

# Celebrating 850 Years of Norham Church

## 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 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was celebrated with a Service of Mattins on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> October 1965.

# Celebrating the 850<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Norham Church in 2015

We'll be celebrating the 850<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Norham Church with a series of events from Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March to Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 850<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year.

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

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or visit [www.norham.org](http://www.norham.org).

## Confirmed dates and events

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March

10.45am (approx) in Norham Church

'William Stephen Gilly: An Exceptionally Busy Life'

This is the title of a new biography, written by Hugh Norwood with Nicholas Groves, 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.

There's a memorial to Canon Gilly in the chancel of the church.

Susan Curran, the book's publisher, will give a talk about the book and the history behind it. The talk will start soon after the 10.00am Service of Holy Communion. Copies of the book will be available to buy.

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May

During the 10.00am Service of Morning Worship

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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 about 150 strong!

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May

Starting at 1.00pm at the Village Hall

Cost £5.00

In the 100<sup>th</sup> 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 24<sup>th</sup> 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1950.

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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,  
member or non-member.

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.weightonwaytes.org).

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> 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, we'd like the Harvest of Thanksgiving to 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.

Sometime between 4<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> October

A Flower Festival will be held in Norham Church

The actual dates and details will be confirmed nearer the time.

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October  
The 850<sup>th</sup> 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 1300<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> November  
A Remembrance Sunday Concert  
by the Andante Chamber Choir  
4.00pm in Norham Church  
Ticket price to be confirmed

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 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 850<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations.

## Other activities

A Norham Church 850<sup>th</sup> Anniversary mug will be produced and made available to buy.

Members of the Borders Group of the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS), who have been recording the contents of Norham Church for the past two years, will give a fascinating talk about the church, based on the findings of their report, on one or more dates to be confirmed.

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.

## Possible dates and events

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

Ticket price to be confirmed

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

Sometime during the Anniversary Year?

The idea has been floated of having a 'Community Fair' in Norham Church, with stalls and demonstrations showcasing the interests and activities of the various groups and organisations in and around the parish. The Norham 850 Steering Group suspect that they don't have the capacity to organise such an event on their own! Would anyone else be interested in helping to make it happen?