Historic Buildin

Bedfield Unitarian Chapel Bedfield, Suffolk



Historic Building Recording



September 2011

Client: Philip Clifford

OA East Report No: 1303 OASIS No: oxfordar3-109295

NGR: TM 219 665



Bedfield Unitarian Chapel, Bedfield, Suffolk

Historic Building Survey

By Taleyna Fletcher BA, MIfA

Editor: Rachel Clarke BA, AlfA

Illustrators: Gillian Greer and Andrew Corrigan

Report Date: September 2011

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Report Number:

1303

Site Name:

Bedfield Unitarian Chapel, Bedfield, Suffolk

HER Event No:

BED024

Date of Works:

7th September 2011

Client Name:

Philip Clifford

Client Ref:

Bedfield Chapel

Planning Ref:

2786/10

Grid Ref:

TM 219 665

Site Code:

BED 024

Finance Code:

XSFBED11

Receiving Body:

Suffolk County Councils Archaeology Service (SCCAS)

Accession No:

BED024

Prepared by:

Taleyna Fletcher

Position: Date:

Project Officer September 2011

Checked by:

Aileen Connor

Position:

Project Manager

Date:

September 2011

Signed:

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1 Como

Oxford Archaeology East,

15 Trafalgar Way, Bar Hill, Cambridge. **CB23 8SQ**

t: 01223 850500 f: 01223 850599

e: oaeast@thehumanjourney.net

w: http://thehumanjourney.net/oaeast

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Summary

On 7th September 2011, Oxford Archaeology East conducted a historical building survey at the former Unitarian Chapel, Long Green in Bedfield, mid Suffolk. The site is owned by a private developer and is the subject of planning consent for demolition followed by the construction of a three bedroomed residential property.

This work was carried out in response to a Brief issued by Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service Conservation Team. The brief required that a historic building survey was carried out on the existing building to meet the requirements of English Heritages building survey at Level 1.

Three main phases of development were identified during the survey; construction of the original chapel in the late 19th century, followed by two extensions added onto the rear in the mid-late 20th century. Despite the buildings plain and unassuming exterior appearance, the original interior, clad with pine survives along with a built-in wooden seat (with carved scroll ends) that spans the width of the room. Original entrances along with built-in cupboard, hooks and shelves were also noted.

The chapel was founded by the Rev. Alfred Amey in 1895 and the record book of the chapel's Sunday School from dating from the early 20th century provides an insight into the role that the chapel and Unitarian church played in the social and religious lives of local residents.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 An historic building recording survey was conducted at the former Unitarian chapel at Long Green in the mid-Suffolk village of Bedfield (Figure 1). The work was carried out in advance of demolition of the building, which is to be replaced with a new residential dwelling.
- 1.1.2 The historic building survey was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Sarah Poppy of Suffolk County Councils Archaeological Service Conservation Team (Poppy 2011), supplemented by a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Oxford Archaeology East (Fletcher 2011).
- 1.1.3 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with Suffolk County Council's Archaeology Service in due course (Accession Code BED 024).

1.2 Location and topography

- 1.2.1 Bedfield is a small village situated approximately four miles east of Debenham and five miles west of Framlingham. It has a population of about 300 (at the 2001 census), mainly centred on the main Worlingworth to Earl Soham Road that runs through the village at Long Green and Little Green (www.onesuffolk.co.uk). The chapel is located on the west side of this main road. The chapel building is located on School Road, the main road which runs through Bedfield centred at TM 219 665 (Figure 1).
- 1.2.2 The chapel stands within its own grounds, mostly laid to lawn with shrubs and trees around the perimeter. There is a house to the south the gardens (of which)extend to the west of the chapel, with allotments to the north.

1.3 Acknowledgements

1.3.1 The author would like to thank Philip Clifford for commissioning the work and for providing the elevations reproduced in this report and to Simon Knott for kind permission to reproduce his photograph used in Figure 3. Thanks also to Rachel Clarke for editing the text and Gillian Greer and Andrew Corrigan for producing the illustrations. The author carried out all on-site building recording, photography and background research.

