

Standing Building Survey
Airlie Parish Church
Kirkton of Airlie
ANGUS
AG10



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STANDING BUILDING SURVEY
AIRLIE PARISH CHURCH
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ABSTRACT

Alder Archaeology conducted a Level 2 survey of Airlie Parish Church, a Category B-listed building at NGR NO 31323 51526, following its transfer to private ownership and in advance of work to convert it to use as a private house. The survey included a full photographic record of all external and internal elevations, significant features and setting, annotated measured plans and elevation drawings and a narrative description of the building fabric and development. The present church was constructed in 1783, with additions in 1893 and internal refurbishment and modification in the 1980s and 90s. A church is known to have stood on or close to the spot since at least 1242, with rebuilding in 1603. The survey (site code AG10) was conducted on 7th August 2017 in generally fine weather conditions.

1 Background

1.1 Introduction

Mr Alan Smith commissioned Alder Archaeology Ltd to conduct a Level 2 Standing Building Survey of the former parish church of Airlie, a Category B-listed building at NGR NO 31323 51526, in advance of conversion for use as a private dwelling. The survey was carried out on 7th August, 2017, in generally fine weather conditions. In addition, note was taken of measures in place to prevent damage to three external features of interest: a weather vane bearing the date 1783, a medieval statue in low relief, presumed to be of St John the Baptist, incorporated into the exterior wall of the present building, and an 18th-century inscription on a window cill on the S elevation. As no work was to be conducted on the building exterior, these features were not compromised.

Three internal features were also of concern: a late medieval aumbry, a marble memorial plaque dated 1889 and a decapitated stone statue, perhaps of St Mirren. The statue had already been removed by the Church of Scotland, the plaque was to be left in situ and avoided during works; only the aumbry was potentially compromised, but Mr Smith agreed to protect this during conversion work by fixing a wooden board in front of the aumbry and thereafter to preserve the setting of the feature following completion of the works.

The work was designed to inform the archaeological condition on development application reference 14/00450/FULL and Listed Building Consent 14/00451/LBC.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The main aim of this investigation was to record the date, character, form, fabric and developmental sequence of the standing building

1.3 Reporting

The present document has been prepared as the final report on this survey and watching brief. Copies will be sent to the client, to Historic Environment Scotland, and Angus Sites and Monuments Record, curated by Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service.

1.4 Planning and Curatorial Issues

This survey is designed to satisfy the outstanding archaeological condition on the planning consent for this development.

1.5 Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Mr Alan Smith for his assistance and guidance throughout this project. Mr Smith funded this survey.

2 Details of Work

2.1 The Site (Illus 1)

The decommissioned parish church of Airlie occupies a hillock on the SE bank of the Canty Burn at Kirkton of Airlie. The church is aligned NE-SW and is surrounded on

three sides by a cemetery, which is still in use and owned by the Church of Scotland. The present building is basically a simple rectangle, with porches on both short sides and a NW extension to the N long side.

2.2 Archaeological Potential

The present building (NO35SW 29) dates from 1783, with substantial additions in 1893. Originally constructed as a simple box church, the late Victorian extension removed the pulpit from a central location to place it within the extension, opposite a fine stained glass window depicting St Andrew.

In 1242, Bishop de Bernham (possibly simply the Bishop of Birnham) dedicated a church on the site to St Medan, a saint of the early British church of somewhat confused identity: being either St Modwena, an Irish abbess who died in 517 or 519 and believed to have founded a number of Scottish churches; or St Modan, a male saint also the patron of churches in Rosneath, Falkirk, Fraserburgh, Fintry and Freswick and possibly one of the companions of the Pictish St Drostan. In either case, the dedication to a very early and somewhat obscure local patron rather than one of the more prominent saints of the High Middle Ages perhaps indicates an even earlier church building on the site. In support of this, several long cist burials were reported in the area, upstream at Cantsmill (NO35SW 28) where a well dedicated to St Madden (Medan) was back-filled in 1863 (NO35SW 27), while the presence of at least one, but possibly several, Iron Age souterrains at Barns of Airlie farm c.200m to the NW of the site (NO35SW 19) suggests an early settlement of local prominence.

