

**Report on former Tabernacle Chapel, (PRN 25712)
18/19 High Street Lampeter, Ceredigion**

**Zoë Crossland
David Austin**
Department of Archaeology
University of Wales Lampeter

Additional recording by:

Timo Ala-Opas, Ben Attfield, Caroline Barclay, Sue Beckett, Karen Black, Jane Burtenshaw, Michelle Butler, Paul Carley, Tim Dobbs, Lloyd English, Jo Evans, Andy Failes, Nova Felton, Christine Garner, Sarah Giles, Lucinda Gilham, Sióbhán Lynes, Teresa McCarthy, Jude Phillips, Adam Pollock, Matthew Tierney and Geraldine Turner.

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Drawn record

There are two sets of illustrations accompanying this report:

1. A photographic record included in the text of the report (figures 1 to 18).
2. The illustrations conforming to the building recording brief (figures 19 to 27).

An additional set of illustrations was produced by students as part of a teaching exercise at the Department of Archaeology, University of Wales Lampeter. These are supplemental to the requirements of the report and have been photocopied and bundled separately for submission to the NMR. They include

- A plan of the chapel and its surroundings
- A plan of the chapel floor
- Detailed interior elevations of the west south and east walls
- Detailed illustrations of windows.

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Introduction

The Tabernacle Chapel (also known as the Old Shiloh Chapel), is a free-standing stone building, oriented with its front façade facing approximately north-east¹. It is located on the west side of Lampeter High Street, lying behind what used to be the Red Lion Inn, recorded on the 1906 Ordnance Survey map. The Tabernacle was Lampeter's Calvinist Methodist Chapel until it was replaced in 1874 by the larger Capel Siloh on Pontfaen Road. The Tabernacle has also been recorded by the National Monuments Record (NPRN 14932), Cadw (Rec: 10444) and the Sites and Monuments Record (PRN 25712).

The new Capel Siloh still holds the inscribed plate from the front of the Tabernacle in the vestry. This dates the founding or building of the chapel to 1806. It reads:

TABERNACL
addoldy perthunol i
Cyfundeb y Methodistiaid
Calfinaidd
A adeiladwyd yn y flwddin
MDCCCVI

Local tradition records that the Tabernacle was the second Calvinist Methodist Chapel in Lampeter, with the first being located at Creigiau, Cwmann on the Cellan road, near the Black Ram Inn (Lewis 1997). On-site inspection of this area failed to identify any traces of an earlier chapel. Lewis also records that some of the stone from the earlier chapel was reused in the Tabernacle. Rawlins (1987) gives a date of 1775 for the first Calvinistic Methodist chapel in Lampeter. He records that the Tabernacle was a branch of Gwynfil Chapel, Gwynfil Township, Llanddewi Brefi parish. He also notes that records of births and baptisms 1818-37 are held at the Public Records Office (London RGA/4085 (GS 828105) IGI).

The 1844 tithe map of Lampeter Parish shows the chapel as an apparently undivided free-standing building. It records that the open area behind the chapel, and most adjacent land were occupied by Thomas Arthur, and were classed as Black Lion Inn lands, owned by John Scandreff Harford, the major landowner in the area.

The 1887 Ordnance Survey map shows that the building had been divided into three elements, with two walls running parallel to each other cutting the space into three roughly equal parts. The Second Edition 1906 OS map shows the same divisions. By the time of recording these partitions had been removed. The interior had recently been used as a workshop. Local people also recalled that it had been used for paper storage during the Second World War.

Spatial context of the chapel:

Turning in to the chapel from Lampeter High Street one passes through a narrow passage which leads between Andrew Davis Architect's Office and a private house (see student plan). This leads to the north corner of the chapel, and the chapel

¹ For ease of reference, and to be consistent with the architect's plans, this is referred to as the north wall. The other walls of the building are similarly referred to as the west, south and east walls.

forecourt is entered by stepping up through a wrought iron gate located at the end of the passage (see figs. 1, 2 and 27).



Fig. 1. Gate on north side of chapel

The NMR records:

“The gates have uprights with spiked and scroll finials rising alternatively above top and lock rails, each top rail set on an upward curve towards the centre.”

The gates are set in two stone posts, the west of which has a round head and is whitewashed. The east post is made of slate with a pointed head, and has probably been reused as it has small holes where a previous gate has hung (see Fig. 2).

The chapel forecourt is small and restricted in size by the buildings on the north and northeast sides (see student plan), also visible on the 1887 and 1906 OS maps. Behind the chapel, to the southwest, and on its southeast side the chapel is set in an open area. A small car garage has recently been built to the southeast.

External description:

The chapel is built of rough courses of small stones and rubble, with traces of whitewash still adhering on all walls. The corners are constructed of larger quoins with rough hammer dressing (see fig. 26). Attached to the east corner of the chapel, on the front (North) elevation are the remains of a red painted gate (fig 3.). Two doors are located at either end of the north elevation (fig. 19). The eastern door is wider than the western, and has a brick head which is probably of 20th century date. This door has been widened, probably to provide vehicular access when the building was used as a workshop. This is confirmed by observation of the interior. The west door is headed by a stone segmental head.

Both entrances are closed by double doors. Those on the west door have a cross motif and are painted red, matching the gatepost and voussoirs and also fittings inside the chapel, suggesting that they may date to the period when the building was



Fig. 2. Showing hole where another gate has been hung

of cut sandstone voussoirs. Traces of red paint adhere to all the window heads.

Lying directly underneath the central window is a small entrance, a later addition, that is now bricked in. The exterior window sill appears to have been replaced with a slate slab slightly smaller than the previous sill traces. This acts as a lintel for the bricked up entrance.

Visible just above the two highest windows is a timber wall plate, possibly a string course, which Cadw suggests indicates that the building has been extended. This is confirmed by observation of the interior, described below. This wooden strip cuts the top of the heads of the higher two windows, also suggesting that it was a later addition. It continues around the corners of the building but does not extend across the west and east elevations. Both the west and east walls have a blocked central semi-circular headed window, located high in the wall at around 3m above ground level. A smaller

used as a chapel (see illustration 19.1). The NMR describes these doors as “early to mid 19th century type”.

Above each door is a narrow semi-circular headed window with voussoirs made of slate blocks, similar to the west door. The sill of each window lies directly above the door, and may have been cut by the entrances. A broader central window is located between the two doors, 2 meters above the ground. Its semi-circular head is comprised



Fig. 3. Gatepost on North wall

blocked window with a slightly cambered head made of slate voussoirs, (similar to the



Fig. 4. Exterior of west wall, showing blocked windows

openings on the rear elevation, and the west front entrance) was also located on the south side of the central window on the west wall. This had lead flashing above it. Fig. 4 shows the heads of these blocked windows, visible from the exterior. Figure 20.2 shows them from the interior. The stones around and above the blocked window with cambered head are more rounded than those above the semi-circular headed window, which are more

rectangular (see figure 4). The interior wall also indicates a rebuilding of the wall above the semi-circular headed window, as there were no traces of plaster adhering to the wall in this area (see figure 5). This may date to the later insertion of a chimney.



Fig. 5. Interior of west wall, when plaster was removed, showing two blocked openings. White shows location of plaster.

The east wall may have had a small window in a similar location to the south of the central window, indicated by a possible change in the stonework (see Fig. 6). However, there was no trace of voussoirs, and no clear line marking the window edge. The semicircular-headed window in the east wall also had lead flashing lying in a horizontal line above the window/



Fig. 6. Possible window in east wall. Arrow indicates line of previous gable

Roof:

The roof is half hipped, with projecting decorative bracket eaves on the north and east elevations (see Figures 7 and 23.3). These were not present on the south elevation, (the rear of the building), where



Fig. 8. Interior of west wall after removal of plaster. Arrow indicates previous line of gable.

The rear wall (south elevation) has two openings with cambered segmental heads, comprised of slate voussoirs. The base of these openings is presently level with the exterior ground surface. They were blocked with corrugated iron at the time of recording. Above the two large openings were three smaller square windows with timber sills and lintels. Two of these, located to either side of the larger openings were also sealed with corrugated iron. The central small window has been walled up and is not immediately visible from the exterior.



Fig. 7. Northeast projecting bracket eaves cornice.

the projecting eaves were constructed from unadorned boards. This also appeared to be the case on the west elevation (which would not have been visible from the front forecourt or access routes). However, the eaves on the northwest elevation were only partially present and were in a worse

state of preservation than on the other walls, so this was difficult to assess precisely.

The walls showed traces of an earlier gable line lying just below the current roof line. These traces were visible on the exterior walls where larger, rough hammer dressed stones were still visible forming a clear edge within the present stonework (see figures 20.1, 22.1). On the interior, white plaster still adhered to the walls following the line of the previous gable (figures 20.2, 22.2). When the plaster was removed lines of larger roughly dressed stones were also visible from the interior (see figures 6 and 8)



Fig. 9. King post of roof tree

The roof tree (figures 9 and 23) is constructed of five pegged king-post trusses with central iron braces on each king-post. The five machine-cut cross beams that span the chapel were probably added later, presumably when the roof was raised. These were unpegged and probably were inserted to hold a suspended plaster ceiling.



Fig. 10. Details of carpenter's marks on tie beam and cross beam.