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2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The aim of the investigation was to carry out a historic building survey equivalent to English Heritage Level 1 (English Heritage 2006).
- 2.1.2 The work was designed to adequately record the structure in its current state before the demolition work began. The specific aims of the project were:
 - To collate information about the building in order to compile a record of the structure, with analysis and interpretation of the structure in conjunction with an associated documentary survey.
 - To make a permanent record of the structures, as they are, in order to preserve by record the character, state, preservation and architectural and historic significance of the building.
 - To assess the archaeological value and research potential of known or possible structures to be measured against appropriate local, regional and national research agendas.
 - To produce a high quality, fully integrated archive suitable for long-term deposition in order to 'preserve by record' the building in its current form.

2.2 Site Conditions

- 2.2.1 Conditions within and around the building were good, allowing measured and photographic survey to take place. The building was vacant at the time of recording and all furniture had been removed, however a number of built-in fixtures and fittings remained.
- 2.2.2 Lights and fittings were still in use and access to all parts of the structure was possible, however due to the height of the ceiling, the roof space was not inspected.

2.3 Methodology

- 2.3.1 The measured building survey was carried out using basic equipment including: a distometer, tower tape, 30m tapes, hand tapes, a 30cm ruler and a plumb line.
- 2.3.2 Photographic survey (equivalent to English Heritage Level 1) was carried out by the author using a 35mm camera (monochrome and colour) with additional digital photographs using a high resolution Canon EOS 450D digital SLR camera.
- 2.3.3 All building recording work carried out complied with standards and guidance set out in by the IfA (2001) and was undertaken by an experienced buildings archaeologist. Scaled architects drawings, supplied by the client in drawn format, were used for field notes and were annotated and amended on site as necessary.
- 2.3.4 Full descriptions of external elevations were made in note form including structural techniques and construction methods. Internally, all areas/rooms were described in detailed notes.

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3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 General Historical Background

- 3.1.1 A search of Suffolk's Historic Environment Record (SHER) within a 500m radius of the site returned just two records (www.heritagegateway.org). A worked flint object, thought to be Neolithic in date was discovered to the north of the site, within the parish of Worlingworth (ref WGW Misc.). The chapel is located close to the village green known as Long Green (SHER ref. BED 005). Bedfield Long Green is marked and named on J Hodskinson's Map of Suffolk 1783 and is shown and named as "The Long Green" on the 1842 Bedfield Tithe Map. Long Green was enclosed under an Act of 1849.
- 3.1.2 Bedfield has a number of historic buildings, many of which are listed, a full list of which is available at www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk. The buildings include the Church of Saint Nicholas (BED 004), located at the end of Church Lane which dates to the 14th century. The church is constructed mainly of flint rubble punctuated by larger brown stones, various types of brick, knapped flints and imported dressed stone for the windows and doorways. Also in Church Lane, the Crown Public House (Listed Building 281440), originally a farmhouse, dates from the 15th century with 18th and 20th century additions.

3.2 Historical Background of Bedfield Unitarian Chapel

- 3.2.1 A board outside the chapel states that it was built in 1895. Historic map evidence would support this as there is not a building on the site on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885 (viewed at www.old-maps.co.uk) however the chapel, broadly in its current form is present by the Second Edition map of 1904 (Figure 2). This map shows that there was a small rectangular addition on the west side of the chapel which is no longer present but has continued to be represented on Ordnance Survey maps until recently. This may have housed a small boiler or fuel-burner to heat the hall.
- 3.2.2 Although little of the history of the chapel survives, a closing service held in October 2010 by Rev. Clifford M. Reed, reproduced in the Unitarian Annual Newsletter provides information about the history and particularly the social aspects of the chapel building's past. The ceremony script uses the chapel's Sunday School record book from 1916-1920 and Arthur Causebrooke's "College Chapel Echoes" (1942) to summarise the development and the highlights of the chapel's history and place in the local community. This section draws heavily upon the text for the ceremony published in the newsletter (2010).
- 3.2.3 The chapel was founded by Rev Alfred Amey along with two local residents, Florence Hill and Lucy Tagart. Amey had conceived the idea of a Village Mission, centred on Bedfield and with the support of Tagart and Hill who were already strongly involved in the Unitarian initiative known as the Postal Mission, opened the chapel in 1896. In the 1890s the Suffolk countryside was in a state of depression, with poverty, social deprivation, pitifully low wages and widespread unemployment. The Village Mission was as concerned with meeting social needs as it was with spiritual ones, and it also addressed the chronic need for housing.
- 3.2.4 The movement bought a number of derelict cottages in the village, making them habitable and charging nominal rents. Lucy Tagart gave each of the cottages a name including Cowslip Cottage (Listed Building 281455) which became the Missions headquarters. In addition to Cowslip Cottage, English Heritage's Listed Buildings

