

**HISTORIC BUILDING APPRAISAL
OF THE FORMER CHAPEL AT
STANCLIFFE HALL, DARLEY DALE,
NEAR MATLOCK, DERBYSHIRE**



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SUMMARY

- Trent & Peak Archaeology was commissioned by Brian Sutherland and Deborah K. Fern to carry out a building appraisal of the former chapel at Stancliffe Hall, Darley Dale, near Matlock, Derbyshire. It is in relation to a proposed application for Listed Building Consent to Derbyshire Dales District Council to make repairs and alterations to the building. The present Hall is a Grade II listed building dating from the late 17th century, with later additions. The chapel building was first consecrated and used in 1902 when the Hall was a school. The site is now privately owned and the former chapel is currently being used as a venue for civil wedding ceremonies.
- In 1856 Stancliffe Hall was bought by Sir Joseph Whitworth Bt., a prominent Victorian armaments manufacturer and philanthropist. Whitworth extended the Hall and created ornamental gardens. After the death of Lady Whitworth in 1896 the estate (including the Darley Dale gritstone quarries) was purchased (with a partner) by J.H. Dawson, a son of Joseph Dawson who had been the agent and estate manager. Another son Charles Edward Dawson acted as company surveyor and architect.
- After plans to turn the Hall into a residential hotel were abandoned the Stancliffe Hall Preparatory School was established by the Rev. Ernest Owen MA; students were enrolled and a building programme started. The architect Dawson prepared plans for a new chapel and sanatorium and in 1902 the school magazine reported that the chapel had been completed. It was described as a charmingly pretty building with walls of rich brown wooden shingles and roof of red tiles. It was made in Sweden to the design of the school's architect who went over to Sweden to inspect the buildings there and make the necessary arrangements. The structure was described as being extremely solid and well built, the walls being composed of five layers of wood; it seemed to be 'warmer even than if built of stone and far prettier.' It had an organ, oak altar and reredos installed and panels of 15th century tiles from a disused monastery in Portugal were used as adornment.
- The former chapel is an unusual and distinctive building. It has a stone and concrete base and a superstructure almost entirely built of softwood timber. The external walls are composed entirely of small vertically-hung shingles, the upper ones with pointed ends, the lower ones with rounded ends. Internally, the building is of single-room rectilinear plan 5.33m (17½ feet) x 14.65m (48ft). The side walling has vertical panelling and has rails and window surrounds decorated with detailed mouldings. The ceiling curves down toward the side walls. The roof is held up by 15 simple principal rafter trusses, set about 1m apart. There are some assembly marks and a maker's mark in English for *The New Ekman Co., Stockholm, Sweden* shows on a roof timber. The roofspace has metal pipes that conveyed by-products from former gas lights through the roof-spire. Asbestos tiles on the roof are a later introduction.
- Ekmans built cheaply priced prefabricated structures at its joinery workshops in Stockholm. Through studying trade price guides, Dawson is likely to have seen the financial advantages of using Scandinavian products for the construction of a relatively large building. Other advantages included low costs of transport, good thermal and insulating properties and flexibility for possible re-siting. It was certainly a forward move on the part of Rev. Owen and Dawson to erect such an unusual Scandinavian-style building at a school in rural Derbyshire. The building may be a unique survival in Britain and it deserves to be better known and appreciated.

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1. Introduction

This historic building report by Trent & Peak Archaeology (TPA) was commissioned by Brian Sutherland and Deborah K. Fern. It is in relation to a proposed application for Listed Building Consent to Derbyshire Dales District Council to make repairs and alterations to a formerly consecrated chapel at Stancliffe Hall, Darley Dale, near Matlock, Derbyshire (Figure 1). The present Hall is a Grade II listed building dating from the late 17th century, with later additions. The chapel building was constructed over a century ago when the Hall was the Stancliffe Hall Preparatory School. The site is now in private ownership and the former chapel is currently being used as a venue for civil wedding ceremonies. Prior to or following applications for changes to a listed structure, planning officers often require an historic appraisal to inform the decision-making process.

The overall study employs the methodology developed by Trent & Peak Archaeology (TPA) for use on similar projects in the region. This methodology conforms to the standard requirements of planning authorities where consent applications are made for development, re-development, building conversion, major restoration or demolition. These follow guidelines to be found in the National Planning Procedure Framework (2012) which replaces conservation planning document *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS 5, Department for Communities and Local Government 2010).

