

**FORMER PARISH CHURCH
ALVAH
BANFF
ABERDEENSHIRE**



Standing Building Survey

Carried out 7th December 2016

by

Murray Archaeological Services Ltd



Report No: MAS 2016-35

by

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- Standing Building Survey -

1. Background

1.1 A standing building survey was required for the former Parish Church at Alvah, Banff, Aberdeenshire, prior to its conversion into a dwelling house.

1.2 The archaeological condition was applied in the context of planning legislation (PAN 2/2011, SPP, SHEP), which states that it is necessary for developers to arrange for archaeological work to take place prior to development, in appropriate circumstances. Planning Application Number: APP/2016/0988, 0989

1.3 A Level 1 Standing Building Survey was required which includes measured floor plans and a written account of the building's plan, form, function, age and development sequence, in addition to a photographic survey.

1.4 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned to undertake the work by Mantell Ritchie, Architects, on behalf of their client Miss Deborah Cargill. The site element of the survey was completed on the 7th December 2016..

2. Desk-top survey

2.1 A search was carried out in the Sites and Monuments Record, Archaeology Service, Aberdeenshire Council, the Sites and Monuments Records of Historic Environment Scotland (HES), the Listed Buildings Register (HES) and the Buildings at Risk Register.

2.2 The 25"/mile 1st and later Ordnance Survey maps were consulted.

2.3 Site plans and elevations were kindly supplied by Mantell Ritchie, Architects and have been annotated and used as a basis for detailed plans of the observed areas.



Illus 1 Location map courtesy of Mansell Ritchie Architects

3. The Site

3.1 The church stands on the NE slope of the prominent Hill of Alvah c4km S of Banff, with wide views S across the Deveron valley towards the sea. By road Alvah lies to the E of the A97 between Banff and Aberchirder.

Parish: Alvah

NGR: NJ 6781 6025

NRHE No: NJ66SE7

Aberdeenshire SMR: NJ66SE0088

Historic Scotland Ref: 2891 B Listed Building.

Buildings at Risk Register: 2613

3.2 The present church was built in 1792, replacing an earlier church on the site.

According to The Ordnance Survey Name Book of 1867 (OS1/4/2/21

www.scotlandspplaces.gov.uk)

This church formerly stood in front of the present building, and was pulled down at the time the new one was erected (1792).

It is not positively known when it was first erected, but an old stone which is now built into the grave yard wall was preserved from the ruins and bears the date 1529 and was evidently a stone which had been placed over the door or some other conspicuous place. The grave yard had evidently belonged to the old church.

In 1961 the date stone was not found (NRHE: NJ66SE7).

The 1st OS map of 1866 marks the old church site as S of the present church. This seems more likely than to the E where the ground falls away quite steeply. Within the graveyard S of the present church there is an area of quite markedly uneven ground which may represent the site of the former church.

3.3 St Colm's well, which may have an Early Christian association lies c. 1km NW on the lower slopes of the hill, near Tipperty.

4. Documentary evidence

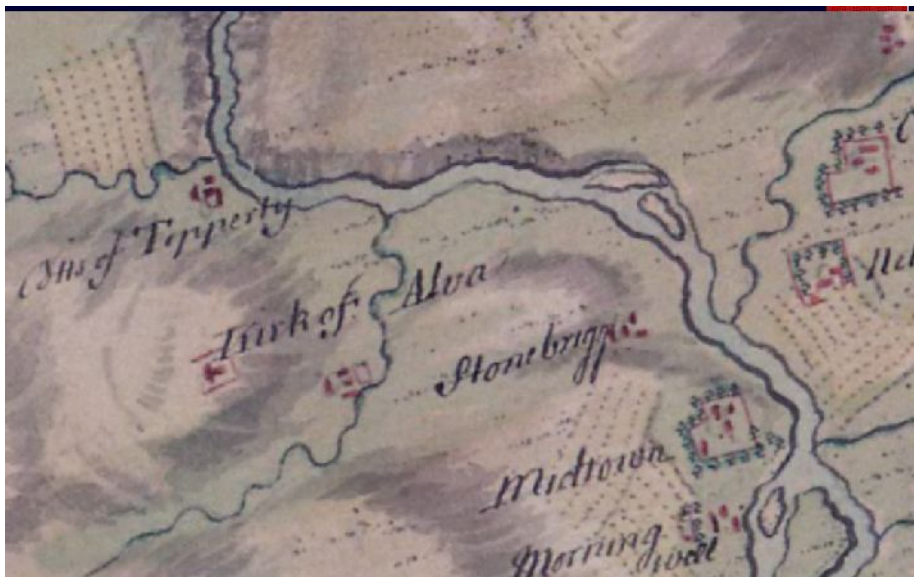
4.1 **1296** 28th August. Ragmans Roll. Master William of Dundee, parson of the church of Alvah is one of the signatories. *Instrumenta Publica*, pp. 163-6 (Ragman Roll) <http://db.poms.ac.uk>

4.2 **1308** 5th October. Charter of Robert 1, confirming various land grants, including the grant by Marjory, Countess of Atholl of the church of Alvah to Coupar Angus Abbey. <http://db.poms.ac.uk> Document 1/53/3 (RRS,v,no.3)

4.3 **1314** 28th January. Charter of Henry, bishop of Aberdeen granting the church of Alvah to Coupar Angus Abbey. *Aberdeen Registrum*, 41-2 <http://db.poms.ac.uk> Document 4/4/23 (Abdn. Reg., i, 41-2)

4.4 **1593** Charter of the lands of Alvah from Cistercians of Cupar to Sir William Ogilvie at Dunclas. Quoted in Statistical Account for Scotland 1834-45. <http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/link/1791-99/Banff/Alvah/4/398/>

4.5 **Roys Military Map 1747-55** depicts Kirk of Alva (sic) as a T- shaped structure, or two adjoining structures, set in a rectangular enclosure.