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- register also lists a Daisy Cottage (Listed Building 281454) also at Long Green, which may have been one of these buildings. There is also a Jasmine Cottage located at Long Green on the opposite side of the road to the chapel.
- 3.2.5 The chapel was only ever meant to be a temporary building, to later be replaced by a more permanent structure with more facilities.
- 3.2.6 Causebrooke indicates that a regular Sunday School preceded the afternoon services and a lively Sunday School was very much part of Chapel life in the early 20th century; the dual-purpose chapel was the scene of both Congregational and village events. The records of the chapel indicate the use by other groups in the early 20th century including Bedfield Sewing Circle who held its New Year's party here in 1917 and in April 1917 the chapel was full for a concert that included songs, recitations and a play. One item, 'A Soldier's Prayer', is a reminder that this occured during the First World War. The annual village children's Christmas party is documented in 1919 where presents included "a warm petticoat, a khaki scarf, stockings, a pink-striped petticoat and bodice, a handkerchief, white and blue pinafores, and a tape measure". The annual party continued until the early 1980s.
- 3.2.7 By the 1940s there were improvements to living conditions and standards in Bedfield, Causebrooke writes; "Today things are improving rapidly even in these out of the way places. The water is being laid on in every house and cottage...The grid system for electricity has also made its appearance, and oil lamps are gradually disappearing. Nearly every home is equipped with a wireless set of the very latest design."
- 3.2.8 The chapel, as a village facility, was used less and less, with fewer and fewer villagers making use of it in recent years except to vote it was the Bedfield polling station or to attend Parish Council meetings. For Unitarians, though, it remained one of the most popular venues for the Eastern Union Summer Meetings.
- 3.2.9 A photograph taken by Simon Knott, who has visited and photographed a number of Suffolk churches and chapels, shows the interior of the chapel taken whilst it was still in use (Figure 4). The plaques on the far wall which commemorate the works of Lucy Tagart and Florence Hill were moved to the Framlingham Unitarian Meeting House after the chapel closed (www.onesuffolk.co.uk).
- 3.2.10 The chapel appears to have been extended at the rear to form its current layout at some point between 1957 and 1980. This is evidenced through Ordnance Survey maps (not illustrated, viewed online at www.old-maps.co.uk).

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4 SUNDAY SCHOOL BUILDING : DESCRIPTIONS

4.1 External description

4.1.1 The chapel comprises a single storey, roughly L-shaped building which is covered with horizontally laid weatherboard, constructed upon a small brick plinth and covered with a roof of coated profiled metal sheeting. Figure 4 shows the location of the plates used in the following text section.

North-east-Facing elevation

- 4.1.2 The north-east-facing elevation fronts onto the main road (Plate 1 and Figure 5). This elevation shows two main elements to the building: a long, single storey element on a roughly north-south orientation and a shorter element, at the front with mono-pitched roof, continuous from the eave of the main building behind.
- 4.1.3 Closer inspection shows this building has been constructed on a brick plinth comprising three (visible) courses (Plate 2). The brick is orange-coloured and the plinth is constructed mostly using stretchers. The original mortar is concealed having been repointed with cement.
- 4.1.4 Between the brick and the weatherboad is a layer of the same fabric as used on the roof covering; evidence of repair work which has taken place at some point in the late 20th century. This was recorded on all elevations of the chapel.
- 4.1.5 There is a use of symmetry in the construction of this building, which is also evidenced in the design of the original layout (Figure 2) and also in the fenestration of this elevation. There are five windows, all of which are set in wooden frames and are painted white.
- 4.1.6 At both ends of this elevation are initials inscribed in the brickwork, perhaps of those involved in constructing the chapel (Plates 2 and 3). Although very worn and difficult to read, they appear to be "WW" and "PN".