The procedures follow closely those laid down in English Heritage's *Understanding Historic Buildings. A guide to good recording practice* (2006). The methodology also accords with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) *Codes of Conduct and Standards* and the paper *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 2001).

The report

This report is the result of several specific information-gathering tasks:

- A site visit was made by the author on the 16th October 2012. The building was examined, measured (no detailed drawings were available) and photographed.
- Background research, including a visit to the Derbyshire Local Studies Library in Matlock and consultation of the genealogical research site Findmypast.co.uk

The TPA site code is SHA.2.

2. *Historical background*

The site of Stancliffe Hall may have been first occupied by the Columbello family, lords of Darley, in about 1520, when a hall was probably built by Humphrey Columello (Craven and Stanley 2001, 204). The site itself had been used much earlier, for in 1863 an excavation uncovered Bronze Age remains just to the north-west of the present Hall. The location of this find is indicated on early Ordnance Survey maps.

The earliest recognizable part of the present Hall is the south-west section, a two-storey double-pile structure, probably built in the late 17th century. The Hall was sold several times between c.1700 and 1856, when it was eventually bought by Sir Joseph Whitworth Bt., a prominent Victorian armaments manufacturer and philanthropist. Whitworth built the present south-east part of the Hall, extended the 17th century northwards on the west side and added a northern service wing. Most of this work probably occurred in the 1870s when architects T. Roger Smith and E. M. Barry were employed (Kilburn 1987, 42). In 1885 a winter garden conservatory was erected.

Sir Joseph Whitworth died in 1887. Following the death of the second Lady Whitworth on 26th May 1896 the Stancliffe Estates Co. Ltd (including the profitable Darley Dale gritstone quarries) was purchased by Messrs Joseph Henry Dawson and Cooper Drabble of Darley Dale for about £100,000 (*Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald* 7/11/1896). Dawson was one of the sons of Mr Joseph Dawson (1829-99) who had been the agent and estate manager at Stancliffe, and a close friend of Lady Whitworth. Son Joseph Henry became Managing Director of the company and another son Charles Edward, (formerly the Estate Clerk of Works) was employed as surveyor and architect. The latter was responsible for plans submitted in 1899 for a new railway to the quarries.

The *Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald* reported on the 8th April 1899 that plans to turn the Hall into a residential hotel had been abandoned and that it had been let to become a school. In October the paper reported that the Stancliffe Hall Preparatory School, established by the Rev. Ernest Owen MA, had 50 students enrolled and already had a new school room built, two dormitories under construction, and that the school's architect C.E. Dawson was preparing plans for a new chapel and sanatorium. Owen was an educational innovator in his day, who had previously been at a school at Llandaff in South Wales (Crust 1975, 56-58). At a Speech Day and Prize Giving occasion at Stancliffe on the 31st July 1901 Owen stated that the chapel would have been completed but for unforeseen delays; no further details were given.

The Chapel

In *The Old Llandavians ('83-'99) and Stancliffe Hall Magazine*, for 1902 it was announced that the chapel had been completed, with the exception of a portion of the internal decoration. It had been built opposite the school room and faced east, with a covered way to it from Boys' entrance. It was described as a charmingly pretty building with walls of rich brown wooden shingles and roof of red tiles. It was made in Sweden to the design of the school's architect Mr C. E. Dawson, who went over to Sweden to inspect the buildings there and make the necessary arrangements, and it was then put together by local workmen. The whole structure was described as being extremely solid and well built, the walls being composed of five layers of wood of unusual thickness; it seemed to be 'warmer even than if built of stone and far prettier.'

It had an organ installed and an oak altar and reredos carved by Mr Clarke of Llandaff, and contains artistic reproductions of Rossetti's altar piece in Llandaff Cathedral. The space on each side of the altar was filled with panels of 15th century tiles which a Miss Owen brought for the chapel from a disused monastery in Portugal. This Miss Owen was probably the Reverend's sister. He married Miss Cecily Gertrude Black in 1906. The chapel will have been officially consecrated - and later de consecrated - but neither event is recorded.

