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Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd.

**St Aelrhiw's Church
Archaeological Survey**

I.P. Brooks

EAS Client report 2015/15

St Aelrhiw's Church, Archaeological Survey

Commissioned by

J and S Jones Building Contractors Limited

Fieldwork and Analysis by:

I.P. Brooks

Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd

Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd is

Registered in England No 286978

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INTRODUCTION

Listed Building Ref.: 4238
NPRN: 301082
PRN: 4238

Summary

The church of St Aelrhiw's was built in 1860 on the site of an earlier church. It has an unusual plan with very short chancel and nave and very long transepts. It is possible that the original church was aligned at right angles, to the current building, with the altar at the north eastern end as is suggested by the position of two graves of 18th century rectors in the church yard. A church is thought to have been on the site from at least the mid thirteenth century, although the nature of the graveyard suggest the possibility of a much earlier origins.

Location

St Aelrhiw's Church lies in an elevated position to the north and east of the somewhat scatter village of Rhiw (Figure 1). It is approximately 450 m North West of the property of Plas yn Rhiw, on the south facing slopes of Mynedd Rhiw at a height of approximately 153 m OD at SH 23403 28630.

Archaeological Background

The church is being converted for domestic use under the planning application C/12/1643/30/CR. This was granted on 10th April 2013 and works started shortly after. The planning permission, however required a full photographic survey of the church and an agreed programme of archaeological works to be commissioned before any works took place. Unfortunately this did not happen and the current archaeological recording was not commissioned until September 2015. In the meantime the roof of the church had been re-covered, the internal fittings and plaster had been removed, the supports for new mezzanine floors inserted and the floor replaced. Fortunately the inside of the church was photographed for the Rhiw.com website in 2009 (http://www.rhiw.com/hanes_02/adeiladau/aelrhiw/saint_aelrhiw.htm) and a few photographs were taken by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monument of Wales in the 1950's (<http://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/301082/images/ST+AELRHIW%27S+CHURCH%2C+RHIW/>). The contactors also took a series of photographs during the course of the restoration which have allowed some record of the deposits below the floor to be recorded. The chest, lectern and a mirror surround from the church were removed, but stored so that they could be recorded and the font, although dismantled and not in its original position, was still within the church.

Methodology

A desktop study was undertaken using the records of: The National Library of Wales, The Gwynedd Archive Office, The University of Bangor Archive Office and The Gwynedd Historic Environment Record.

The church was recorded with an internal plan recorded with a Leica TS06 total station. This instrument was also used to record the form of one of the trusses. Other features were record by direct measurement. Photographs were taken with a Nikon D80 DSLR camera with

photographs taken in RAW (Nikon NEF) format at a resolution of 10.2 MP. Where possible the photographs included a metric scale of a suitable size. Further photographs were also taken with a Panasonic Lumix DCM-TZ60 camera with a resolution of 18.1 MP

Results

Desk Top Study

The resources of The Gwynedd Archive Service at Caernarfon were consulted together with the Archives held by The University of Bangor and the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth. The archaeological records held by the Gwynedd Historic Environment Record were consulted together with the records of the National Monuments Record held by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. Photographs and some description of the church were also consulted on the Rhiw.com website.

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Lease for 21 years of parcels of land called Tir'r Eglwys in p. Rhiw, co. Caern, 1663, Aug. 11. National Library D1033

Will of Owen Jones, Curate/Rector of Rhiw 1665. National Library

Will of William Hughes, Rector of Rhiw 1761. National Library

A Terrier of Rhiw Exhibited at Bangor 10th Aug. 1762. National Library P695.

Will of Evan Williams, Minister of Rhiw 1772 National Library

Will of James Davies, Rector of Rhiw 1772. National Library

A True and Perfect Terrier of Glebe Lands and Houses, Tithes etc. belonging to the Rectory of Rhiw in the County of Carnarvon and Diocese of Bangor 1776. National Library B/TERR/1336.

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Tithe Map and Schedule for Parish of Rhiw 1842 (<http://cynefin.archiveswales.org.uk/en/tithe-maps/>)

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Plan of the Rhiw Estate in the Parishes of Rhiw and Llanfaelrhys in the County of Carnarvon 1875. National Library Caern. 232

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EKA12-008_AEL-JCJ1278. Existing Layout and Sections

EKA12-008_AEL-JCJ1278. Existing elevations

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North Wales Express 24th July 1896

The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality 5th January 1889

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<http://historicwales.gov.uk/>

<http://www.rhiw.com/>

Results

The church of St Aelrhiw's is within an area of some importance for prehistoric archaeology. Mynydd Rhiw (SH2285 2938) has been well known since 1950's for the quarrying of a baked shale to produce Neolithic polished stone axes (Stone Axe Group XXI, McK Clough and Cummins 1979, 127). Recently Burrow (2011, 248) has suggested that the exploitation of these resources started in the Mesolithic, although the main phase of exploitation took place in the Neolithic. There is also some evidence that the debris was also reworked in the Late

Bronze Age (*ibid.* 255. Although extensive working are know it would appear that the axes were used relatively locally with no know examples having been recorded outside Wales. Of particular note was the recovery of an axe rough out and a scraper which was found near St. Aelrhiw's Church (PRN 3315). Approximately 360 m ENE of the church is a Neolithic chambered tomb (Scheduled Ancient Monument CN026, NPRN 95290, PRN 1219),

Later prehistoric activity is represented by a series of defended enclosures around Mynydd Rhiw including Conion Hillfort (PRN 1207, Castell Caeron (PRN 1234) and Meillionydd (PRN 1205) which are assumed to be Late Bronze Age to Iron Age in date.

A proximately 160 m south west of St Aelrhiw's Church is the Ffynnon Rhiw well/spring (Listed Building 4241, NPRN 32189, PRN 1221). The current structure is thought to be 17th century in date, however local tradition links this well to the medieval pilgrim's route to Bardsey Island.

The earliest record of a church within the parish of Rhiw is with the Valuation of Norwich in c 1254 (Lunt 1926, 190-191) which is assumed to relate to the site now occupied by St Aelrhiw's Church. The parish is also mentioned in the register of Benedict, Bishop of Bangor between 1408 and 1417 (Pryce 1922, 89). The next record recovered was Henry VIII's financial study of the church assets, the "*Valor Ecclesiasticus*," (RCAHMWM 1964, 97). By the reign of Elizabeth I, Sir John Roberts, the parson of Rhiw, was required to provide a musket (and presumably the soldier to use it) at a muster in Conwy in 1596 (Clenennau 1, 438).

Evidence for the financial arrangements to maintain the church are first recorded in the 17th century. Two documents in the National Library church (National Library 617 and D1033), both dated 1663 record a lease on a parcel of land called Tir'r Eglwys with an annual rent of 8 schillings which was to be used for the reparation of the parish church of Rhiw. This arrangement was also recorded in the earliest of the Terriers for the parish in 1762 (National Library, Lanfair Brynddel P695) along with other properties who's income was used for the upkeep of the church. Similar arrangement continued until at least 1893 as they are recorded in a newspaper article in the North Wales Express on 29th December 1893.

In the late 17th century there were a series of endowments, largely from Frederick Wynne. In 1662 he presented pewter flagon, and in 1672 a silver chalice. The bell was presented in 1670 and it is assumed that it was also from Frederick Wynne as had the initials R.P.R: F.W.W. TW inscribed upon it (Kendrick nd, 26). The flagon was lost, but re-emerged in the museum in Exeter who eventually returned it to the Nonhoran Estate, who re-presented it to the church. The label attached to the vessel suggested that it had been found in a ditch approximately 30 miles from the church by a Miss. C. Gallini and then presented to the museum (Hughes 1923, 294). Frederick Wynne is also mentioned on the memorial now housed in the nave, he was a warden of the church (Kendrick, nd.). Further gifts were in the early 18th century, with the chest having a date of 1715 carved onto its face together with the initials "R", "RH" and "WI".

There is only limited evidence of form of the church prior to it being rebuilt in 1860. The earliest description is in the Terrier of 12th July 1776 (National Library B/TERR/1336). Terriers are, in effect, financial statements covering the assets associated with each of the Rectories. That for Rhiw in 1776 describes the church as "...consisting of a cross in one way length 20 yards, in breadth 7 yards. In the other way in length 14 yards and breadth 6 yards without the walls." This is consistent with the size of the current building, possibly

suggesting that the 1860 church is built on the footings of the earlier church. No images or reliable plans of the earlier church have been recovered, however it appears on both the Tithe Map of 1844 (Figure 2) and the 1874 Rhiw Estate Map (Figure 3). Although the Rhiw Estate Map dates from after the church had been re-built in 1860 it is clearly based on an earlier map. Neither of these maps show the church as having the cruciform plan described in the 1776 Terrier and differ between themselves, however, they both suggest that the earlier church was heavily buttressed.

There are also three published descriptions of the pre-1860 church. Hyde Hall (Jones, 1952, 304) described the church as it appeared between 1809 and 1811, as a “small dark, mean building without even a pulpit, and in no respect well kept. Near it stands the parsonage, a very wretched building also meanly thatched quite unprotected, and forming a dreary abode.” A more upbeat description was given by Samuel Lewis (1833) who describes the church as “The church, dedicated to St Aelrhiw, is an ancient and spacious cruciform structure, in the early style of English architecture, and is of good repair.” This is in contrast to Glynne who visited the church on September 7th 1858, shortly before it was demolished, and described the church as “A small rude church of clumsy, quasi cruciform plan, with small bell cot. The architectural features are poor. The roof is open; the windows modern and without character, except on narrow slit in the south transept, and there are no arches within and the walls low; but the situation lofty, and commands a fine view.” It is curious to compare these description to the depiction of the church on the Tithe map drawn in 1844 (Figure 2) which shows the church as a single range with large buttresses at the corners and the 1874 Rhiw Estate Map (Figure 3) which depicts a “T” shaped building also with large buttresses.

