the village don't even know that the church is there!

We plan to produce more user-friendly literature for the back of church and elsewhere.