

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD

MAGHULL ANCIENT CHAPEL



Maghull Ancient Chapel, Damfield Lane, Maghull, Merseyside

National Grid Reference: SD 37534 01931

May 2011

Prepared by Cerys Edwards MPlan, MRTPI

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1. Summary

Maghull Ancient Chapel is a Grade II* Listed Building, parts of which are believed to have been built in the early 13th century. It is constructed of red, random coursed sandstone with a pitched stone slate roof and contains a number of late Norman and Early English features, but also displays significant 19th century alterations. It has been a place of worship for the entire length of its existence. It is presently owned and used by the Church of England, but was originally believed to have been constructed as Catholic chapel.

The chapel is located close to the centre of the north Merseyside commuter settlement of Maghull. It was originally constructed as a chapel-of-ease to the parish of Halsall, some five miles away and is still in use today, open regularly and holding occasional small church services. Further details concerning the history and development of the chapel are recorded in section 5.

This document provides written, photographic and drawn depiction of the building, recorded on three visits between February and April 2011. There is also an account of the building's historical development together with background explanation of architectural and social significance.

2. Introduction

2.1. Purpose and Format

This record has been prepared in order to document the historic interest of the Chapel, an appreciation of which could inform the development of appropriate future management proposals.

The format of the record follows guidance contained in the English Heritage Publication 'Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice' (February 2006). In summary it consists of a written description and analysis which draws upon investigation of the building's fabric, together with research in documentary sources.

2.2. The Author

Cerys Edwards has a degree in Environment and Planning from the University of Liverpool and a background in Local Authority planning policy. The author is also a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and is currently studying for an MSc in Building Conservation and Regeneration at the University of Central Lancashire.

2.3. Methods of Investigation and Recording

Visual inspections of the building were carried out in February, March and April 2011. Measurements and photographs were taken as a desktop source of reference, and were used in conjunction with plans provided by the Friends of Maghull Chapel group. Digital photographs and drawings are provided within the record for reference purposes. Photographs and a full set of record drawings can be found in Section 4. A plan indicating the location of each photograph is given at the start of Section 4.

2.4 Archiving

This Building Record (including photographs and drawings) will be deposited in a local repository which has suitable arrangements for the long term preservation of such material (e.g. local library – Maghull Library or local record office at Crosby Library).

3. General Description

3.1. Site Location

The site is located at National Grid Reference SD 37534 01931 and is located off the northern end of Damfield Lane, immediately to the east of Northway (A59) which is the main route between north Liverpool and Ormskirk and is just to the east of the modern centre of the north Merseyside commuter town of Maghull.

3.2. Site Description

The chapel is a detached building sited within a graveyard, just behind a much larger and later church building – St Andrew’s Church (built in 1878 - 1880) which is the present Parish church for Maghull. Access to the chapel is via a narrow flagged pathway leading from the main church entrance. The church hall and vicarage also lie within the plot. Immediately to the west are a dual carriageway (A59) and the main urban centre of Maghull. Some housing development lies to the east along Damfield Lane, while open fields and the Leeds Liverpool Canal lie to the south. A site plan is shown below in Figure 1 and a larger version in 1:2500 scale is also included in Appendix 2.



Figure 1 Maghull Chapel Site Plan (extract of 2010 OS Map)

3.3. Topography

The building occupies a plot of land which slopes gently towards the west. The chapel lies just to the east of the modern town centre, but to the east of the older 19th century settlement centre and station. Maghull lies within the flood plain of the River Alt and is therefore relatively flat. In previous centuries the area was covered by extensive marshlands which stretched out from the south and west and were regularly flooded. These however have been largely drained for agricultural purposes and to accommodate more recent urban development.

4. Building Record

4.1. Orientation

The church is orientated approximately along the east west axis - the altar being to the east end and the bell tower being to the west. For clarification see Figure 1.

4.2. Overview: Building Plan and Materials



Figure 2 Two arch arcade

The chapel comprises principally of two joined elements – the bays of the Chancel (located to the south) and the Unsworth Chapel, joined by a two arched arcade (see Fig 2). The principle entrance to the building is into the gable end of the Unsworth Chapel, through a 19th century gabled porch with pointed double-chamfered entrance on the western elevation, near the north west corner. However another entrance exists into the gable end of the chancel, also on the western elevation. It is now disused but the



Figure 3 Two entrances and bellcote visible

door is still in situ. An octagonal bell turret is located above the south west corner, featuring a string course cornice and cupola with ball finial and four lancet openings, containing a small bell (see Fig.3).



Figure 4 19th century changes visible in the use of more regular shaped sandstone blocks

The building has solid masonry walls of red sandstone, most of which is random coursed but with some of the 19th century changes being discernable through the use of more uniformly shaped, dressed sandstone blocks (see Fig 4). The



Figure 5 Remains of Medieval wall painting near altar

interior face of the walls is bare stone, but was once believed to have been partly rendered in a horse hair plaster. However the remains of a medieval wall painting onto render is visible in the chancel, to the south of the window. The Unsworth Chapel and chancel have separately pitched 19th century timber scissor-beam truss, purlin and rafter structures, covered with stone slates and with stone coped gables. The roof of the Unsworth Chapel is believed to contain a tipped truss.