The hillock on which the church stands is prone to water-logging and partially covered with fungus, possibly due to the presence of a spring. The cemetery adjoining the present church contains a rectangular, free-standing stone burial structure known as the Ministers Aisle, incorporating a moulded entrance and several incised or carved stones of probable medieval origin; it has been hypothesised that this represents the choir of the medieval church. A later church is believed to have been constructed in 1603.

2.3 Archaeological Method

A Level 2 survey was compiled, comprising: annotated location and base plans and elevations, indicating phasing and cross-referenced to the accompanying text; a written description of the buildings, considering form, function, location, age, type of building and description of architectural phasing; photographs of all external and main internal elevations, detailing and the setting of the buildings; detailed archival research. The online National Record of Historic Environment Scotland (Canmore) was consulted, identifying numbers above are from the NMRS.

2.4 Results of Investigations

The exterior of the building was harled across all elevations at the time of the survey, with a grey slate pitched roof and a belfry at the west end bearing a brass weather vane with the date 1783 prominently displayed on a stylised banner. Brown-painted ashlar quoins were present on the NW extension, but not on the remainder of the building corners, although ashlar blocks were used on door and window casings and cills. The west gable incorporated a clearly medieval statue, unpainted stone in low relief; bearded and bearing what may be a dove representing the Holy Spirit, this has been interpreted as St John the Baptist, patron of the Strathmore family who held the barony

from 1458. The statue occupied a position adjacent to the junction of the W porch with the gable of the main building, some 2.50m above the present ground surface. It measured c.0.70m high x c.1.5m wide.

The SE exterior elevation featured three Romanesque windows, evenly spaced along the main nave wall, with two rectangular windows to either side, illuminating the W end of the nave and the former WC at the E end of the church. Each of the rectangular windows was 1.39m wide, 1.83m high, set in interior embrasures measuring 1.56m wide and 0.55m deep; a mason's mark was present in the bottom left corner of the W example. The central arched window was 1.55m wide, with the flanking examples 1.46m wide; all were 2.00m high. The central window was stained glass, while the others were plain-glazed within wooden lattice frames. The central window also featured a black-painted inscription on the exterior cill: "17M^rIS M^rIF:81". This possibly translates as: "1781, Mr I.S., Minister."

The NW extension featured four Romanesque windows, two in the NW elevation with one each in the SW and NE elevations. Each was 0.80m wide, 2.00m high, with diagonal lead latticework containing diamond-shaped panes. The side windows also featured small hopper vents.

Both the SW and NE elevations featured single, centrally placed rectangular sash windows at first floor level, illuminating the interior staircases and porches. Both were 1.00m wide x 1.50m high, with rectangular lattice frames.

By the time of the survey, the majority of the internal fittings, such as memorial plaques and pews, had been removed by the Church of Scotland and relocated to Lintrathen church; in the case of the plaques, this was to allow local families continued access. The 1980s/90s internal decor had also been partially removed as part of development work.

The main building or nave measured 10.00m NE-SW x 6.50m NW-SE, internally. The N extension, measuring 4.50m NE-SW x 4.00m NW-SE, was framed by a moulded arch, opposed to the central, stained glass window in the S elevation. The latter, featuring a full-length depiction of St Andrew, bore a memorial inscription commemorating the late David Taylor, former schoolmaster, dated 1898. Immediately to the left (E) of the window was a marble, Italianesque plaque featuring columns and foliage and commemorating the late Reverend Thomas Reid, former minister of Airlie, died 1889. The stained glass and N extension and its archway may be presumed to be part of the late Victorian reorganisation of the church, which may also have seen the incorporation of the medieval statuary and aumbry (see below) as part of a general relaxation in attitudes towards pre-Reformation elements, which would certainly not have been present in the original 1783 design. The N extension itself could be seen as a move towards creating a transept, albeit without the corresponding extension to the wall opposite; whether this was the ultimate aim, never completed, is unknown. The ceiling of the nave was coved, with fairly simple, linear crown moulding, all plain white-painted, with the ceiling proper a faded yellow. The coving of the extension was of a different, less curved design, without top edge crown moulding.

