

Archaeological
Building
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Services

**An Archaeological Standing Building Survey.
The Old Chapel,
Shutlanger,
Northamptonshire.
(NGR SP 472609 249859)**

On Behalf of Mr R. Taylor



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**An Archaeological Standing Building Survey of The Old Chapel, Showsley Road,
Shutlanger, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 472609 249849).**

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Gerwyn Richards

Summary

This document is an archaeological standing building survey of The Old Chapel, Showsley Road, Shutlanger, Northamptonshire (SP 472609 249849), commissioned from Archaeological Building Recording Services (ABRS) by Mr R. Taylor in advance of the proposed re-development of the Chapel for residential use.

The Chapel was built in 1844 as a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel and remained in use until 1985. The Chapel was extended in 1889 with seating for a congregation of 160; the extension was also used as a School room. As with most nonconformist chapels, the Chapel is simple in appearance with only very simple flourishes such as a coloured fanlight above the door.

Documentary sources indicate extensive and prolonged problems with the extension culminating in its partial demolition in 1949. The Chapel remained in use throughout the remainder of the 20th century and even welcomed the Wesleyans from Stoke Bruerne upon the closure of their Chapel in 1975.

The archive will be retained by ABRS under the temporary site code 2012-OCSN until deposition with Northamptonshire County Council can be arranged.

1. Introduction

Archaeological Building Recording Services (ABRS) were commissioned by Mr R. Taylor to undertake an archaeological standing building survey of The Old Chapel Showsley Road, Shutlanger, Northamptonshire (SP 472609 249849 (*Figures 1 & 2*)). Planning permission has been granted for the re-development of the Chapel for residential use (Planning Permission No S/2012/0139/FUL). The building is a single storey stone built Chapel, believed to date from the 19th century. The Assistant Archaeological Advisor, Northamptonshire County Council, as advisor to South Northamptonshire District Council has recommended that an archaeological standing building survey to English Heritage Level 2 as defined in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage 2006) be carried out prior to any proposed works being carried out. The building is not statutorily listed.

The project was completed in accordance with the *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Building Recording at The Old Chapel, Showsley Road, Shutlanger, Northamptonshire* (October 2012) as issued by the Assistant Archaeological Advisor and followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Code of Conduct*, and adhered to their *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures* (2008).



Figure 1: Site Location

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Wesleyan Methodism can trace its origins to the Oxford Methodists, a group of tutors and students meeting at Oxford University in late 1720s. These included John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, all three of whom later moved to America as Missionaries. After three years in the southern state Georgia, John Wesley and Whitefield returned to England and built their first Methodist Chapel in 1739, in Bristol. Wesley and Whitefield travelled the country visiting deprived areas frequently preaching open air sermons. By this time Wesley had emerged as the leader of the Methodists preached that people who loved God in return, they would "be saved from sin and made holy". Wesley also had a lot to say about personal morality, he encouraged people to work hard and to save for the future and warned against the dangers of gambling and drinking.

Upon his death in 1791, Methodist congregations numbered some 76,000. By 1801 this had grown to 87,000. The split with Hugh Bourne's Primitive Methodists in 1808 reduced the congregation slightly and to differentiate the two groups, those following Wesley's teachings became known as Wesleyans.

As with the majority of the non-conformists the Methodists were active in the political and religious reform of the early 19th century and became allied with the Liberal Party, with a number of Methodists entering Parliament as M.Ps. Thanks to John Wesley's encouragement of lay preachers, many working people gained in-valuable experience of speaking in public and later became the leaders of trade unions and other political and social reform groups.

During the 1840s the Wesleyan Methodists began an ambitious programme of chapel and school building, during which time the Chapel in Shutlanger and numerous others were built. Two new seminaries were opened and wages of ministers increased. In the years following Wesleyan congregations grew to 285,000. Methodism, of all descriptions remained weak in London and the rural areas but was strong in the industrialised regions of England and Wales.