3. *Building description (see Figure 3).*

The former chapel appears as a somewhat unusual and distinctive building in its setting next to the stone-built 'irregular mansion' of Stancliffe Hall (as described in its listing entry). The chapel building appears to have a stone base at least two courses thick, with indications of some bricks and concrete used at the south-west end. Above this base the superstructure is almost entirely built of softwood timber, the external side walling being composed of small vertically-hung shingles set below a high horizontal rail and with a middle rail separating shingles with pointed ends from those below with rounded ends (Plates 5, 8). The shingles are about 228mm (13 inches) long, 97mm (2⁷/₈ ins) wide and about 7.5mm (³/₈ in) thick, although the thickness increases towards the tail or butt end.

The south-west end has a decorative partly paneled double-door entry beneath a covered way that served as a sort of porch (Plate 6). The latter is held in place by some decorative brackets (Plate 7). There are seven windows with pointed tops along each of the long sides (Plate 9) but no openings in the north-east end of the building.

The roofing is composed of a chequer-board pattern of reddish asbestos tiles (Plate 3) although early views of the building show it originally had horizontal bands of small reddish tiles on the roof (Plate 1). The roofline is broken by a single spire with a lower grill, its function having been to act as a ventilation outlet for the by-products of combustion for internal gas lighting. Water was removed along cast-iron gutters feeding into a centrally-placed down-pipe on either side of the building (Plate 10).

Internally, the chapel is of single-room rectilinear plan 5.33m (17½ feet) x 14.65m (48ft), a ratio of 1:2.75. There are two rises at the north-east end towards where the altar one stood. The still intact altar and surrounding panels are shown on an early view of the interior (Plate 2); this also shows a former gas fitting in the ceiling and the upper windows are shown open. The chapel's side walling has vertical panelling and has rails and window surrounds that are decorated with detailed mouldings (Plates 16, 17). The ceiling is composed of long narrow timber strips and the ceiling curves down toward the side walls (Plates 14, 15). There are still two circular openings in the ceiling that formerly opened into flues to remove gases given off from gas lights immediately below (Plate 18). The building has no added heating system.

The roof is held up by a series of simple principal rafter trusses, each rafter being jointed into and extending down below a tie-beam (Plates 19, 20). Some trusses have added collars nailed on. From the vantage point of a hatch entry at the south-west end the author counted 15 regularly set trusses, each just under 1m apart. Assembly marks II, III and IIII showed on several trusses close to the hatch, but not in sequence (Plate 20). A maker's mark bearing the name in English *The New Ekman Co., Stockholm, Sweden* showed on a roof timber close to the hatch (Plate 23). Also showing in the attic were two vertical metal pipes, a connecting horizontal one and a rising pipe below the roof spire (Plate 21). Modern batons beneath the replacement roof tiles showed in one area (Plate 22).

The roof plan included in Figure 3 shows the presumed truss spacing and, between this plan and the ground plan above it, where the building's side walling may include vertical posts. Although there is a line of closely set windows on either side of the building, the truss arrangement allows for 8 out of the 15 positions to have the support of a wall post. The structure may also include wall plates at the bottom of the rafters and on the stone base but, if so, these are masked by the outer timberwork.

The building's side walling is relatively thin, probably being no more than 20cm (8 inches) thick in total, although the side walls do appear to taper outwards and downwards on the outside faces. Towards the north-east end some shingles have deteriorated and become displaced (Plate 13). At least three layers of thin timbers were counted here.

4. Comment

The former chapel at Stancliffe Hall is unusual and possibly unique to this country. Whilst being included within the listing for the Hall, being both adjacent and physically attached to the main structure, its presence is not mentioned in the listing description. This is a clear omission, which may partly explain why it has attracted little attention from building historians. It deserves to be more widely known.