To NE and SW of the nave, wooden balconies provided additional seating areas at first floor level. These were accessed via the end porches, from which wooden spiral

staircases (re-covered or replaced fairly recently) led beneath the end windows and through varnished pine doors with lattice-framed transoms to each balcony, the W stair being right-hand turn, the E left hand, both therefore ascending to the N wall of the church. The balconies were of plain wood and had been refitted or replaced in the 1980s or 90s.

On the N elevation of the E porch, in the space beneath the stair, was a moulded pink sandstone aumbry (ambry), once used for storing sacred vessels when not in use during the Mass. This measured 0.54m wide and 0.74m high, set into an alcove and 0.23m deep internally, the aumbry being backed by three crescent moons within an arch framed by ropework with a cross and wreath in the top left, a diagonal cruciform arrangement of the hands, feet and heart of Christ, together with wounds, in the top right. This notable feature, of probable late Medieval date, may have originated in the earlier church building on or near the site, the sandstone being probably of the local Angus variety. In any case, it was clearly a later insertion into the 1783 building.

The upper parts of the interior wall faces were white-painted throughout, while plasterboard wainscoting had extended from floor to cill-level following late 20th Century refurbishment; this had been removed prior to the survey, exposing concrete render across much of the fabric, although in places (notably the W porch), the wall fabric itself was exposed. It was possible to establish, from this, that the wall was constructed of snecked rubble, later being covered in concrete. To the E of the nave, in a rectangular room formerly used as the WC, the lower part of the wall was entirely coated in concrete render. The embrasure of the rectangular window featured plain box panelling, while the wooden window frame may have been a fairly recent replacement of an original.

The Ministers Aisle, although not compromised by the works, was photographed and found to incorporate a number of incised stones of possible medieval origin, as well as a moulded entrance and Latin inscriptions: “Disce mori ut bene moriaris” (“Learn to die in order to die well”). The entrance and inscriptions are likely to be post-medieval and associated with burials within and adjacent to the aisle.

3 Interpretation

The developmental sequence of the building fabric appeared to follow what was already known from records: a simple box-church was constructed in 1783, with the addition (probably in the late 19th Century) of an extension to the N elevation to create a flattened T-plan. Probably around the same time, medieval features including two stone statues and an aumbry were incorporated into the fabric, while in 1898 stained glass was fitted to the central window of the S elevation. The stone features may or may not have derived from an earlier church on the site and were presumably incorporated due to the personal interest of the minister, kirk elders or perhaps local landowner. Incised stones in the Ministers Aisle were probably incorporated for similar reasons, rather than being simply in situ remnants (the moulded entrance was unlikely to have been a feature of an original choir). Internal refurbishment in the late 20th Century included refitting of wooden balconies, pews, pulpit and plasterboard; with the exception of the balconies, these had been removed prior to the survey.

The measures taken to protect the features potentially compromised by the works- the memorial plaque to Rev. Reid and the medieval aumbry- seem sufficient to afford adequate protection. The aumbry will be protected by a wooden board, while both it and the plaque are to be left in situ with setting preserved. All other plaques had already been removed by the Church of Scotland, along with the headless statue. The other features of interest- cill inscription, weather vane and wall statue of John the Baptist- are unaffected by the works, which will not alter the exterior fabric of the building.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

Alder Archaeology consider that the Standing Building Record has been compiled according to the planning condition and do not recommend further work in connection with the present development. However, the final decision ultimately rests with Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service, as curators of Angus archaeology.