Figure 2
Plan of the proposed development area (Highlighted in Red).
(Provided by client. Not to Scale).

By the 1880s, Hugh Price Hughes (1847-1902) of Carmarthenshire emerged as the new leader of the Wesleyans. Hughes was a dynamic preacher, attacking the established Church's control of education and was a strong supporter of the Temperance Movement. In 1901 Wesleyan Methodist congregations numbered 412,000.

The earliest reference to non-conformity in the region of Shutlanger is the registering of a house in nearby Stoke Bruerne as a meeting place for Protestant dissenters in 1801, indicating non-conformists were living in nearby Stoke Bruerne, and most likely Shutlanger as well. In 1811 a William Heighten, who is named on the registrations of the Stoke Bruerne meeting houses assisted in the registration of a house in Shutlanger as a meeting house, the house belonged to Mary Campion. It is likely; therefore that non-conformity was well established in the area by the turn of the 19th century. By the 1820s the houses of Thomas Martin and

John Frost of Stoke Bruerne and Richard Jackson of Shutlanger were registered as meeting places. In 1841 John Pointer's house at Shutlanger was also registered.

The Wesleyan Chapel was built in Shutlanger in 1844; a second was built in Stoke Bruerne in 1846 and both being officially registered in 1854. The original Chapel had seats for 130. In 1889 the Chapel was enlarged, providing about 160 seats. The resulting debt was cleared by as early as 1900, an indication of the size and devotion of its congregation.

In 1917 the Chapel Trust was refilled (Shutlanger Methodist Church Trust A/C Book 1917-1976 (NMC472)), of the 16 trustees, five were from Shutlanger and two from Stoke Bruerne; the remainder were from adjacent villages, including Ashton, Roade, Towcester, and Greens Norton. The occupations of the trustees included five labourers and a roadman, three small tradesmen, a bootmaker, a railway signalman, a farmer, a builder, a millwright, a motor and cycle agent, and one 'gentleman'. By 1922 the Chapel required extensive repairs and was temporarily closed, the congregation moved to the school-chapel belonging to the Anglicans. An indication of the extent of the works is its cost, nearly £100. Remarkably, half of this cost had been paid off by year's end and the remainder by 1924, again an indication of the devotion of its congregation. The superintendent minister at Towcester described the congregation as having 'worked wonders'.

Despite the £100 spent in 1922, further work was required to the chapel ceiling as soon as 1933, which took five years to complete. The Chapel roof however continued to cause problems. The problems continued to such an extent that in 1948 the congregation agreed to take down the 1889 extension, then in use as a schoolroom, this restored the Chapel to its original size and shape (NMC472), seating 100. The work cost a total of £153 and was carried out by Messer. Fisher and Son. The interior of the Chapel was decorated electric light fittings installed, although there was at the time no mains electricity in the village, its arrival was anticipated in the near future. During these works, the Anglican school chapel was again used by the congregation. The chapel was reopened in June 1949, marked by special services attended by the rector of Stoke as well as other local Methodist ministers.

For the remainder of the 20th century, the Chapel seems to have remained a flourishing congregation. The completion of routine repairs and maintenance work along with the installation of electric convactor heaters in 1969 (electricity reached the village in 1950) suggests the Chapel was financially secure as well, confirmed by the Chapel Trust being renewed in March 1969 under the leadership of Rev. Argyle. The same, however could not be said of the nearby Stoke Bruerne Chapel; with a dwindling congregation, the idea of closing Stoke Bruerne Chapel was first raised in the circuit quarterly meeting in May 1974. The following year with their Chapel closed and soon to be sold the congregation of Stoke Bruerne joined the congregation at Shutlanger. However, little more than a decade later, Shutlanger Chapel was also to close, again as a result of a dwindling congregation. The building was retained and served as a book repository until its eventual sale.

2. Aims and Methodology

The specific objectives of the standing building survey were as follows:

- To provide a written, drawn and photographic record of the building prior to its permitted conversion.