Even though the average attendance was recorded as only 15 people in the religious census of 1851 (Jones 1981), funds were sort and the church was demolished and completely re-built by 1861 (The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality, 23rd March 1861). The current building was designed by John Jones of Cochymoel and cost about £300. On reopening the church had no pews, allowing a congregation of 200 to be accommodated. This may have been deliberate as the unusual plan of the church with elongated transepts means that many of the congregation would not be able to see the altar.

There are a flurry of letters in the local papers in early 1888 over the role of the curate, Rev. H. Jones Manley in the improvement of the church whilst the vicar, Thomas Hardy Richards, was terminally ill. In the article in the North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality for 7th January 1888, the curate is praised for his efforts in improving the church including the donation of an altar cloth and carpeting around the communion table from Misses Roberts of Plas-yn-Rhiw and donations from Lord Penrhyn towards the church funds. The following letters, however, (North Wales Chronical and Advertiser for the Principality 28th Jan 1888 and 4th February 1888) suggest this might have been part of Manley’s campaign to be appointed vicar of Talysarn. Shortly after this spat it is reported that a new organ-harmonium was provided to the church by Misses Roberts of Plas-yn-Rhiw (The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality 5th January 1889).

Probably more serious was a series of legal actions between the vicars of Rhiw. The executrix of the late Rev. Thomas Hardy Richard sued the Rev. Owen Davies for the sum of £6 16s due the estate of the late vicar (North Wales Express 17th October 1890). Then in 1896 the Rev. Owen Davies, in his own turn, sued the incoming vicar (Rev. D. Sinnett Jones) for £9.18s9d over funds spent by him on the upkeep of the church and for the exchange of the parish (North Wales Express 24th July 1896).

There were plans to alter the orientation of the church in 1909. An application was made, by the Rev Sinnett Jones, to the Diocese of Bangor to move the altar into the North West (National Library B/F/456) transept because current layout did not allow many in the congregation to see the altar. The application would also include the replacing of the window in the north transept and the moving of the monument from the body of the church and placing it in the porch. This application was modified in 1910 to a much more modest scheme to include:

1. Re-flooring the church including the construction of a raised platform in the chancel and sanctuary
2. A dwarf screen
3. Wood screens and sides of the chancel
4. A new pulpit
5. A new altar rail
6. A new lectern
7. The creation of a porch by dividing the nave
8. The adapting the old pews to the new configuration
9. The refitting the font in a new position
10. The formation of a small vestry in the north transept.

This faculty was approved giving rise to the layout of the church which survived until it became redundant.

On the death of Rev. D. Sinnett Jones in 1919 the parish presented a lectern to the church (see below) and his widow a credence table (Kendrick nd, 26).

A series of photographs of the church were taken in March 2009 (http://www.rhiw.com/hanes_02/adeiladau/aelrhiw/saint_aelrhiw.htm) (Plates 2-5) which show the layout before the restoration took place, when combined with the photographs taken by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales in 1951 (<http://coflein.gov.uk/>) it allows for the layout of the church before restoration to be determined (Figure 5). This was helped by the plan EKA12-008_AEL-JCJ278 drawn as part of the current restoration programme. The short chancel contained the communion table which was on a low platform. This was separated from the body of the church by a low altar rail on the edge of the platform. Because of the restricted size of the chancel the altar rail was pushed forward into the body of the crossing. To the north was the pulpit and to the south the organ-harmonium. This arrangement meant that many of the congregation sitting on the pews in the transepts could not see the communion table. A small vestry was made by dividing off the northern end of the north transept and the nave was also divided by a wooden screen to form an “internal porch”. The font was housed within the “porch” as was the memorial to Lowry, the first daughter and heiress of Thomas ap Richard of Bodwythog. There were also low benches along at least two side of the “porch”.

Building Survey

St Aelrhiw's church (Plate 6) is based on a curious plan, (Figure 6) with a short nave, very short chancel and two oversized transepts. Surprisingly given its age the openings are barely pointed and there is little or no Gothic ornamentation. It is constructed of roughly coursed rubble with local, squared, stone voussoir, but little or no use of differentiated quoins. The roof has been repaired/replaced with a slate roof of a similar type to that on the building before the restoration started. This uses split slates of regular sizes and ceramic ridge tiles.

The building is entered through a double door in the northern side of the nave (Plate 7, Figure 9). Each leaf of the door consists of a, six plank, ledged door shaped to fit the opening and the remains of iron door fitting survive above the key hole in the western leaf. There are no openings in the western side of the north transept (Plate 8, Figure 8)), however there is a single opening in the northern gable end of this range (Plate 9, Figure 9). This is a relatively simple window with a two-centred, pointed arch defined by a series of squared quoins. The window is of plain glass with a vertical, centrally placed, wooden mullion.

There are three opening in the east facing elevation of the church (Plate 6, Figure 8), one each in the northern transept (Plate 10, chancel (Plate 11) and southern transept (Plate 12). Those in the two transepts are of similar design with two-centred arches defined by squares voussoirs and a central mullion. They are both divided into small square panes by glazing bars which contain largely clear glass. There are, however a few panes of coloured glass surviving with two panes of a green glass and one of a pink coloured glass in the window in the northern transept. The window in the southern transept retains only two panes of pink glass. The chancel window (Plate 11) is also of two-centred arch form, but is larger and has Y tracery. It has metal glazing bars separating small square panes of clear glass.

The southern gable end of the south transept contains a single window (Plate 13) which is similar to that in the northern gable of the northern transept. It has a two-centred arch defined by voussoirs and a wooden mullion defining two large panes. There are no opening in neither the western side of the south transept nor the south face of the nave (Plate 14).

The western elevation of the nave (Plate 15, Figure 8) contains a single window (Plate 16) and the bellcote. The window is of similar design to others within the building with a two-centred arch, a wooden mullion and metal glazing bars. Unlike the other windows this window retains several coloured panes. There are a mixture of pink and green glass panes which tend to occupy the edges of the opening. Unfortunately, however, they do not appear to form a consistent pattern and possibly represent available coloured glass used to repair the window. The bellcote (Plates 15 and 17) is a relatively simple structure with slate slab roof and an arched opening for the bell.

Inside the church had been stripped out prior to the recording had been commissioned and the basic structure for the mezzanine floors had been constructed. (Plates 18 – 20). Within the nave and attached to the western wall is the memorial to Lowry, the first daughter of Thomas ap Richard of Bodwthog (Plate 21). This slab is 1960 x 850 mm in size and is 90 mm thick. The inscription is on the upper section of the slab and the basal 490 mm are blank. This would tend to suggest that the memorial was either originally intended to have stood upright in the ground or that there was space for further family member left. The memorial is remarkably unworn suggesting that it has neither spent significant time in the open air, nor been on the floor of the church. The top of the memorial is marked by an armorial in the top left hand corner which has three fleur de llys and a chevron with a crescent moon (Plate 22) and a skull and crossbones (Plate 23) in the top right corner. The inscription reads:

HERE LIETH THE BODY
OF LOWRY THE FIRST
DAUGHTER AND HEIRESS
OF THOMAS AP RICHARD
OF BODWYTHOG GENT
& THE WIFE OF FREDERICK
WYNNE SHE DIED

THE 8TH AVGVST ANNO
DIN 1674
& ALSO Y^E BODY OF Y^E
SAID FREDERICK WYNN^E
THE SONNE OF JOHN
WYNNE OF BODVEAN.

There is a final line which is very worn and undecipherable but may include “10th March”.

The font (Plate 24) has been temporally moved to the north transept for safety. It is plain, octagonal in plan, stands to a height of 666 mm and is 535 mm in diameter. And is made of plain white marble.

The roof consist of seven identical trusses crossing the nave and two transepts (Plate 25, Figures 6 and 7) and a set of crossed trusses over the crossing (Plate 26). Each of the trusses spring from a small stone corbel (Plate 27) and consist of a collar with arch bracing below and a king post above. There are also short lengths of roll mouldings tacked to the foot of each of the trusses as a decorative feature. The trusses are fixed with a mixture of iron bolts and nails and a pair of iron plates on both sides of the collar. The arch bracing was constructed of four separate timbers which are nailed together and fixed to the principle rafters and the collar by iron bolts. This pattern is followed by the crossed trusses over the crossing which has a single king post in the centre of the crossing. There is a break in the stonework of the walls at the level of the top of the corbels (Plate 28) only on the side walls and not on the gable ends. This is assumed to be a function of the construction of the roof with the trusses being placed before the walling was completed (J. Jones *pers. comm.*).