Appendix 1 Photographic Register

<i>Image No</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>View</i>
0001	Location shot, SW end of church within churchyard	E
0002	Location shot, SW end of church, from lychgate	E
0003	Location shot, SW end of church, with Ministers Aisle to SE	E
0004	SW elevation, exterior, ground floor	NE
0005-6	SW elevation, exterior, gable and belfry	NE
0007	SW elevation, exterior, ground floor	NE
0008	SW elevation, main building N of porch, exterior	NE
0009-10	Detail, medieval statue in gable end	NE
0011-12	SW elevation of extension, exterior	NE
0013	NW elevation of W porch, exterior	SE
0014-15	NW elevation, W of extension	SE
0016	NW elevation, W of extension, belfry	SE
0017-18	NW elevation of extension, exterior	SE
0019-20	NW elevation, NE end of church, exterior	SE
0021	NW elevation, oblique, exterior	S
0022-23	NW elevation, oblique, exterior	N
0024	Location, Crabra and Clerkheim roadsign	N
0025-26	NW elevation, E porch, exterior	SE
0027	NE elevation, extension, exterior	SW
0028	NE elevation, N side of NE gable, exterior	SW
0029	NE elevation, E porch, exterior	SW
0030-31	NE end of church, oblique, exterior	W
0032-33	SE elevation, E porch, exterior	NW
0034-35	SE elevation of church, exterior	NW
0036-37	Detail, belfry and weather vane	W

0038	Detail, inscription on cill of central window, SE elevation, exterior	NW
0039	Detail, central stained glass window and cill inscription, SE elevation, exterior	NW
0040-41	SE elevation, W porch, exterior	NW, W
0042-43	Ministers Aisle, oblique	N
0044	N end of Ministers Aisle	NW
0045	S end of Ministers Aisle	NW
0046	Detail, entrance to Ministers Aisle, with Latin inscriptions	N
0047-48	Details, Latin inscriptions around Ministers Aisle entrance	N
0049-51	Detail, mason's mark, bottom left corner of SW window, SE elevation of church, exterior	NW
0052-53	Interior, SE elevation of nave, oblique	E
0054-55	Interior, SE elevation of nave	SE
0056	Interior, W balcony	SW
0057-58	Detail, ceiling vent	SW
0059	Interior, extension, NW elevation	NW
0060	Interior, SW end of NW elevation of nave	NW
0061	Interior, NE end of NW elevation of nave	NW
0062	Interior, E balcony/NE elevation	NE
0063	Interior, W balcony/SW elevation	SW
0064-67	Detail, boiler recess/cellar	N, NW, W, E
0068	Detail, main entrance door, W porch	NW
0069	Detail, base of SW staircase	SW
0070	Interior SW staircase, oblique	W
0071	Interior, staircase window	SW
0072	Interior, doorway to W balcony	E
0073	Interior, E balcony, from W balcony	NE
0074	Interior, SE elevation of W balcony	SE
0075	Interior, SE elevation of W balcony, oblique	E

0076	Interior, NW elevation of W balcony	NW
0077-78	Interior, NW elevation of W balcony and extension	N
0079	Interior, base of W staircase from landing	E
0080	Interior, window in WC room	SE
0081-82	SE elevation, WC room	ESE, SE
0083-84	Detail, aumbry	NW
0085	Detail, E porch window, oblique	N
0086-88	Interior, base of E staircase	NE, N
0089-91	Interior, doorway to E balcony	W
0092	Interior, NW elevation, E balcony	NW
0093	Interior, NW elevation of nave, from E balcony, oblique	W
0094	Interior, W balcony, from E balcony	SW
0095	Interior, SE elevation of E balcony	SE
0096	Interior, SE elevation of E balcony, oblique	E
0097	Interior, SE elevation of nave, from E balcony, oblique	E
0098-99	Detail, hearse house by lych-gate	NE