The use of wooden shingles is a traditional technique in this country, more commonly associated with roofing as an alternative to or a replacement for thatching. Shingles are known from several early archaeological sites and in former buildings such as the Rose Theatre, Southwark, built in 1592 (Pennick 2002, 87). There are many listed buildings with shingles attached but these are mostly on churches, or tile-hung to the upper floors of the occasional domestic building, most commonly in the southern counties of England (e.g. The Old House, Church Street, Godalming). They were often added to hide deteriorating timberwork and were not necessarily original to a building. However, at Bicton Park, East Devon there is a summerhouse of c.1840 that was deliberately made distinctive by having small fish-scale shingles mask the underlying brickwork walls. Timber was more commonly added as an architectural feature in the form of weatherboarding in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Shingles were more commonly found where timber was more plentiful and where they had a clear advantage as a flexible lightweight roofing material in areas with long snow cover. This ranged through Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, the Alps and the Jura Mountain ranges and across to France (where shingles were called 'bardeau'). Several Norwegian stave churches that have survived intact still retain medieval shingles, attached to their roofs, walls and posts (Pennick 2002, 84). A more recent example, a Methodist Church at Mauriceville West in New Zealand, was built by Norwegian settlers in c.1870 with timber walling and with a shingle roof.

The construction of a largely shingle-built structure at Stancliffe may be explained by several contributing factors. Although a distinctive so-called Shingle Style architectural movement existed in the United States between 1880-1915 this can be discounted as an influence. In Scandinavia, however, there was a revival movement in all four countries from c.1860 onwards to create their own distinctive architectural identities, partly based on traditional buildings. Shingles as used on early churches were included on some new buildings designed by architects influenced by the so-called National Romanticism movement (Davey 1995, 220). This revival was closely related to the early development of prefabricated housing (Lane 2000, 64).

From the 1870s onwards there was a large increase in the import of foreign-made joinery products into Britain, reaching a peak at the turn of the century. Foremost in this was the Swedish export trade, with prices falling so much that by 1901 Swedish doors and windows sold for one third of the cost of home-made ones (Louw 1996, 53). One pioneering manufacturer was the Ekman's company who built prefabricated structures at its joinery workshops in Stockholm (Lane 2000, 64), and which kept prices low by employing women and children (Louw 1996, 56). Through their agents in Britain advertising in journals such as *The Builder* and through trade price guides, an architect such as C.E. Dawson is likely to have been well aware of the financial advantage of using Scandinavian products for the construction of a relatively large building.

A possible scenario is that Rev. Owen was a widely travelled man who had seen some timber-built churches and chapels in Europe or Scandinavia, and possibly some simple timber or corrugated iron non-conformist chapels closer to home. He may also have been influenced by some unusual revivalist buildings being designed through the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain. If finances were being stretched by Owen's ambitious expansion programme for the school, Dawson may have made him aware of the price advantage of acquiring a relatively large timber hall structure made in Sweden. Other advantages for a prefabricated timber building were low costs of transport, good thermal and insulating properties and flexibility for possible re-siting. Nevertheless, it was a forward move on the part of Owen and Dawson to erect such an unusual Scandinavian-style building at a school in rural Derbyshire.

Although Charles Edward Dawson was a relatively minor provincial architect (the RIBA Library in London does not even have a biographical file on him), he appears to have been a competent architect, surveyor and landscape gardener. Amongst his achievements was the design of the grounds of the Whitworth Institute in Darley Dale. He appears to have been held in high regard in the area as his funeral in 1928 was well attended. The cortege is shown on a photographic view that can be viewed on the Picture The Past website (see reference below).

Summary

The building's design of no division between nave and aisles, and a small spire is similar to many rural churches found in Norway. The chapel was designed to be light and airy and had gas lights for increased lighting when required. It was modestly decorated with panels and moulded woodwork. Although the close-set roof structure was probably meant to take the weight of locally sourced tiles, at some stage these were replaced by lighter asbestos tiles, although this is unlikely to have reduced the effects of any fire below. The building remains in relatively good condition for its age, although the roof cover probably now needs replacing again and some repairs are needed to parts of the external walling.