Figure 8 Perpendicular style of chancel east window



Figure 6 Creped Ogee windows on southern elevation

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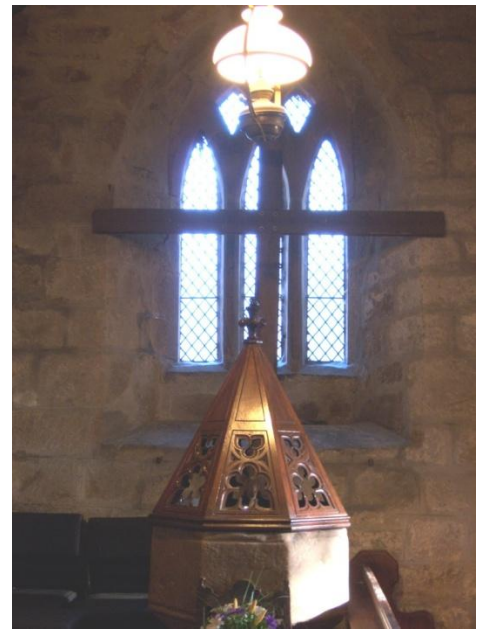


Figure 7 Intersecting tracery in eastern window of Unsworth chapel

The chapel contains six windows of a variety of ages and therefore reflecting different styles. The western elevation contains a small latticed single lancet window just above and to the left of the porch entrance, and latticed triple lancets above the disused chancel entrance. No windows exist along the northern elevation. The eastern wall of the Unsworth Chapel contains the

earliest window with intersecting tracery¹, believed to date from the end of the 13th century. A late 19th century perpendicular two light window with a Pre-Raphaelite style stained glass depiction of the resurrection is located within the eastern wall of the chancel, and the south wall contains two sets of two light latticed windows, each with two creped ogee heads – the south west window is believed to be a 19th century replica of the other.



Figure 10 Clasp buttress - south east corner

The chapel demonstrates a number of different styles of buttressing, used as part of original construction and during later alterations. The west wall, where it meets the south wall is braced by angled buttresses with set offs and a triangular elevation topped by a gable in an Early English style (but added in the 19th century). The junction between the west and north walls is supported by a stepped lateral buttress. The north wall also features a chimney breast in the style of a central clamp buttress. The south elevation is braced by a tall, steeply sloping



Figure 9 Diagonal buttress - north east corner

diagonal buttress in the north east corner, a central clamp buttress and a stepped clasp buttress at the south east corner.



Figure 11 Norman nailwork decoration to capital

The principle entrance is through an oak door above which - all around the door frame - are a series of small quatrefoil lights. The door is set within a rounded late Norman arch supported by half-octagonal columns. To the chapel interior, the division between the Chancel and Unsworth Chapel is marked by a row of three round columns supporting two double-chamfered Early English arches, the capital of the westernmost respond bearing the remains of late Norman nailwork decoration. A cast iron decorated screen

¹ Pevsner, N (2006) *The Buildings of England - Lancashire: Liverpool and the South West* Yale University Press

also divides the space. Stone flagging covers the entirety of the chancel floor, including the raised altar platform, while a marble and slate tiled floor with a decorative geometric pattern covers the whole floor, including the inscriptions to the Unsworth family vault in the Unsworth Chapel.

The chancel has a sedilia and piscina recess within the south wall, near the south eastern corner.

Fixtures and fittings inside the chapel include:

- A wooden altar rail
- An altar table
- 3 rows of wooden pews within the chancel
- An Alms box
- A set of 5 chairs in a rural Jacobean style
- A chain for the Book of Homilies near to the altar
- A pillar like object of uncertain origin – possibly an 18th century pedestal font, but described in the chapel Listing Description as a sundial shaft
- Several wall mounted memorials from the late 18th and early 19th centuries to the local landowning families – two on the north wall to the local Unsworth family, 1 to the Mather family. A memorial to Mary Harrison, daughter of a local landowner is located on the south wall, between the two windows. A further memorial to the Formby family on the east wall marks the site of a vault
- A board on the south wall commemorating the enlargement of the church in 1830
- A Cresset stone
- An octagonal font with 19th century cover

4.3. Photographic Record

The following section contains a photographic record of the building with supporting captions describing elements of significance and interest. The location and direction of each photo is shown in Figure 12 below.