Appendix 2 Discovery & Excavation in Scotland Entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Angus
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Airlie Parish Church
PROJECT CODE:	AG10
PARISH:	Airlie
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	C Fyles
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Alder Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	SBR
NMRS NO(S):	NO35SW 29
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Church (B-listed)
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NGR NO 31323 51526
START DATE (this season)	07/08/2017
END DATE (this season)	07/08/2017
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	Alder Archaeology conducted a Level 2 standing building survey of a Category B-listed church in advance of conversion to use as a private dwelling. The church, constructed in 1783, was substantially modified in 1893, with internal refurbishment in the 1980s and 90s. Originally a simple box-plan, it was extended into a flattened T-shape. The building incorporated medieval features including a statue of John the Baptist and a late medieval aumbry; a church is known to have been dedicated on or near the site in 1242, with nearby cist burials and a holy well suggesting an even earlier foundation was possible. External features also included a weather vane dated 1783 and an inscription from 1781, as well as a free-standing burial structure known as the Ministers Aisle which included incised stones of possible medieval origin. The building fabric was of snecked rubble, harled over all exterior elevations, with concrete render within. The pitched roof was of grey slate.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	-
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Mr Alan Smith
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	Alder Archaeology Ltd, 55 South Methven Street, Perth PH1 5NX
EMAIL ADDRESS:	director@alderarchaeology.co.uk
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	HES (intended)

Appendix 3 Standard Terms of Reference for all Fieldwork

3.1 Recording Methodology

Alder Archaeology employs a Single Context Recording System that allows full cross-referencing of stratigraphy, finds and environmental samples, as well as site-wide phasing. All features will be planned at scale 1:20, and sections drawn at scale 1:10. Sections and profiles will be drawn and all features will be photographed with metric scale included. Environmental samples will be taken from archaeologically significant contexts, if the analysis of these samples would aid significantly in the interpretation of any features identified.

3.2 Human Remains

If human remains are encountered they will be left in situ and the local police will be informed. If removal is required this will take place in compliance with Historic Scotland's Policy Paper *The Treatment of Human Remains in Archaeology*.

3.3 Products and Reporting

A Data Structure Report will normally be prepared within a period agreed within the Written Scheme of Investigation/ Project Design, after the completion of the fieldwork. This forms the basic level of reporting. Further reporting may be required on the basis of discoveries made during excavations.

A copy of the report and the project archive will be deposited in the NMRS. Further copies will be sent to the client, LAAO and others, as appropriate.

3.4 Artefacts

Finds of objects will be subject to the Scots Laws of Treasure Trove and *Bona Vacantia*. We will report such finds, if recovered, with supporting documentation to the Secretariat of the Treasure Trove Panel for disposal to the appropriate museum.

3.5 Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

A brief summary of the results will be submitted to *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*.

3.6 General Conditions and Health and Safety

We adhere to the Code of Conduct of the Institute for Archaeologists.