South-east facing elevation

- 4.1.7 This elevation (Plates 4 and 5; Figure 5) reveals a later phase of addition to the rear of the chapel, shown as being present by the 1957 Ordnance Survey map (not illustrated).
- 4.1.8 This additional 'wing', orientated roughly east-to-west, has the same weatherboard covering and contemporary fenestration and roof covering as the main chapel building (Plate 4). There is a plain wooden plank and batten door, which provides access to this extension and a brown coloured plastic downpipe. Closer inspection of the brick plinth shows it is constructed on a reddish coloured brick which would appear to be mid-late 20th century in date.
- 4.1.9 The mid-section of this elevation comprises the gable end of the original phase of the chapel building. It has a relatively steeply pitched roof with a plain wooden bargeboard and carved diamond-shaped finial. There are windows at the ground floor and within the pitched roof. There is also the original brick plinth at the base.
- 4.1.10 On the far right of this elevation is a door which is currently used as the main access to the building. This door is painted white with decorative, heavy iron hinges (Plate 6).

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South-west facing elevation

- 4.1.11 The south-west facing elevation incorporates the two principal phases of the structure (Figure 5). On the far left of this elevation is the rear of the original chapel building. There is evidence of the remains of what may be the small rectangular part of the building as recorded on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey map (Figure 3). All that remains is a small brick pillar, some concrete and part of a ceramic water pipe (Plate 7). The location would imply it is part of the original structure, although perhaps an external, separate feature, as there is no break in the brickwork to indicate an entrance into the main building here.
- 4.1.12 The gable end of the east-west extension is viewed from this elevation (Plates 8 and 9). There are two main elements to this: an area of brick wall on the left, with the rest comprising the same coated profiled metal sheeting as used on the roof covering. Both elements are contained beneath a moderately steep pitched roof with a plain wooden barge-board and carved diamond finial as seen on the south-facing elevation.

North-west facing elevation

4.1.13 This side of the building almost mirrors that on the opposite south-east facing side with entrance door (Plate 11) on the left and gable end in the centre; both parts of the original construction. On the right is the east-west addition (Plate 12) and at the far end the brick-built extension (Plate 13). This brick-built addition is constructed using a Flemish bond with headers and stretchers laid alternatively in each layer of bricks. The roof has the same covering as the rest of the building, under a continuous pitch and there is a small wooden framed window on the east-facing wall (Plate 13).

4.2 Internal description

There are five separate rooms within this building and for the purposes of this report, they are described below as rooms G1-5 (Figure 4).

G1 Southern Entrance

4.2.1 This area/room comprises the entrance area accessed from the external door recorded on the south-facing elevation (Plate 6). This small area measures 1.40m by 1.40m and is boarded throughout with a tongue and groove, vertically laid pine board, each board measuring 15cm (6") wide (Plate 14). Remnants of paint on the boards indicate that at some point all of the chapel interior was painted white. Wooden floorboards are exposed and a door on the left on entering provides access into the main hall. The hinges and latch (Plate 15) used on this door are typically late 19th century in date (Hall 2007) and therefore thought to be original.

G2 Northern Entrance

- 4.2.2 This entrance area is accessed via two internal doors from G3 and also externally via the door recorded on the north-facing elevation (Plate 11), which is no longer in use. This room measures 3.36m by 1.39m and, as G1, the walls and ceiling are covered with tongue and groove boards with exposed wooden floorboards.
- 4.2.3 This room has a number of interesting fixtures including a built-in cupboard at one end (Plate 16), a wooden shelf above and a number of iron coat hooks (Plate 17), all thought to be original.

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4.2.4 There are two doors in this room which provide access into the main hall. There is evidence on the wall and ceiling between these doors that there may once have been a temporary screen or dividing wall between these doors (Plate 18). This sub-division may have been to create a separate storage area (with cupboard), or it may have been used to separate the boy's and girl's entrances at Sunday School, as was common in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

G3 Main Chapel Hall

- 4.2.5 This area is the main chapel hall/meeting room, measuring 10.67m by 5.54m. Like the other rooms the ceiling and walls are covered with tongue and groove board and it has an exposed wooden floor (Plate 19).
- 4.2.6 Internally there are three doors on the eastern side of the room; two leading into G2 and one into G1 and on the opposite side there is one door leading into the east-west extension (G4); (Plate 20).
- 4.2.7 At the northern end of G3 there is a fitted wooden bench which spans the width of the room (Plate 21). This bench has a centrally located seat with carved scroll ends and chamfered edges.
- 4.2.8 A chair rail and skirting board run all the way around the room these appear to be a later addition. There are also a number of bakelite light fittings as well as evidence on the walls where fittings had previously been (Plate 22).
- 4.2.9 On the southern end wall are marks which would indicate the presence of built-in cupboards which have been removed (Plate 23) as well as evidence of pictures and other wall hangings throughout the room which correspond to some of those seen on Simon Knott's photograph (Figure 4) taken whilst the chapel was in use.
- 4.2.10 There is an access to the roofspace, however it was not safe or possible to investigate this during the visit. There is a large iron tie which spans the width of the room and has been added to provide structural support (Plate 23).