Illus 2 Detail from Roy's Military Map of 1747-55. www.nls.ac.uk

4.6 The **first Statistical Account for Scotland of 1791-99** describes the earlier church as ‘ The church is very old and in bad repair’ <http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/link/1791-99/Banff/Alvah/4/398/> [Oddly the present building is not mentioned although it must have been built around the time this account was written]

4.7 The **New Statistical Account of 1834-45** (written By Rev Andrew Todd in 1837 and revised in 1842) (Stat Acc 1834-45, Alvah, 175) describes the present building as ‘ The church, a plain, substantial ediface, at present in good repair and containing free sittings for 600 persons, was erected in 1792’. He also records that the glebe was 6-7 acres and that ‘the Minister’s stipend is 13 chalders, the one half meal, and the other half barley, payable in money’. At this point the Established Church was the only place of worship in Alvah parish and had c400 people who took communion annually.

The Rev Todd also mentions the charters relating to the earlier church (Stat Acc 1834-45, Alvah, 153). [These were said to be in Advocates Library but not traced.]

In 1314 A Charter signed at Aberbrothwick by Marjory, widow of John Earl of Atholl, gave ‘to the blessed Virgin Mary, to God , and to the abbot of Cupar, the right of patronage of the kirk of Alvah’

In 1593 A charter of the lands of Alvah from the Cistercians of Cupar to Sir William Ogilvie at Dunlugas.

<http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/link/1834-45/Banff/Alvah/>

4.8 1866. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey 25” to the mile map (Banff sheet X.8. published 1871) shows the church, the site of the former church, and the Ogilvy burial enclosure.



Illus 3 1st edition OS map (25”/mile) surveyed 1866, published 1871 (Banff sheet X.8) (www.nls.ac.uk)

4.9 By the 2nd edition 25”/mile Ordnance Survey of 1901 (published 1902. Banffshire Sheet 010.08) the 1792 church is shown with the addition of both the porch and the vestry both c. 1882.



Illus 4 2nd edition 25”/mile Ordnance Survey of 1902 (pub 1904) (www.nls.ac.uk)

4.10 **1882-3** W porch and vestry at NE built by architect James Duncan (Dictionary of Scottish Architects <http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk> Based on plans in Aberdeen City Archives. Duncan and Munro Collection.)

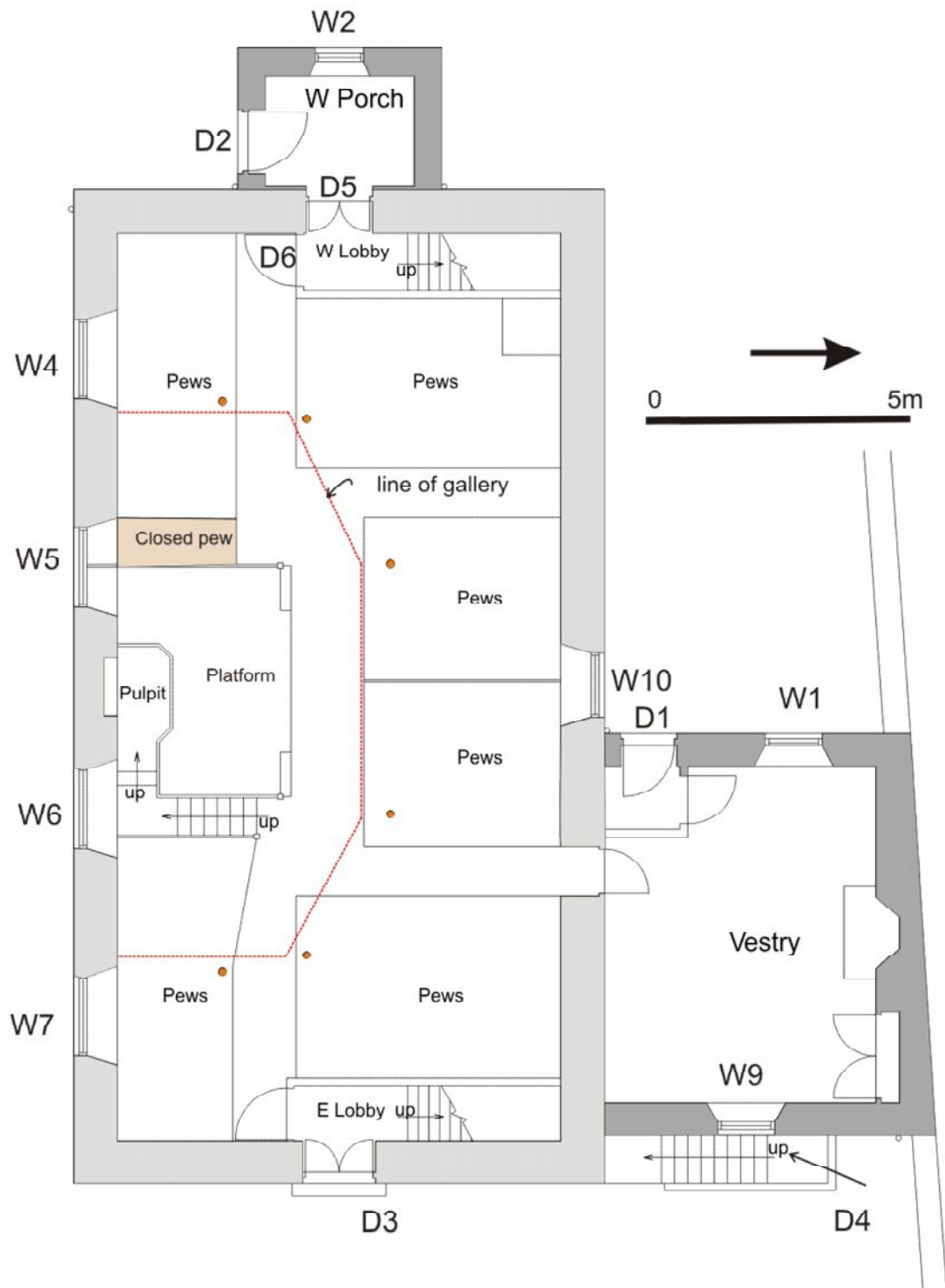
C1900 Additions and alterations A & W Reid & Wittet. Architectural practice (Dictionary of Scottish Architects. <http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk> Based on site plans in Elgin Library, Local Heritage Centre. Wittets & Co Collection. DAW p163 and 169. Site plan by A&W Reid)

