



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

A Level 2 Building Record of Adstone Wesleyan Chapel

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Adstone Wesleyan Chapel

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Summary

An early 19th century agricultural building was converted in 1849 into a Wesleyan Chapel. It is now about to be converted and extended to become a home. Built of ironstone under a slate roof, the building survives as a shell, and there are few architectural details. It is however, testament to the simplicity of surroundings in a Wesleyan Methodist chapel in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Introduction

The former Wesleyan Chapel in the village of Adstone, Northamptonshire, is being converted into a home by David and Julia Wyles, with a substantial rear extension to designs by Roger Coy Partnership. The chapel lies on the roadside leading from Adstone to Maidford, Northamptonshire at NGR: SP 5960 5160; Fig 1.



Fig 1: Site location (arrowed)

Apparently built in 1849, as indicated by a prominent date-stone (otherwise defaced), the building is considered a non-designated heritage asset and accordingly at the request of Liz Mordue, Assistant Archaeological Adviser at Northamptonshire County Council, a requirement was placed on the planning consent by South Northamptonshire Council for its recording as a condition of its conversion to a home (Application no S/2017/1720/FUL; condition 8).

This was addressed in a two-part Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Iain Soden Heritage Services and approved before work began:

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Firstly, in November 2017 The building was subject to Level 2-compliant recording, as set down in the Historic England procedural document *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (2016).

Thereafter, a programme of monitoring of groundworks forms the second part of the approved WSI, and this will be added to this report, which will be reissued after groundworks have taken place.

Historic documents



Fig 2: Adstone in c1810 on the Ordnance Survey Surveyors' drawing (Sheet 228). Note the spelling! It is by no means certain that the future chapel can be discerned at all, although its location seems to be indicated by the roadside wedge of open land (leading into what became its front garden), arrowed.

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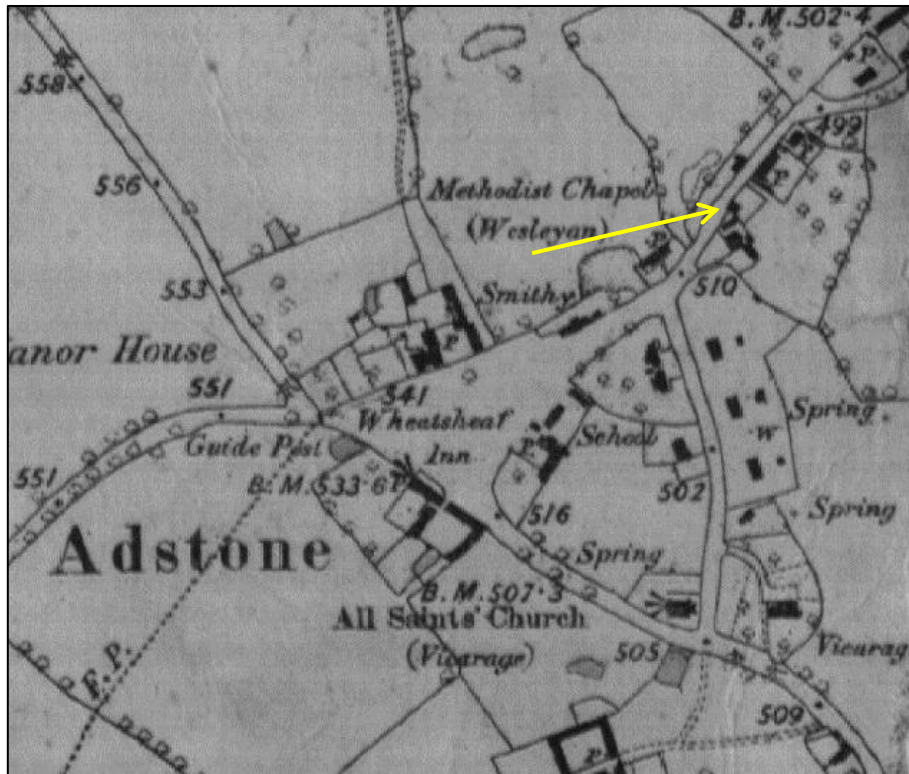


Fig 3: The village in c1880, as depicted by the Ordnance Survey 1st edition (Sheet 55SW). The site is arrowed as well as labelled.

The building exterior

This single-cell building is very plain indeed, warranting the simplest of entries in the RCHME Chapels and Meeting-houses inventory of Northamptonshire (RCHME 1986, 135).

The front of the building is coursed Northampton Sand with Ironstone, the wall pierced by two round-arched windows above ironstone sills. A third round arch with plain coursed stone tympanum sits above a Victorian six-panel front door. The brick wall leading to the outer door-jamb is a modern replacement for a taller ironstone example photographed in 1986 which swept up to almost head-height to keep the wind and rain off the front door (ibid, 135).

Between the two windows is a date-stone of 1849 formed apparently in mortar, but with a top half previously defaced and not legible.

The roof is of Welsh Slate with Staffordshire Blue ridge tiles. The north end is surmounted by a squat brick chimney and pot.