- To ensure the long term preservation of the information through deposition of the record and a summary written report with an appropriate depository.
- The site based element of the Historic Building Recording programme involved the production of measured survey drawings and the completion of photographic and written records.
- Desk-based research included the analysis of readily available documentary and cartographic sources including Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record (HER) & Northamptonshire Records Office.

Orientation: The recorded building occupies the western most part of the proposed development area and consists of a single building. The long axis of the building is orientated approximately north-north west to south-south east (*Figure 2*), for ease of description this is taken hereafter to be north to south with the principal elevation, facing south. Where the terms ‘left’, ‘right’, ‘front’ and ‘back’ etc are used in the report, this is in relation to this principal elevation as views from the south. For the purpose of this report a number prefix has been added for significant partitions.

As far as is known, no previous historic building recording has been undertaken of the building.

The site visit was carried out by Gerwyn Richards on December 17th 2012.

3. Description of the Building

The Wesleyan Chapel is a stone built single storey building of squared local stone with a pitched roof of Welsh Slate. There is a red brick extension on the east of the building. The brick-built extension has a corrugated asbestos cement sheet roof. The Chapel house (01) has two timber framed windows on the west elevation. There are two arched doorways on the principal south facing elevation. The original central door has a Thomas Thomas arch with a blue and red glazed radial arch fanlight. Both arches are brick-built (brick dimensions 9” x 3” x 4”). The yellow colour suggests that they may be London Stocks. There is also a timber framed window near the apex of the principal elevation.

The windows are simple timber-framed nine light windows with timber lintels and stone sills. The size of the glazing bars suggest an early 19th century date, but may be later. The main door is a double door, each two panelled with an ovolo moulded bead on the recessed panels, documentary sources indicate that this door was built in 1937 by Mr A.J Denny, a trustee of the Chapel, replacing an earlier door. The second, later door is also four panelled, but without the recessed panels, and is likely to be original to the 1889 extension.

Abutting the eastern wall of the Chapel house is a brick-built extension (02), the School Room. The bricks are local red bricks (brick dimensions 9” x 3” x 4”) laid in Flemish Garden Wall Bond (3 stretchers to 1 header in each course). In 1879 the nearby Stoke Bruerne Chapel was re-built using brick supplied by George Savage, from his brick yard in the village. Documentary sources indicate that the Shutlanger extension was built in 1889; superficially the bricks in both buildings appear very similar and may, therefore be from the same source.

02 has a pair of miss-matched timber windows on the eastern elevation, one of which is leaded, it is difficult to ascertain, which, if either is original. As with the Chapel house itself there are timber lintels and stone sills on each window.

The eastern elevation of the Chapel house itself partially visible from immediately below the eaves. There is clear evidence of the alteration works mentioned in documentary sources, the wall between 01 and 02 is built in Fletton bricks, dating from the middle of the 20th century. On the northern end there is a short wall stub in stone, repaired with yellow brick, indicating the alignment of the original chapel wall. There is also an exposed timber beam, possibly the original wall plate, but more likely an inserted joist which carried the valley between the Chapel roof and the extension roof. Lead flashing towards the centre of the beam (*Figure 4*) suggests there may be a column carrying the beam internally. Being ungainly in appearance confirms that this elevation is the result of the remedial works mentioned in documentary sources.

It is likely that the original extension had a pitched roof with a valley between it and the original Chapel house. There are numerous references to water ingress through this valley including repairs to the slates and the “leaden gutter be[ing] put in good order” in May 1937; a Mr Newport of Towcester was employed to carry out the work. The extension was finally taken down in March 1949 in order “to get rid of the leaden gutter once and for all”. It is possible that the exposed beam was inserted during these works as it is likely that the original woodwork would have no doubt been in poor state by this time.

Internal access to the Chapel house is via one of two doors on the principal elevation; the main door would have originally been centre of the principal elevation, the second is off set to the east into the later extension.