4.11 The building has not been in regular use since 1950 and was closed in 1973.

5 Methodology

5.1 The ground plan and elevations (illus 5, 28) have been annotated to show details and to indicate differences in the building materials which may help in understanding the development and history of the building.

5.2 The areas recorded were photographed. The full set of photographs will be supplied to Aberdeenshire SMR and annotated plans in the present report (Illus 29-31) indicate the position of each.



Illus 5 Main plan annotated from drawings courtesy of Mansell Ritchie Architects Gallery support posts shown in red.

6 The Building

THE CHURCH

The church was out of regular use since 1950 and closed in 1973. At the time of the survey in 2016, many of the internal fittings remained but there was some dereliction due to broken windows, damp and pigeons.



Illus 6 Alvah Church W wall and porch.

Description

The church is a plain, rectangular block set E/W with large windows along the S wall and originally symmetrical having central doors in the E and W gables, each with a window above. The N wall has a single, central window. A later porch was added to the centre of the W gable and a vestry/session room with boiler house below, added to the E end of the N wall.

A rectangular bellcote on the apex of the W gable dates to 1645 and was re-used from the earlier church. The bell itself, cast by Peter Jansen is dated to 1643 and has been re-hung in Banff and Alvah Church in Banff (information from HES LB 2891 and Walker & Woodworth (2015, 262).

Dimensions Main 1792 building: Width: 10m ext. Length: 18.9m ext.

Porch 3.8 x 2.7m ext.

Session Room/ Vestry Slightly asymmetric. 7.6 x 5.6 (N) to 6.3m (S).

Walls Concrete harling (buff) with sandstone ashlar at corners and openings. Where harling has broken off the stonework is visible as quite slatey rubble stone.

Roof Steeply pitched, slated. Bellcote at W gable apex. Plain ball finial at E gable apex. Ball finial at apex of W vestry gable.



Illus 7 Bellcote from W. Note iron bar that restrained the bell rope

Bellcote

The bellcote is rectangular, with arched openings to E and W, and solid sides to N and S pierced by roundels. The apex is a stepped pyramid with a ball finial. Although the bell has been removed, an iron strap, which would have retained the bell rope, remains below the bellcote on the W side.

E gable wall



Illus 8 E wall, with vestry/session room on RHS

The E gable has a central door with a window above at gallery level.

D3 W: 1.38m. H: 2.14m from lintel to ground. Plain squared doorway with sandstone margins. Double plank doors. Two granite steps.

W8 (as W3) W: 1.38m H: 1.7m (from elevation). Plain rectangular window with sandstone margins. Upper and lower sash windows each with 5 over 5 panes.

W gable wall

The W porch obscures the original W door (now replaced by internal door D5), the gallery window (W3) matches W8 in the E gable.

W3 (as W8) W: 1.38m H: 1.7m (from elevation). Plain rectangular window with sandstone margins. Upper and lower sash windows each with 5 over 5 panes.

Blue plaque with historical information.

Bench mark. OS bench mark on W face of SW corner. (BM 280. 1st OS map)

S wall



Illus 9 S wall. Porch on LHS

The S wall has two tall windows flanking the position of the pulpit on the inside, with smaller windows at either end below the gallery. In some of the panes, the glass is clearly original, with ripples clearly visible (illus 10) (Historic Scotland, 2008, 1)



Illus 10 Detail of window W4 in S wall, showing ripples in glass

W4 and W 7 W: 1.53m H: 1.83m. Plain rectangular window with sandstone margins. Upper and lower sash windows each with 5 over 5 panes.