Photographs taken during the conversion works show the structure below the floors (Plate 29 - 31). Whilst the floor in the nave appears to have been laid on natural clay, that in the two transepts had three lines of stone slabs running along the transepts with the gap between filled with stone rubble. It is assumed that this rubble was derived from the destruction of the previous church. Some of this rubble was available for inspection, either in a pile just outside the church or in the yard of J and S Jones Building Contractors Ltd where the bulk of this deposit was stored. The majority of this rubble was unshaped stone blocks, however a single fragment of carved stone (Plate 33, Figure 12) was recovered. This appears to be part of a window or door surround, although there is insufficient fragments to be sure. The floor, before it was removed, appears to have been covered, at least in part, by plain clay tiles (Plate 32) some of which have been retained by the developers.

Graveyard

The church sits with a grave yard of a very distinct shape. Both the vicarage and the church sits within a “D” shape enclosure which is further divided into two section by a clawdd wall. The graveyard occupies the south western side of the enclosure. It has four openings, one a gateway to the vicarage and three onto the road to the south of the church. The gateway between the church yard and the vicarage (Plate 34) has been partly blocked so that it is now only a footpath, however it was originally much wider and is marked by a distinct vertically set stone (Plate 35) which may be part of an earlier structure. The wrought iron gate is very similar to that in the gateway in the north western corner of the graveyard (Plate 36) and is presumably of the same date. The First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1888 show a path linking these two gates. Centrally place in the southern boundary is a combined wrought iron gate and stone style combination (Plate 37), the gate of which is of a similar design to those

already discussed. In the north western corner of the graveyard was another opening. This has been widened as part of the works to restore the church, however it does show the width of the boundary wall (Plate 38) which is approximately 1 m wide and consists of well-made faces with rubble infill.

Majority of the graves are 19th century in date, however the marked graves range from 1778 to 2006. There are also many unmarked, or barely marked graves which are shown by a series of low mounds within the church yard. Within the 19th century graves it is noticeable that there is a preference for the depiction of a willow on the markers (Plate 39).

The two earliest graves are both of the clergy and their families. The earliest is of Jacob Davies, Vicar of Rhiw between 1772 and 1778 (Plate 40). The grave slab is very worn making the inscription difficult to determine, however, Jones (1903, 156) record the inscription as:

S M
JACOBI DAVIES CLER.
DE HAC PAROCHIA NUPER RECTORIS
QUI ORBIT NONO DE JUN
ANO DOMINI 1778 vo
ÆTATIS SUÆ 45 vo

The second is for the wife of Evan Rees (vicar 1779 – 1811) and later Rees himself (Plate 41). The slab is less worn, however the full inscription is recorded by Jones (1903, 156) as:

HERELIETH THE BODY OF MARY
REES WIFE OF EVAN REES CLERK
RECTOR OF THIS PARISH WHO DIED
THE 22ND DAY OF FEBRUARY 1799
AGED 57

ALSO
HERE LIETH THE BODY OF THE ABOVE NAMED
REV. EVAN REES
WHO DIED THE 19TH DAY OF NOV^R 1811
AGED 75

It is noticeable that both of these are chest tombs and they are grouped near the north eastern end of the northern transept. Given the status of these graves it is possible that they indicate the altar for the pre-1860 church was at this end of the building.

One of the graves is recorded by the War Graves Commission (BMSS/4012b). It is the grave of Thomas Pengilly from Clovelly, Devon, who drowned in 1917 and was one of a series of bodies washed at Porth Neigwl (Kendrick nd. 26) (Plate 42)

Fittings and Fixtures

A few of the fittings had been removed from the church for safety whilst the building was converted for domestic use, however they were available for recording at the offices of J and S Jones Building Contractors Ltd. These consist of a chest, lectern and the mirrored top to a chest of draws.

The chest is 1.29 x 0.40 x 0.48 m in size (Figure 11, Plates 43 – 47) and is constructed of oak, but it has been painted brown at some point in time. It has short legs at each end (Plate 44) which elevated the base of the chest above ground level. Unfortunately this base is now loose but was originally held in place by mortice joints at each end and nails along the sides of the chest. The top is split into two lids (Plate 45), the larger of which has two, internal strap hinges and the smaller a single hinge. The top is secured by two clasps, one of which has a modern padlock securing the top. The front of the chest has the date 1715 carved at one end (Plate 46) and “W” over “RH WI” at the other (Plate 47). This inscription is partly hidden by the clasp for the shorter lid possibly suggesting that the twin clasps are a secondary feature. There is also an inserted block of wood centrally placed near to the top of the front which may mark the original position of the lock. The conversion to the twin clasps must have taken place before 1776 as the chest is described as having two locks in the terrier of that date (National Library B/TERR/1336). It is possible that the chest was originally a marriage chest which was re-cycled for the parish records and valuables.

The lectern (Plates 48-54) stands to a height of 1.53 m high and has an inscription somewhat crudely carved into its upper surface (Plate 49). This reads:

TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND
IN LOVING MEMORY
OF THE
REV. D. SINNERT JONES
RECTOR OF ST AELHIW ¹⁸⁹⁵₁₉₁₉
PRESENTED BY THE PARISHONERS

The carving is cramped in places such that the dates had to be included in a smaller font and one above the other. Below the reading slope there is also a maker’s mark (Plate 50) which consists of:

DE V YUCK
PENTRE FELIN
1919

The lectern gives the impression of having been constructed from at least three other pieces of furniture with the decorative styles for each of the elements not matching. The reading slope (Plates 51 and 52) has pierced quatrefoil decoration on its sides (Plate 51) and pierced scrollwork on its back (Plate 52), which has half quatrefoils along the base and roses carved in triangular spaces above. The shaft (Plate 53), however, has inverted acanthus decoration, whilst the base (Plate 54) has pieced arabesque arches surmounted by pinnacles with multiple crockets.

The other item stored off site appears to be the top of a domestic chest of draws or sideboard (Plate 55). Although broadly “Georgian” in style the use of machine cut veneer decorative elements would suggest that is part of a late 19th or early 20th century reproduction. This piece of furniture sat above and slightly behind another item, as is shown by the supports near to the base. Either side of the centrally placed mirror are panels of geometric floral decoration (Plate 56) which are shallowly carved. The mirror is defined by a band of dot decoration which is also repeated as two bands below the pediment. The pediment is supported by acanthus decoration and two turned balusters. It has a mirrored, scrolled floral design and turned finials.

Conclusions

It is unfortunate that this study was not commissioned until after the conversion works had been running for at least six months. However it has been possible to re-construct the interior of the church from photographs and from a plan drawn for the conversion in December 2012. Photographs taken during the course of the works have also aided in the recording of the archaeological features of the church.

The current structure of the church of St Aelrhiw's was constructed in 1860, however it is highly likely that this was on the footings of an earlier structure. There are documentary records for a church within the parish from at least the thirteenth century. Given the shape of the graveyard enclosure it is probable that any earlier church recorded in the records was on the site of the current church. It is possible to suggest a tentative description of the church, which was demolished in 1860, from a variety of documentary sources which suggest it was a cruciform church, probably with quite large buttresses and small lancet windows. The orientation of the church is uncertain, however the position of the high status 18th century graves within the graveyard may suggest the altar was at the north eastern end.

The current structure was designed by John Jones of Cochymoel and paid for largely by local subscriptions. When re-opened the church had no pews which may have been a deliberate decision of the architect as the form of the church with its short nave and chancel and long transepts made it difficult, if not impossible for most of the congregation to see the altar. The majority of the fittings within the church, therefore must have dated from after 1861. The pulpit, altar rail and partitions forming the internal porch and vestry can be shown to be from about 1910, although the pews were probably from shortly after the current building was constructed. The exception to this is the chest which is dated 1715, however its form and inscriptions suggest that it was a domestic piece of furniture which was converted for ecclesiastic use. It is known that it was already in the church by 1776 when it is listed on the terrier from that year.

Whilst the majority of the structural works at St Aelrhiw's Church have already taken place, it is still necessary to dig a trench, through the graveyard for the services to the church. This will require a watching brief to record any archaeological features revealed. Of most concern is the distinct probability that human remains will be discovered. It is highly recommended that an exhumation licence is obtained in advance of any works as if human remains are discovered during the groundworks the works would have to be stopped until a suitable license was obtained. There is also a possibility that prehistoric remains may be discovered given the proximity of the site to the "stone axe factory" on Mynydd Rhiw and that an axe rough-out has already been discovered near to the church

Acknowledgements

This report was commissioned by J. Jones for J and S Jones Building Contractors Ltd and his help with providing drawings and photographs from the development is gratefully acknowledged.. The administrator of the Rhiw.com website freely gave permission for the use of photographs from the site. Margaret Dunn, kindly provided some of the information she collected during the course of her Master's research. The National Library of Wales, Gwynedd Archives and Bangor University archive are thanked for their help with this report. Jenny Emmett of the Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Service monitored the work for the planning authority.