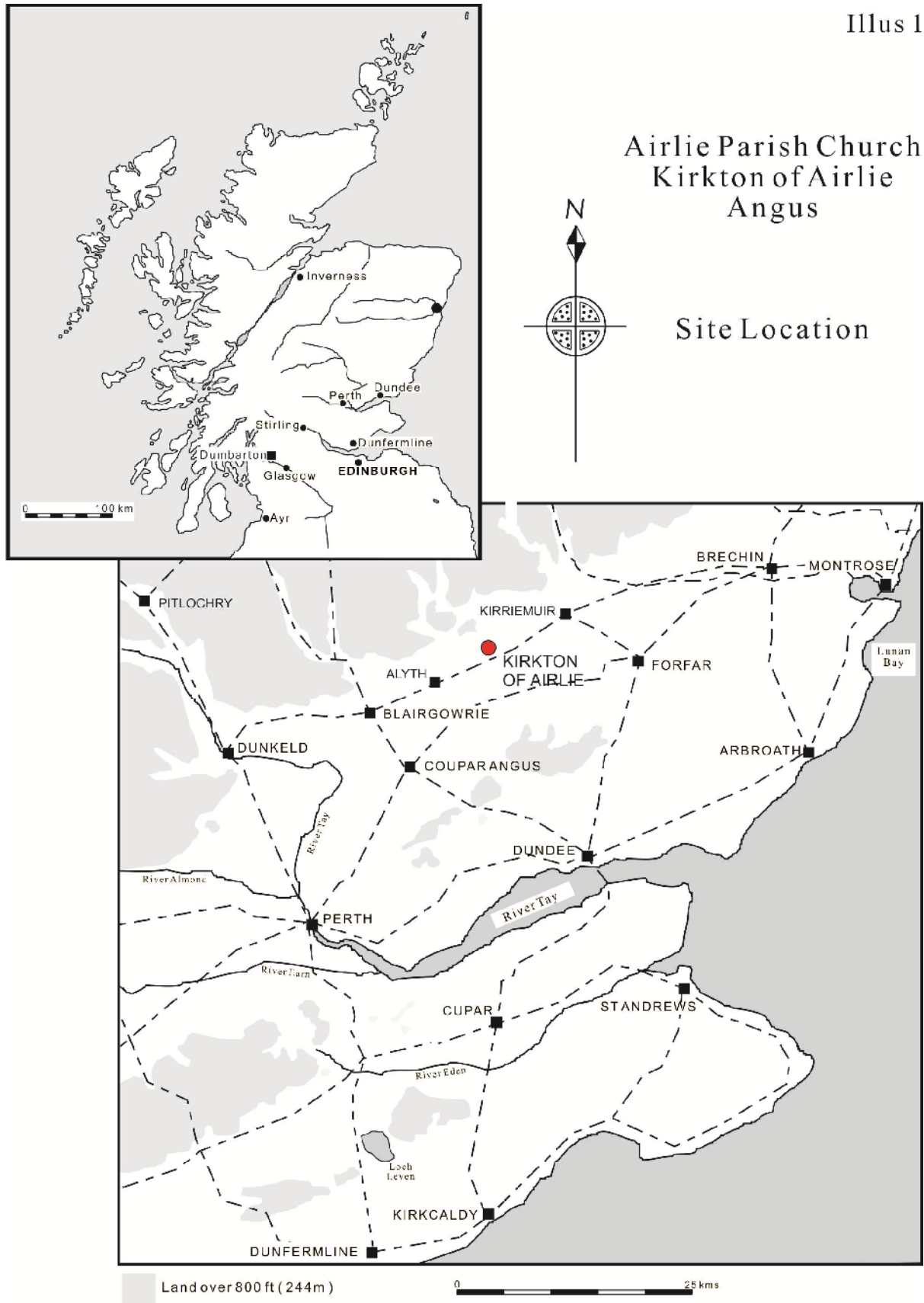
Alder Archaeology Ltd has public liability insurance of £2,000,000. Details of this can be provided on request.

We operate a strict health and safety policy that conforms to the Health and Safety at Work Act. We undertake Risk Assessments on all fieldwork carried out.

Alder Archaeology representatives will at all times wear protective footwear, high visibility clothing and other appropriate clothing. Hard hats will be worn if there is active plant on site or at all times if the site is deemed a hard hat area.

If lightly contaminated deposits are uncovered disposable boiler suits and gloves will be worn. A source of clean water will be made available for staff to clean hands with. If the health risk posed by site contamination is felt to be too high all further archaeological work will stop in that area.