W5 and W6 W: 1.53m H: 3.10m. Plain rectangular window with sandstone margins. Upper and lower sash windows each with 3 rows of 5 panes.

Some of the original iron pivot hinges for shutters survive on all windows.

F3 and F8 Red sandstone block with circular vent. Clearest with F8 where the harling has chipped showing the block is 400mm square, with circular raised block 360mm in diameter, pierced by aperture 150mm diameter with iron grid.

Memorials

The memorials recorded are those that are either set into the wall fabric or are so near the wall that there is a possibility of disturbance during construction.

M1 Set in the wall below W5. Polished black granite. Mary Jane Todd. 1855.



Illus 11 Memorial M1 set in S wall

M2 Freestanding c. 140mm from wall face. Polished light grey granite. Alexander Fraser. d. 1960, wife Dilys Fraser d. 1983, daughter Katherine d. 1947. Anne Nelstropp (nee Fraser) d. 2012.



Illus 12 Memorial M2 set close to S wall



Illus 14 Memorial M4 set in S wall

M5 Freestanding cross 580mm from wall. Polished white granite. Hugh Fraser d. 1923, wife Annie Bean d. 1916. Infant d. 1879.

M6 Freestanding cross 580mm from wall. Polished white granite. Bella Ross Fraser d. 1940, George Abercromby Fraser d. 1964, Jane Cecilia Fraser d. 1973



Illus 15 Memorials M5 & M6 set close to S wall

N wall

The E end of the N wall is obscured by the session room/vestry. The W end is plain with a single window at ground floor level.

W10 W: 1.22m H: 1.66m. Plain rectangular window with sandstone margins.

Upper and lower sash windows each with 3 over 3 panes.

F1 Cast iron tie plate (to balcony ?)

F2 Red sandstone vent as F3, F8

PORCH

The porch has a pitched slate roof and harled stone walls. There is a single window in the W wall and the door in the S wall.

W wall

W2 W: 0.92m H: 1.53m. Red Turriff sandstone margins and hood moulding.

Upper and lower sash windows each with 3 over 3 panes.

S wall

D2 W: 1.22m H: 2.19m Red Turriff sandstone margins. Vertical plank door with ornamental hinges and ring door handle (as D1).



Illus 16 Late 19th-century door fittings: door handle on D2

VESTRY/ SESSION ROOM

The vestry/session house has a ridged slate roof at right angles to the roof of the church. There is a chimney at the N gable. Windows to E and W and external door to W. Internal door to church to S.

The boiler house runs below the vestry/session room. It is entered from the E with steps down to the door. On the W side, an iron covered hole below the W window was probably a coal hole.

Chimney Rectangular sandstone with flared table.

W wall

D1 W: 1.07m H: 2.58m. Door H: 1.97m with 2 pane fanlight above. Red Turriff sandstone margins. Vertical plank door with ornamental hinges and key hole (As D2).



Illus 17 Late 19th-century door fittings: hinge on D1 (same hinges on porch door D2)



Illus 18 Late 19th-century door fittings on D1

W1 W:1.07m H: 1.83m. Red Turriff sandstone margins. Upper and lower sash windows each with 3 over 3 panes.

E wall

W9 W: 1.00m H: 1.35m. Red Turriff sandstone margins. Upper and lower sash windows each with 3 over 3 panes.

F5 Red sandstone vent as F2, F3, F8.

Memorial

M7 Set in wall. Sandstone memorial (not possible to read, very worn). Ogilvy (?) crest of lion rampant within escutcheon. According to Walker & Woodworth (2015, 262) this memorial is 16th century and originally had initials I.M G.M.



Illus 19 Memorial M7 set in E wall of vestry/session room

Cellar/boiler house

D4 W: 1.02m H: 1.78m Red sandstone margins. Plank door.

Interior

The interior of the building, although dilapidated, was relatively untouched since the church closed. The HES Listed Building record (LB2891) notes that the interior had been remodeled c 1880, so it is probable that the present layout is of that date.

The interior of the main church is symmetrical with the pulpit in the centre of the S wall, with five blocks of pews to the N, E and W. The four large windows in the S wall, which are arched on the inside, flood the interior with light. The vestry/session room can be entered either directly from the back of the church, or externally through a small separate lobby.

Inside the original E and W gable doors, narrow lobbies lead both into the ground floor and up stairs into the gallery. The W porch opens into an additional lobby with coat hooks.

The gallery, which is supported on six iron pillars, extends around the N, E and W walls, with five tiers of pews focused on the pulpit.

The ceiling is flat, plaster over lathe, now in places dilapidated. There are three decorative ceiling bosses, which probably also acted as air vents. All three bosses are painted yellow, red, pale blue and white, the central boss has additional applied decoration.



Illus 20 Central ceiling boss

There is considerable natural daylight but additional lighting was supplied by hanging lights with white glass globes and brass chains over the S side. Simpler plainer lights on the underside of the gallery hang on ordinary flex and appear more recent.

Visible floors were wooden throughout, with coir carpet runners.

Ground floor

W Porch Pine panelled to 1.18m with pink plaster above. Iron coat hooks on wooden rail.

D5 Internal door. W: 1.22m H: 2.10m. Two leaves. Pine and glass. This would have replaced the original W gable door when the porch was added.

W Vestibule: The vestibule had pitch pine panelling to 1.24m. Stair to gallery on N side. Door to church on S side.

