

Historical Evaluation of

Gospel Hall, Ashford,
North Devon
EX31 4DB

By Catherine Cull Thomas
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Summary

A good example of a rural Gospel Hall typical to the area, built in 1835 and extended circa 1910 and again circa 1950. It originally comprised of one room with a fire place and pointed-arch windows. When it was then extended in circa 1910 to the east end of the room with a subservient gabled addition. In circa 1950 an extension to the south elevation of the 1910s addition was built to accommodate a kitchen and separate WC. The Gospel Hall was in active use for much of it's history, but the congregation dwindled to during the 1980s and it was disused from the early 2000s to 2014 when residential planning permission was granted to allow conversion to a 3 bedroom house with the circa 1950 extension being removed and replaced with a modern addition.

Introduction

This Building Recording was conducted in response to planning condition 5 ((historic building record) attach to planning permission 57623 for conversion to a residential property granted 01/08/14 and discharged 22/10/14. This document is written by the owner, Catherine Cull Thomas.

The WSI submitted to and approved by the Historic Environment Service is appended, and this WSI satisfied the lifting of condition 5 on the afore mentioned planning permission.

Field research was conducted during November 2014 by the owner, Catherine Cull Thomas.

A digital copy of the report will be uploaded onto the OASIS database, under OASIS ID: catherin1-233047.

Location

The Gospel Hall is situated in Ashford on the Heanton Punchardon road, OS Grid Reference: SS5296435470. See Figure 1 in Appendix 2.

The building is situated amongst modern bungalows and older properties along the south side of the road, with Horridge Farm opposite. This strip of property along the Heanton Punchardon road is surrounded by fields on either side, with the main village being located to the south east, along Strand Lane. See location plan, fig 1 and map, fig 2.

Methodology

Desk-based appraisal. This includes a desk-based appraisal of the site to place the development area into its historic and archaeological context. This includes examination of Ordnance Survey maps, the Ashford Tithe Map of 1842 and associated Apportionments. It also includes analysis of the original 1834 indenture

and an unattributed history of the Gospel Hall found amongst the contents still in the chapel at the time of its conversion.

Field analysis. A record has been made of the building's layout, including a drawn plan and photographic record. Both a drawn and photographic record of the king beams in the original part of the building has been made, and photos of the exterior are also submitted. An analytical record of this field analysis is also presented as part of this report.

Research

There is no building marked on the Ashford Tithe map of 1842, instead plot 44, the land it now occupies, is described as "House and court plot". The owner of the site was Hayman Lovering, and the indenture of 12/12/1834 shows Hayman Lovering gifting the completed Gospel Hall to a range of trustees. Pevsner put the completion date of the original building at 1835¹ and the unattributed history of the building² found during field research gives the completion date as 1834. This is evidence is rather conflicting, but the legal indenture is a very strong indication that the building existed in 1834.

The first edition OS map of 1888 clearly shows the Gospel Hall marked "Baptist Chapel", and its shape on the map may indicate that the second edition had been added by this point, however, there is no further mapping, planning or legal evidence to support a construction date for either the first or the second addition to the building. Some of the woodwork inside the original and first addition was dated on the reverse as 1910, and the unattributed history of the building states "In 1910 it was decided to enlarge the Guild" which may also indicate a date of 1910 for the first extension.

There is no planning record for the kitchen and WC addition to the south side of the first addition, which may indicate that it predates the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 which came into effect on 1st July 1948.

The listed building register indicates that The Gospel Hall was grade II listed in in 1985 with the description also encompassing the graveyard walls, gate piers and gates. Its citation is as follows:

Small chapel, probably C19, stone rubble heavily mortared except on south side which is roughcast rendered. Slate roof with plain bargeboards at each gable end (Ritual west end) Tall single storey with lower C20 rubble extension and lean-to at left gable end. Pair of tilting casements, 8/12 panes on each side with slate sills and thin lintels, inserted in former pointed arched openings. Small square window, 2/2 panes set high at ritual east end with slate sills and lintel. Pointed arch doorway in extension on north side wall with plank door. Chapel and small graveyard surrounded on three sides by rubble wall with rounded stone capping, low to left hand end, north and part of farside, high at right hand end. Gate piers built up for nearside entrance with wrought iron gate with pointed bars and dogbars and small wrought iron gate at nearside left corner

with central spear-headed bar. Plain interior with the pews facing west, suggesting the orientation of the chapel may have been reversed with the addition of the extension.¹

No specialist analysis or reports were found to be necessary in the course of the renovation and conversion of the Gospel Hall, in line with the methodology outlined in the WSI (see appendix 1).