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Fig 4: The front face of the chapel (scale 2m). the dated 1849 wall abuts a brick farm building on the right.

The rear wall is plain and has no piercings at all, but for a patch where the walling has fallen out. However, it is in slightly different ironstone with different bedding planes and a different finish – it is far more lichen-covered; the coursing is far more haphazard than the front and there is a break at about two thirds of the way up. Above that the same coursing as is seen on the front takes up the remainder of the way to the eaves.



Fig 5: The rear face of the chapel (scale 2m). Note the change in coursing two thirds of the way up.

The southern gable is instructive. Here the more haphazard coursing of the back wall is carried around towards the front. At c1.2m from the front wall, there is a jagged join in the stonework, where the front of the building has been built onto an earlier rear.

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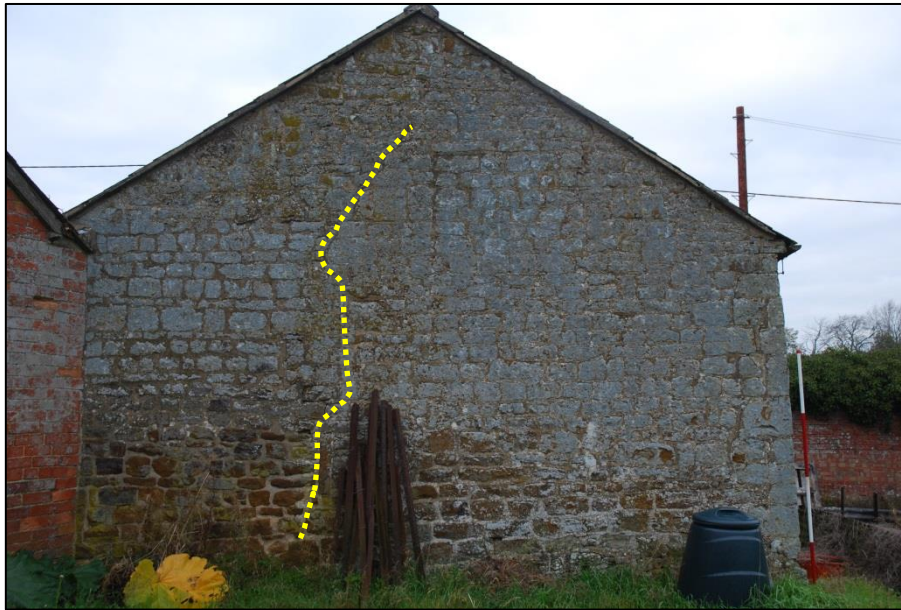


Fig 6: The south gable (scale 2m). The join of two stonework types is outlined.

The roadside (north) gable is partly covered in ivy. The same join as the south gable is not apparent. It is likely that the join at this end took place at the back of the gable (behind ivy), and the gable was a complete rebuild. A hole centrally placed high in the wall is a rodding point for a stove-pipe exiting the chapel and leading to the brick chimney within the gable wall thickness.



Fig 7: The north, roadside gable (scale 2m)

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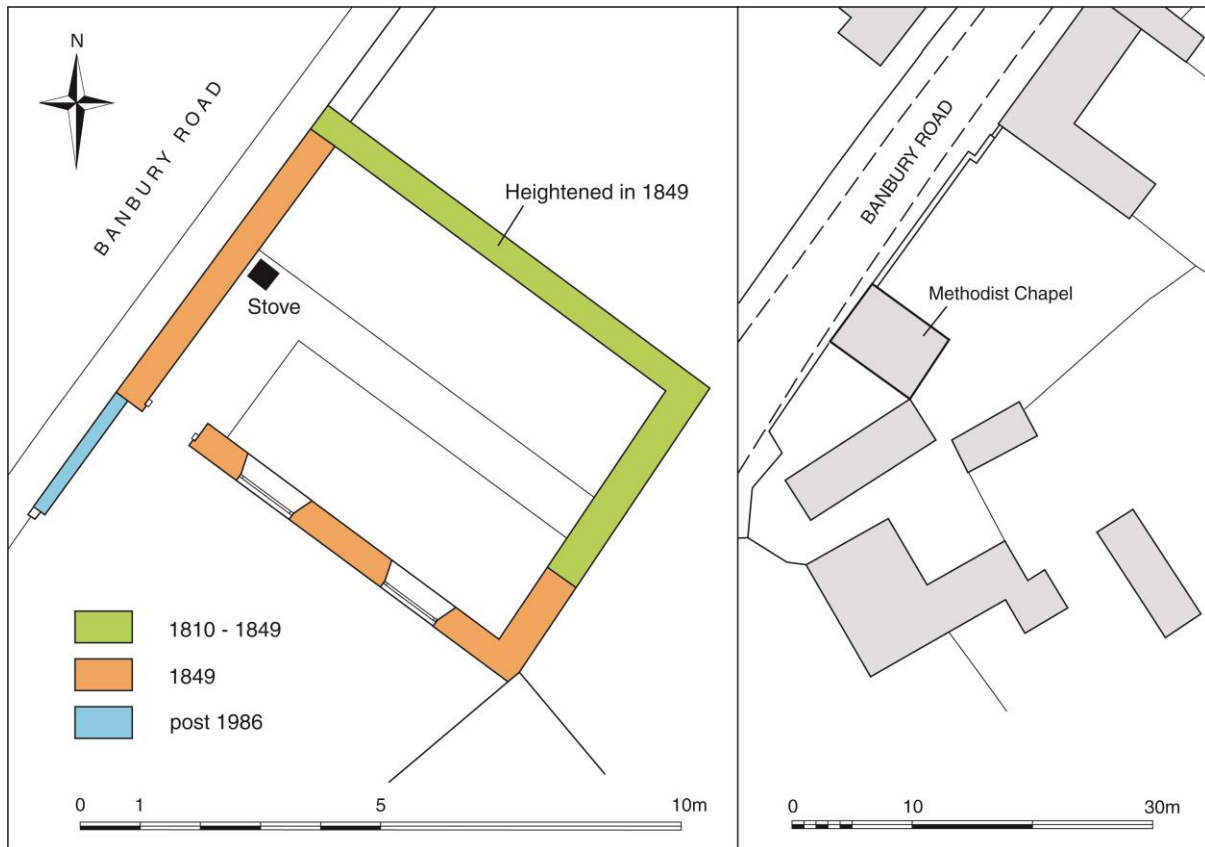