D6 W: 0.93m H: 2.26m Pine.

E Vestibule As W Vestibule but retains its original gable doorway.

Main church: Pine panelled to 1.30m with pink and green plaster above. The pillars supporting the gallery are painted cast iron, 130mm/5") in diameter and with slightly flared tops.

The pews are arranged in five blocks, one set of 8 rows either side of the pulpit, facing E and W and three blocks along the N wall facing S to the pulpit. The pew nearest the W side of the pulpit is enclosed by a door and had a built in table, this was presumably for elders/officers of the church. The pews are of pine, with plain round-topped ends.

The pulpit was set at the centre of the back of a low platform c 280mm high with two sets of two low steps; this is presumably where the communion table would have been placed. This platform is surrounded by a decorative wooden balustrade 1.28m high, with delicate arcading along the top. To the E of the platform are the stairs up to the pulpit.

The pulpit is set in a recessed, red-painted arch, framed by a wooden margin, matching the arch of the flanking windows. The pulpit itself is enclosed by five-sided wooden panels with a padded velvet top and a red velvet and tasselled bible rest.



Illus 21 Ground floor of interior looking E



Illus 22 Ground floor interior looking SE. Detail of decorative balustrade around platform.



Illus 23 Ground floor interior looking S. Pulpit.

Memorial

M8 White marble, set in wall between windows W6 and W7. In memory of Rev Hugh Fraser, minister from 1868 to 1917, and retired senior minister until his death in 1923.



Illus 24 Ground floor interior. Memorial M8.

First floor gallery

The gallery had pine paneling to 1.07m and plaster above. The flat ceiling partly obscured the tops of the gable windows which were recessed up into the loft space. Above the W window there was the hatch which would originally have held the bell ropes.

There were four sets of steps separating five tiers of pews, each containing 5 rows. The pews were of pine with plain flat-topped ends. The front pew in each tier was a closed 'box' with red plush cushioning and red velvet and tasseled front rail.

The front face of the gallery had a decorative paneled board dado.



Illus 25 Gallery looking E



Illus 26 Gallery. Front box pews

Vestry/Session Room

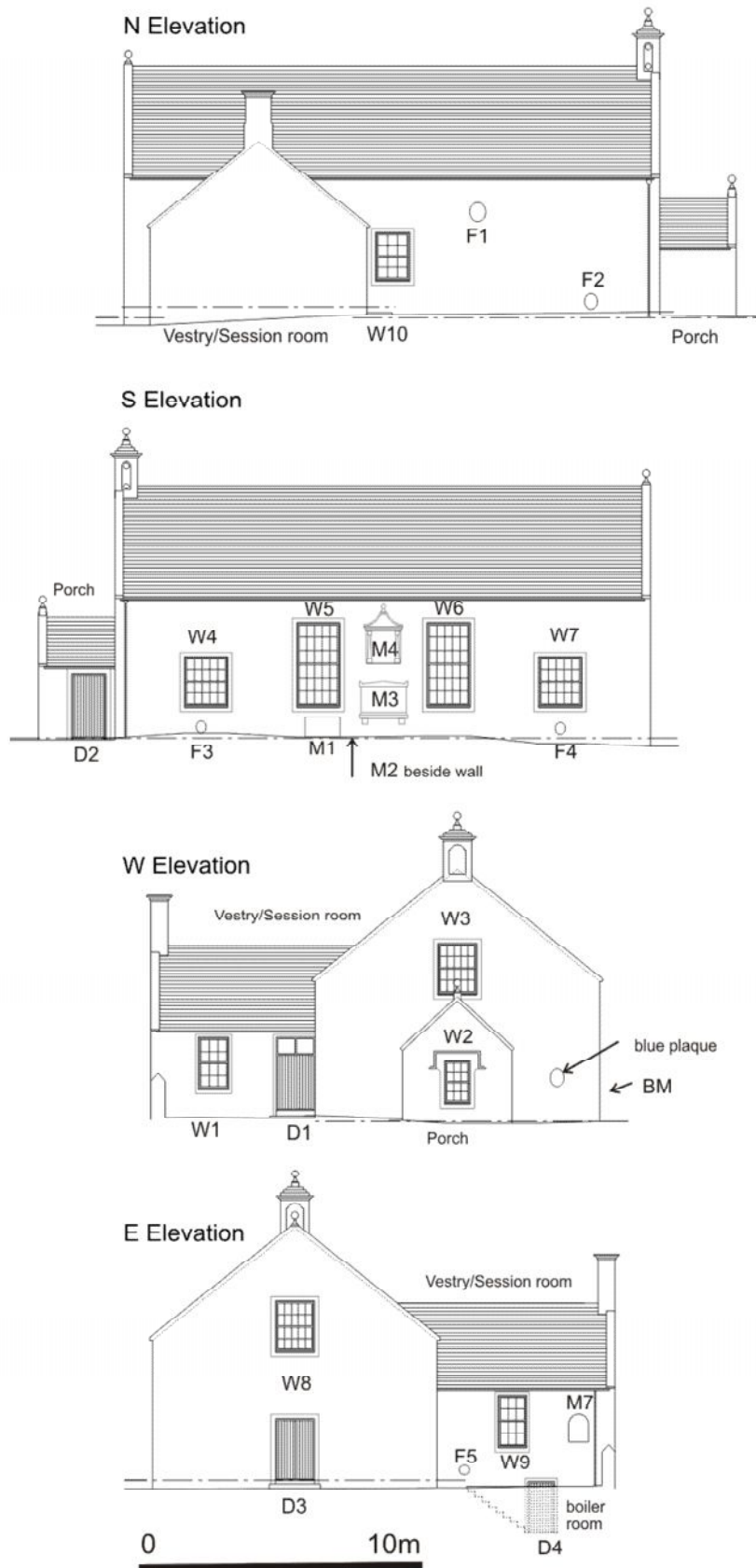
Vertical pine paneling with pink plaster above. There is a fireplace in the centre of the N wall, with a stone/concrete surround painted to look like green marble. Cast iron and tile fireplace. Iron fender. Large wooden cupboard to E of fireplace. Shelves along E and S walls.