G4 East -west Chapel Extension

- 4.2.11 This room comprises the roughly east—west orientated extension recorded at the rear of the chapel. As with the other rooms, this is also covered with tongue and groove board, however the boards used are narrower, measuring 14cm (5^{1/2}") wide. This room has a sink and cupboard and was until recently used for welfare/making refreshments.
- 4.2.12 At the far end (west) of the room there are marks on the wall which indicate the location of a cupboard (Plate 24) as well as two large wooden brackets/supports.
- 4.2.13 There is a wooden plank-and-batten door which provides access into G5 (Plate 24), whilst a door on the southern wall which provides access from outside as recorded on the south-east facing elevation (Plate 25). This door appears to be a fairly modern replacement.

G5 Bathroom

4.2.14 This small room is accessed via an internal door from G4 and measures just 1.53m by 0.84m. There is a small casement window on the east-facing wall and a mid-late 20th

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century toilet unit below (Plate 26). The brickwork wall is exposed and painted white and the floor is covered with concrete.

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5 DISCUSSION: SUGGESTED PHASING

5.1 Phase 1: 1895

- 5.1.1 The first phase of building was constructed in 1895 and map evidence suggests there was not an earlier building on the site before this.
- 5.1.2 The chapel was constructed with two separate entrances on either side, perhaps allowing for the segregation of boys and girls at Sunday School. On entry there would have been hooks for hats and coats before entering into the main hall.
- 5.1.3 Windows in their present location would have allowed for plenty of light to enter the hall and heating *may* have been provided from an externally located boiler.

5.2 Interior Improvements in the 1930/40's

- 5.2.1 Although there are no additional building phases, there were modifications and alterations to the building in the mid 20th century, perhaps in the 1930/40s.
- 5.2.2 As Causebrooke indicates, modern improvements came to the village *and it* appears that the chapel may also have benefited from these improvements with the addition of electric lighting, evidenced through the bakelite fittings recorded throughout the building.

5.3 Phase 2a: 1957 to 1980

- 5.3.1 At some point between 1957 and 1980, the east-west extension was added onto the rear of the building, perhaps to provide additional meeting space or for storage (hence the large cupboards).
- 5.3.2 Map evidence shows that the extension was not present on the 1957 Ordnance Survey Map (not illustrated, viewed at www.old-maps.co.uk), however had appeared by the 1980 edition.

5.4 Phase 2b: 1957 to 1980

- 5.4.1 The final phase of building alterations takes place prior to 1980 and after the construction of the rear extension (phase 2a). This phase sees the addition of welfare facilities to the hall, perhaps a move to make it more suitable for use by the wider community as well as the Unitarian worshippers.
- 5.4.2 A brick-built extension was added onto the side of the rear addition to house a small toilet and a sink was added to the extension (G4) to allow for indoor running water for making drinks and washing hands.
- 5.4.3 A new roof was added using coated profiled metal sheeting which was also used to act as a membrane between the brick-work and the interior and exterior boarding to prevent further damage to the wood from damp.

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6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 This survey has identified three phases of building and modification of the Bedfield Unitarian Chapel which represent changes that needed to be made to meet the needs of the Unitarians as well as the local community.
- 6.1.2 By changing and adapting, this chapel continued to serve the local community for 115 years, which is a remarkable achievement given it was only intended to act as a temporary structure when it was built in 1895. In many villages and towns brick and stone-built chapels are converted into modern living accommodation, however due to the temporary nature of this structure such a conversion would not be feasible.
- 6.1.3 This, like many religious buildings represent the form religion for whom they were built and reflect the values and traditions of that time. Today there is less call for buildings of worship such as the little chapel at Bedfield, often due to a decline in numbers of the congregation or with the demand for better, more modern facilities.