Illus 1

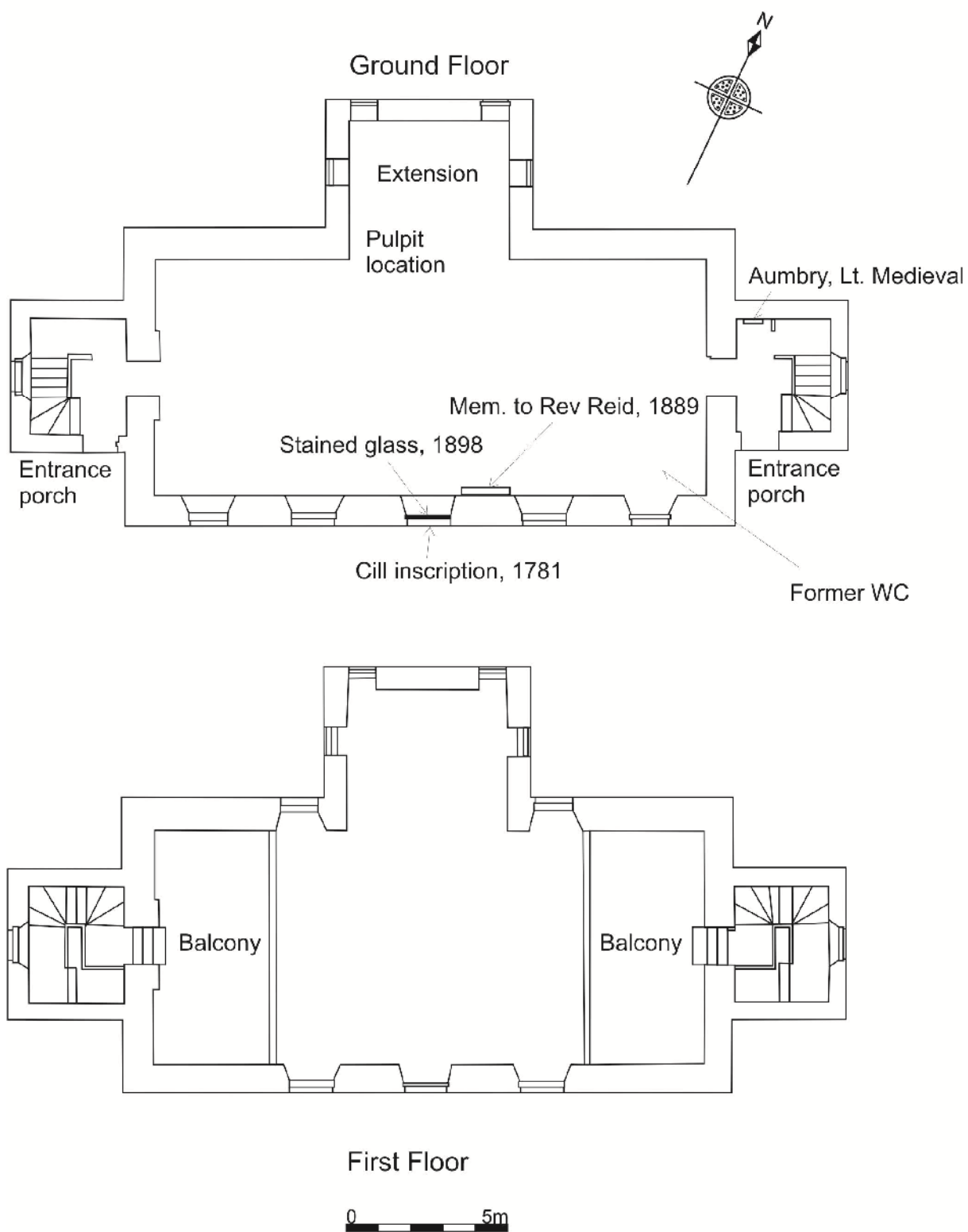


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Illus 2

Ground and First Floor plans