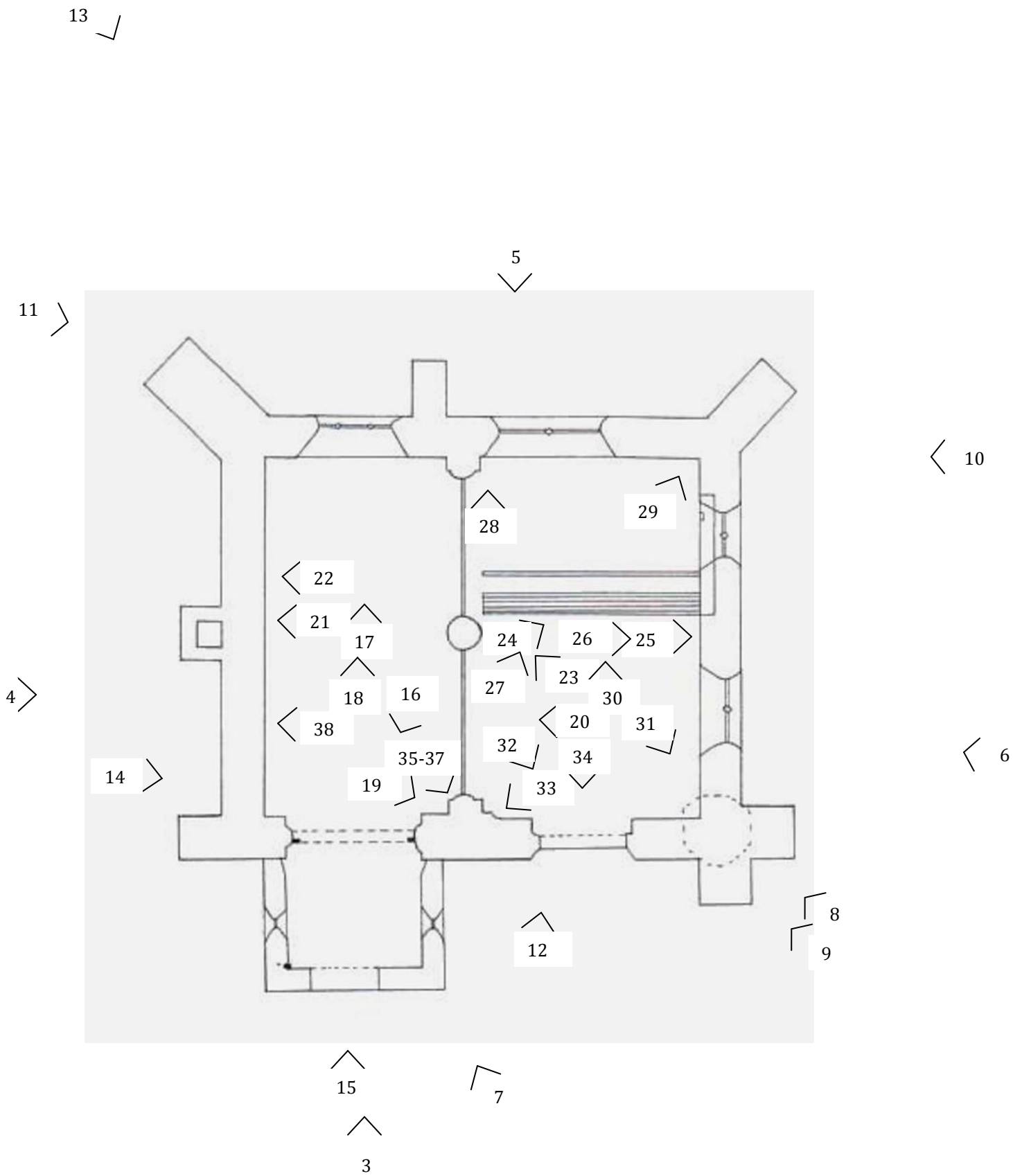


Figure 12 Location of photographs



Figure 13 *Western elevation*



Figure 14 *Northern elevation showing chimney, central clamp buttress and lateral buttress at western end*



Figure 15 Eastern elevation – also showing the east window of the Unsworth Chapel featuring intersecting tracery



Figure 16 Southern elevation with two windows, each with creped ogee lights. The 19th century replica can be seen on the left – distinguishable due to a larger lintel



Figure 17 Western elevation and porch entrance – a former roof line is visible at an angle immediately below the lancet window



Figure 18 Bellcote on south west corner – dating from 1775 but moved into present position during 1830s changes



Figure 19 Angled buttressing at south west corner below the bellcote



Figure 20 Example of a clasping buttress - south east corner



Figure 21 Diagonal buttress - north east corner



Figure 22 Disused round arched entrance into chancel – western elevation



Figure 23 Wide view of chapel (east elevation) with replacement 19th century church in the foreground



Figure 24 Roof detailing showing stone slating, rafter feet and roof soffit



Figure 25 Principle porch entrance into Unsworth Chapel – western elevation



Figure 26 Oak entry door with decorative cast iron strap hinges and quatrefoil window detailing

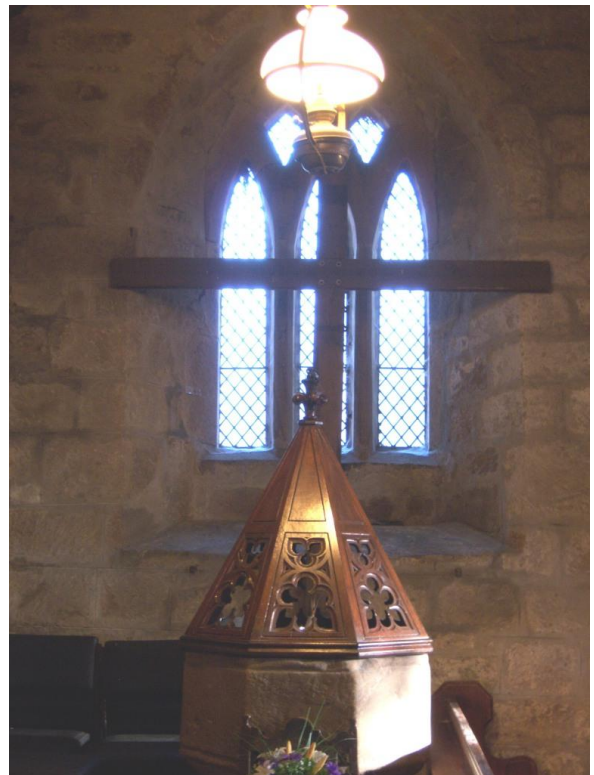


Figure 27 East window of Unsworth Chapel showing intersecting tracery. In the foreground is the 14th century baptismal font set upon a 19th century pedestal and with an ornate 19th century cover



Figure 28 Marble and slate tiled floor in a geometric pattern in the Unsworth Chapel

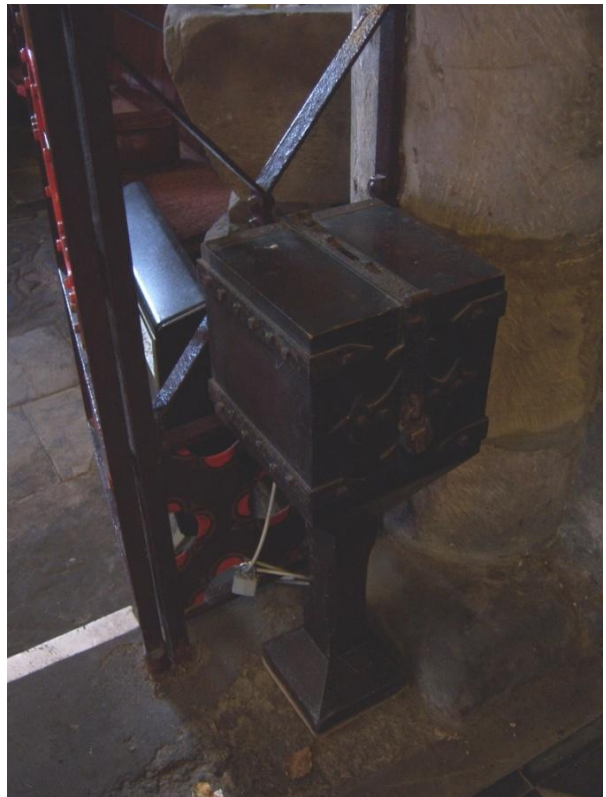


Figure 29 Alms box next to the Chapel entrance



Figure 30 View into the Unsworth Chapel from the Chancel. Cast iron screen set between the two transitional arches is in the foreground