Carpenters marks number these cross beams I to V (figure 10). One of the tie beams was also numbered (figure 10). The earlier pegged roof tree was probably contemporaneous with the previous gabled roof, and would have been visible by the congregation from the chapel below.

Internal description

Floor:

The floor of the chapel was partially covered in slate flagstones (see ground plan, recorded by students). These lay on the north side of the chapel, with a small paved strip running parallel to the walls down the east and west sides. The 'back' of the chapel (on the south side) and the centre of the north side of the chapel, (presumably where the pulpit would have been situated), were devoid of flagstones. The pattern of remaining flagstones probably reflects where the chapel furniture—both pews and pulpit—were removed.

Ceiling:

The top of the walls were edged by a simple plaster moulding, which bordered a suspended ceiling that was hung from the five cross beams described above. A small fragment of the white plaster ceiling was still visible in the southeast corner of the building. The chapel at Llandysul apparently had a plaster ceiling rose, and it is possible that the Tabernacl was similarly decorated previously.

Interior, North wall:

The present day entrance to the chapel is through the east door, which has been widened and a metal girder inserted. Visible above this is a shorter wooden lintel with a mortice cut in it (see fig. 11.1). A similar lintel with mortice cut is visible above the west door in the same wall. These were presumably to support beams for a gallery that



Fig. 11 Shows mortice cut beam (1), replaced by later iron girder, and probable line of gallery balustrade (2).

ran around the east, south and west sides of the interior, c 2.5m above the floor. Also visible above the mortices, above both east and west doors were two linear features that were probably traces of the railing or balustrade that edged the gallery (see fig. 11.2). Much of the interior was still plastered when we recorded the chapel, and some of the paint and the plaster gave an indication of the location of previous

interior walls and staircases. Visible on the northeast and southeast walls were traces of steps leading up to the gallery (see Figures 12.1, 12.2, 19.2 and 22.2), indicating that the stairs began just inside the two entrances, turned, and ascended along the West and East walls.

Fig. 12 Traces of gallery stairs

**12.1 Traces left by paint
on East wall, showing
previous line of stairway**



**12.2 Traces of base of stairs on west end
of North wall, shown by absence of plaster.**

Fig 13.
Inscription on
North wall

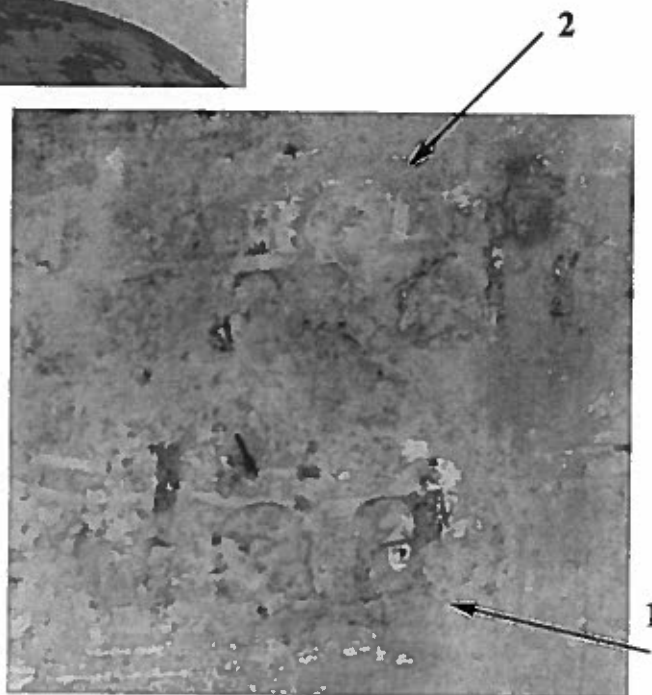


Fig 13.1
View of inscription above
central window



Fig 13.2
Close view of inscription

Fig 13.3
Superposition
of later text (2)
over earlier (1)



On the north wall, over the central window were the traces of two successive inscriptions, one partially overlying the other (see fig. 24). Both apparently read:

Sancteiddrwydd a weddai I'th dŷ, O Arglwydd, byth.

This is taken from Psalm 93, verse 5 and translated to English means

Holiness is the beauty of thy temple, while time shall last, O Lord.

The earlier inscription (figure 24.1) appears to be most complete. Close inspection showed that it was first painted entirely in black, with the lettering encircled by a border of leaves, also painted in black. The leaves were later painted over in dark green and small pink and blue 'knots' (figure 24.2) were added.

This inscription was subsequently painted over in white, and replaced with a second, smaller inscription located higher up on the wall above the window (figure 24.3). Only a fragment of this second inscription was still visible.

The plaster above the inscription was cracked along almost the entire length of the wall. When the plaster was removed, an interior timber plate was visible below the crack. This wall plate cut the top of the east window head on the North wall (fig. 14), and ran just above the west window (fig. 19.2).



Fig. 14. Interior wall plate, cutting east window on North wall

The paint on the upper half of the north wall was visibly divided into three sections, some of it painted red, suggesting that the building had been partitioned into two stories and three rooms on the upper level.

The windows on the North wall were plastered on the interior with red painted wooden reveals with beaded jambs (see figure 15 and student illustrations). Traces of vertical sash frames were visible. The east and west windows both appear to have raked sills. The sill of the central window was destroyed by the later insertion of the small entrance beneath it.

Still visible in the wall were sawn-off iron girders that had been used to construct a framework inside the chapel when the building was in use as a garage.



Fig. 15. Beaded jamb on central window, North wall.

Interior, West wall:

The interior of the west wall, had a partially blocked round headed window in the centre of the wall, c.3m above the floor, as previously described. Still visible, and cutting the top of this window were traces of plaster moulding that had been attached to the suspended ceiling. This window was blocked flush with the exterior wall, but on the interior was set back slightly. The window on the south side of the wall, visible from the exterior of the building was suggested by a crack in the plaster. When the plaster was removed this window was clearly visible (fig. 6). A niche was located in the south end of the west wall, 1.3m above the ground. A fireplace was located in the centre of the west wall, with a chimney leading up from it and through the blocked central window. Visible beneath the blocked window were holes in the wall where supports for the gallery may have been fixed.

Interior, South wall:

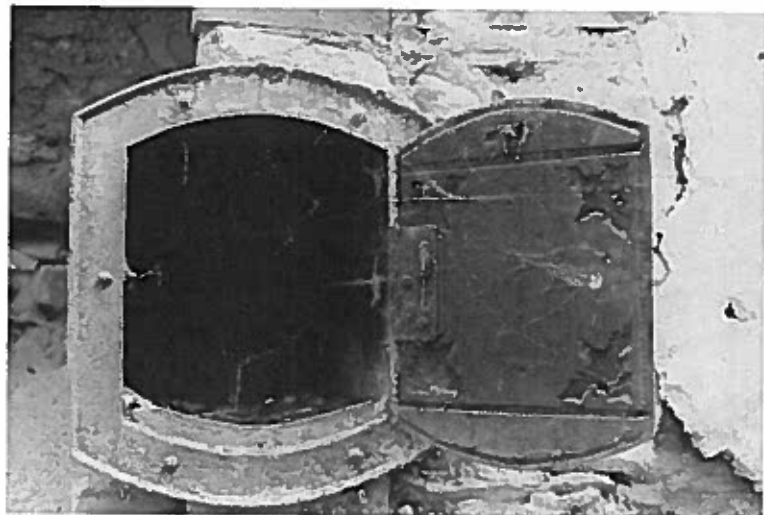
The interior of the South wall (figure 21.2) had five openings into it. Two large rectangular openings, probably windows were located 1.3m above the ground. These had vertical sash frames, and raked sills, although little was left of the sills at the time of recording. Above these two large openings were three smaller windows with red painted wooden reveals and flat sills. The central window was blocked. A later hearth and chimney had been inserted in the centre of the wall, and the window was probably blocked when the chimney was constructed. Visible in the south wall were large holes where the supporting beams for the gallery may have been fixed.

Interior: East wall:

The east wall also had a completely blocked window (figure 22) c.3m above the ground. Directly beneath this was a later oven that had been inserted with its chimney running through the blocked window. As mentioned previously, there was some evidence that there may have been a second square headed window to the south of the central round headed window (see figs. 4 and 5). Visible on the East wall were traces of the gallery stairs (fig.12.1).



Fig. 16 Oven and inserted chimney in the East wall



Interpretation

The earliest chapel was probably a single story building with a gable roof. The immediate impression of the original building, with its symmetrical openings on north and south walls, is that it was purpose-built as a chapel. However, the blocked square headed window in the West wall may provide an indication that the building was adapted from an earlier outbuilding, although it is narrower than other similar nearby outbuildings lying behind the present-day Black Lion pub. The location of the Chapel, lying behind other buildings rather than on the street frontage as is more usual for chapels, also suggests that the building may have been adapted from an earlier use.

In line with the historical evidence (Rawlins 1987) the building archaeology also suggests that the congregation of the chapel grew, leading them to raise the roof in order to insert a gallery around three walls of the building. There are several lines of evidence for this, as follows.

1. The clear traces of an earlier gable on East and West walls, both in the line of the interior plaster and the stone work.
2. The evidence of two inscriptions in the centre of the North wall, the earlier of which lies beneath the line where the roof was raised. The second inscription straddles the old wall and the new extension.
3. The timber wall plates on the interior and exterior of the North wall which cut the top of the east and west windows.