An upright piano (J Marr Wood & Co Ltd. Aberdeen) stood against the N wall.

There is a small outer lobby to the external door.



Illus 27 Vestry/session room. Interior looking NE



Illus 28 Elevations annotated from drawings courtesy of Mansell Ritchie Architect.

7. References

Historic Scotland 2008 *Sash and Case Windows: A short guide for homeowners.*

Edinburgh: Historic Scotland

Old Statistical Account. 1792 Rev. Mr George Sangster, Alvah, County of Banff,

OSA, Vol. IV, 1792

New Statistical Account. Rev. Andrew Todd, Alvah, County of Banff, NSA, Vol.

XIII, 1845

Walker, D W & Woodworth, M 2015 *The Buildings of Scotland. Aberdeenshire:*

North and Moray. Yale University Press: New Haven and London.

8 Archive

A full set of photographs with the photo location plans will be supplied to the Aberdeenshire SMR.

Appendix 1:

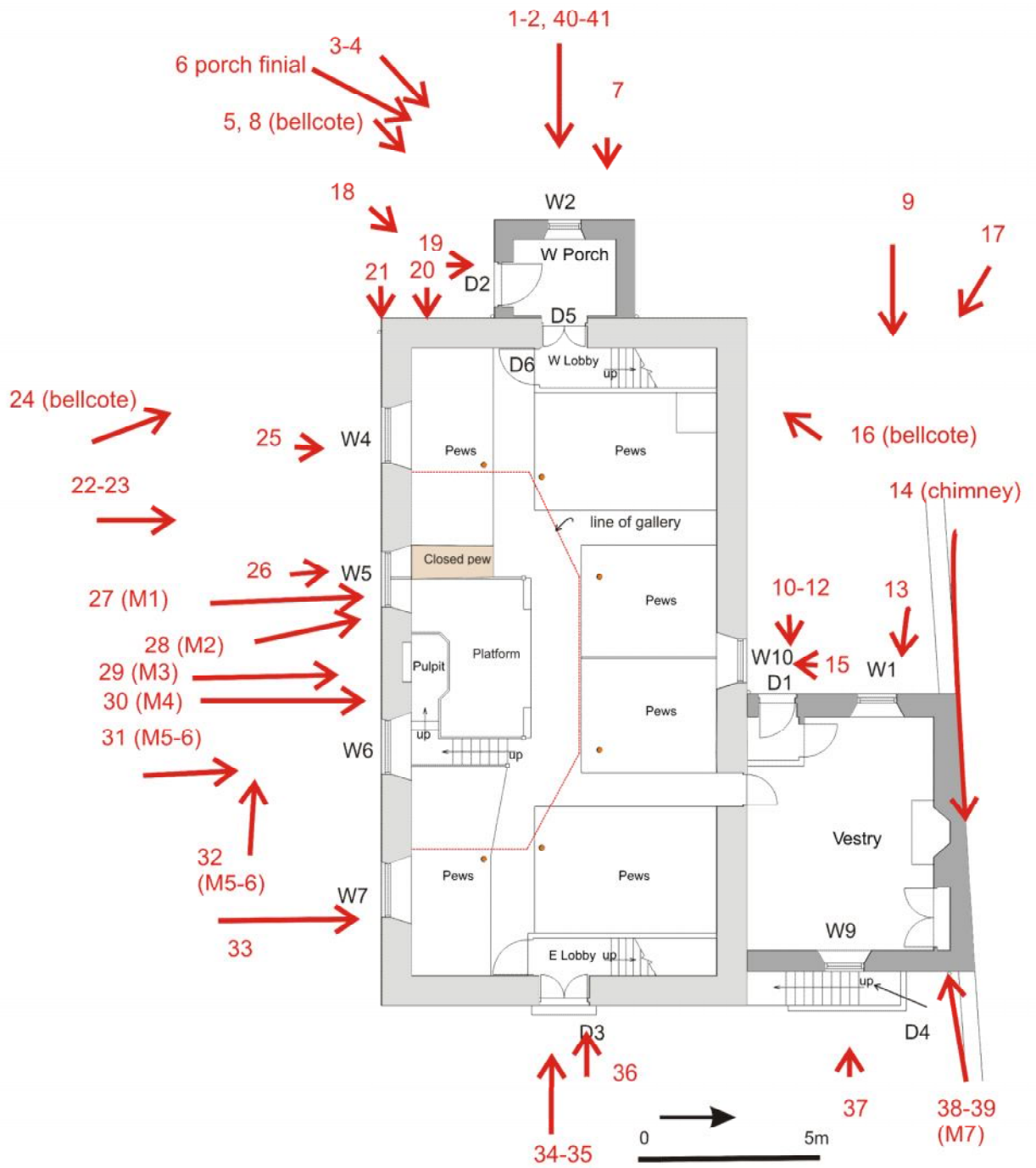
Photographic Catalogue

The position of photographs can be seen on annotated drawing Illus 29-31.