Figure 31 Marble memorial to the Mather family - northern wall of Unsworth Chapel

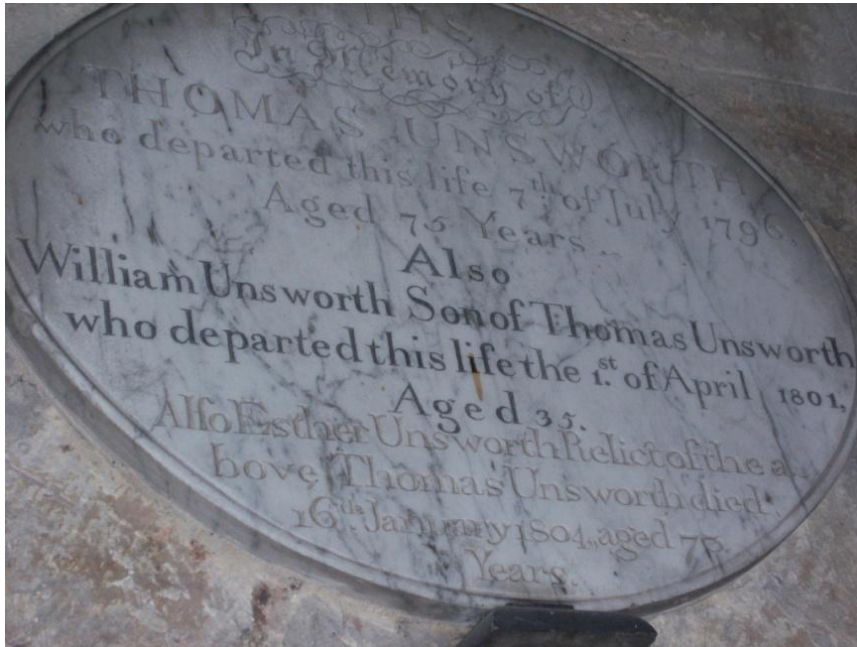


Figure 32 Memorial to the Unsworth family - Roman Catholic family of the nearby Manor of Maghull



Figure 33 View north east into Unsworth Chapel showing two of the three columns of the arcade which separates the Chapel from the chancel



Figure 34 View towards the south east corner of the chancel showing the altar rail and table

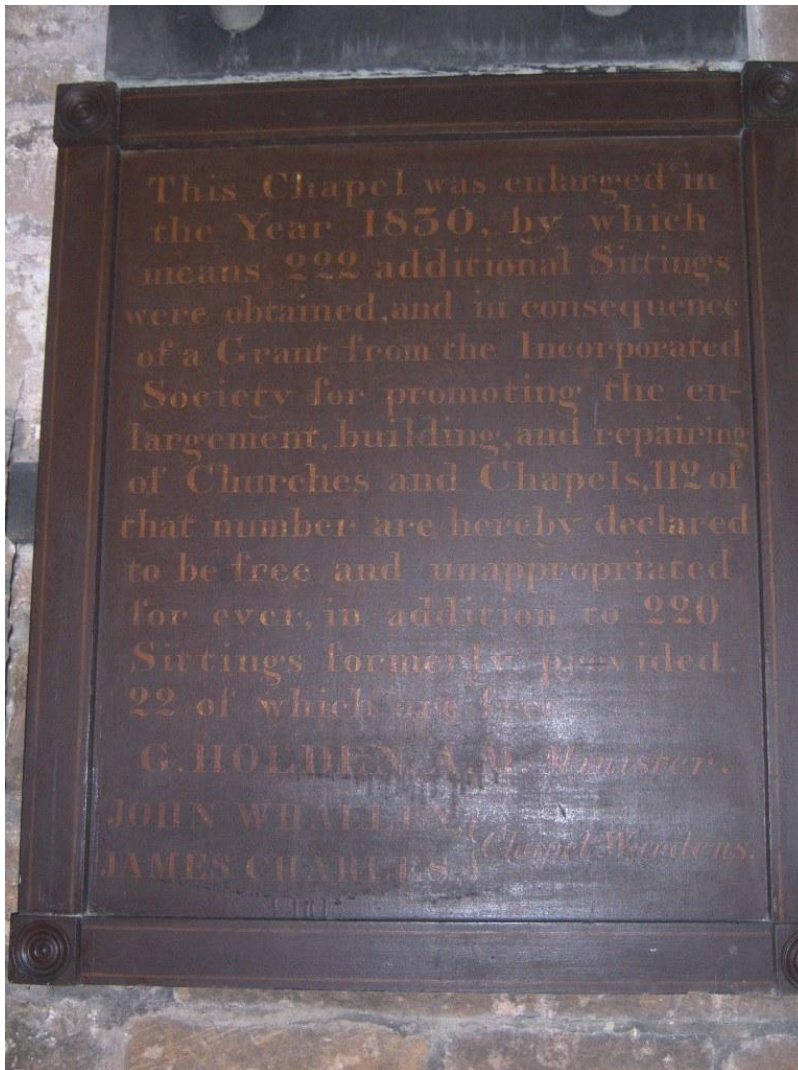


Figure 35 Board on southern wall of the chancel, between the two windows recording the building of the 1830 extension



Figure 36 View west into chancel. Pews, altar rail and commemorative board are all visible



Figure 37 Stained glass perpendicular window on east wall of chancel, pre-Raphaelite style depicting the resurrection