Some sympathetically designed structural alterations may be required to comply with modern regulations for its present-day public use.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

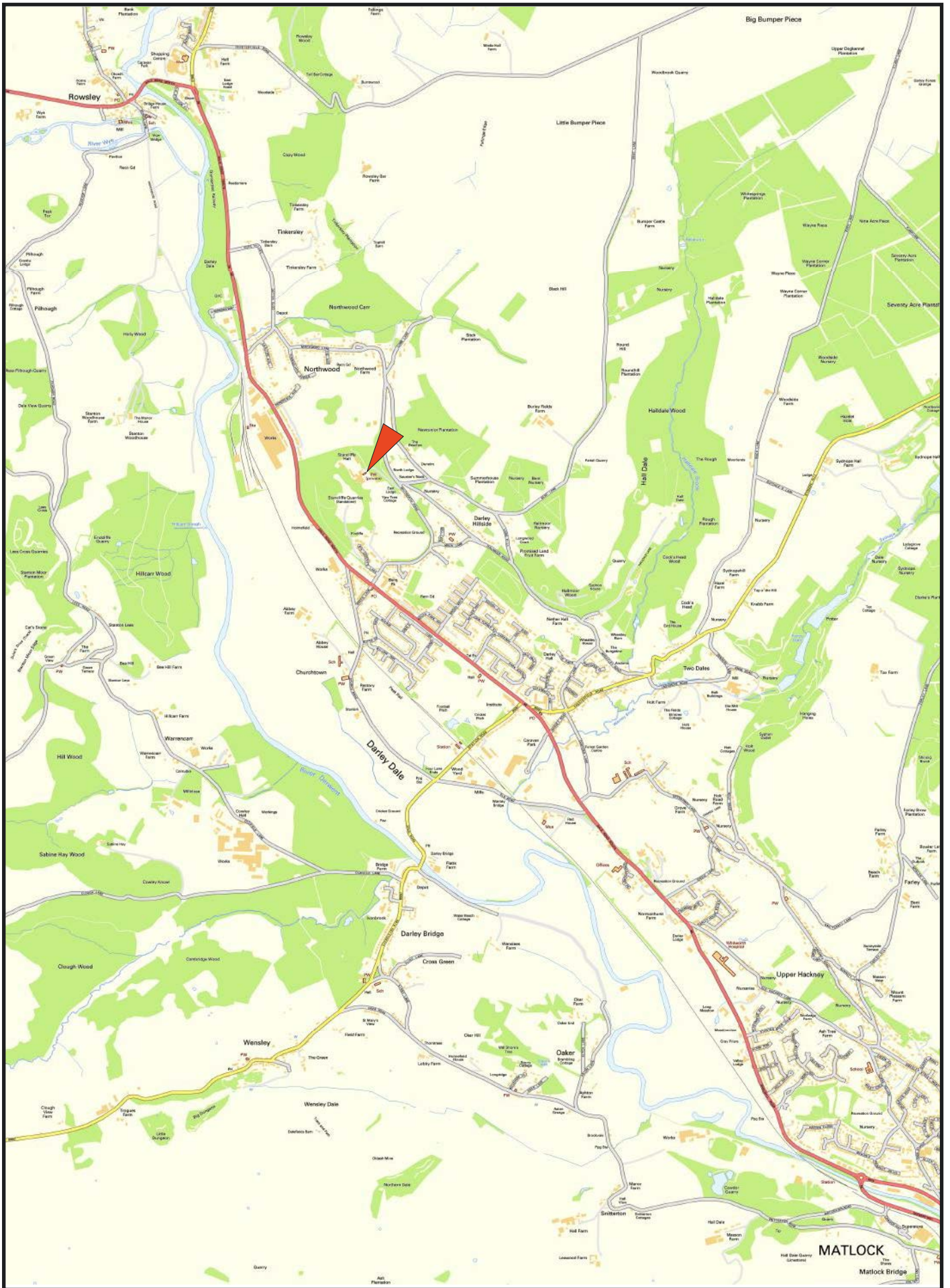


Figure 1: Location of the former chapel at Stancliffe Hall, Darley Dale near Matlock, Derbyshire, here highlighted by arrow. Scale 1:25,000. Contains Ordnance Survey data. © Crown Copyright and database right 2013.