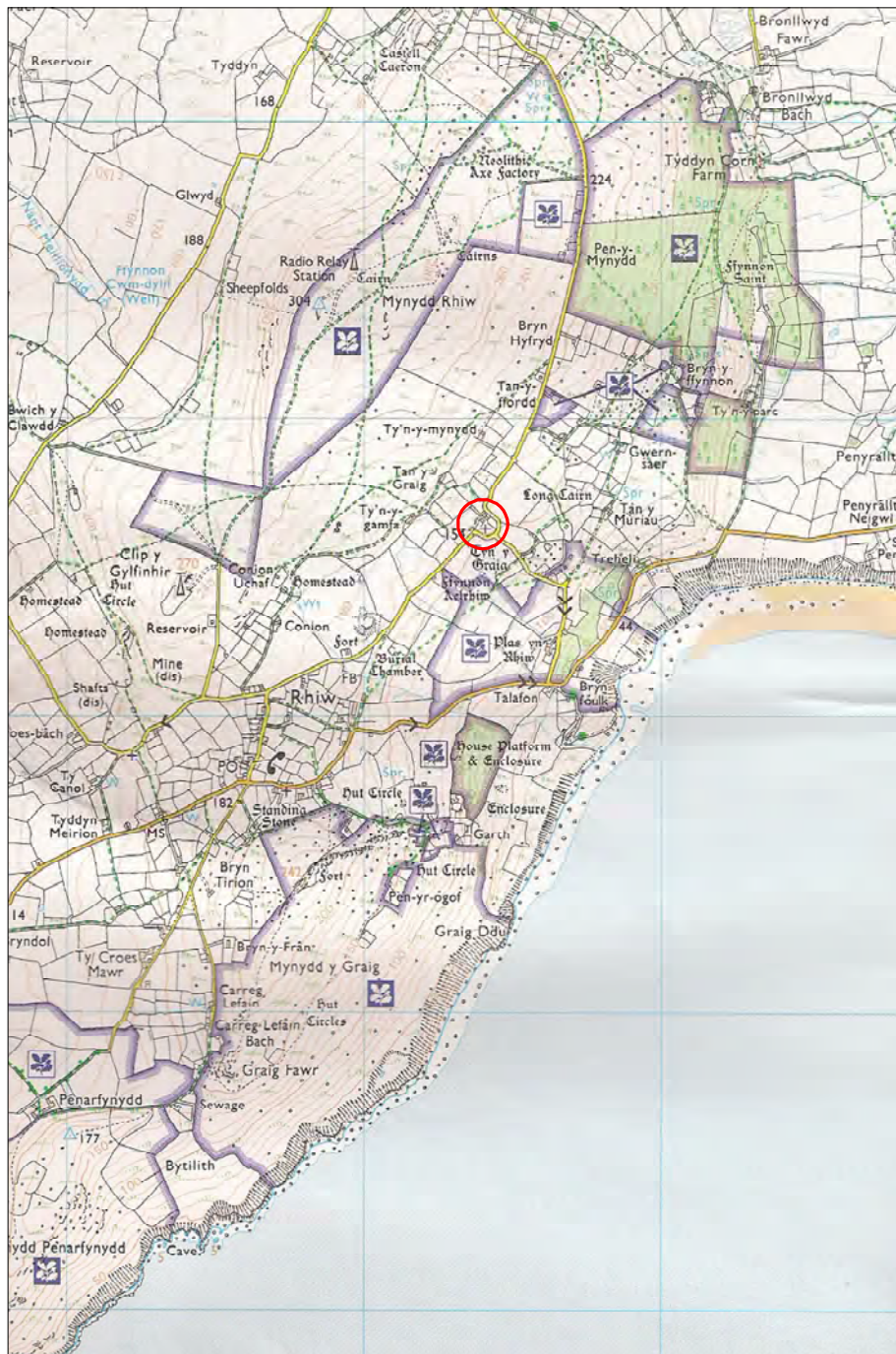


Figure 1: Location
Scale 1:25,000

Reproduced from the Explorer 253, 1:25,000 scale map
by permission of the Ordnance Survey ® on behalf of
The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office
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Figure 2: Extract from the 1844 Rhiw Tithe Map
Re-scale to 1:2500 (approx.)

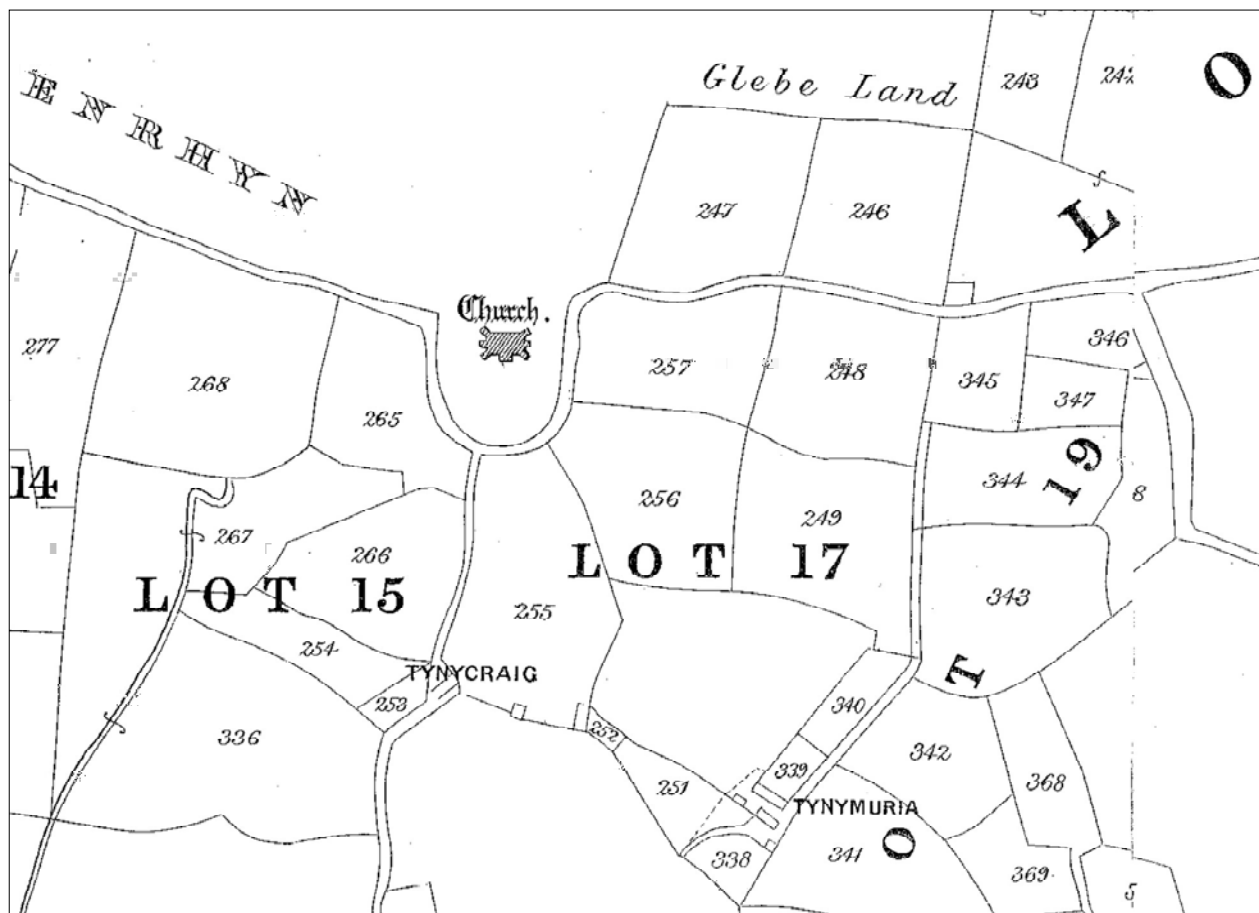


Figure 3: Extract from the 1873 Rhiw Estate Map
(Caern 232)
Not to Scale

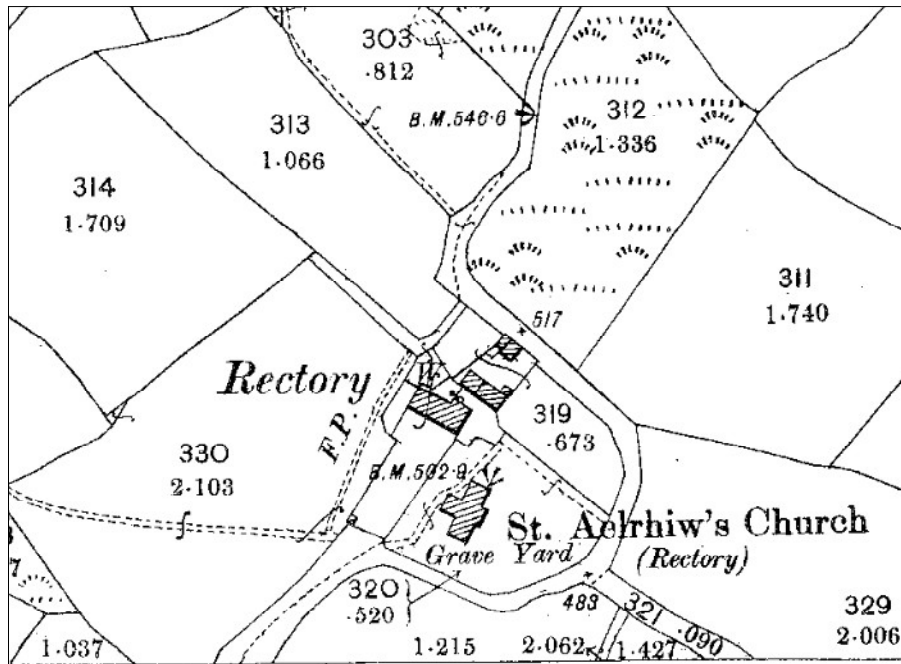


Figure 4: Extract from the Ordnance Survey
1900 Caernarvonshire XLIV.6
1:2500 Map