Figure 38 Chain for Book of Homilies purchased in 1729

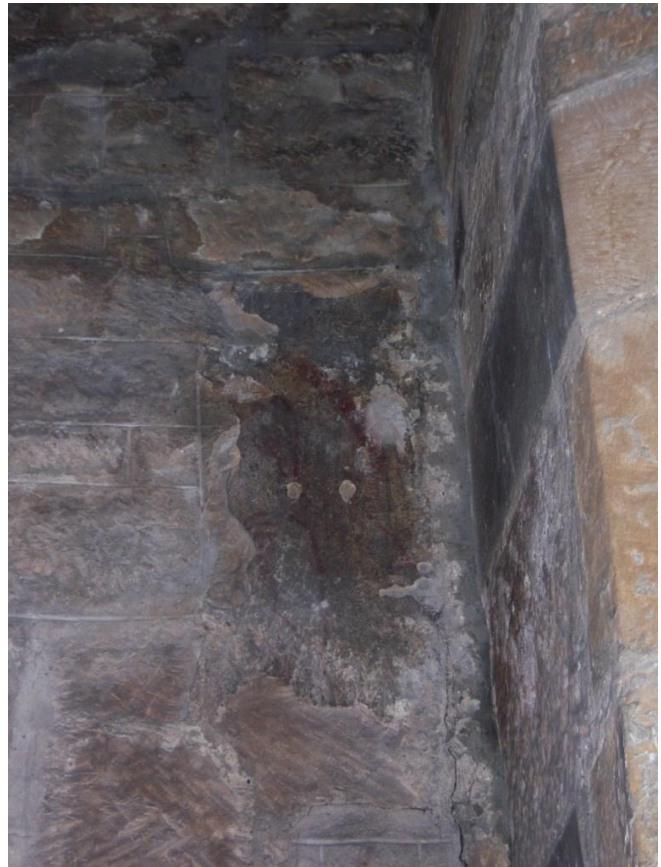


Figure 39 Remains of a medieval wall painting in south east corner of chancel

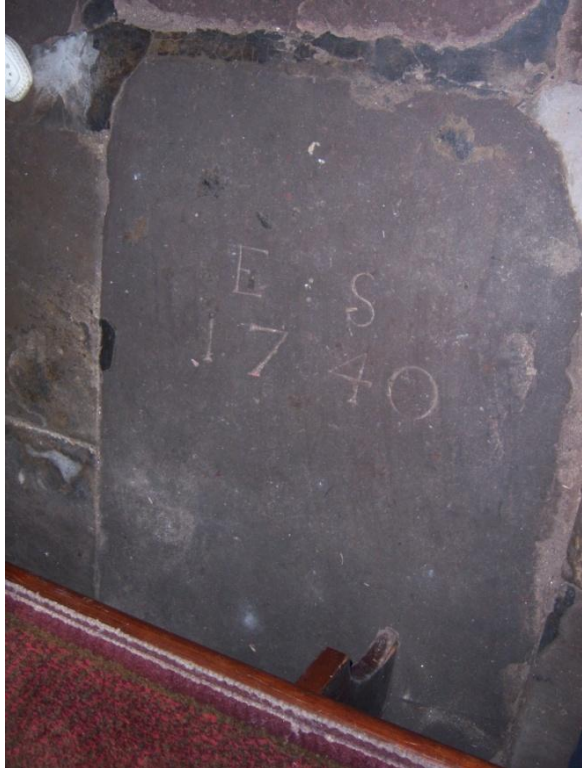


Figure 40 Large stone slab in the floor of the chancel bearing the inscription 'ES 1740' believed to mark the grave of Elizabeth Sherdley, wife of a Chapel curate. It is believed to be the pre-reformation consecrated altar stone



Figure 41 Iron door in south west corner leading to the bell turret



Figure 42 Small pillar like object on window ledge of chancel west wall. Believed to be former sundial shaft



Figure 43 Cresset stone in north west corner of chancel



Figure 44 Scissor braced roof of chancel



Figure 45 Western respond supporting transitional arcade. Gouge in stone visible above capital - unknown cause



Figure 46 Remains of Norman nailhead moulding on capital of western respond



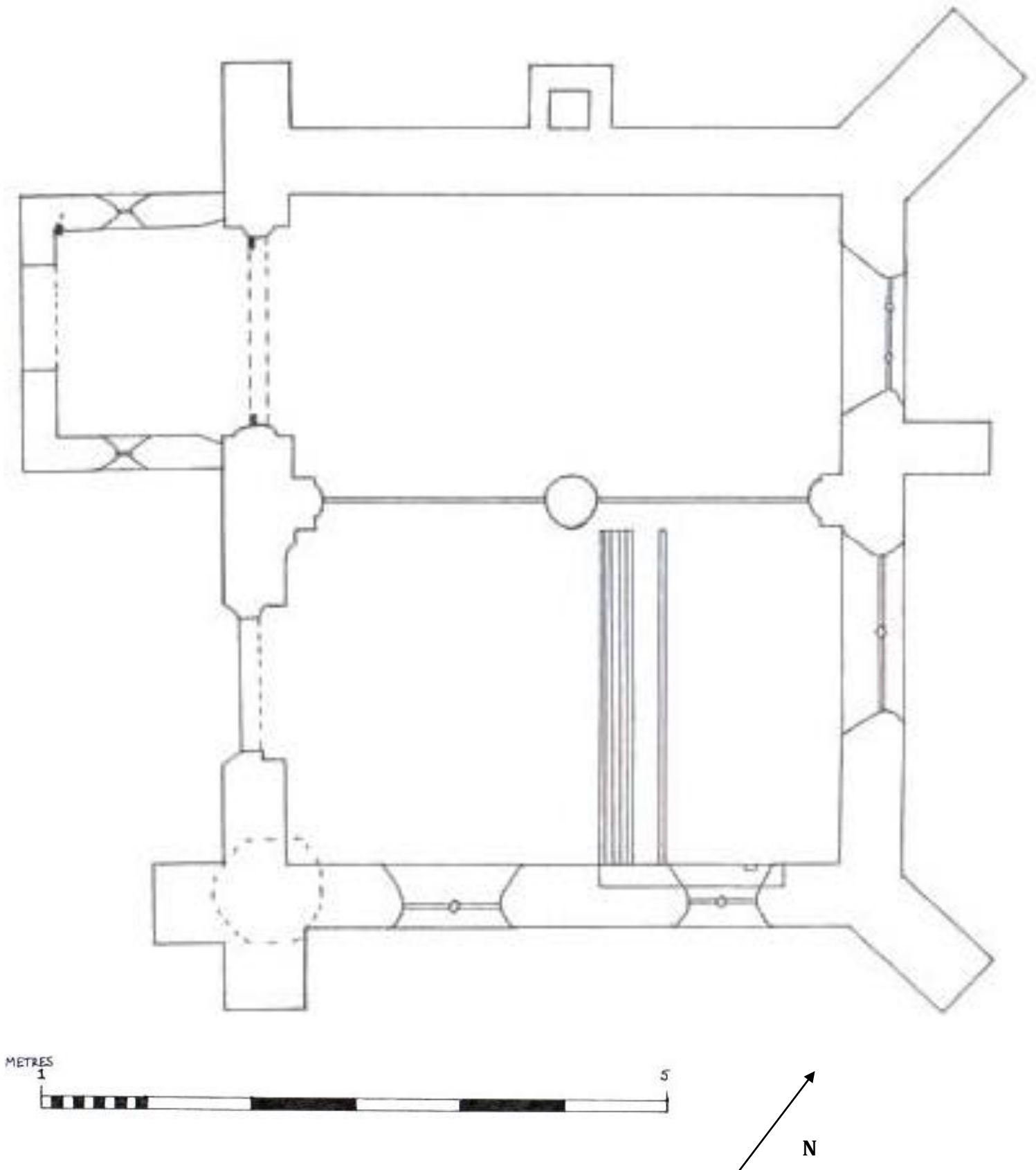
Figure 47 Capital of western respond - wider view