It is not clear whether the large semi-circular headed windows in the end walls (East and West) predate the installation of the gallery. The steps to the gallery on both end walls stop just short of these large windows, and the windows appear to be contained within the wall above the line of the gallery, in contrast to the large windows in the South wall which were cut by the floor of the gallery. The stonework around each end window is disturbed due to the later insertion of chimneys in each of the end walls. However, as mentioned previously (see fig. 6) the plaster clinging to the earlier gable ends was missing directly above the two central windows, although still adhering to either side. Although these areas may have been rebuilt when the chimneys were inserted, comparison with the chimney in the South wall shows that it was more opportunistically inserted with as little disruption as possible to the existing wall. The substantial rebuilding of the wall above the windows therefore may provide more credible evidence for an earlier alteration or insertion of these large windows, perhaps when the roof was raised, and the gallery inserted. It may also have been at this time that the smaller window in the south of the west wall was blocked and plastered over.

With the construction of the gallery, the chapel would have needed more windows, not only to provide light to the gallery, but also as the gallery prevented some of the light from the large rectangular windows in the South wall from penetrating to the ground floor. It is probable that the three small square windows in the South wall were therefore added when the gallery was built, in order to provide more light to the interior.

The suspended plaster ceiling may also have been fitted at the same time as the gallery, or at a slightly later date. The round headed windows in the East and West walls may predate the fitting of this ceiling as the plaster moulding cuts the top of each of them, obscuring the head of the arch from view from inside the chapel. However, this may also have been due to a miscalculation in the construction of different elements of the building relative to one another – certainly the evidence of the east window in the North wall shows that the builders came across some difficulties when

raising the roof. The top of this window was located at a slightly higher distance above the ground than its matching counterpart on the west end of the same wall. As a result it was cut by the timber wall plates in both the interior (figures 13, 19.2) and exterior (figure 19.1), probably in order to create a flat string course for extending the wall.

The doorways on each end of the North wall also sit awkwardly beneath the windows above them, with the sill of each window resting directly upon the lintel. It is possible that these doorways were also moved in order to accommodate the base of the stairs to the gallery, although there is little evidence for this in the stonework adjacent to each door.

Comparison with other chapels

The Calvinist Methodist Tabernacl chapel at Llandysul (SN41554044; NPRN: 7286) proved to be of limited use as a comparison as we were refused access by the present owner. The RCAHMW record of the chapel at Llandysul records that it was built in 1832. The external front elevation has some similarities to the Lampeter Tabernacl (figure 17). There are two central semi-circular headed windows in the centre of the exterior and two semicircular headed doors at either end. In contrast to the Lampeter Tabernacl, the front elevation also possesses two smaller windows at a higher level. The building as a whole is higher than the Lampeter Tabernacl, and would appear to provide more room for the gallery. There is no record of it being extended, and it seems probable that the Llandysul Tabernacl was probably designed as a chapel, with a gallery within it. In contrast to the Lampeter Tabernacl it is clearly visible from the street, lying slightly set back on the northwest side of the A486.

We contacted the previous owner of the chapel at Llandysul who described a gallery running across the back wall only, in contrast to the gallery at the Tabernacl Lampeter. He also described a suspended plaster ceiling with a central rose. According to the previous owner, the building had also held pews and other furniture. The present owner said that there was no longer any furniture or fittings within the chapel, that it is currently being used for storage, and could not be accessed.

The Independent or Congregational chapel at Horeb, Ceredigion provided a better comparison to the Tabernacl. The chapel at Horeb is also located facing the street, on the north side of the A475, in the parish of Llandysul (SN39434250; NPRN: 7283). It has been recorded by Cambria Archaeology (Dyfed Archaeological Trust). It was being re-rendered in August 2001 when the photographs shown in figure 18 were taken, exposing the stone wall of the front façade. It is of a similar date to the Tabernacl, Lampeter. A plaque outside records that it was built in 1784, then rebuilt twice, in 1826 and 1879:

HOREB
ADEILADWYD
1784
AIL ADEILADWYD
1826
TRYDYDD ADEILADWYD
1879

The RCAHMW Chapels database also records that it was enlarged in 1832. It is a gable-ended chapel with an interior gallery still present. This was visible from the exterior, apparently wrapping around three sides of the building. The traces of two semi-circular headed doors were clearly visible at either end of the front façade (figure 18). These have been replaced by smaller doors with cambered segmental heads. It is probable that the doors were moved in order to accommodate the gallery.

Fig. 17.
Calvinist Methodist Tabernacl in Llandysul



Fig. 18. Chapel at Horeb



A pair of long windows with semi-circular heads are located in the centre of the front façade, between the two doors. To either side of the central windows are two small round windows. All are probably later additions, as they appear to have replaced a row of three small square windows, now blocked (figure 18b). Also visible above the line of the windows is a change in the stonework, suggesting that the wall was extended in order to raise the roof, as at the Tabernacl, Lampeter.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to T. G. Jones for identifying and translating the inscription in the Lampeter Tabernacl. Penny Icke of the RCAHMW was of great help, providing photographs and information from the NMR and Chapels Database. Thanks also to Andrew Davies, the architect in charge of the chapel conversion and to Patrick O'Keefe for assistance on site. Andrew Morgan of Morgan & Davies helped us with locating the previous owners of Capel Tabernacl, Llandysul, Mr and Mrs Bailey who were also generous with their time in describing the interior of the Llandysul Tabernacl.

References

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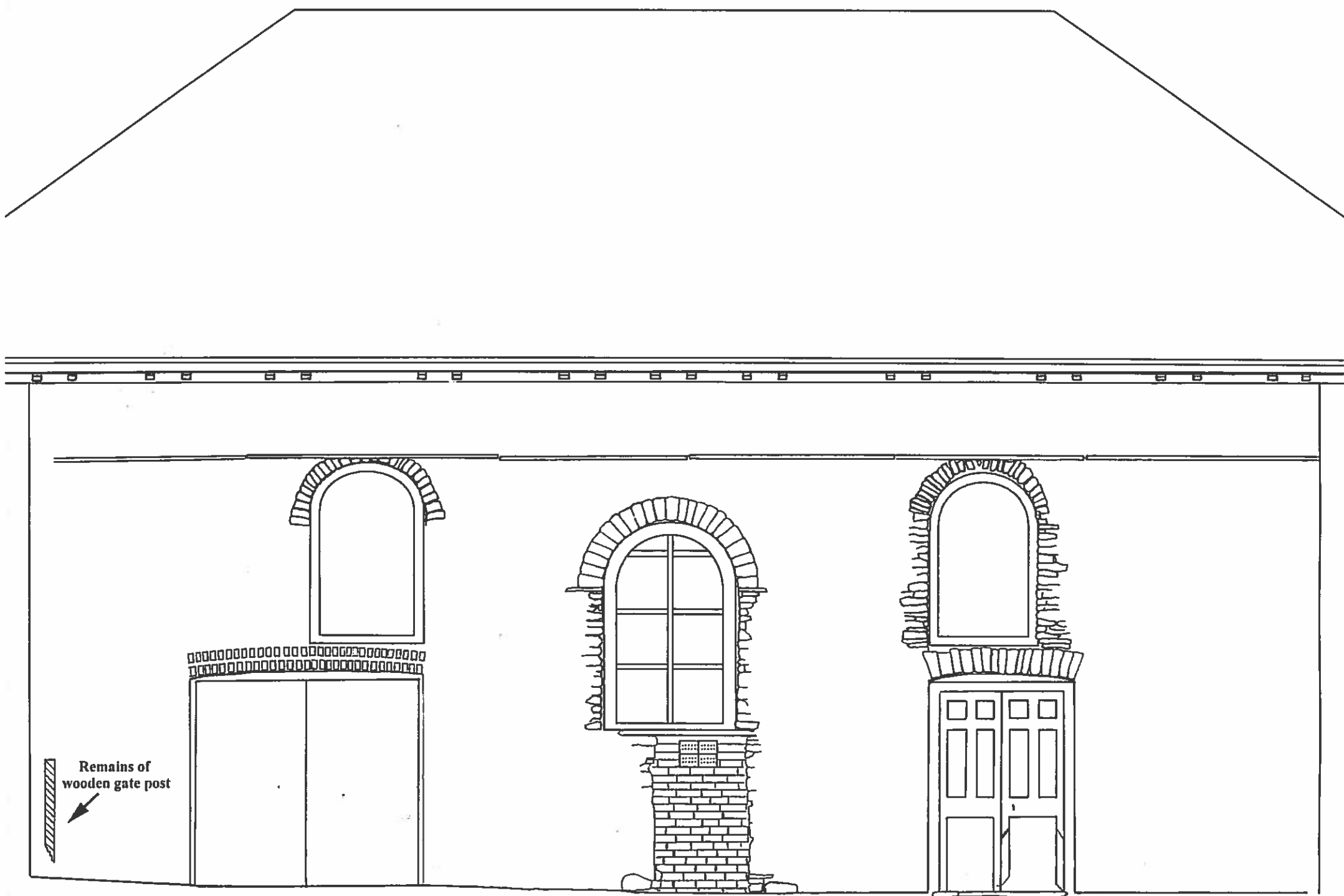