Internally, the Chapel has suffered considerably from neglect and disrepair, leaving little of historical or architectural interest. The history of the Chapel however is clearly visible within the exposed fabric. Extensive physical evidence supporting the documentary evidence is clearly visible. 01 is the original Chapel house, adjacent to door there was originally a lobby, only the two side doors now remain. The quarry tiled lobby floor remains; the remainder of the floor is machine-sawn softwood. Documentary sources indicate that the whole of the floor was replaced in 1922 after a number of years of problems; the lobby of the extension, then in use as a School Room was also tiled. The lack of plaster on the lower parts of the walls suggests that there was originally timber panelling here. An outline, likely to represent the pulpit can also be seen on the northern wall (*Figure 5*). Also on the northern wall, there appears to be an outline of a blocked door (*Figure 10*), the external elevation of this wall was not accessible, therefore it was impossible to establish whether the infilling represented a blocked doorway or an in-filled niche.

The gallery remains intact within 01 and consists of three tiers. Access is via a straight flight stair with a winder from 02, the gallery, is therefore unlikely to be original and was probably added in 1889 was the Chapel was extended. The outline of a pew can be seen on the western wall of the gallery. The panelling fronting the gallery appears to be original and has ovolo moulded bead on the recessed panels and has a circular opening, probably for a clock in the centre. The panelling continues the full width of 01 and 02, and carries the roof joists within 02, the Fletton brick-built partition wall, built in 1949 is built around the panelling (*Figure 7*).

The interior of 02 contains very little of historical interest. The southern and eastern walls are red brick, while the northern wall is stone-built. The exterior of the southern wall is stone in order that extension matches the Chapel and the principal elevation appears uniformed. The column glimpsed externally is clearly visible within 02 (*Figure 11*) and carries the principal rafters of the Chapel roof. The column is a 6inch (150mm) cast iron cylindrical column with slight decoration at the top, there were no casting marks or makers stamps visible and is almost certain to date from the 1889 extension. The roof of 02 is corrugated asbestos cement sheets carried on deal joists aligned north-south.

A limited examination of the roof structure indicated that the roof is made up of coupled rafters. The eastern roof shows evidence of alterations and additions, no doubt as a result of the remediation work carried out in 1949, the western roof appears largely original. There is a pair of principal rafters in the centre, it is possible that these are collared; the collar partially is concealed by the ceiling. Interestingly, there is iron rod acting as tie beam along with second iron rod acting as king post visible in the Chapel (*Figure 9*). The iron king post is not visible in the attic suggesting it is attached to the concealed collar. It is possible that this iron work is later, added during the building of the extension when the column was added to carry the roof, or even added as late as 1949 when the extension was taken down.

4. Conclusion

The Old Chapel, Shutlanger is stone built Chapel with a later largely brick-built extension. It dates from a period of expansion and Chapel building by the Wesleyans in the mid 19th century. It was extended in 1889 and could seat a congregation of 160. The extension was also used as a school room. The Chapel, like many other nonconformist Chapels was built by subscription and work was occasionally less than perfect, this was the case at Shutlanger where both documentary sources and physical evidence indicates extensive repairs and remediation work was carried out throughout its life. This culminated in the partial removal of the extension in 1949 after numerous leaks.

The documentary evidence indicates a strong and faithful congregation who maintained and up graded the Chapel as and when required. The congregation, unlike many other nonconformist Chapels resisted the urge to mimic the ostentation of the Anglican Church and Shutlanger was built as and remained a plain nonconformist Chapel, with only the coloured fanlight and double door being of any status.

The Chapel is, never the less of interest in relation to the development of the village and the history of nonconformity in Northamptonshire. As early as 1801 there was a registered nonconformist meeting house in Stoke Bruerne and Shutlanger Chapel was built in 1844 confirming a strong nonconformist community in both villages, which reflects the early growth of nonconformity in the region and the reaction of the wider society against the established church brought about by the social changes caused by rapid industrialisation and economic changes in the 19th century.