Figure 48 *Painting of the Chapel prior to its 1830 reconstruction. Artist unknown.*

4.4. Drawn Record

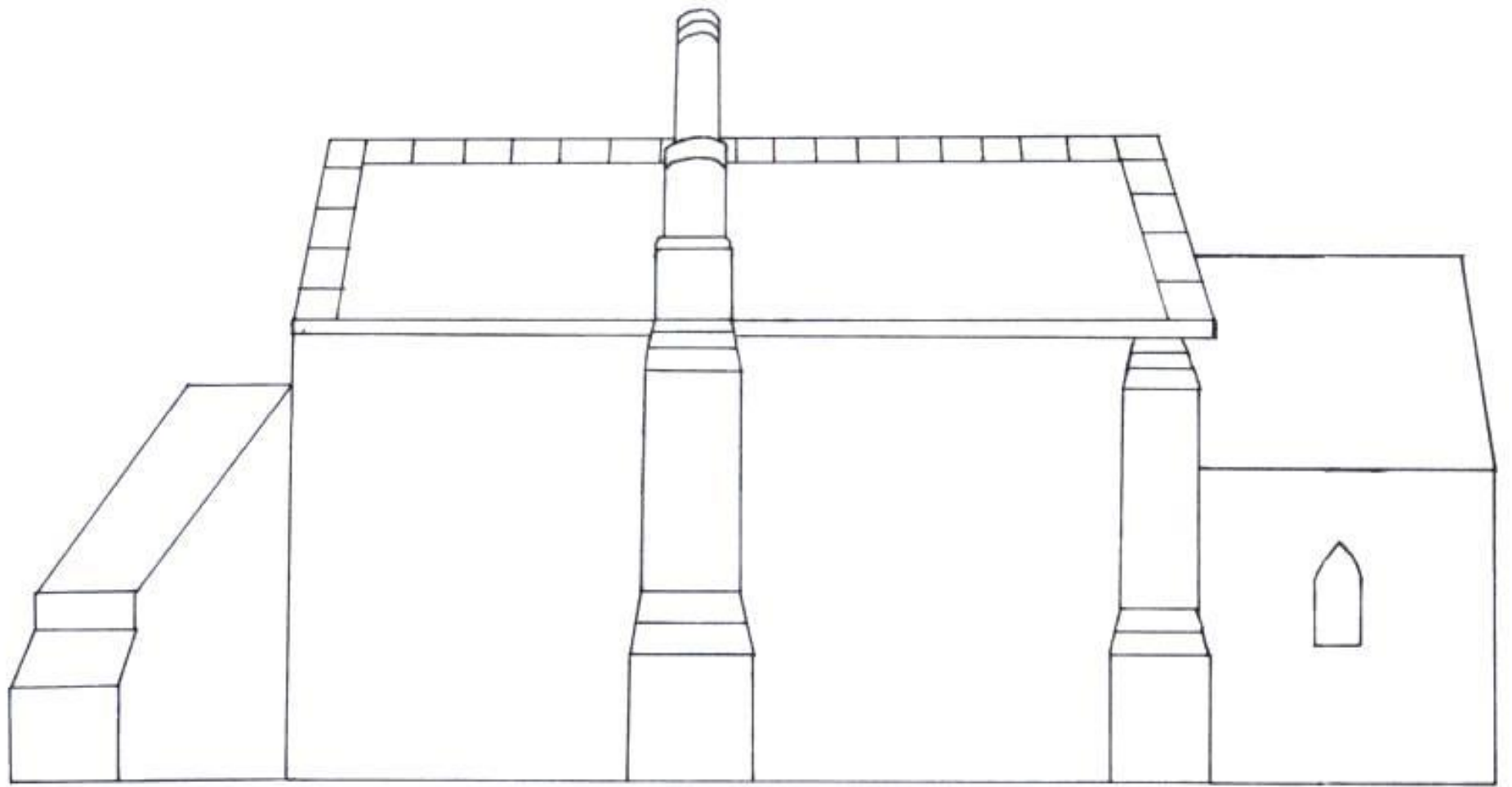
Floor Plan (1:100)