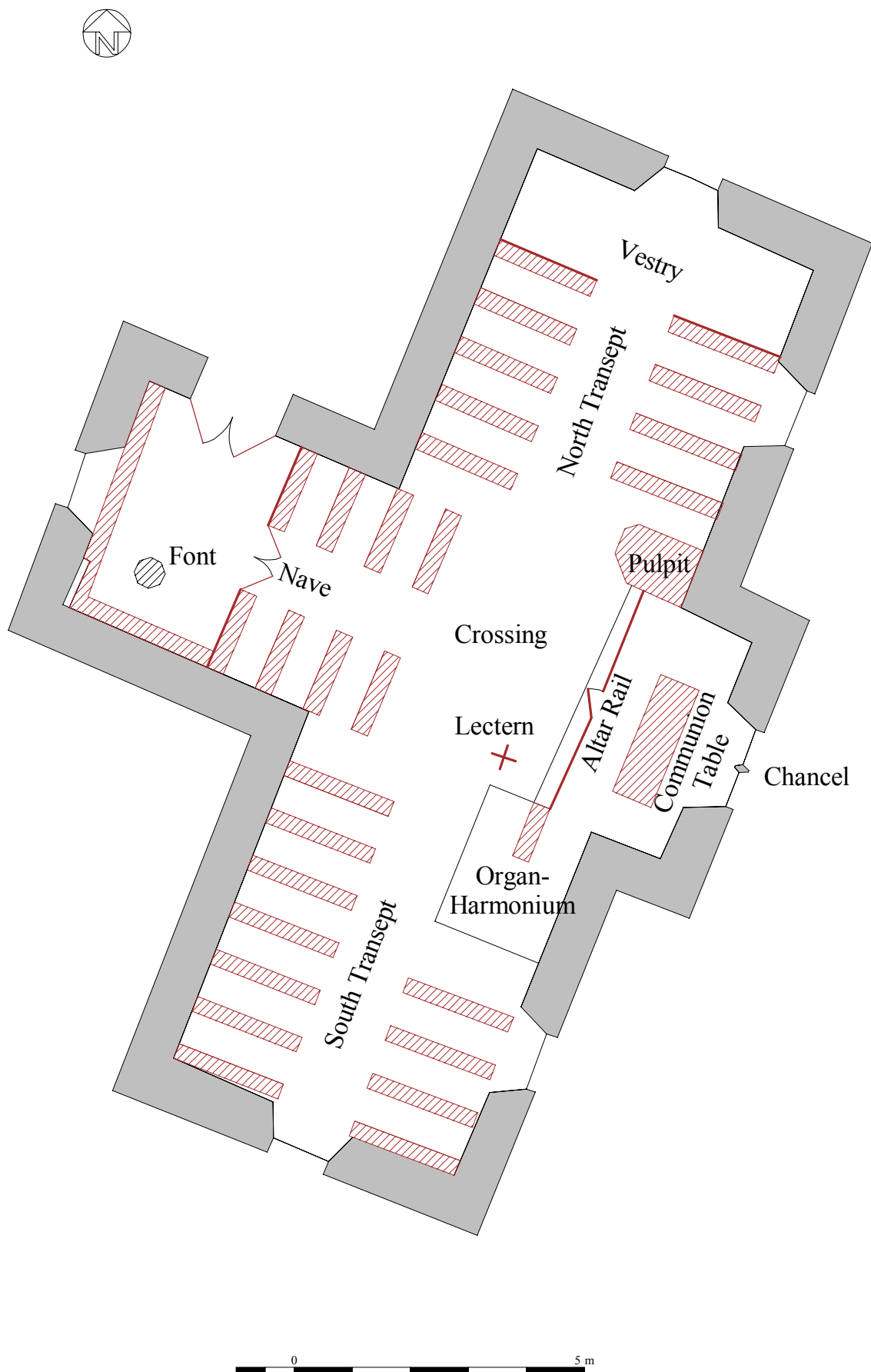


Figure 5: Plan of the Church before 2009
Scale 1:100

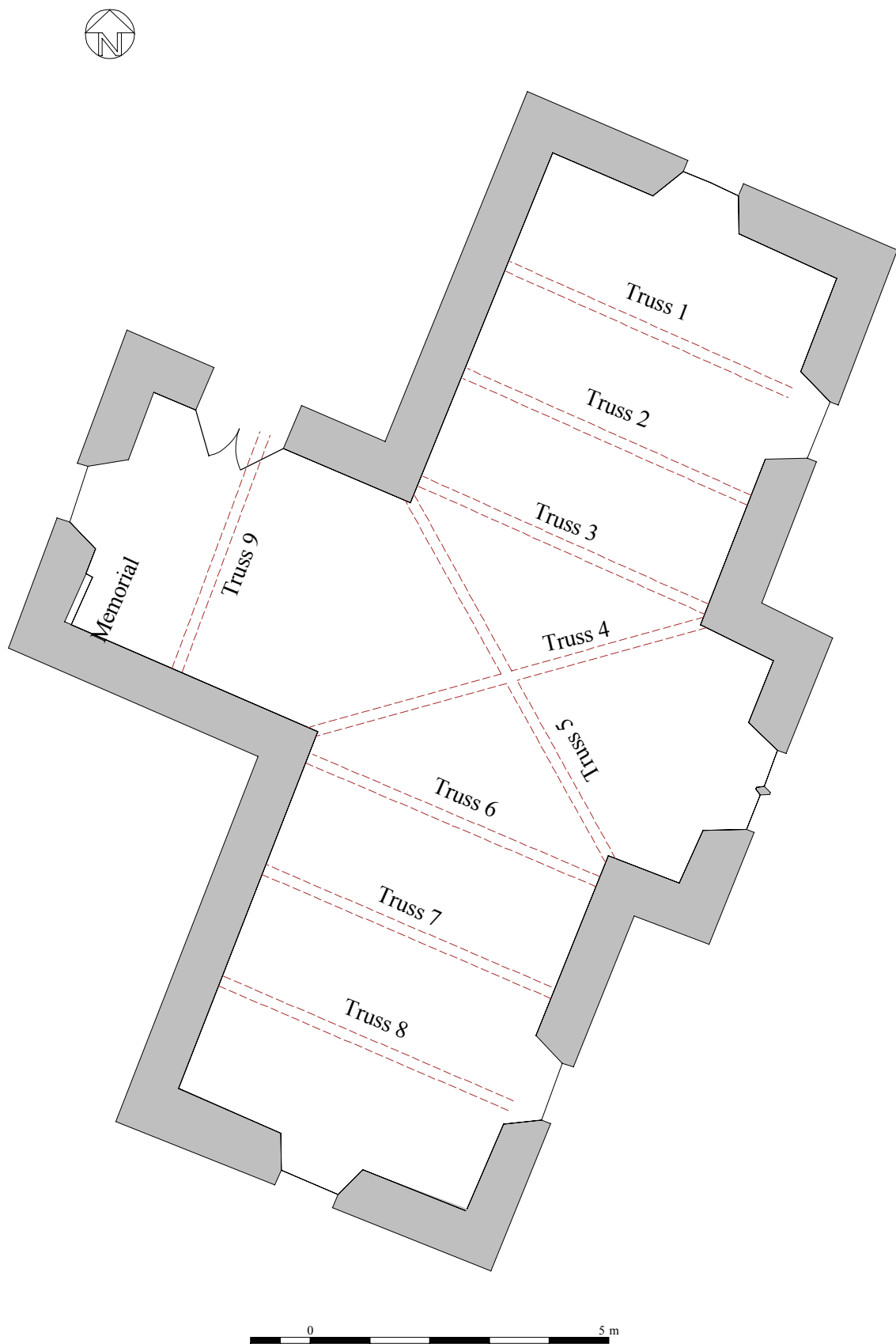