Description of Findings

A Gospel Hall is a simple building used by independent group usually describe themselves simply as "Christians" gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus. They tend to be Evangelical and dispensational in nature, and these groups were relatively common in North Devon in the late 19th Century, and some are still active today. Gospel Halls from this period are generally in rural locations and take their architectural style and choice of building methods and materials from the agricultural buildings of the same time period.

To this end, The Gospel Hall, Ashford is single skin, rubble construction gable-ended building with a Delabole slate roof. The windows were originally pointed arch openings, but it was later remodelled to incorporate rectangular openings. The pointed arch doorway in the first extension, however, echoes this original theme. The first extension of circa 1910 adds space to the main worship area of the hall, and it is built with a matching gable roof subservient to the original structure and a large rectangular window to the eastern elevation. This roof is again clad in Delabole slate. The second extension of circa 1950 is of concrete block, cavity construction with roughcast render (which is continued along the southern elevation of the original chapel.

Inside, the chapel has a slate aisle leading to a pitch pine lectern at the eastern end. The lower half of the room is clad in pitch pine tongue and groove woodwork (replaced with modern pine on the southern elevation) with pitch pine pews grafted into this cladding in the original section of the building only. The kitchen/WC extension is equipped with very basic and dated fixtures, and the kitchen and first extension to the chapel have lino to the floor. A curtain is in place that could be used to separate the original and more recent section of the main hall. Figure 5 shows the floorplan of the chapel in it's current layout. Figures 6 and 7 shows the elevations.

To the eastern and northern elevations of the building there is a rubble wall with rounded stone capping. The western end of the plot incorporates a small (unconsecrated) graveyard with grave stones dating from the first half of the 19th century. There is a simple, wrought iron gate between gateposts in front of the pointed arch, tongue and groove door.²

¹ Pevsner, Devon (Pevsner Architectural Guides: Buildings of Scotland)

² "A Precious Seed" reproduced in Appendix 2

The roof of the original building is of king beam construction, with 4 king beams supporting this roof. The beams are held together with pine pegs and a square iron bolt through the apex of the “k”. Figure 5 shows the position of the kingbeams and Figure 8 shows the design. No examination of the roof construction of the first extension was made as the ceiling was still intact at the time of the survey. The second extension is a lean-to addition with a cut roof.

The floor in all of the chapel is of pine abutted board construction with wooden floor joists. In the original hall, dwarf red brick walls support the slate aisle, and these dwarf walls are backfilled with ash. A ringbeam supports the floorboards on either side of this dwarf wall. There is some evidence of a fire having previously existed in the north-west corner of the building. The subfloor is bare earth.

Interpretation of Findings

The Gospel Hall, Ashford is a good example of a rural Gospel Hall typical to the area, built in 1835 and extended circa 1910 and again circa 1950. It originally comprised of one room with a fireplace and pointed-arch windows. When it was then extended in circa 1910 to the east end of the room with a subservient gabled addition. In circa 1950 an extension to the south elevation of the 1910s addition was built to accommodate a kitchen and separate WC.

The dating of the original building can be made with some confidence due to the indenture, and despite the tithe apportionment of 7 years later referring to a “plot” rather than a building. The dating of the later additions is more difficult due to the lack of strong documentary evidence to support a timeline for the building. However, given the documentary evidence available and in conjunction with the building style, it is estimated that the actual date of construction is within a tolerance of 10 years either side of the provisional date given.

The engineering requirements of the redevelopment to dig foundations in the subfloor of the original chapel gave a good opportunity to glean additional information on the Gospel Hall’s original construction. There was no evidence of the historical fire place in the current building, or use of red brick, so these finds were additional to the evidence that could otherwise have been collected.

Project Archive

A digital copy of the report will be uploaded onto the OASIS database, under OASIS ID: catherin1-233047.

Appendix 1 – WSI

WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION (WSI) FOR HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING OF ASHFORD GOSPEL HALL ASHFORD, NORTH DEVON EX31 4DB

Planning Application No. 57623

Proposal: Conversion of Gospel Hall to 3 bedroom dwelling

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document forms a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) and it is produced by the owner of the chapel, Catherine Cull Thomas. It sets out the methodology for the historic building recording to be undertaken at the Gospel Hall, Ashford and for related off site analysis and reporting, prior to conversion of the building to a 3-bedroom dwelling (PA nos 57623 and 57624).

1.2 The WSI and the schedule of work it proposes were drawn up in accordance to a brief issued by the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (HET) in accordance with the following condition of planning consent:

‘The development hereby approved shall not commence until a programme of historic building recording and analysis has been carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The development thereafter shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme or such other details as subsequently agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.’