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Description	Date
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www.britishlisted buildings.co.uk

www.suffolkchurches.co.uk

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APPENDIX A. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project D	etails		•	• •					
OASIS Num	nber	oxfordar3-10929	5						
Project Nan	ne	Historic Building	Survey at Bedfi	eld Chape	el, Bedfield	d, Suffolk			
Project Name Project Dates (fields) Previous Work (by C Project Reference C Site Code BED 024 HER No. BED 024 Type of Project/Tec		work) Start) Start 08-09-2011			Finish 08-09-2011			
Previous W	ork (by	OA East)	No			Future	Worl	Unknown	
Project Ref	erence	Codes							
				Plannii	ng App.	No.		2786/10	
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County	Suffolk				Site Ad	ldress (in	cludi	ng postcode if possi	ble)
District	Mid Su	ffolk				ld Unitarian Green, Bedf		el	
Parish	Bedfield				Long Green, Bedfield Woodbridge, Suffolk				
HER	Suffolk	County Council							
Study Area					Nationa	al Grid Re	efere	nce _{TM 219 665}	



Project Originators

		-						
Organisation OA EAS			Т					
Project Brief Originator Su		Suffok C	Suffok County Council					
Project Design Originator Taleyn		Taleyna	aleyna Fletcher					
Project Manager		Aileen C	onnor					
Supervisor		Taleyna	Fletcher					
Project Archi	ves							
Physical Archive			Digital A	chive		Paper Arch	ive	
SCCAS			OA East Offices			SCCAS		
BED 024			XSFBED	11		BED 024		
Archive Content	s/Media							
	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents		Digital Me	dia	Paper Media	
Animal Bones					☐ Database		X Aerial Photos	
Ceramics					—		Context Sheet	
Environmental					☐ Geophysic	es	★ Correspondence	
Glass					x Images		Diary	
Human Bones					▼ Illustration	S	□ Drawing	
Industrial					☐ Moving Im	age	Manuscript	
Leather					Spreadshe	eets	⋉ Map	
Metal					⋉ Survey		Matrices	
Stratigraphic					▼ Text		Microfilm	
Survey					☐ Virtual Re	ality	× Misc.	
Textiles							■ Research/Notes	
Wood							➤ Photos	
Worked Bone							▼ Plans	
Worked Stone/Lithic							⋉ Report	
None	×						▼ Sections	
							⋉ Survey	
Other								

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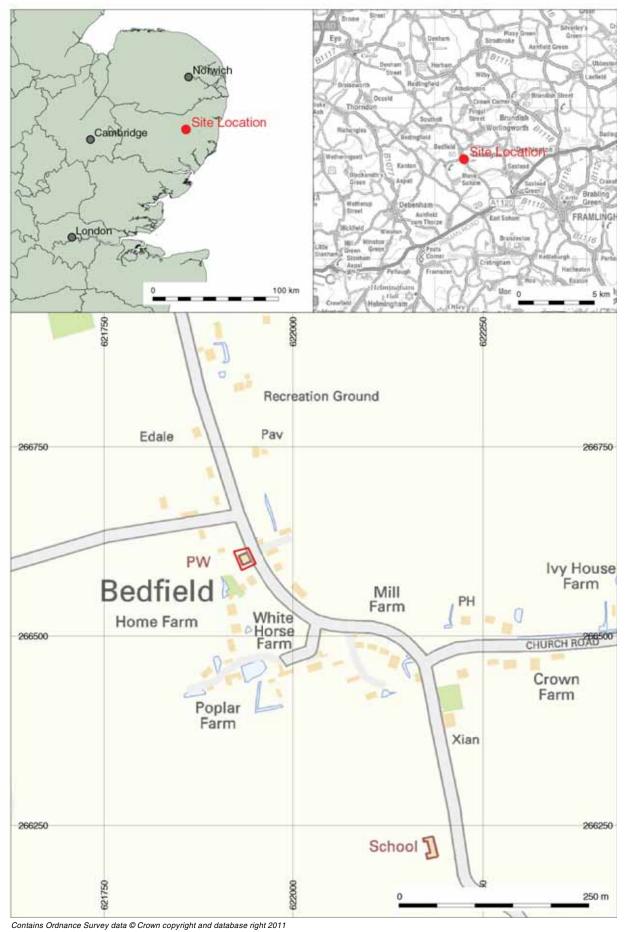