Fig. 19.1

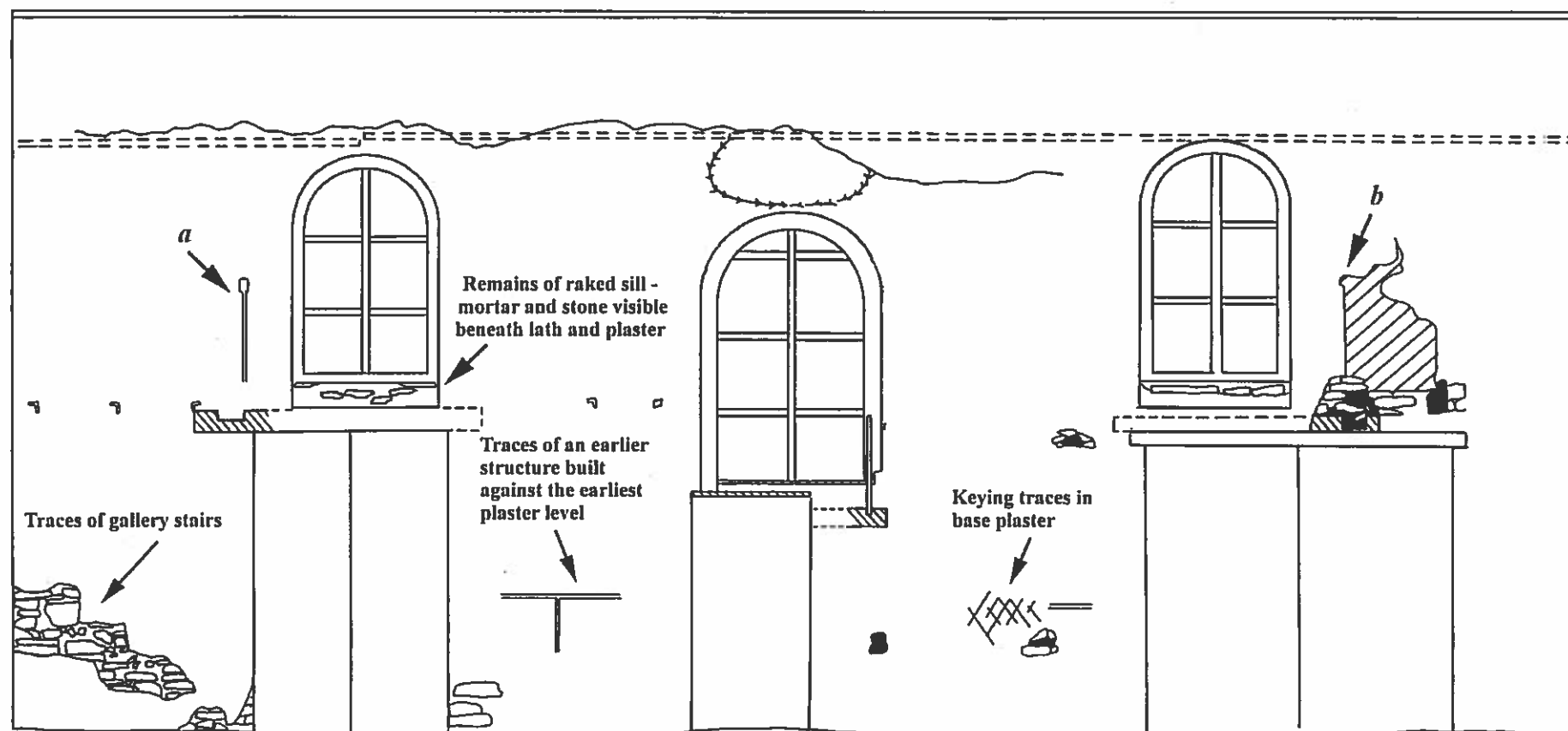


Fig. 19.2



Fig. 19
North wall of the Tabernacle Chapel, Lampeter.
NGR SSN 5755 4809
Recorded June 2001
Drawn scale 1:50
Interior recorded by SB, CB, CG, BA, KB, SG, ZC
Exterior recorded by BA, KB, SG, NF, GT, MB, ZC