Figure 6: Plan
Scale 1:100

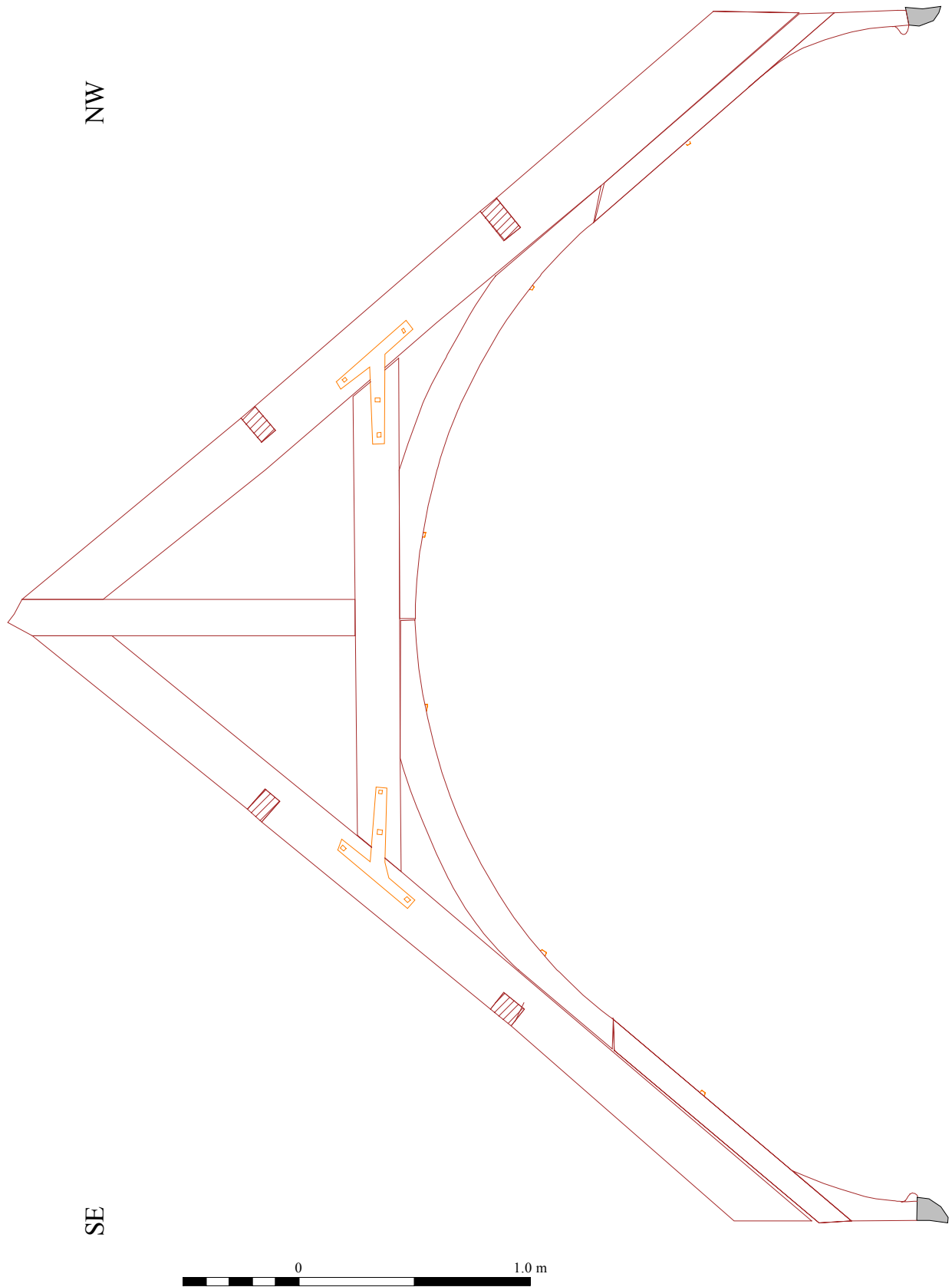
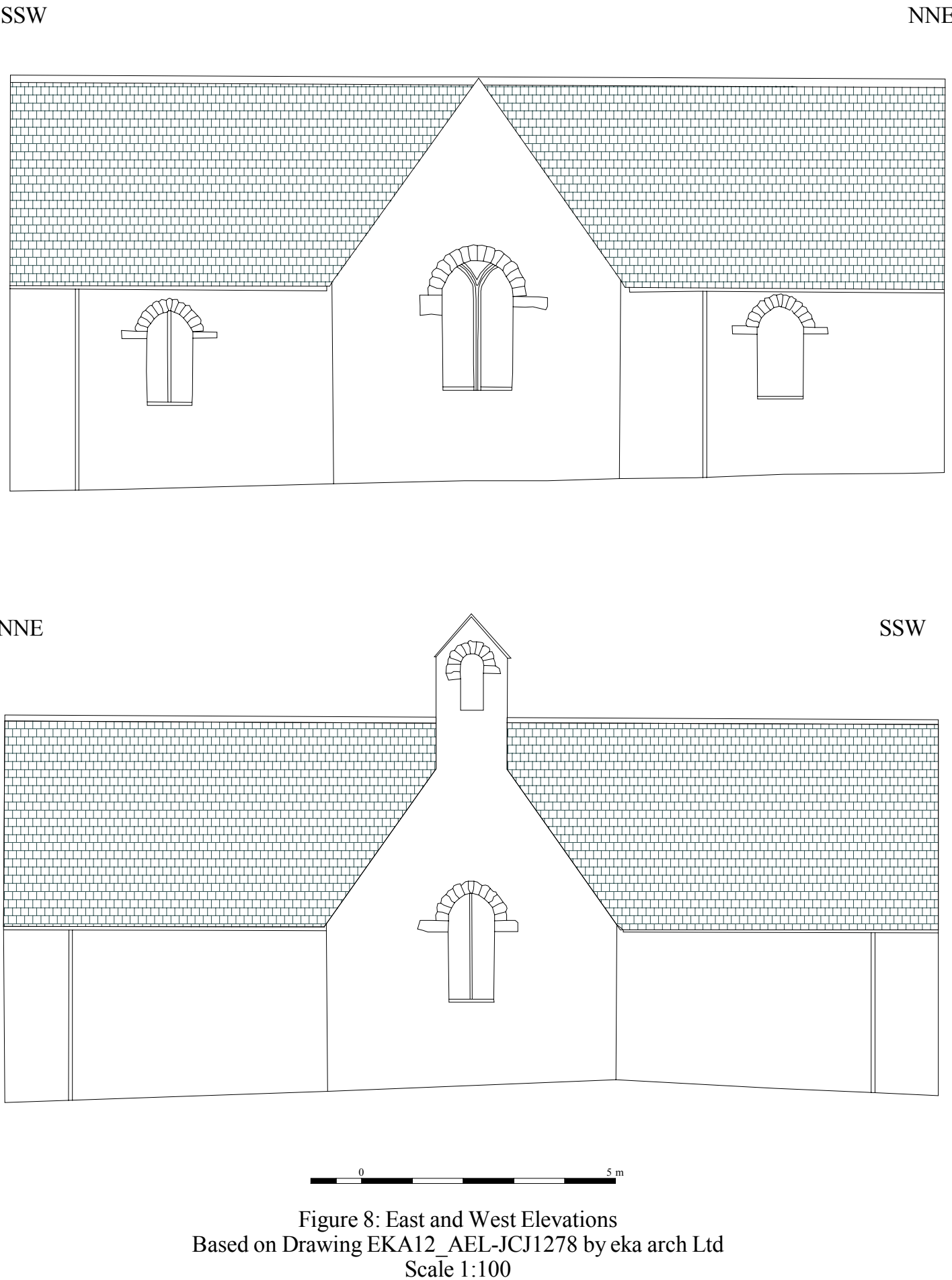
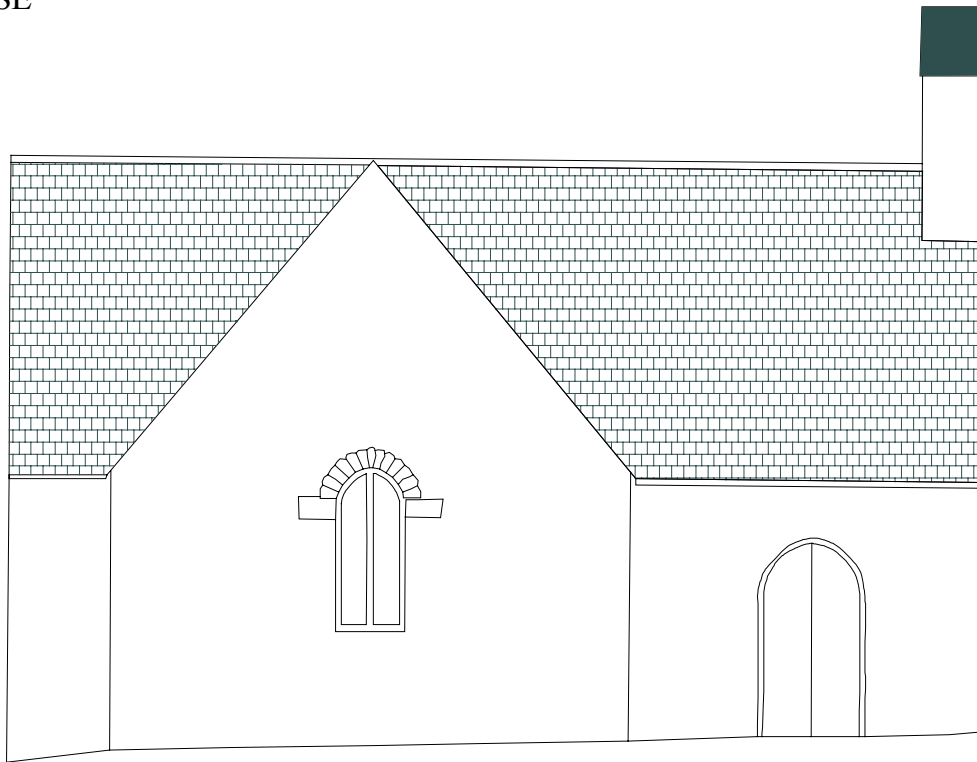