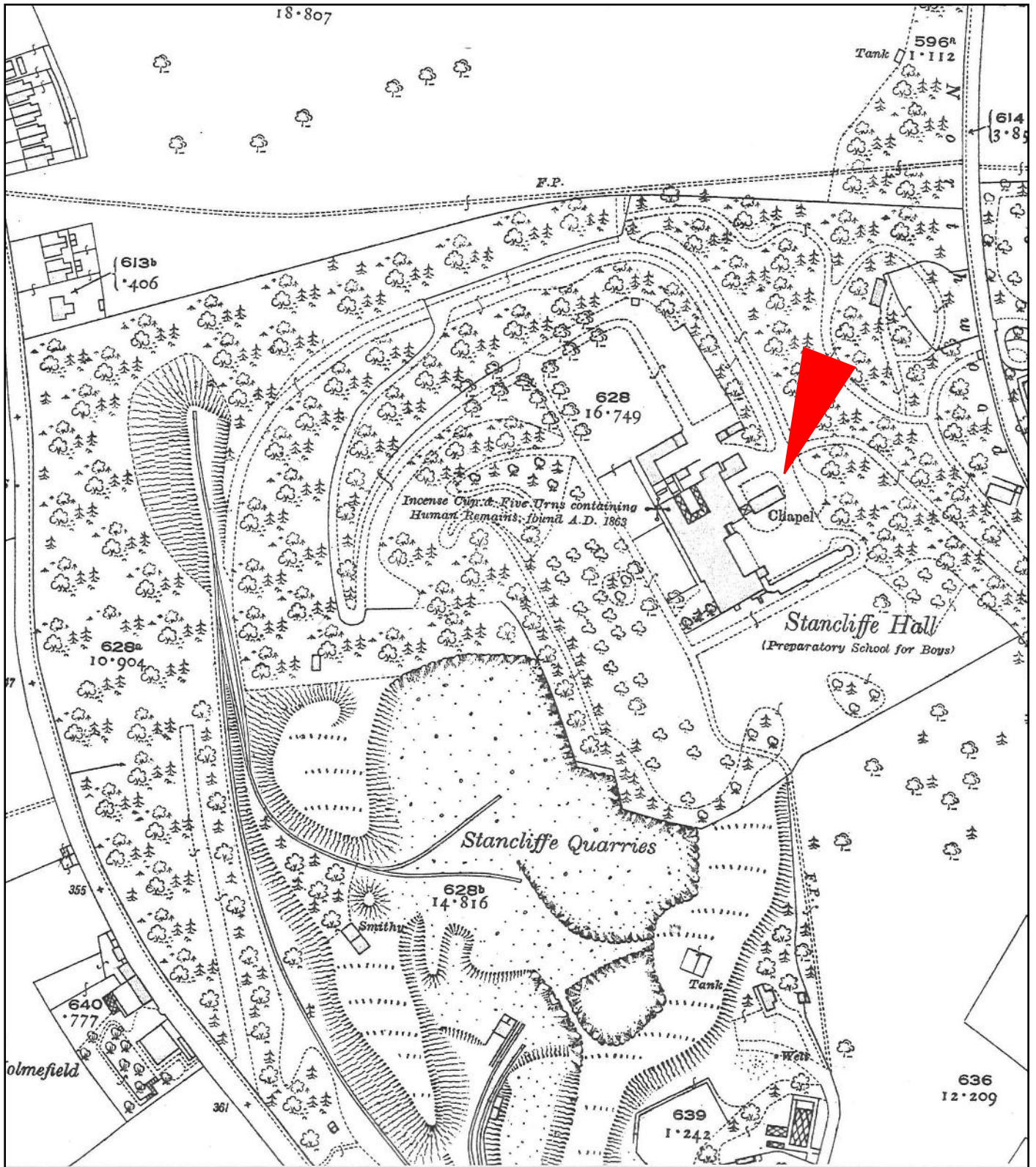


Figure 2: Position of the former chapel at Stancliffe Hall, Darley Dale, Derbyshire, here highlighted on an Ordnance Survey 25 inch scale map of 1920. Scale 1:2,500.