Modern cement
Timber

(a) and (b) show probable edge of gallery

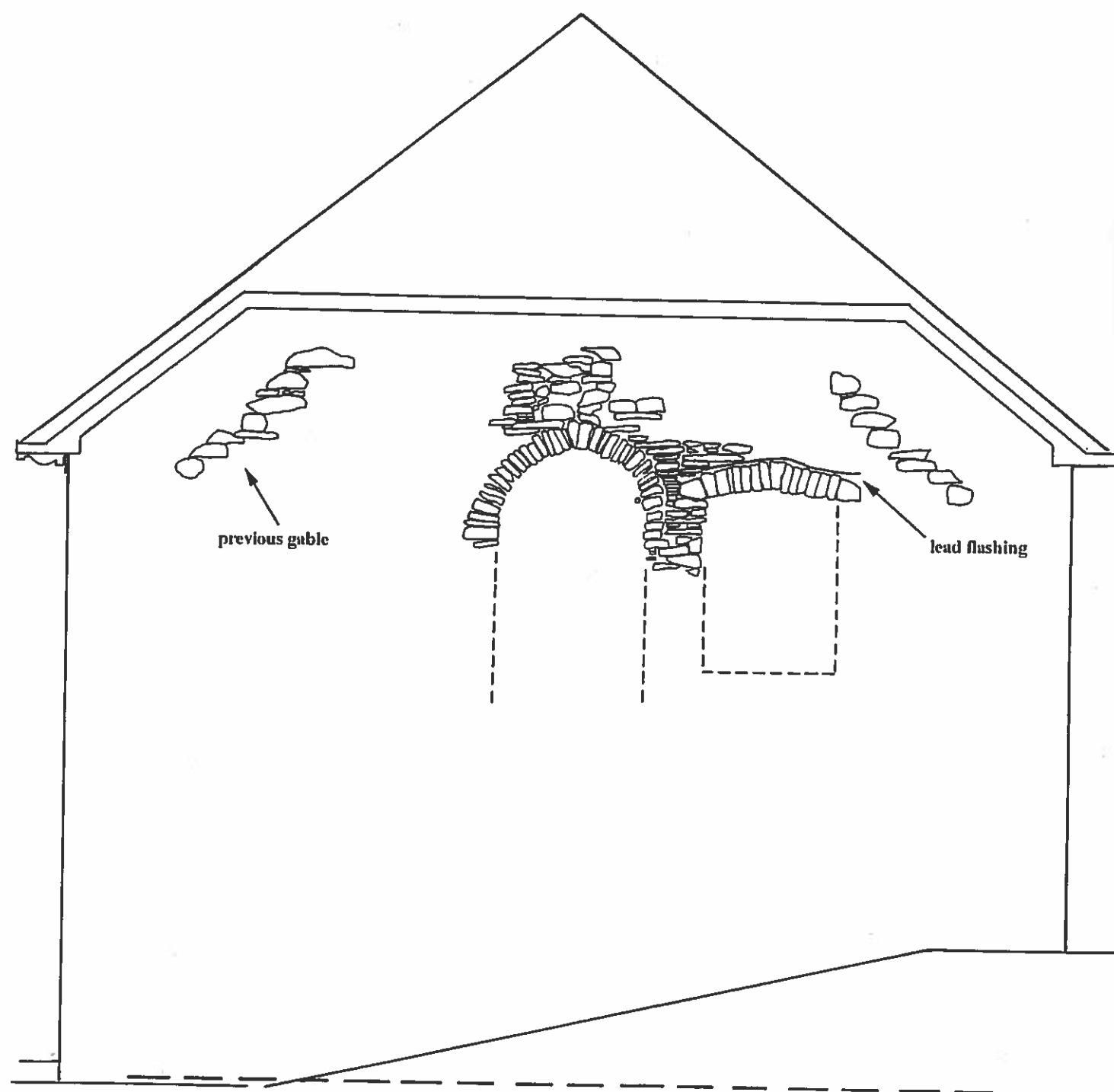


Fig. 20.1 Exterior elevation

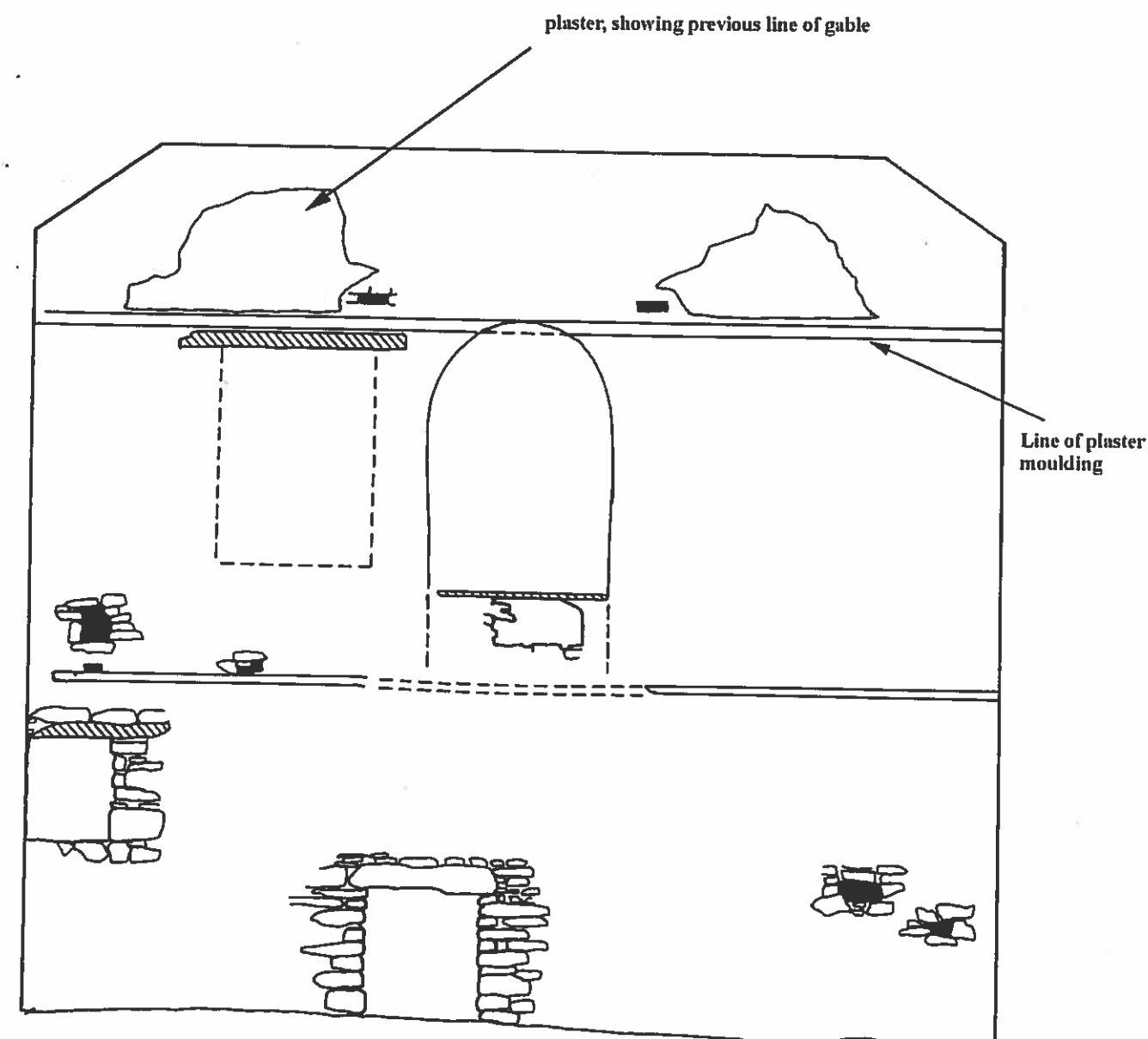
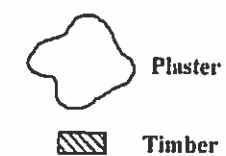
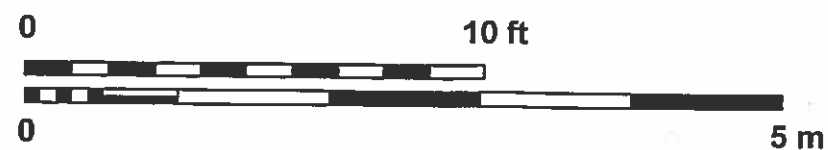


Fig. 20.2 Interior elevation

Fig. 20
West wall of the Tabernacl Chapel, Lampeter.
NGR SSN 5755 4809
Recorded June 2001
Drawn scale 1:50
Interior recorded by SL, TM, JP, ZC
Exterior recorded by ZC