5. Archive & Publication

The site archive consists of

- 2 A3 permagraph sheet containing plans, elevations & notes
- 1 A2 client supplied paper drawing showing plans & elevations
- DVD containing 49 digital images
- 2 A4 contact sheets
- 49 Black & White negatives and contact prints
- 3 A4 photo record sheets
- 1 Unbound copy of this report

The archive will be held by ABRS under the temporary site 2012-OCSN until deposition with Northamptonshire County Council can be arranged.

A version of the summary (above) will be submitted to the editor of the local journal for inclusion in the next edition.

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7. Colour Plates



Figure 3
Principal Elevation (Looking North East).



Figure 4
Eastern Elevation (Looking West).



Figure 5
Chapel House 01 (Looking North East).

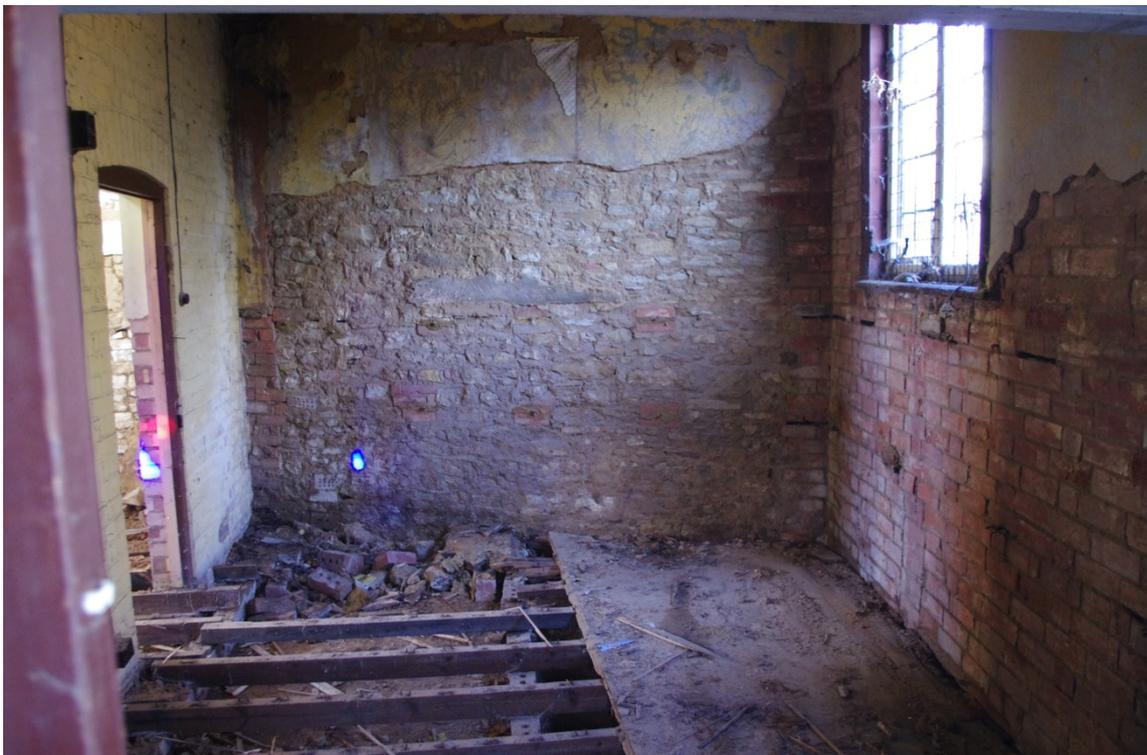


Figure 6
School Room 02 (looking north).



Figure 7
Gallery Panel & Inserted Wall 01.



Figure 8
Gallery Panel 02.