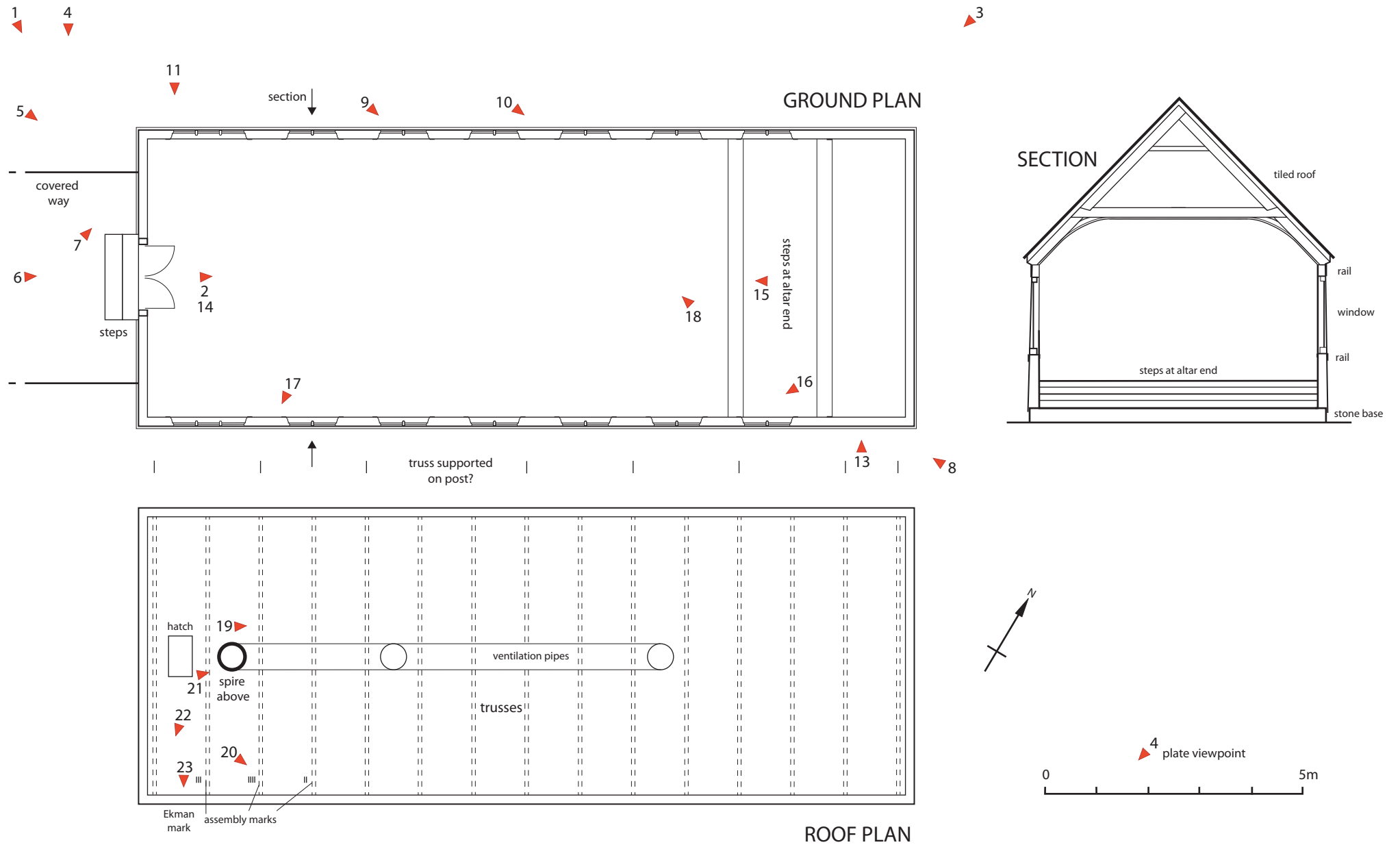


Figure 3: Plans of and a section through the former chapel at Stancliffe Hall, Darley Dale, Derbyshire. Scale 1:100.



Plate 1: Early 20th century view of the chapel at Stancliffe Hall, Derbyshire with two school pupils showing in the foreground.



Plate 2: Early 20th century postcard view of the interior of the chapel at Stancliffe Hall with the altar and decorative panels still in place at the far end.



Plate 3: View showing relationship of the chapel to the main building complex at Stancliffe Hall.



Plate 4: South-west end of the chapel and covered walkway.



Plate 5: South-west entrance end of the chapel at Stancliffe Hall.



Plate 6: Double-door entrance with decorative panelling



Plate 7: Decorative bracket beneath the walkway canopy.



Plate 8: Shingles of differing shape.



Plate 9: Pointed windows.



Plate 10: One of two cast-iron down-pipes with decorative rain-heads.



Plate 11: Stone and concrete base and closer-set shingles towards the bottom of the side walling.

Plate 12: Fragments of asbestos tiles from the roof.