Figure 1: Site location, showing the development area outlined red



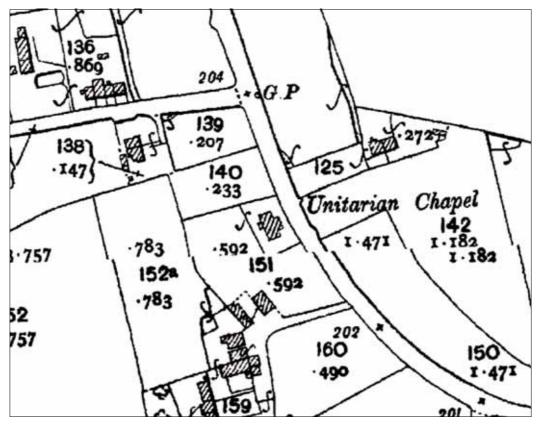


Figure 2: Extract from 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1:2500), 1904



Figure 3: Photograph of chapel interior prior to closure (reproduced with kind permission from Simon Knott)



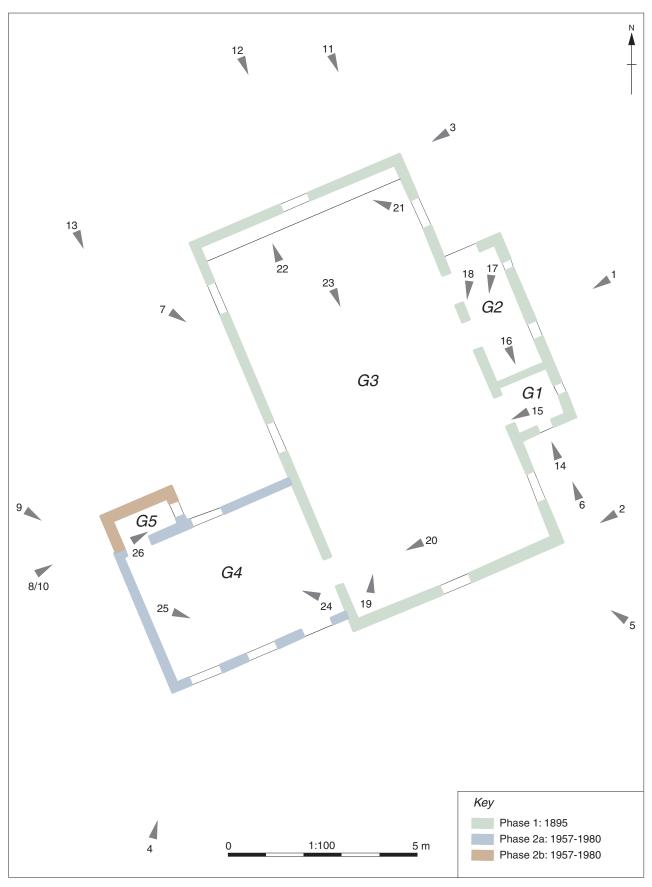


Figure 4: Floor plan of chapel showing location of plates and suggested phasing. Scale 1:100



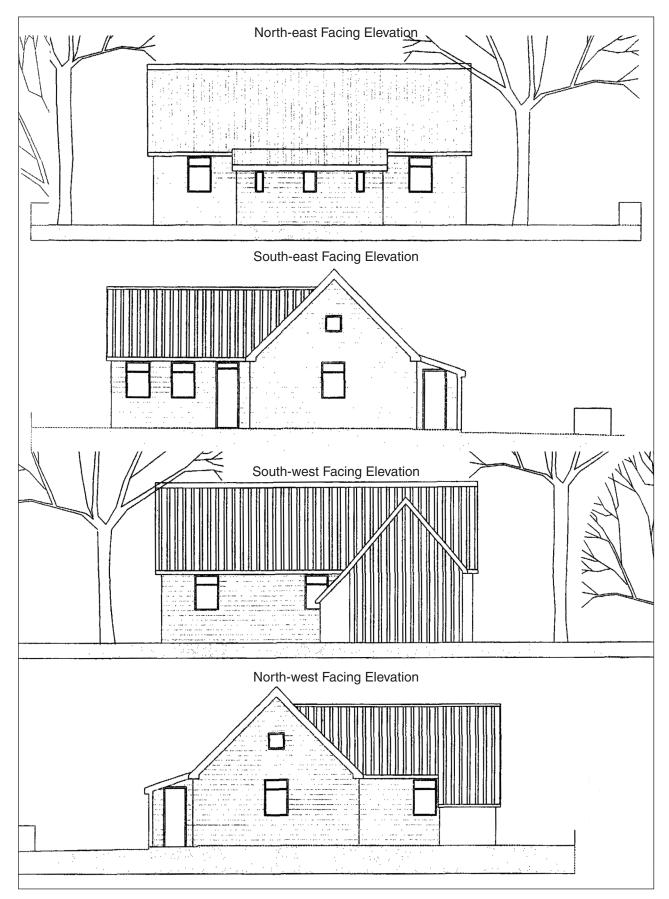


Figure 5: Elevations of Bedfield Chapel (data supplied by client)