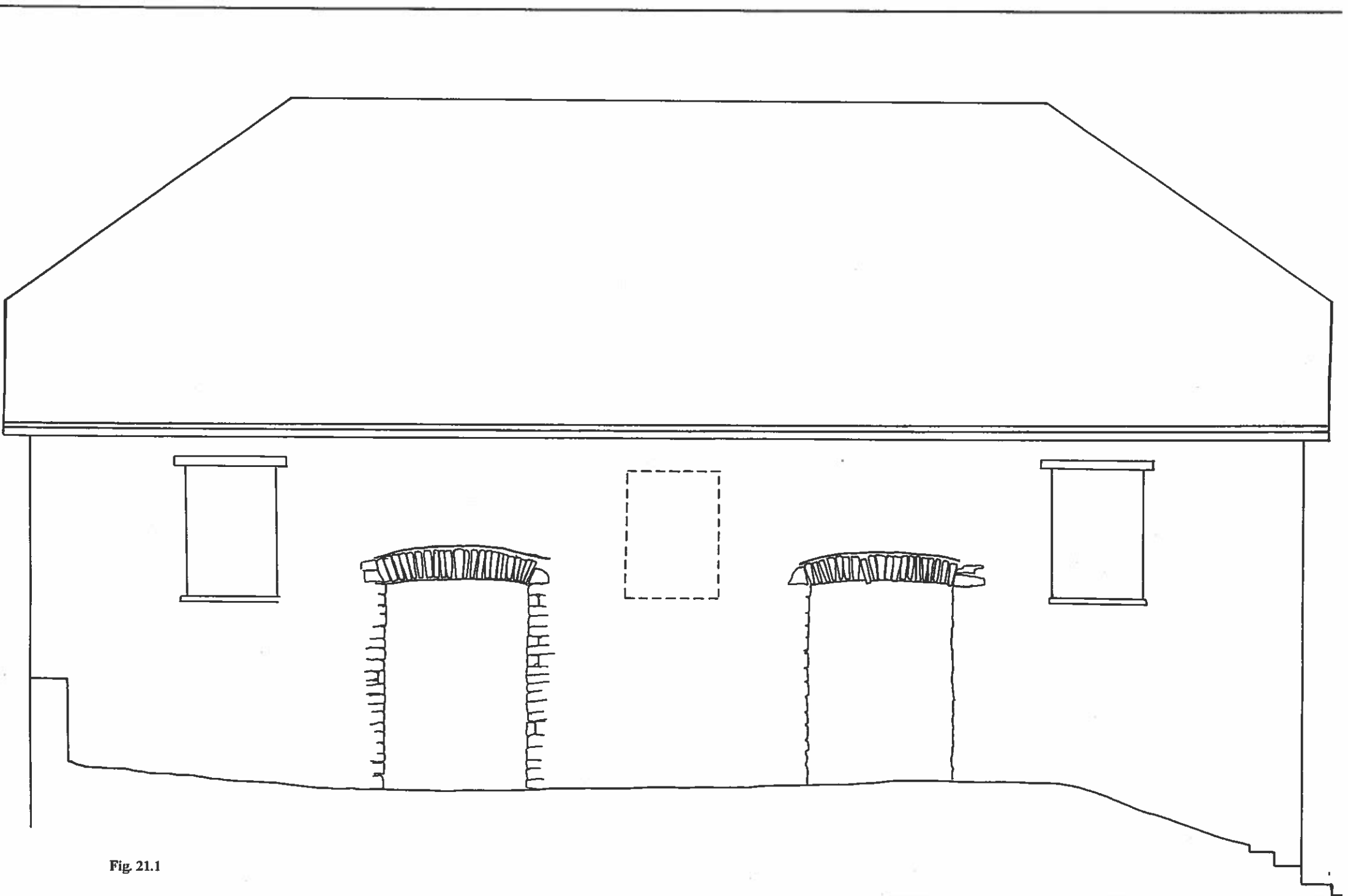


Fig. 21.1

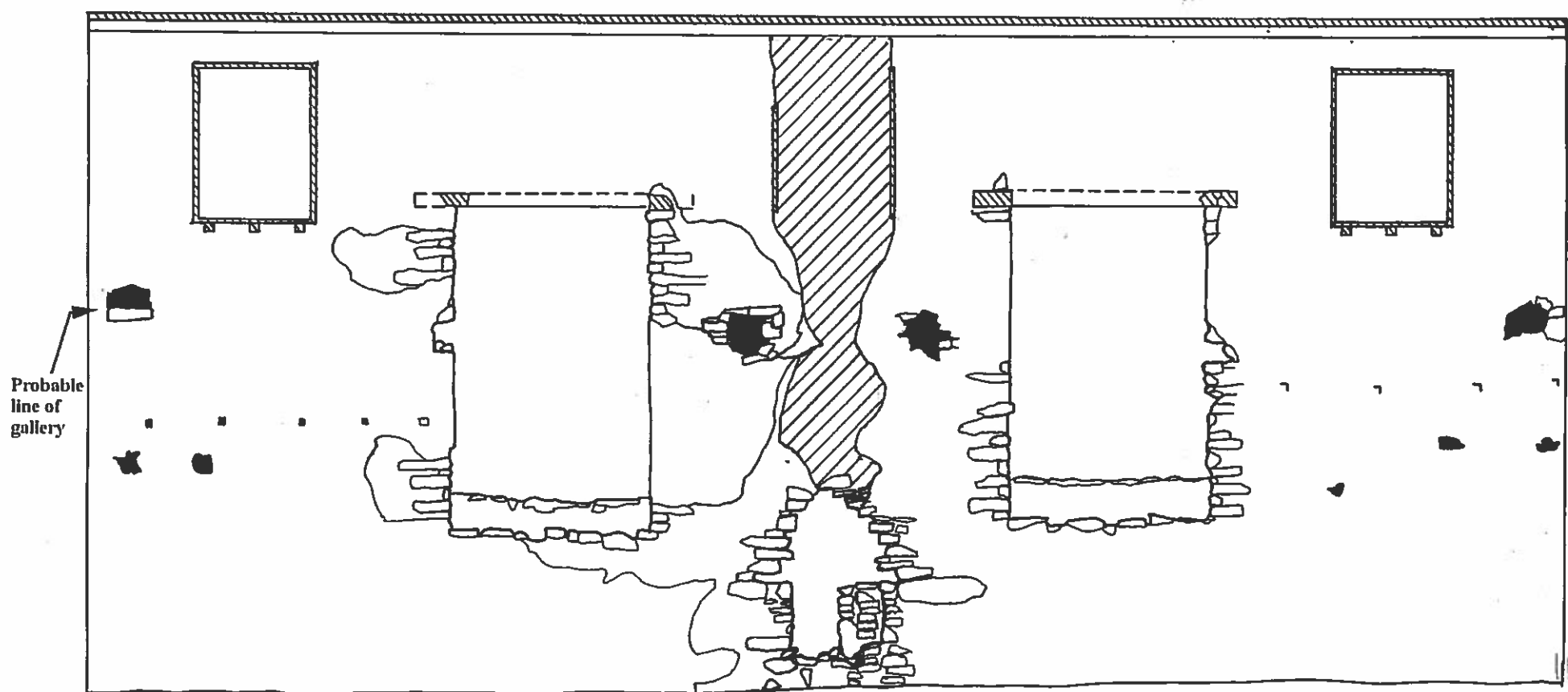


Fig. 21.2

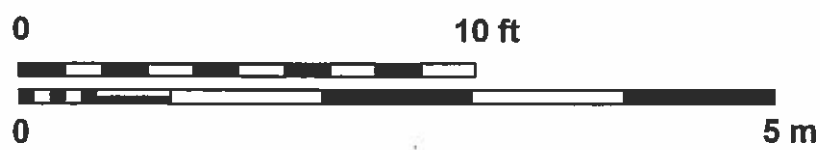


Fig. 21
 South wall of the Tabernacl Chapel, Lampeter.
 NGR SSN 5755 4809
 Recorded June 2001
 Drawn scale 1:50
 Interior recorded by LG, JB, MT, ZC
 Exterior recorded by ZC

Modern cement
 Timber

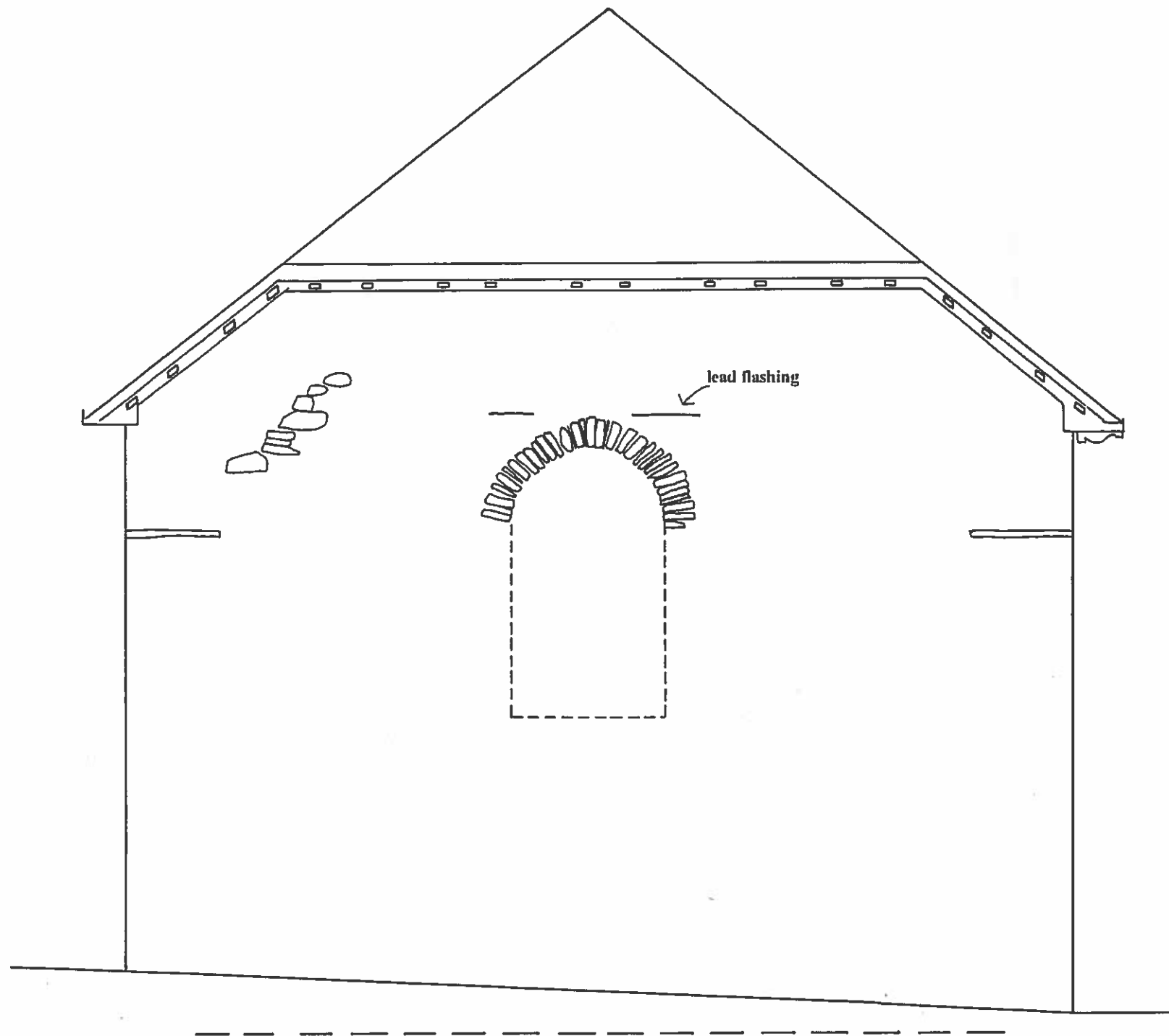


Fig. 22.1 Exterior elevation

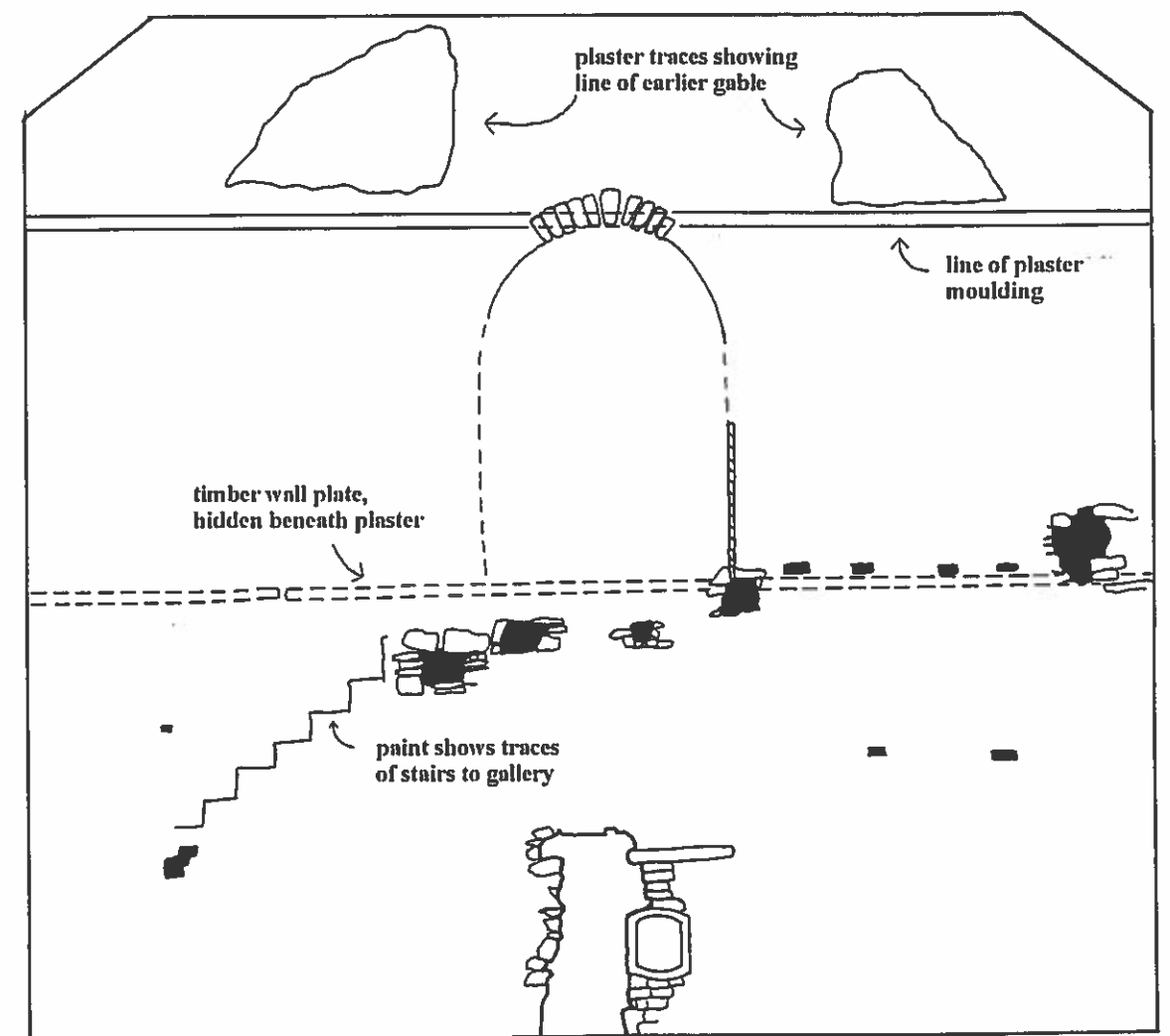
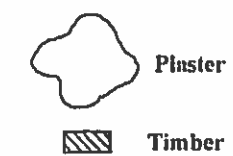