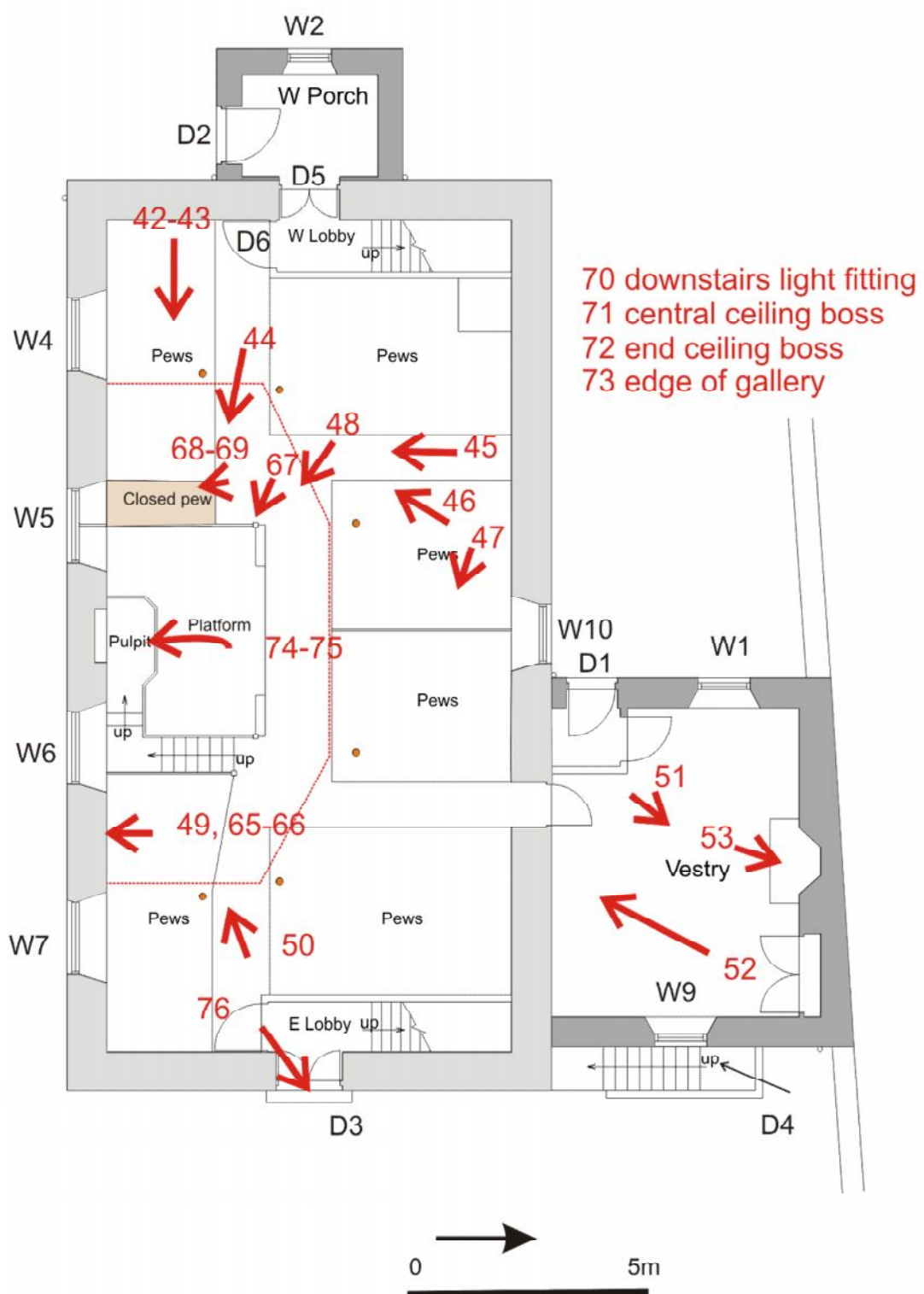
Photo number	Content
ALVAH OLD PARISH CHURCH	
1-4	W facade
5	Bellcote from W
6	Finial on porch from W
7	Window W2
8	Bellcote from W
9	Vestry/Session House W wall and N wall church
10-12	Vestry/Session House Door D1
13	Vestry/Session House W1
14	Vestry/Session House Chimney
15	Church N wall W10
16	Bellcote from SE
17	Vestry/Session House W wall and N wall church
18	Porch S and W walls
19	Porch D2 detail
20	Blue plaque on W wall church
21	Bench mark on SW corner church
22-23	S wall church
24	Bellcote from S
25	S wall window W4