Plate 3: Detail of brick plinth on north-east facing elevation



Plate 4: South-east facing elevation



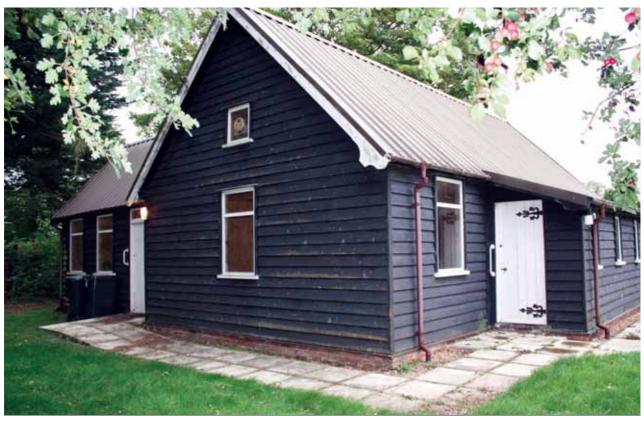


Plate 5: Corner of south-east and north-east facing elevations



Plate 6: External door on south-east facing elevation





Plate 7: Remains of removed structure on south-west facing elevation



Plate 8: Detail of brick-built element of south-west facing elevation





Plate 9: Detail of south-west facing elevation



Plate 10: Detail of roof covering on eave of south-west facing elevation





Plate 11: External entrance door on north-west facing elevation

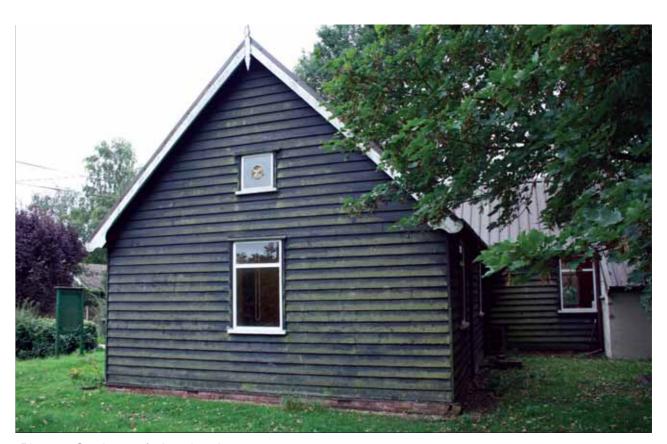


Plate 12: South-west facing elevation





Plate 13: South-west facing elevation



Plate 14: Internal view of entrance area G1





Plate 15: Detail of internal door latch, G1



Plate 16: Built-in cupboard, G2





Plate 17: Detail of shelves and hooks, G2



Plate 18: Evidence of removed internal partition, G2





Plate 19: General room view, facing north, G3



Plate 20: Detail of internal door leading from G3 to G4





Plate 21: Bench at northern end of G3



Plate 22: Detail of Bakelite light switch, G3





Plate 23: General room view, facing south, G3



Plate 24: Evidence of removed cupboards and internal door, G4





Plate 25: Detail of doors, G4



Plate 26: General room view, G5



Head Office/Registered Office/ OA South

Janus House Osney Mead Oxford OX2 0ES

t:+44(0)1865 263800 f:+44 (0)1865 793496 e:info@oxfordarch.co.uk w:http://thehumanjourney.net

OA North

Mill3 MoorLane LancasterLA11GF

t:+44(0)1524 541000 f:+44(0)1524 848606 e:oanorth@thehumanjourney.net w:http://thehumanjourney.net

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way Bar Hill Cambridgeshire CB238SQ

t: +44(0)1223 850500

f: +44(0)1223 850599 e: oaeast@thehumanjourney.net w:http://thehumanjourney.net



Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

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