Fig. 22.2 Interior elevation

Fig. 22
East wall of the Tabernacl Chapel, Lampeter.
NGR SSN 5755 4809
Recorded June 2001
Drawn scale 1:50
Interior recorded by T O-A, PC, NF, MB, GT, ZC
Exterior recorded by ZC



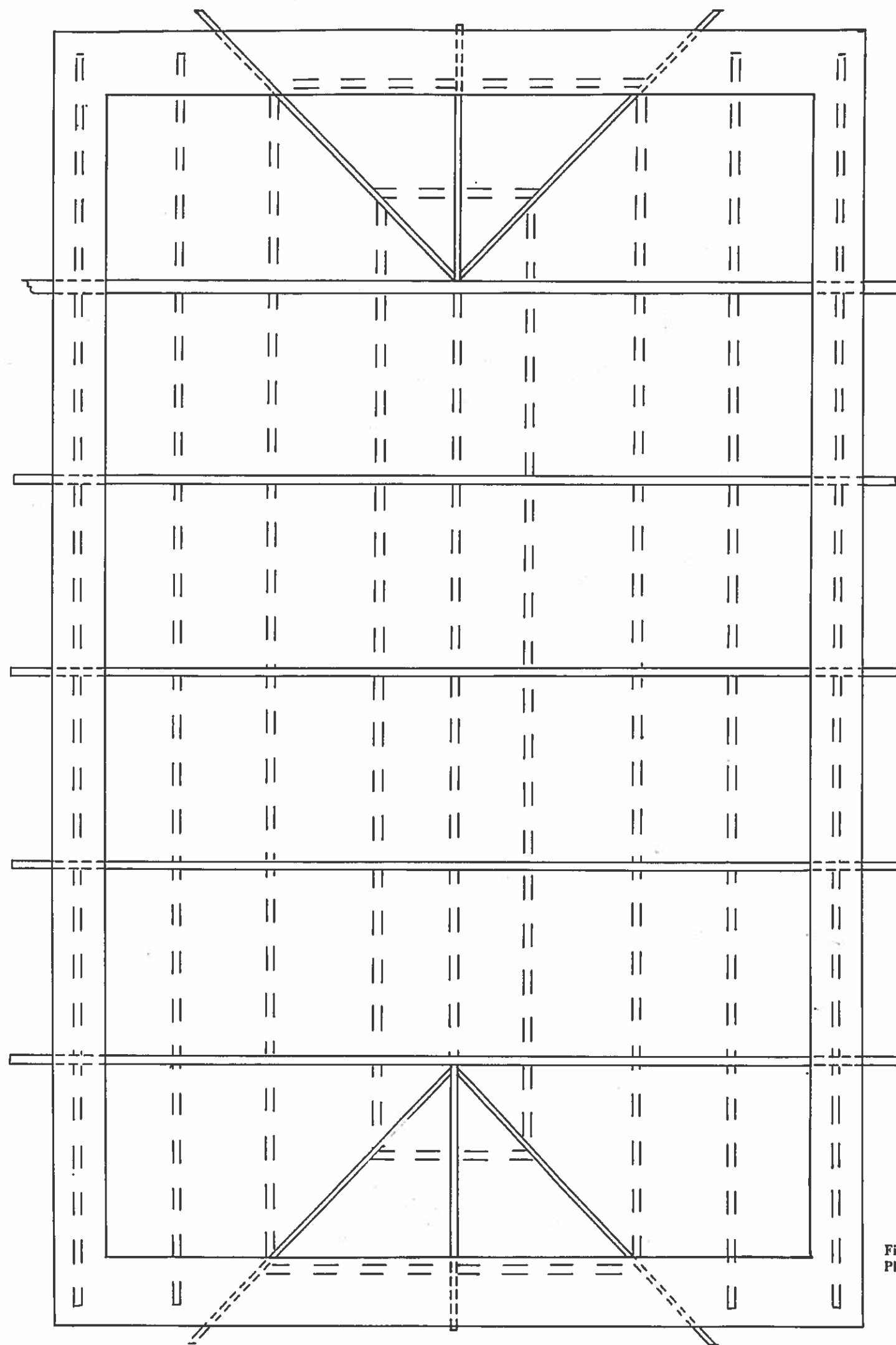


Fig. 23.1
Plan of roof tree

Fig. 23
Roof tree, Tabernacl Chapel, Lampeter.
NGR SSN 5755 4809
Recorded June 2001
Drawn scale 1:50
Recorded by ZC

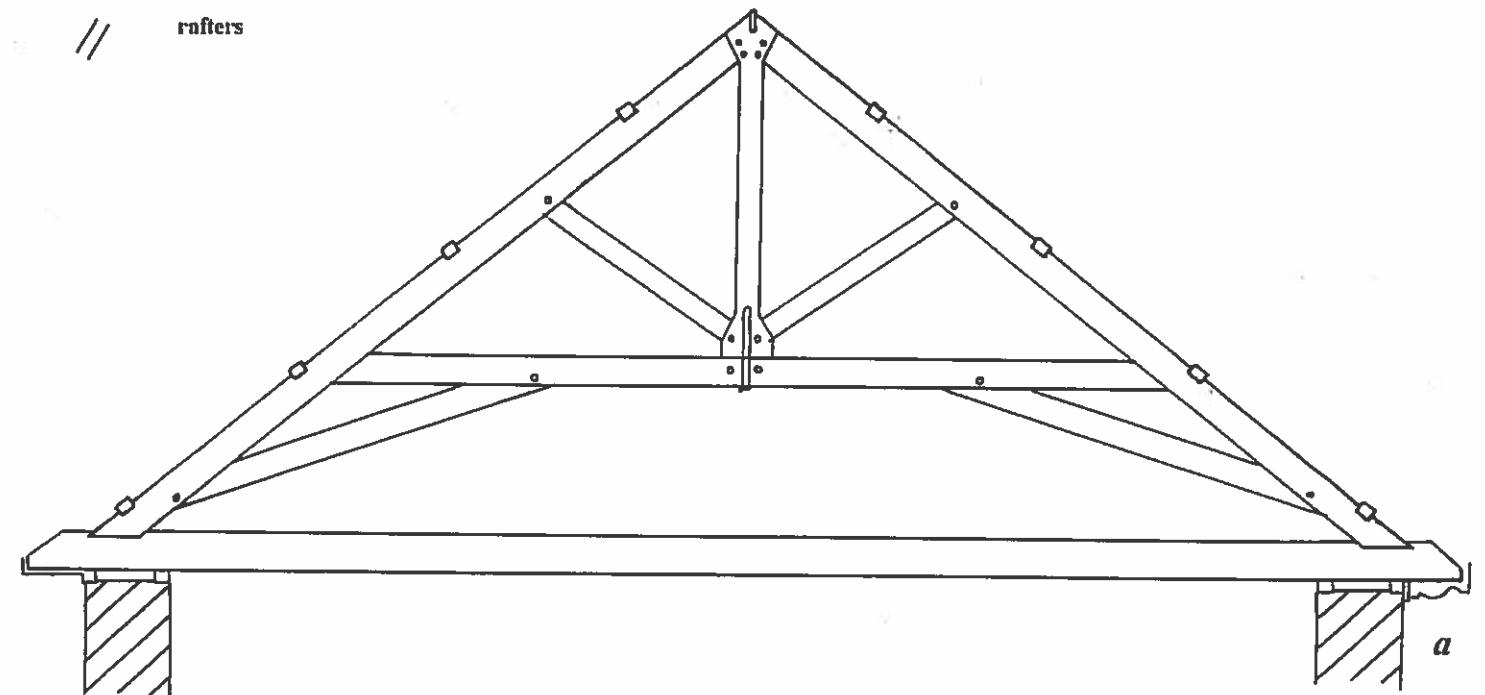
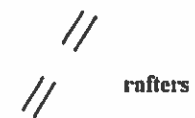
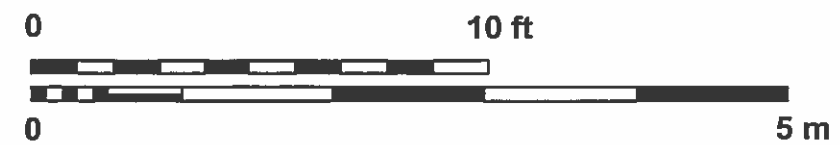


Fig. 23.2
Roof tree (elevation)

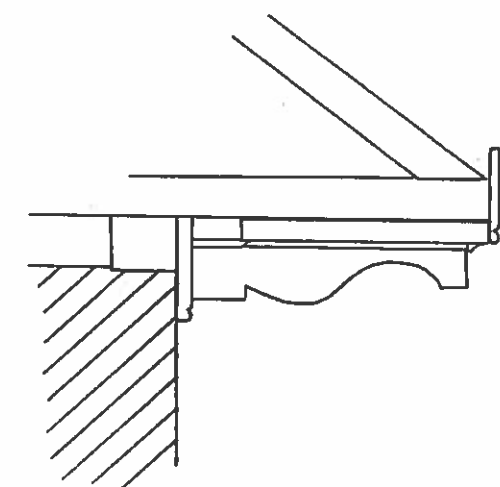


Fig. 23.3
Detail at (a)
Drawn scale 1:10



Fig. 24
 Inscription on North wall of the Tabernacle Chapel, Lampeter
 NGR SSN 5755 4809
 Recorded June 2001
 Drawn scale 1:10
 Recorded by ZC



Fig. 24.1

Earliest visible inscription, located in the centre of North wall.