Plate 13: Area of lost and damaged shingles and exposure of timber layering.



Plate 14: View looking towards the north-east altar end of the chapel at Stancliffe Hall.



Plate 15: View looking towards the south-west entrance end of the chapel at Stancliffe Hall.



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Plate 17: Detail of moulded timbers used inside the chapel.



Plate 18: One of the two ventilation openings in the chapel's ceiling.



Plate 19: View looking towards the south-west end of the chapel's attic showing closely spaced trusses with simple collars and pipe-work for the ventilation system.



Plate 20: Junction of a tie-beam, principal rafter, connecting brace and curving ceiling timbers. The arrow points at an assembly mark.



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Plate 22: Timber framework showing in the attic beneath asbestos roof-tiles.

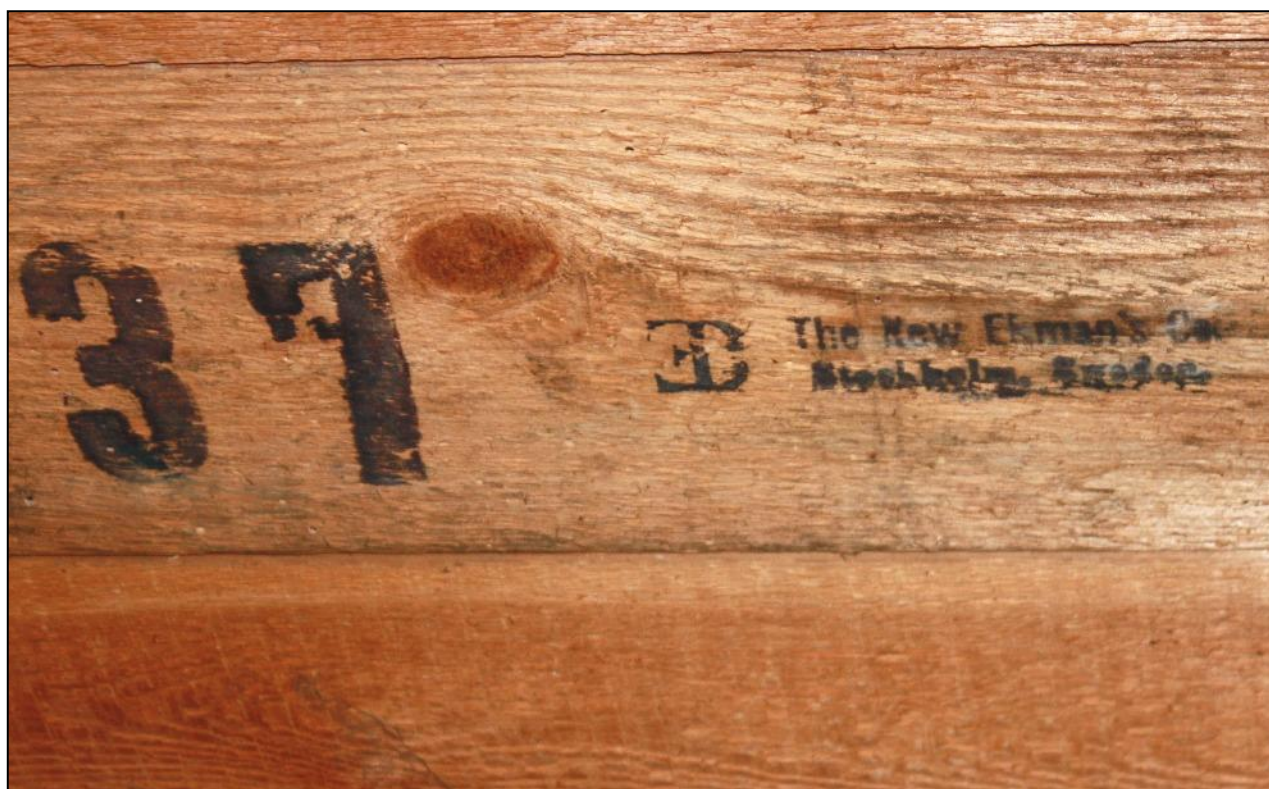


Plate 23: A maker's mark that reads in English *The New Ekman Co., Stockholm, Sweden.*