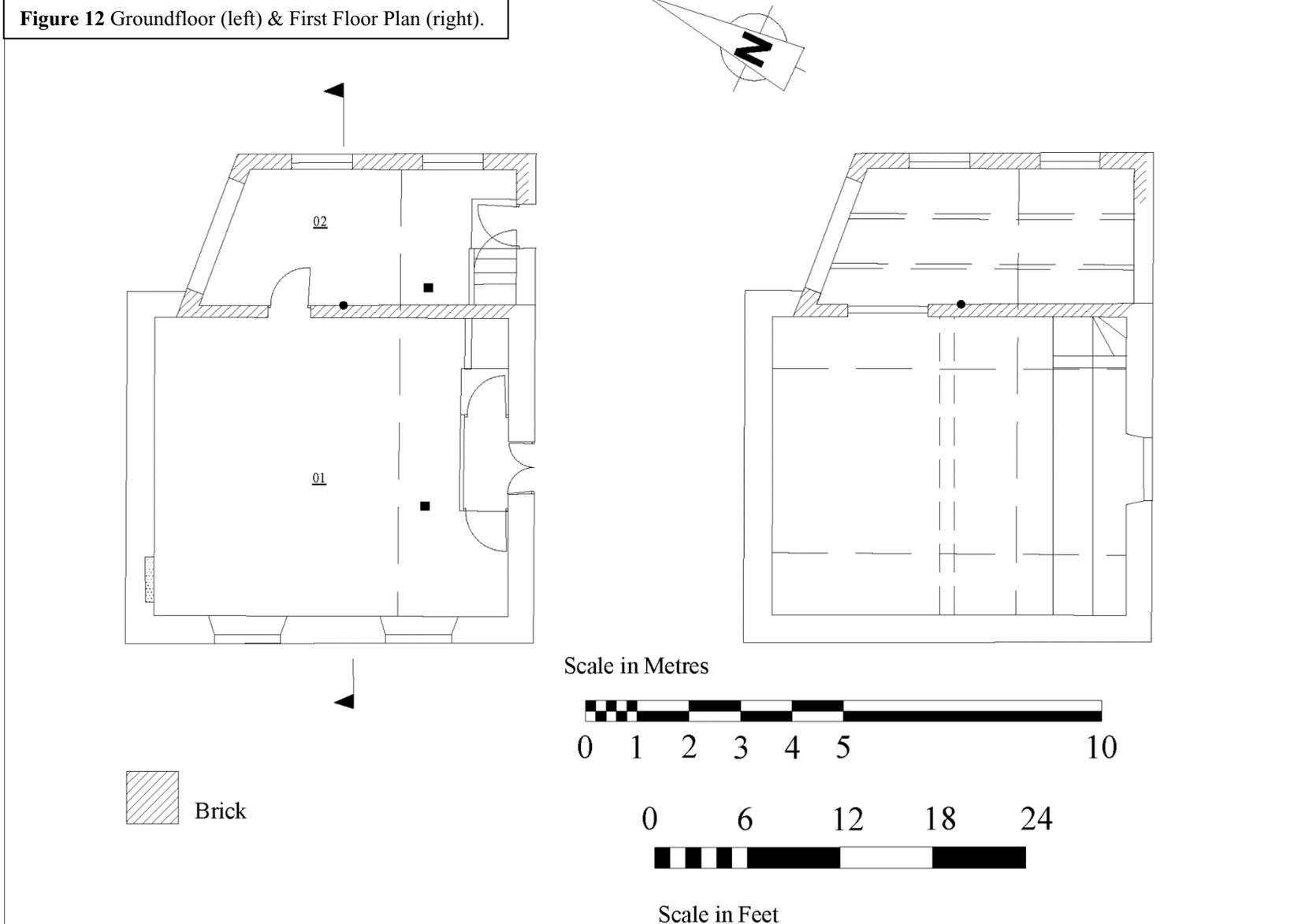
Figure 9
Principal Rafters & Iron Work.



Figure 10 Possible Blocked Doorway (Northern Wall).



Figure 11 Iron Column in 02.