Originally painted black, with no 'knots' between leaves. Subsequently, leaves and stem painted over in dark green and oval pink and blue 'knots' added (see 24.2)

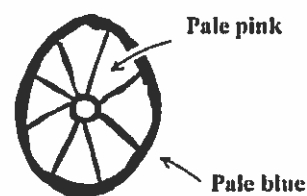


Fig. 24.2
 Detail at (a)
 Drawn scale 1:1



Fig. 24.3

Later inscription, painted over 24.1
 Drawn scale 1:10
 Black paint on white background

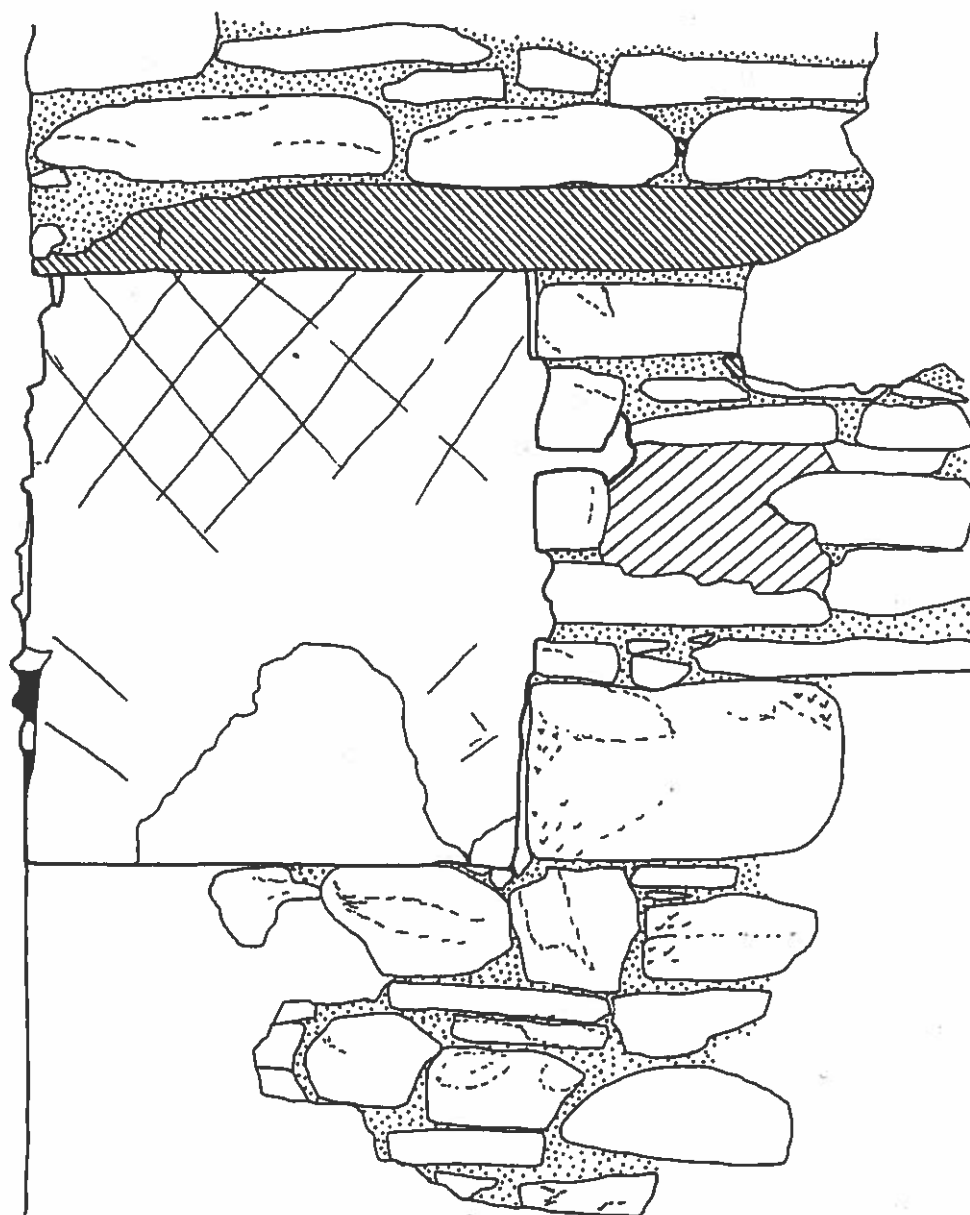


Fig. 25
Detail of niche on West wall
NGR SSN 5755 4809
Recorded June 2001
Drawn scale 1:10
Recorded by ZC



timber



modern concrete

0

2 feet



0

1 metre



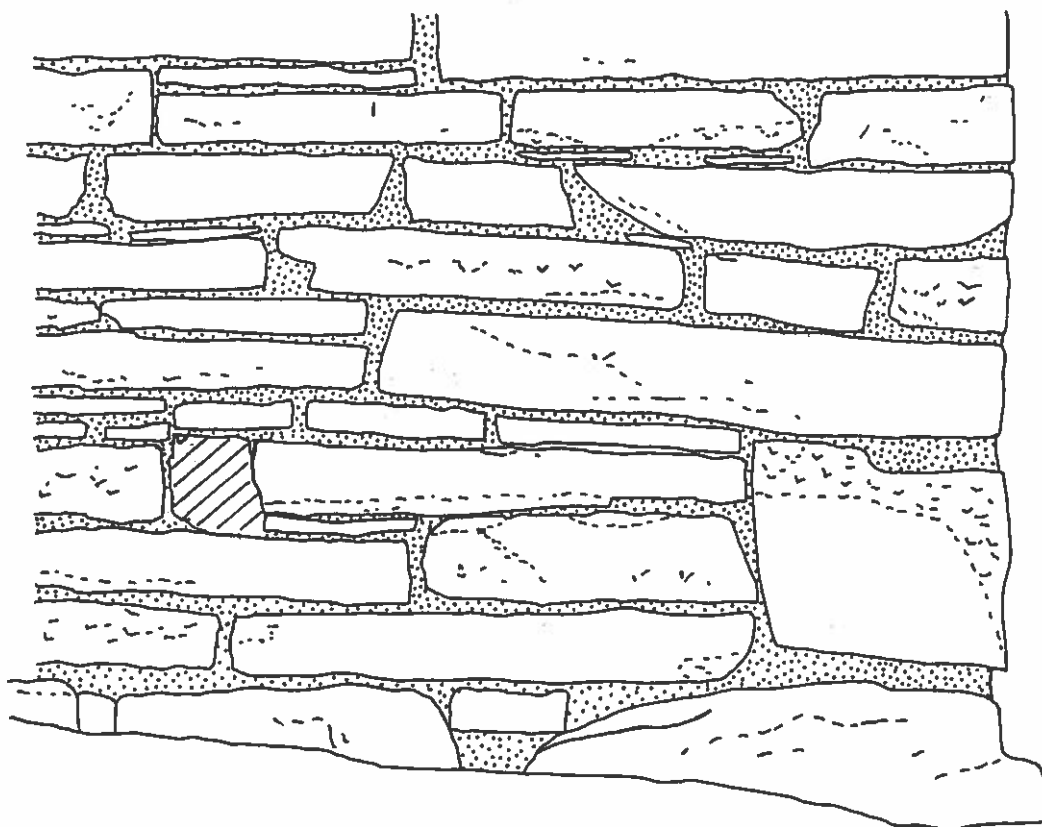


Fig. 26
Details of quoins on northeast of chapel (exterior)
NGR SSN 5755 4809
Recorded June 2001
Drawn scale 1:10
Recorded by DA
Inked by ZC

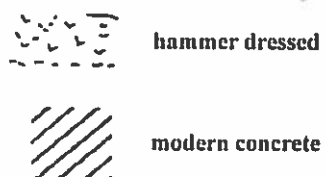


Fig. 27
Gate on north side of Tabernacl Chapel, Lampeter
NGR SSN 5755 4809
Recorded June 2001
Drawn scale 1:10
Recorded by CG, ZC