2 AIM

2.1 To make a record of the historic building prior to the commencement of the conversion works.

2.2 To analyse and report on the results of the project as appropriate.

3 METHOD

3.1 Desk-based appraisal. This will include a desk-based *appraisal* of the site to place the development area into its historic and archaeological context. This will include examination of Ordnance Survey maps, Tithe Map(s) and Apportionments and any other information available at the Devon Heritage Centre (DHC). It will also include analysis of historical records relating to the ownership and trusteeship of the chapel.

3.2 Field analysis. A record will be made of the building. This work will conform to Level 2 - 3 of recording levels as set in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice - English Heritage 2006* (available on-line at the English Heritage website) and described in outline below:

Level 2 is a **descriptive record**, made in circumstances similar to those of Level 1 but when more information is needed. It may be made of a building which is judged not to require any fuller record, or it may serve to gather data for a wider project. Both the exterior and the interior will be viewed, described and photographed. The record will present conclusions regarding the building's development and use, but will not discuss in detail the evidence on which these conclusions are based. A plan and sometimes other drawings may be made but the drawn record will normally not be comprehensive and may be tailored to the scope of a wider project.

Level 3 is an **analytical record**, and will comprise an introductory description followed by a systematic account of the building's origins, development and use. The record will include an account of the evidence on which the analysis has been based, allowing the validity of the record to be re-examined in detail. It will also include all drawn and photographic records that may be required to illustrate the building's appearance and structure and to support an historical analysis.

The information contained in the record will for the most part have been obtained through an examination of the building itself. If documentary sources are used they are likely to be those which are most readily accessible, such as historic Ordnance Survey maps, trade directories and other published sources. The record will not normally discuss the building's broader stylistic or historical context and importance at any length. It may, however, form part of a wider survey – thematic or regional, for example – of a group of buildings, in which additional source material contributes to an overall historical and architectural synthesis. A Level 3 record may also be appropriate when the fabric of a building is under threat but time or resources are insufficient for detailed documentary research, or where the scope for such research is limited.

3.3 Scale drawings will be produced/sourced to show the site plan, plan of the layout of the chapel including scale and location of king beams, pews and pulpit (cross section and floor plan).

3.4 An adequate photographic record of the historic building recording work will be prepared. This will include photographs illustrating the principal architectural features and any finds discovered, in detail and in context. The photographic record will also include working shots to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted. All photographs of archaeological detail will feature an appropriately-sized scale. The drawn and written record will be on an appropriately archivable medium.

3.5 Should these works encounter historic fabric that contains palaeoenvironmental or datable elements, appropriate sampling and analysis will be undertaken by a suitable sub-contractor. This would include consideration of sampling of historic thatch and cob for plant macro-fossil analysis, dendrochronological samples for dating purposes, etc. Any assessment and analysis will be undertaken in accordance with English Heritage's guidance in *Environmental Archaeology: a guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation 2002*.

3.6 Should significant historical and/or architectural elements be exposed within the building by conversion/construction works the North Devon District Council Conservation Officer, and the HET will be informed. I (the applicant) will ensure that any such exposed elements remain undisturbed until their significance can be determined and to allow consideration for their retention *in situ*.

3.7 The results of any desk-based work undertaken and a copy of the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation will be shared with the site director/supervisor to enable the adequate interpretation of exposed features/deposits during fieldwork and that the agreed programme of works is understood and undertaken.

4. MONITORING

4.1 I will agree monitoring arrangements with the County Historic Environment Team and the District Conservation Officer and give two weeks' notice, unless a shorter period is agreed with the HET, of commencement of the fieldwork. Details will be agreed of any monitoring points where decisions on options within the programme are to be made.

4.2 Monitoring will continue until the deposition of the site archive and finds, and the satisfactory completion of an OASIS report.