Figure 7: Truss 8
Scale 1:25



ESE

WNW



WNW

ESE

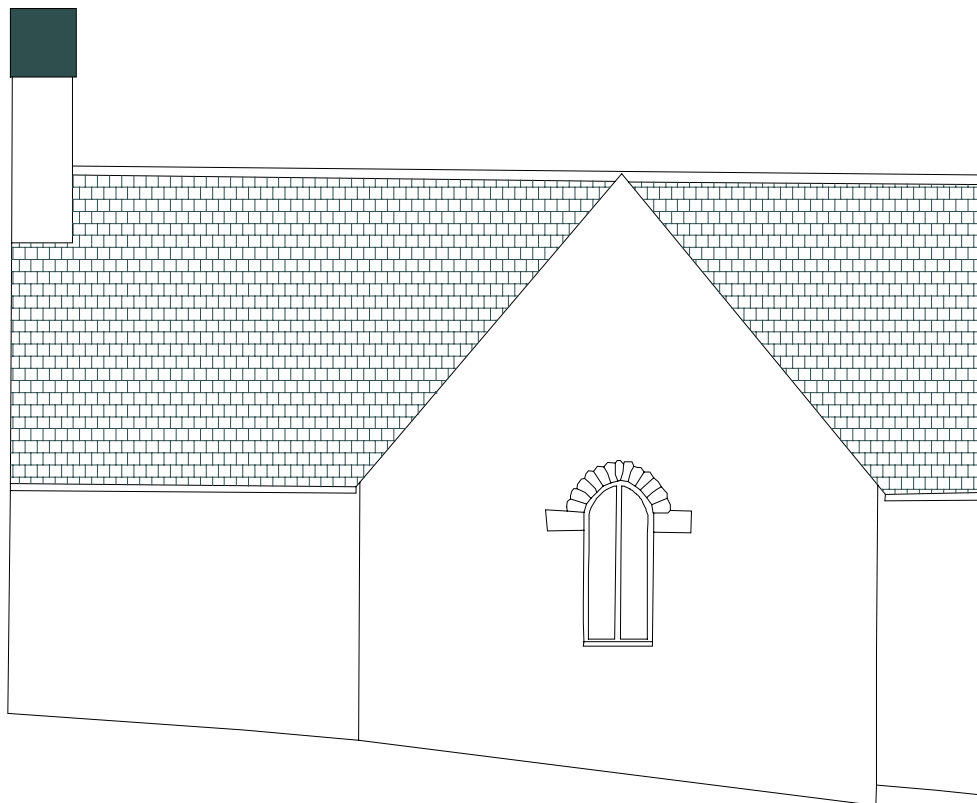


Figure 9: North and South Elevations
Based on the Drawing EKA12-008_AEL-JC1278 by eka arch Ltd
Scale 1:100

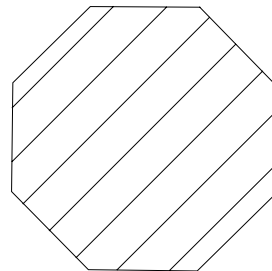
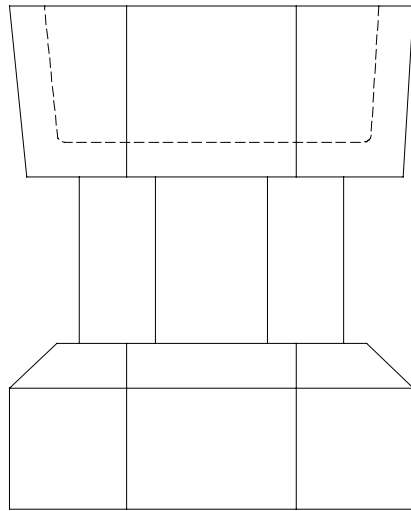
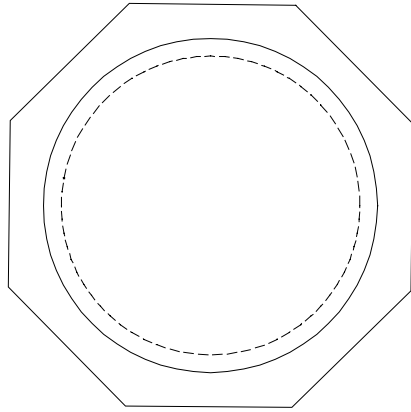


Figure 10: Font
Scale 1:10

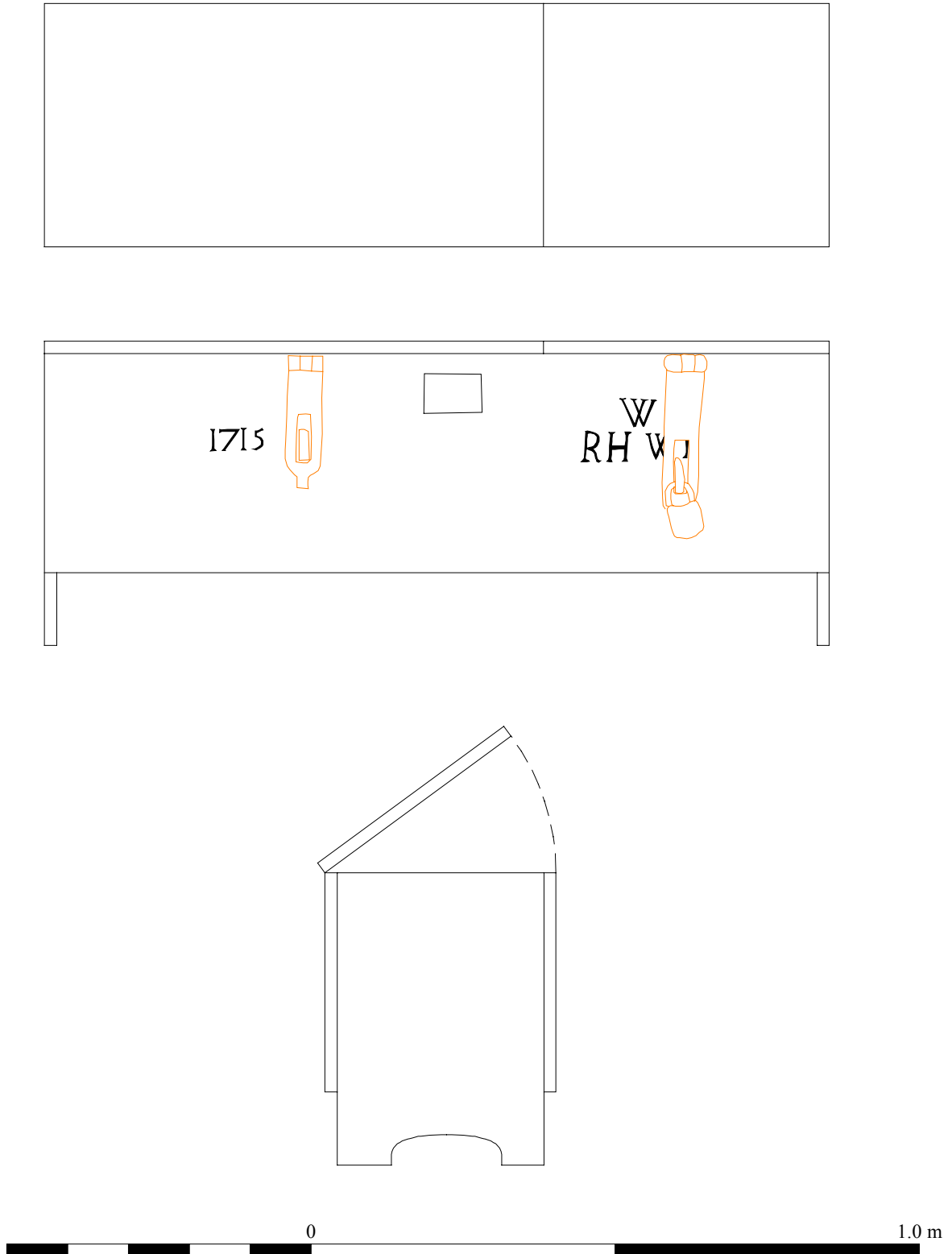


Figure 11: Chest
Scale 1:10

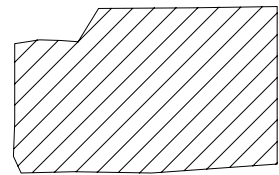
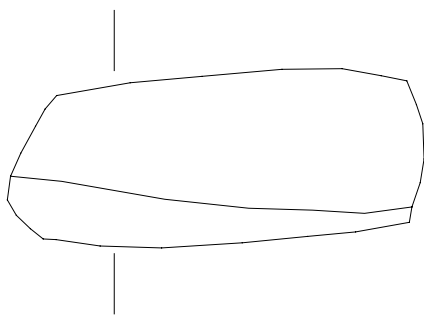