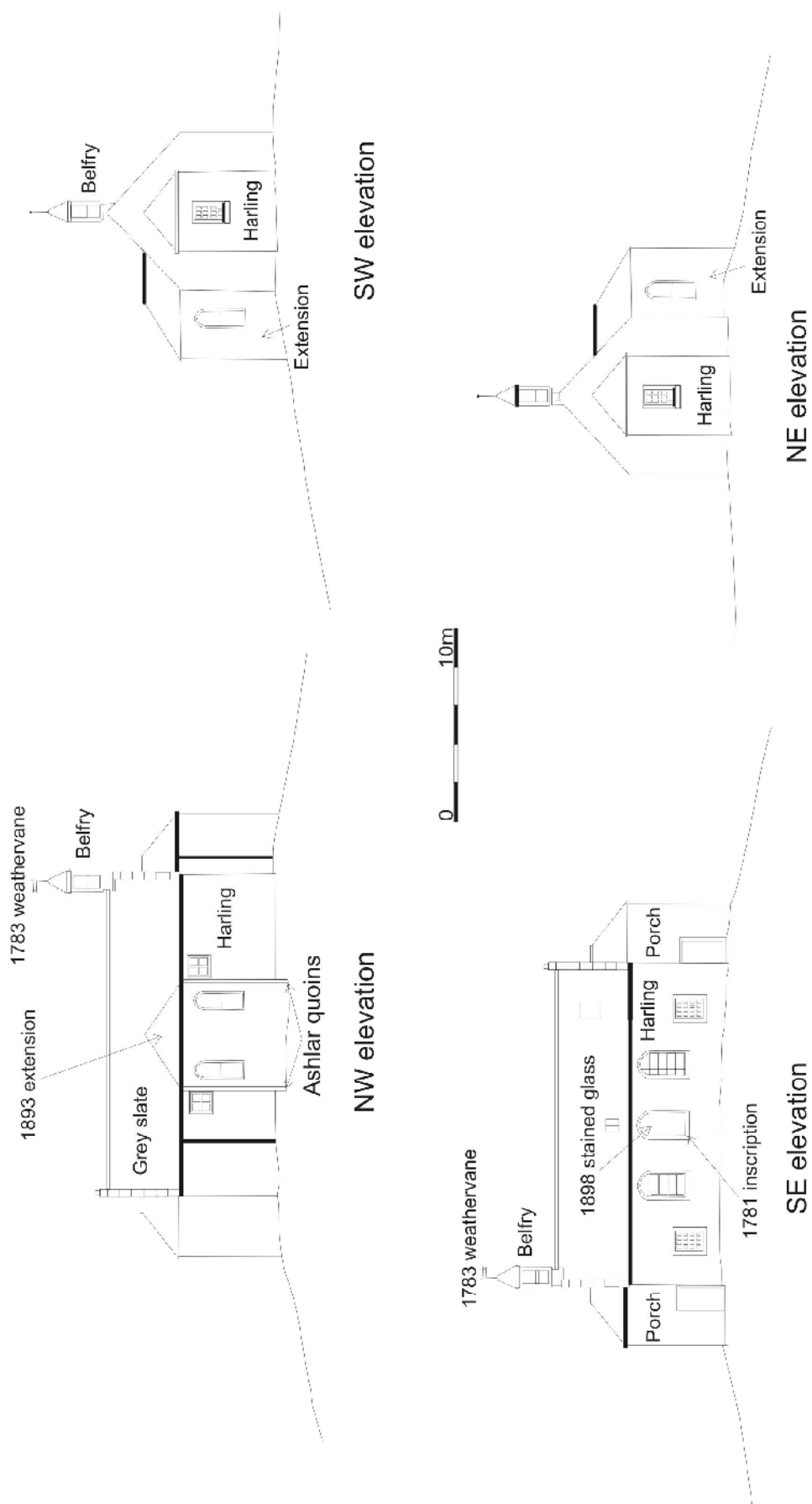


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Illus 3

Exterior elevations



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