Fig 8: Phased plan of the building with the plot layout (Andy Isham after Roger Coy Partnership)

The building interior

Inside the chapel is a single small room, measuring c8m x c6m. Lit only along the west side, it is simply decorated with plaster scribed with false jointing to mimic ashlar stone. The plaster is undecorated below 1m (waist height) and it is considered that from floor to 1m was probably formerly tongue and groove panelling. A modern dado stencil then highlights the junction with the top half of the walls which are painted a pastel yellow. There are previous traces of a light blue colour scheme showing through. At head-height is a continuous wooden rail holding regularly-spaced coat and hat pegs, broken only by the doorway and (formerly) by whatever stood against the south end gable wall. This was possibly a lectern or some sort of tabernacle. It had been taken out some time ago, and the rail had subsequently infilled the space.

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Fig 9: The interior, looking south, scale 2m

The floor is mostly boarded out for chairs, but with a tiled walkway up the central axis, and a tiled area at the north end just inside the doorway. At that end there once stood a heating stove, which would have vented its gases through a hole half way up the gable wall into the chimney flue.

The roof is visible through a patch of collapsed ceiling. There is a central king post truss (typical of Victorian agricultural buildings) dividing the roof into two equal bays. This is probably of 1849.



Fig 10: Marks indicating the former presence of a lectern or tabernacle against the south wall (scale 2m). Later the space was infilled with a modification to the coat rail.

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Fig 11: The interior looking north-west towards the door (scale 2m). Note former stove position and stove-pipe exit above. A piano may have once stood in the far right corner of the room

Conclusions

This tiny chapel was converted from an earlier, probably agricultural building in 1849. Its interior is very plain and would have seated, at most about twenty to thirty. A tabernacle or lectern once stood at the front, and it was heated by a stove at the back. All four sides of the interior are furnished with metal coat and hat pegs.

The interior is a very simple space, with barely an embellishment. This is typical of 19th-century Methodism at its most primitive, part of its original appeal. Methodism was a strong force in both urban and rural communities of ordinary people in the 19th and early 20th centuries and represented the biggest challenge to the Church of England establishment since the rise of the Baptist movement. Many thousands gravitated towards their simple, scripture-based teaching and worship, lacking weighty liturgy but shot through with a strong sense of social justice, which endures in that denomination to this day. Begun by the great Christian preacher, John Wesley, and aided by his hymn-writing brother Charles, the Methodists appealed strongly to the working classes. They became a force in the early labour party, whose socialism was often intertwined with religious conviction (Prime Minister Harold Wilson for instance was a Methodist).

The small, probably agricultural building which preceded the chapel may have been built after 1810 as it is not readily apparent on the Ordnance Surveyors' map of that year. While that map is not always accurate, the relevant sheet in this case (228) does seem to show many of the village's buildings well.

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Bibliography

Historic England, 2016 *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice*.

RCHME, 1986 *An inventory of nonconformist chapels and meeting houses in central England: Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire (135-86)*

Appendix

OASIS data

Project Name	Adstone Wesleyan Chapel
OASIS ID	iainsode1-301041
Project Type	Building Recording
Originator	Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Previous/future work	Yes (monitoring during groundworks)
Current land use	Derelict building
Development type	Conversion to a home
Reason for investigation	Planning Condition
National grid reference	SP 5960 5160
Start/end dates of fieldwork	2 Nov 2017 (Building Recording)
Archive recipient	Northamptonshire Archive
Study area	250 sq m



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14 November 2017