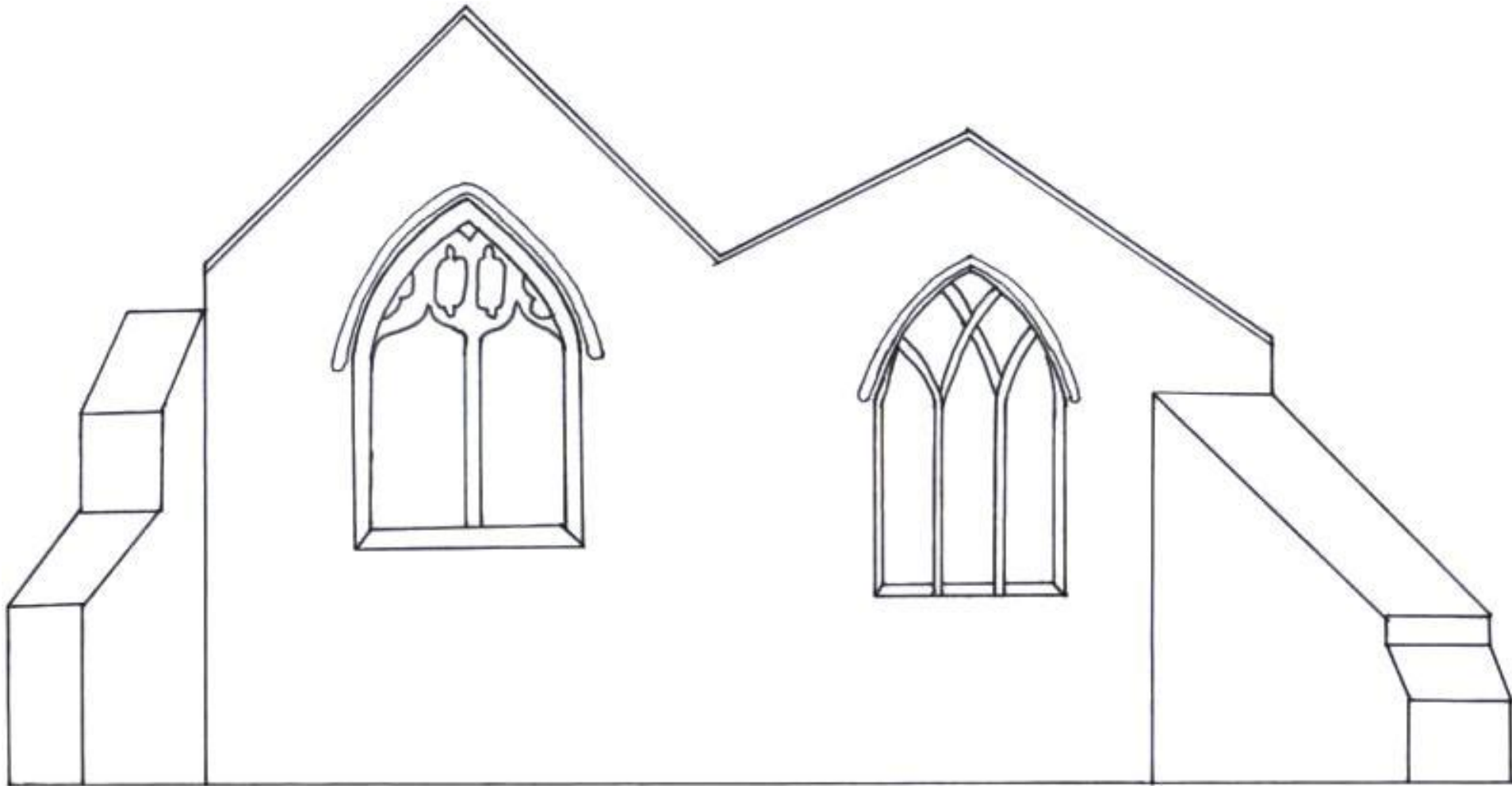
West elevation (1:50)





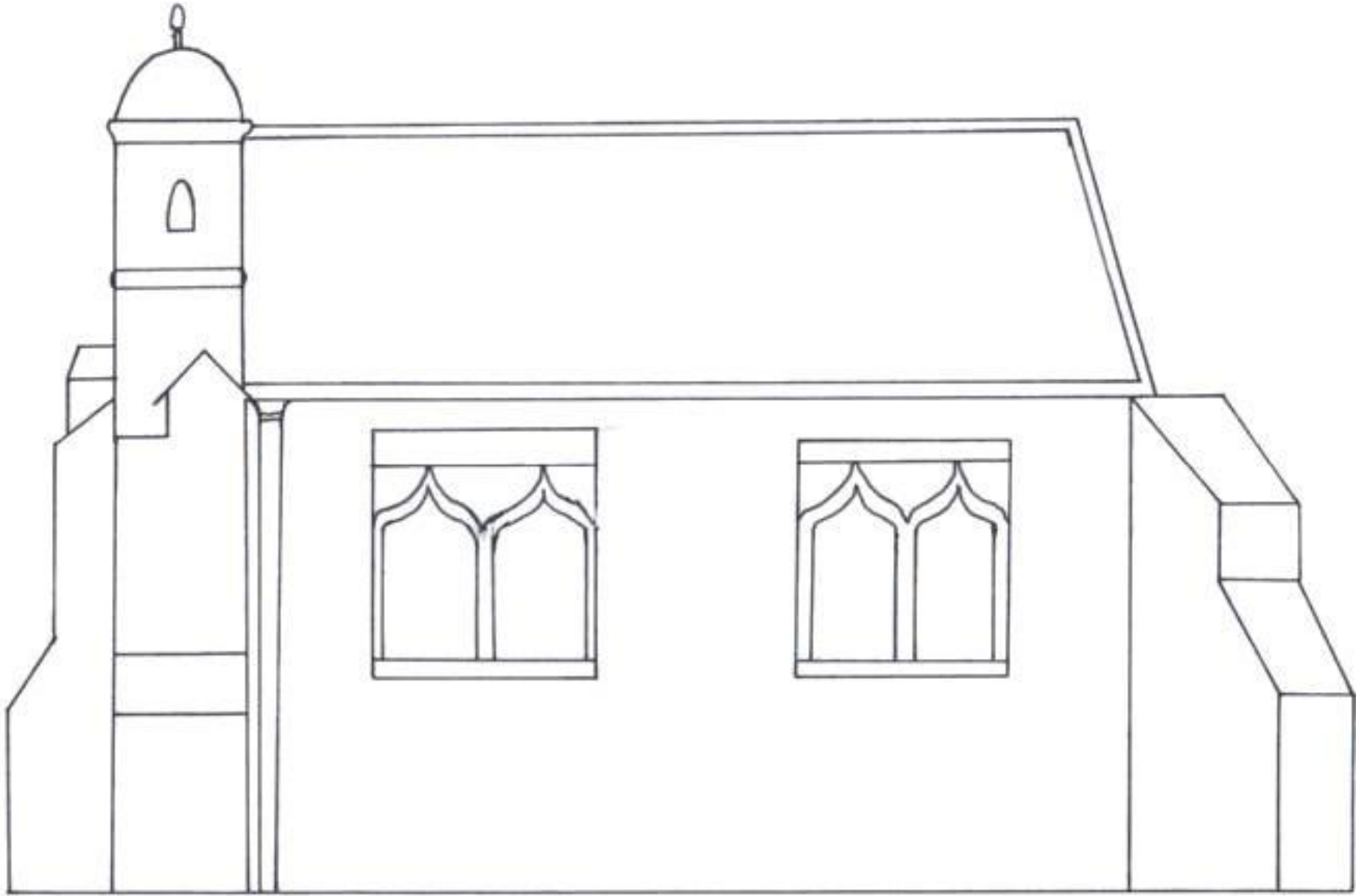
North elevation (1:50)