Figure 12: Possible Carved Stone
Scale 1:5

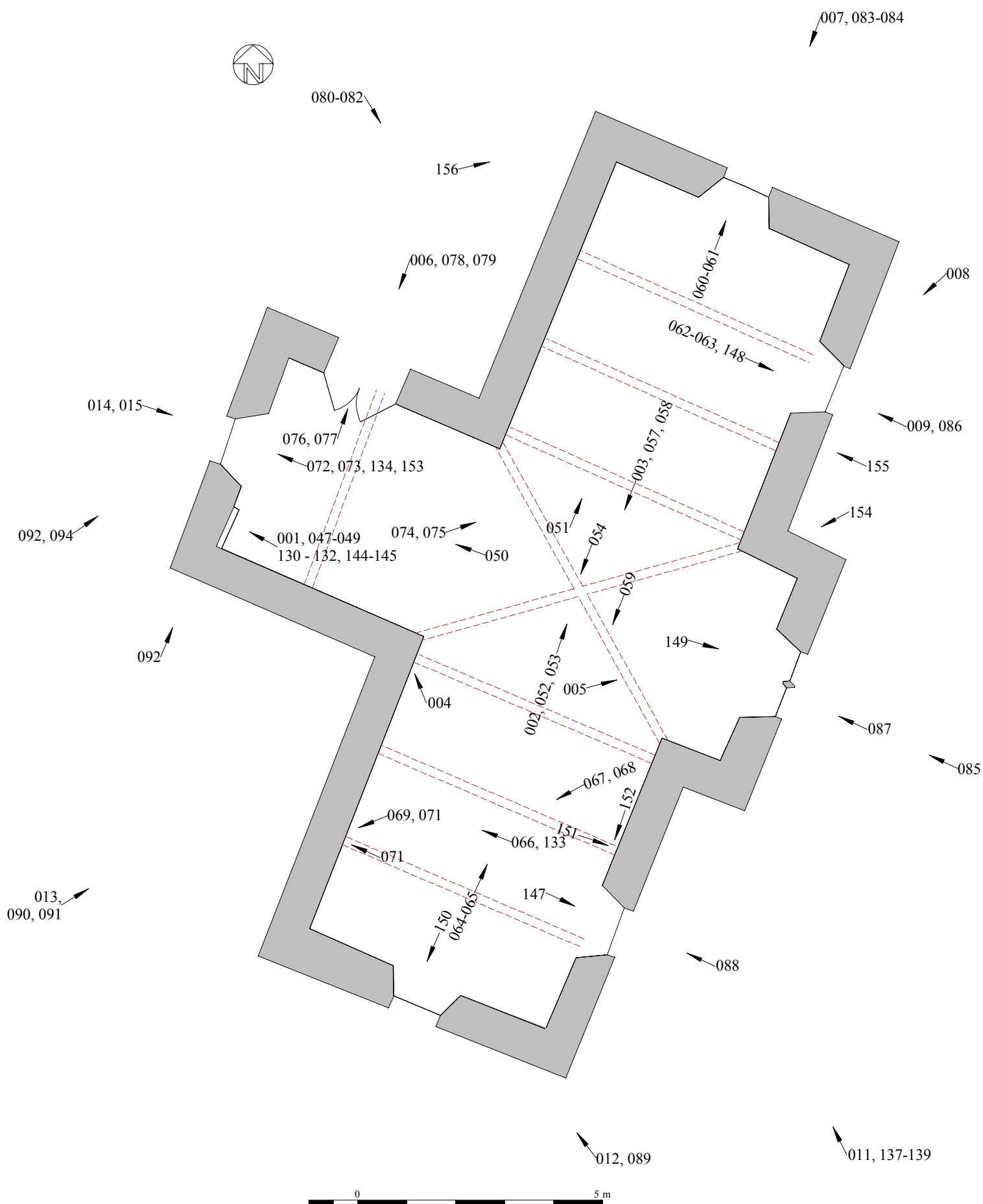


Figure 13: Location of the Photographs in the Archive
Scale 1:100



Plate 1: Panorama of the churchyard



Plate 2: View of the transepts in 2009, looking north east (Source <http://www.rhiw.com/>)



Plate 3: View of transepts in 2009, looking north (Source <http://www.rhiw.com/>)



Plate 4: View of the nave in 2009 (Source <http://www.rhiw.com/>)



Plate 5: Font in the “porch” in 2009 (Source <http://www.rhiw.com/>)



Plate 6: South eastern elevation



Plate 7: The doorway.



Plate 8: Western elevation of the northern transept



Plate 9: Northern elevation of the north transept



Plate 10: Eastern elevation of the north transept



Plate 11: Eastern elevation of the chancel



Plate 12: Eastern elevation of the south transept



Plate 13: Southern elevation of the south transept



Plate 14: South western side of the church



Plate 15: Western elevation of the nave



Plate 16: Window in the western elevation of the Nave

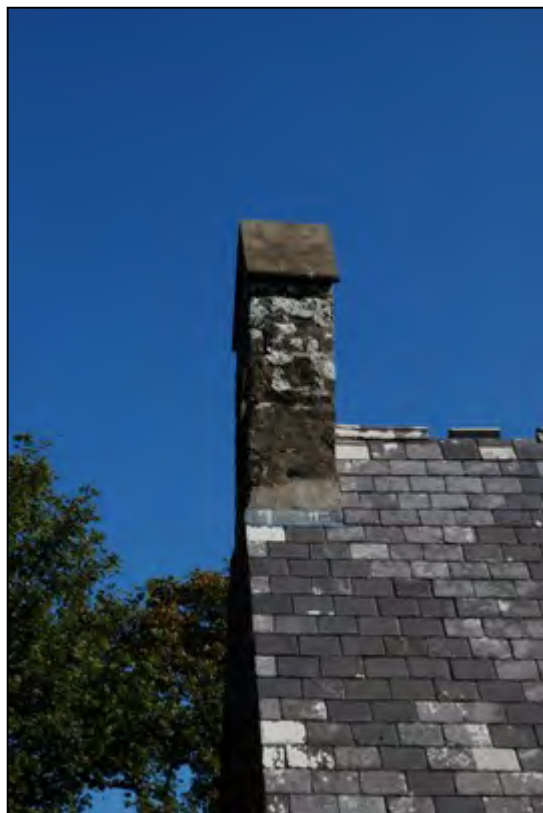


Plate 17: The bellcote



Plate 18: The nave looking WNW



Plate 19: The north transept, looking NNE



Plate 20: The south transept, looking SSW



Plate 21: Memorial in the nave



Plate 22: The armorial



Plate 23: The skull and crossbones



Plate 24: The font



Plate 25: The roof in the northern transept



Plate 26: The roof structure over the crossing



Plate 27: Corbel and base of Truss 7



Plate 28: Break in the stonework at the level of the corbels

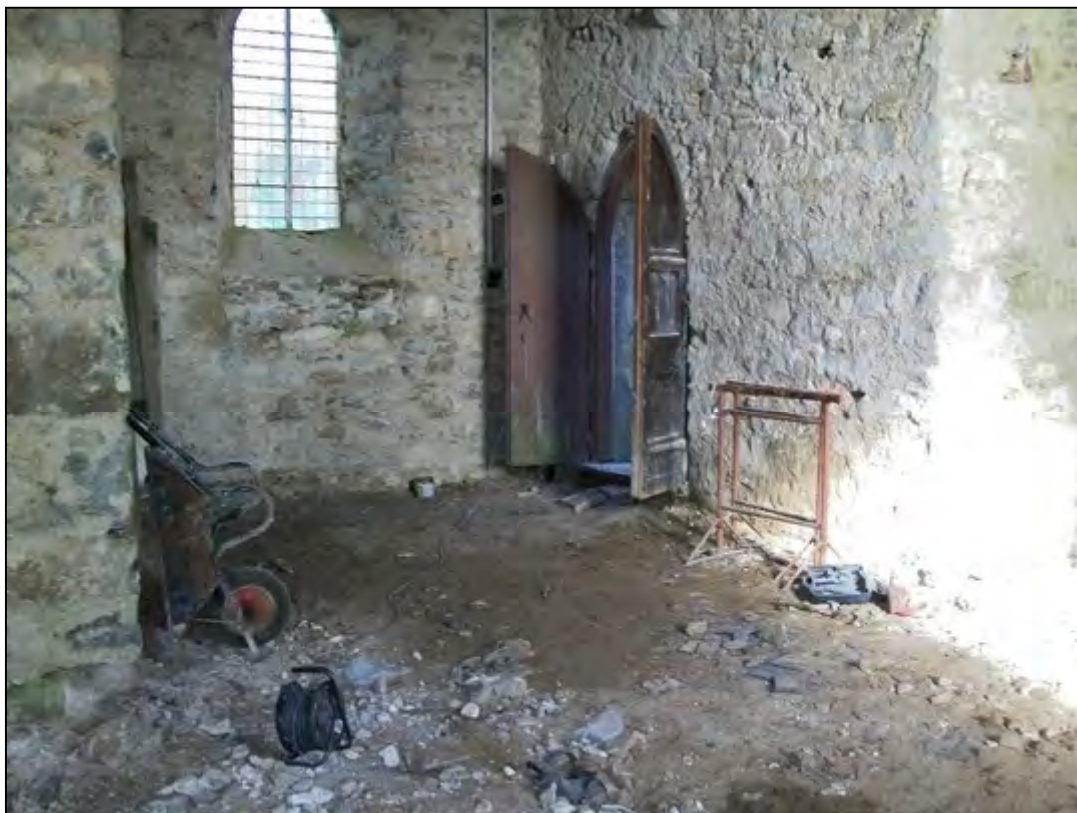


Plate 29: The nave after the removal of the floor (photograph by J Jones)



Plate 30: South transept after the removal of the floor (Photograph by J. Jones)



Plate 31: North transept after the removal of the floor (Photograph J. Jones)



Plate 32: Floor tile



Plate 33: Carved block



Plate 34: The gateway to the vicarage



Plate 35: Upright stone at the southern end of the gate to the vicarage



Plate 36: The gate in the eastern corner of the graveyard



Plate 37: The southern gateway



Plate 38: The structure of the boundary wall



Plate 39: Typical 19th century grave stone with willow pattern



Plate 40: Grave of Jacob Davies



Plate 41: Grave of Mary and Evan Rees



Plate 42: Grave of Thomas Pengilly



Plate 43: The chest



Plate 44: The end of the chest



Plate 45: Inside of the chest



Plate 46: Date on the chest



Plate 47: Inscription on the chest



Plate 48: The lectern



Plate 49: The inscription on the top of the lectern



Plate 50: Maker's mark on the underside of the lectern



Plate 51: Side of the lectern



Plate 52: Back of the lectern



Plate 53: Shaft of the lectern



Plate 54: Base of the lectern



Plate 55: The probable top to a chest of draws



Plate 56: Detail of the decorative panel on the top of the chest of draws