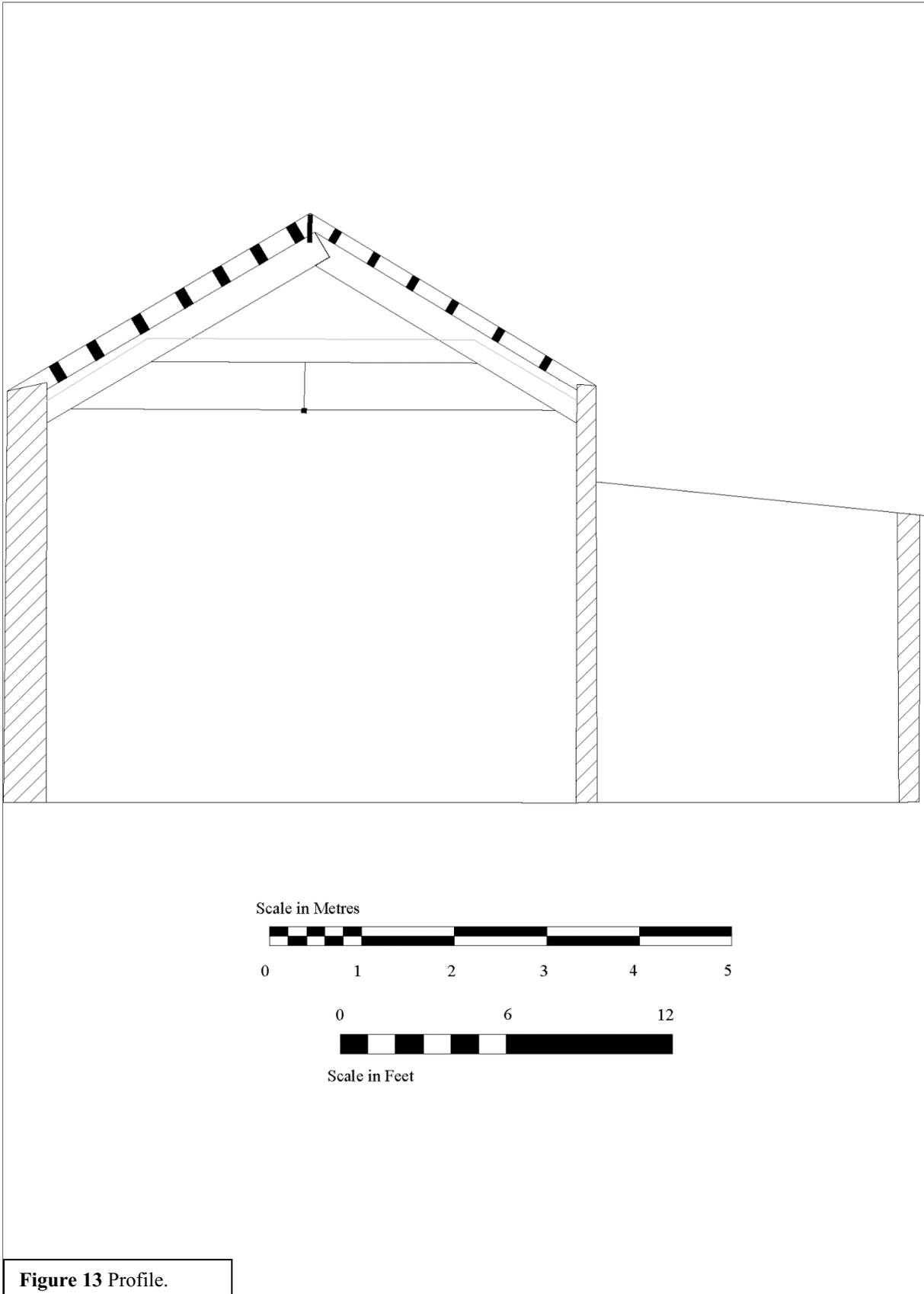
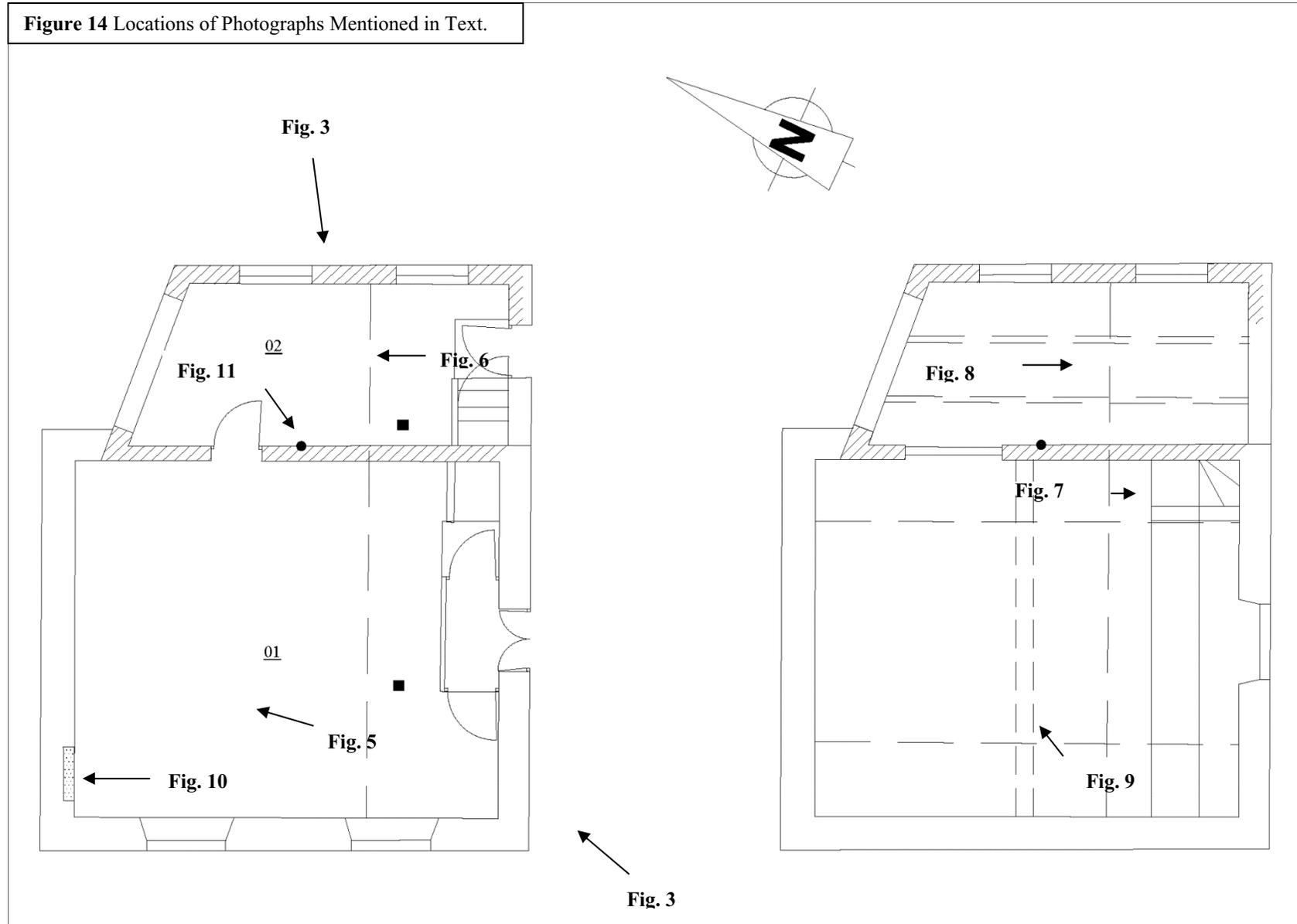


Figure 13 Profile.

Figure 14 Locations of Photographs Mentioned in Text.



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