East Elevation (1:50)





South Elevation(1:50)





Section through Maghull Chapel (looking east) (1:50)



5. Interpretation

Although no record of the chapel's building or consecration has yet been traced through diocesan records, its architectural details date it from the early 13th century – during the transition period from Romanesque/Norman to Gothic/Early English. It is believed that the north (or Lady) chapel was built first with the chancel added in the 13th century. Of this 12th/13th century chapel, only the chancel and the north (or Unsworth) chapel remain.

In some respects Maghull Ancient Chapel conforms to the symbolic conventions of church architecture that emerged during the medieval period. The chancel and altar end faces east with the congregational entrance on the western wall. However its unconventional appearance is clear when comparison is made with other examples of small chapels-of-ease. This is largely due to the alterations made to the chapel at various points over the centuries. Historic Parish records suggest that this was partly due to the poor condition of the building fabric, but mainly in order to accommodate the needs of a growing congregation. The timeline below sets out the complex alterations that have been made over the centuries:

Date	
c. 1200	Chapel built
c. 1300	Chancel added
1755	Old medieval Nave demolished and new Nave constructed with gallery Roof re-slatted
1778	North and south walls of Nave taken down and rebuilt
1797	New Vestry constructed
1830	Extension to south wall – this virtually doubled the width of the building throughout its length from east to west. The old south wall was replaced by three iron pillars.
1832	New graveyard created and consecrated
1880	St Andrews Church built
1883	Permission granted to demolish all but the most ancient parts of the chapel – 1830 Nave demolished
c. 2005	Chapel walls re-pointed

The increasing population of the area has also impacted significantly on the setting of the chapel. This has been most notable during the 20th century when Maghull became a commuter town. By 1921 the population had reached 2,637 and by 1971 it was over 20,000. This was brought about by the construction of 'Northway' (A59) in 1933, which improved transport links to Liverpool. This passes close by the western wall of the chapel and impacts upon its setting. The following Figures illustrate this.



Figure 49 1900 Ordnance Survey Map showing the Chapel in its semi-rural setting (chapel circled)



Figure 50 1960 Ordnance Survey Map showing the encroachment of the suburbs on the setting of the chapel (circled)

As the 20th century progressed the chapel was used less and became a store room for unwanted church furniture. It was subject to attack by vandals on a number of occasions and a SPAB (Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) grant was applied for in 1972 to make the chapel secure. However interest shown by the Ancient Maghull Chapel Trust together with fundraising have enabled subsequent repair works to the chapel – including the re-pointing of the stonework and the re-laying of the stone slate roof. The chapel is now used regularly for small services and some special events.

6. Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Eileen Kermode of the Friends of Maghull Chapel, for giving her time during the building surveys and sharing her extensive knowledge of the Chapel. Also thanks to Pamela Russell (MPhil) for providing further information about the history of the area.

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Appendix 1 Listing Description for Maghull Ancient Chapel

Building Details

Building Name: MAGHULL CHAPEL

Parish: MAGHULL

District: SEFTON

County: MERSEYSIDE

LBS Number: 216498

Grade: II*

Date Listed: 11/10/1968

NGR: SD3753401931

Listing Text:

MAGHULL DAMFIELD LANE

SD 30 SE

(south-west side)

7/99 Maghull chapel

11,10.6H

G.V. II*

Chancel and north Unsworth chapel of former parish church. Late C13 with later alterations; west wall and west bay of south wall of 1880 following demolition of nave; bell turret re-used from nave of 1775. Stone with stone slate roofs, stone coped gables. East end has diagonal buttresses and central buttress, chancel has 2-light window with Perpendicular tracery and chapel has 3-light window with intersected tracery. West end has south angle buttresses with octagonal turret over; string course cornice and cupola - with ball finial, and 4 lancet openings. Porch to chapel is gabled with pointed double-chamfered entrance. Inner entrance is round-headed with octagonal jambs; wide-boarded door in frame with glazed quatrefoils. Round-headed entrance to chancel. Lancet to chapel and triple lancets to chancel. South side has 2 straight-headed windows of 2 lights with creped ogee heads; north side has buttress. Interior: 2-bay arcade has double-chamfered arches on round pier. C19 Scissor-braced roofs. Chancel has sedilia and piscina recess, canopy missing. Remains of north side of chancel arch. Remains of wall painting to south of east window, which has tracery dating from restoration of 1883. Iron railings to arcade. Some late C18 and early C19 wall memorials; board commemorates enlargement of church in 1830. Octagonal font has C19 base and cover. Stone vessel of uncertain purpose at west end of chancel. Late C17 chained chancel prayer book and book of homilies; bible of 1830.

Some early C17 chairs and bench. Baluster for sundial of 1781 on sill of west window. The chapel is an important medieval survival in an area with few such buildings.

Appendix 2 Site Plan - 1:2500 scale