

A Chronology.

635 At the request of King Oswald, Aidan comes to Northumbria from Iona and causes the first church to be built, probably on the site of the present church. Tradition has it that the only relic of this first church is the beam over the font. It serves no structural function and is believed to have supported the awning under which Aidan died. Mention of this beam is made by Bede in his chronicles.

1121 By the grant of Henry I Bamburgh Church and Parish were attached to Nostell near Wakefield in West Yorkshire, where there was a religious establishment of the Augustinian Canons.

1170 to 1230 The greater part of the present day church was built. Few traces of the Norman church remain but several authorities state that these are to be found in the window in the east wall of the north transept, which has a round-headed internal splay the exterior of which has been altered to a lancet.

1190 The first extension of the Norman church was the addition of the north aisle in 1190 and the enlargement of the north transept. The arch into the north aisle was rebuilt to its present style and size, and at the same time those into the chancel and south transept were similarly altered.

1230 Construction of the chancel, built to supersede the previous Norman chancel, when the Augustinian Canons came into full possession of their Bamburgh property. The chancel is unusually long – 60 ft. by 21 ft. – in relation to the nave. Within the chancel today are the recumbent effigy of a knight, reputed to be called Sir Lancelot du Lake, dating from 1320 or later and the helmet, breastplate, sword and gauntlets of Ferdinando Forster who was killed in Newcastle in 1701.

14th century Both transepts were lengthened to provide accommodation for the new altars. The north transept was made into a chantry chapel and for many years was known as the Fowberry Porch; today it is known as St. Oswald's chapel.

16th century With the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII Bamburgh church and its lands were sold to Sir John Forster and thereafter was neglected. In 1611 it was recorded that "the steeple was only half covered with lead and the other half utterly decayed and open. The church was thatched and indecently kept and defiled with doves. The windows thereof not sufficiently glassed.."

1715 First Jacobite rising. Because of the prominent part he played in it Tom Forster, being unable to inherit the family estates, went bankrupt. The Forster estates, including the church, were purchased by Lord Crewe, Bishop of Durham and whose wife, Dorothy, was Tom Forster's aunt. This marked the start of the gradual restoration of the Church building.

1757 Thomas Sharpe became curate of Bamburgh. For the rest of this century the Sharpe family played a leading role in the ongoing restoration of the Church. At the west end of the north aisle is a monument given in 1839 by Catherine Sharp to be a memorial to her husband and several members of the Sharp family.

1819 First organ installed in church

1837 In July 1837 the crypt was “rediscovered”. Quite how it had come to be lost is not known. It had been used as a burial chamber both by the Augustinian canons and by the Forster family. The crypt, which is not open to the public, comprises two chambers, the larger of which has a vaulted roof and appears to have been used as a chapel, having an altar, Piscina and aumbry.

1841 – 1852 During this period the box pews were removed. An oil painting by the font shows how the interior of the church looked when the box pews were in situ. Also at this time (1852) a second organ was installed.

1847 The windows in the chancel were glazed with glass from the Netherlands. They depict the twelve Apostles.

1883 Present organ installed in the chancel. Subsequently in 1889 the organ was moved to its present position in the south transept.

1885 The effigy of Grace Darling was placed in the North Aisle. This was originally in the churchyard but following a storm that year when the canopy was blown down the effigy was brought into the church and another one put in its place outside.

1895 – 1900 During this period the roof of the chancel, which for many years had been flat, was restored to its original form thus enabling the lancet windows at the east end of the church to be extended to their original height. The present reredos, carved of Caen stone, was set up being the altar. The 16 carved figures are of Northumbrian and other saints with the two principal figures being Saints Aidan and Oswald respectively. The tower was also raised

1912 Installation of the 7th and Tenor bells completed the peal of eight bells in the tower. Prior to 1885 the church had only two bells and the casting of the new peal took place over a five year period from 1907 to 1912.