Photo number	Content
ALVAH OLD PARISH CHURCH	
26	S wall window W5
27	S wall memorial M1
28	S wall memorial M2
29	S wall memorial M3
30	S wall memorial M4
31-32	S wall memorials M5 & M6
33	Vent F4
34-35	E wall church
36	E wall door D3
37	E wall Vestry/session room
38-39	E wall vestry memorial M7
40-41	W wall church
42-43	Interior ground floor looking E
44	Interior ground floor looking SE
45-46	Interior ground floor looking S
47	Interior ground floor looking E
48	Pulpit looking S
49	Memorial on S wall
50	Pulpit looking W
51	Vestry/session room looking NE
52	Vestry/session room looking SW
53	Vestry/session room detail fireplace
54	Gallery looking SE
55	Gallery looking SW
56	Gallery looking E
57-58	Pulpit from gallery

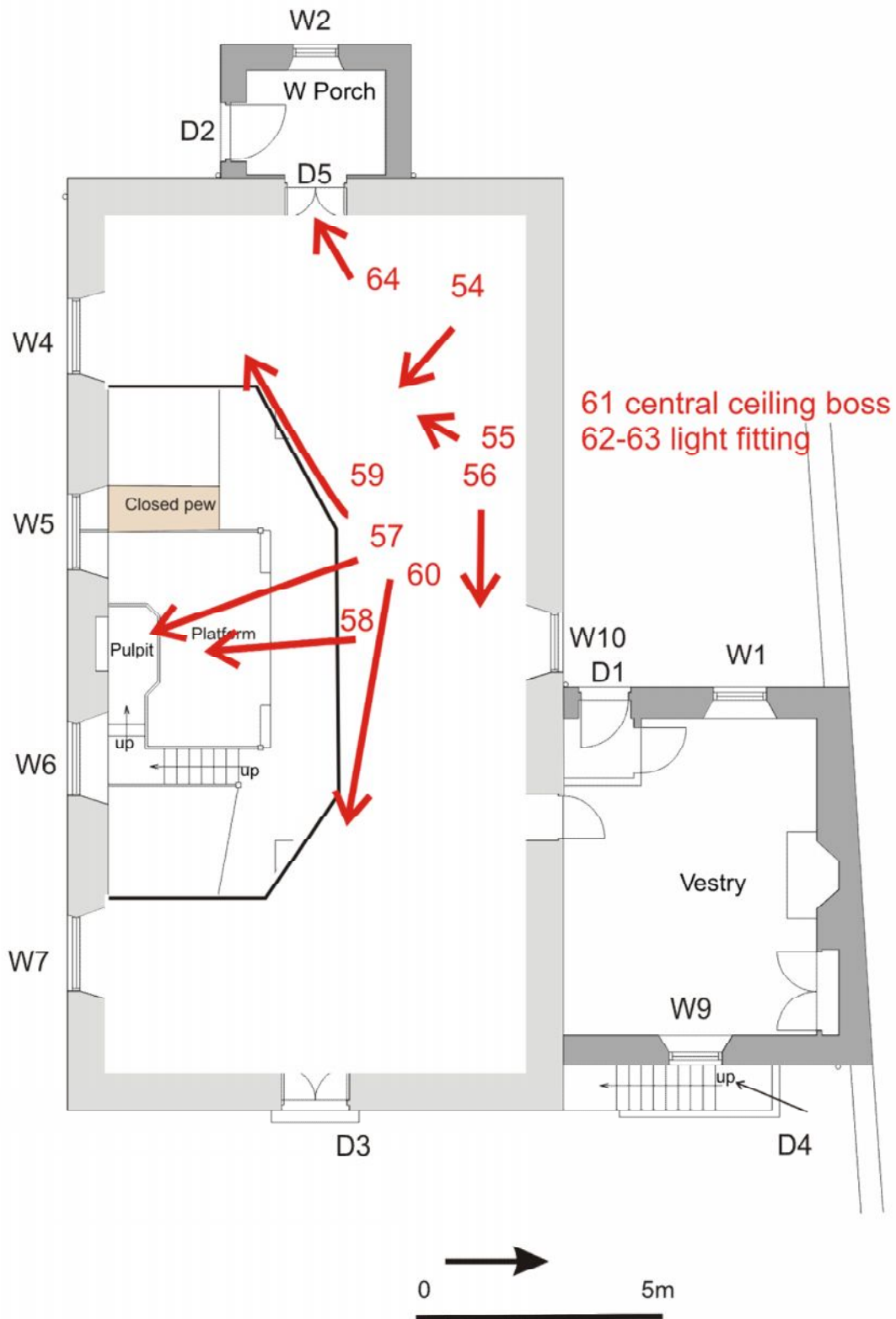
Photo number	Content
ALVAH OLD PARISH CHURCH	
59	Gallery closed front box pew
60	Gallery looking SE
61	Ceiling boss
62-63	Light fitting
64	Hatch above window W3 for bell ropes
65-66	Memorial on S wall M8
67	Detail of balustrade around platform
68-69	Closed box pew to W of pulpit
70	Light fitting below gallery
71-72	Ceiling bosses
73	Edge of gallery
74-75	Details of pulpit
76	Inside of E door D3
77-78	Basement/boiler house below Vestry/Session room



Illus 29 Photos external. Annotated from drawing courtesy of Mansell Ritchie Architect.



Illus 30 Photos ground floor, internal. Annotated from drawing courtesy of Mansell Ritchie Architect.



Illus 31 Photos gallery, internal. Annotated from drawing courtesy of Mansell Ritchie Architect.