4.3 I will notify the HET upon completion of the fieldwork stage of these works.

5. REPORTING

5.1 A report will be produced within 3 months of completing the fieldwork, and as set out in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice - English Heritage 2006*:

The report will include:

- (i) a summary of the project's background;
- (ii) description and illustration of the buildings location;
- (iii) a methodology of all works undertaken;
- (iv) include plans and reports of all documentary and other research undertaken;

- (v) a description of the project's results;*
- (vi) an interpretation of the results in the appropriate context;*
- (vii) a summary of the contents of the project archive and its location (including summary catalogues of finds and samples);*
- (viii) a site location plan at an appropriate scale on an Ordnance Survey, or equivalent, base-map;*
- (ix) a plan showing the layout of the buildings subject to this programme of work in relation to identifiable landscape features and other buildings;*
- (x) the results of the historic building recording that shall include a written description and analysis of the historic fabric of the building, appropriately illustrated with phased plans, cross-section drawing, internal and external scale elevations and plans, illustration - drawn and photographic - of elements of special architectural or historic interest, annotated architects plans;*
- (xi) photographs showing the general site layout and exposed significant features of historic or architectural significance that are referred to in the text. All photographs should contain appropriate scales, the size of which will be noted in the illustration's caption;*
- (xii) a consideration of evidence within its wider context;*
- (xiii) any specialist assessment or analysis reports that where undertaken;*
- (xiv) an evaluation of the methodology employed and the results obtained (i.e. a confidence rating).*

A draft report will be submitted to the HET for comment prior to its formal submission to the Local Planning Authority

5.2 On completion of the final report, hard copies of the report shall be emailed to the HET and the Conservation Officer in PDF format on the understanding that it may in future be made available to researchers via a web-based version of the Historic Environment Record.

5.3 The archaeological consultant shall complete an online OASIS (*Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS*) form in respect of the archaeological work. This will include a digital version of the report. The report or short entry to the Historic Environment Record will also include the OASIS ID number.

6. PUBLICATION

Where the exposure of architectural or historic building fabric is limited or of little significance reporting will follow on directly from the fieldwork - see section 5 above.

Should particularly significant architectural, archaeological or palaeoenvironmental remains, finds and/or deposits be encountered, then these, because of their importance, are likely to merit wider publication in line with government planning guidance (paragraph 141 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (2012)). If such remains are encountered, the publication requirements – including any further analysis that may be necessary – will be confirmed with the HET.

6.1 Where excavations reveal archaeological, artefactual or palaeoenvironmental deposits that have potential for yielding important information about the site or its environs, through specialist assessment and analysis, this assessment work will be undertaken and reported on in a separate formal Post-Excavation Assessment and Project Design. This document may also fulfil the role of an interim report if a substantial publication delay is expected. This document will be produced by an archaeological contractor within three months of completion of the fieldwork - specialist input allowing - and agreed with the HET. It will include:

- 1) A summary of the project and its background
- 2) A plan showing the location of the site and plans of the site showing the location of archaeological features, artefactual or palaeoenvironmental deposits exposed
- 3) Research aims and objectives
- 4) Method statements setting out how these aims and objectives are to be achieved
- 5) Details of the tasks to be undertaken
- 6) The results of any specialist assessment work undertaken as part of the production of the formal Assessment and Project Design
- 7) Proposed project team
- 8) Overall timetable for undertaking the tasks as well as setting out monitoring points with the HET
- 9) Details of the journal in which the material is to be published

7. ARCHIVE

7.1 On completion of the project an ordered and integrated site archive will be prepared in accordance with section 8 of the Brief prepared by the HET. The digital element of the archive will be transferred to the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) for long-term curation within 6 months of completion of fieldwork. A licence to copyright for documentary material, in both physical and digital forms, will be given to the ADS.

7.2 It is anticipated that the archive will consist of two elements:

- 1) The digital archive of the report
- 2) Copies of any photographs not presented in the report (including their metadata)

7.3 Should the programme of historic building recording yield any artefactual material or involve the recovery of architectural elements that are worthy of deposition with the collecting museum, I will contact the collecting museum as soon as such material finds are recovered to obtain an accession or reference number and agree future conditions for deposition with the museum. Items in the material archive will be cleaned (or otherwise treated) ordered, recorded, packed and boxed in accordance with the deposition standards of the relevant

museum. Early consultation with the museum will facilitate transfer of the material archive. Any finds will remain in my ownership and an agreement will be made with the museum for the time-limited retention of the material and its full analysis and recording.

7.4 I will offer the primary paper record archive to the museum prior to filing it in my office.

7.5 I will notify the HET upon the completion of:

- i) Deposition of the site report with the ADS,
- ii) Deposition of any additional digital images with the ADS.

8. CONFLICT WITH OTHER CONDITIONS AND STATUTORY PROTECTED SPECIES

It is the applicant's (my) responsibility to ensure that the required archaeological works do not conflict with any other conditions that have been imposed upon the consent granted and should also consider any biodiversity issues as covered by the NERC Act 2006. In particular, such conflicts may arise where archaeological investigations/excavations have the potential to have an impact upon protected species and/or natural habitats e.g. SSSIs, National Nature Reserves, Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Ramsar sites, County Wildlife Sites etc.

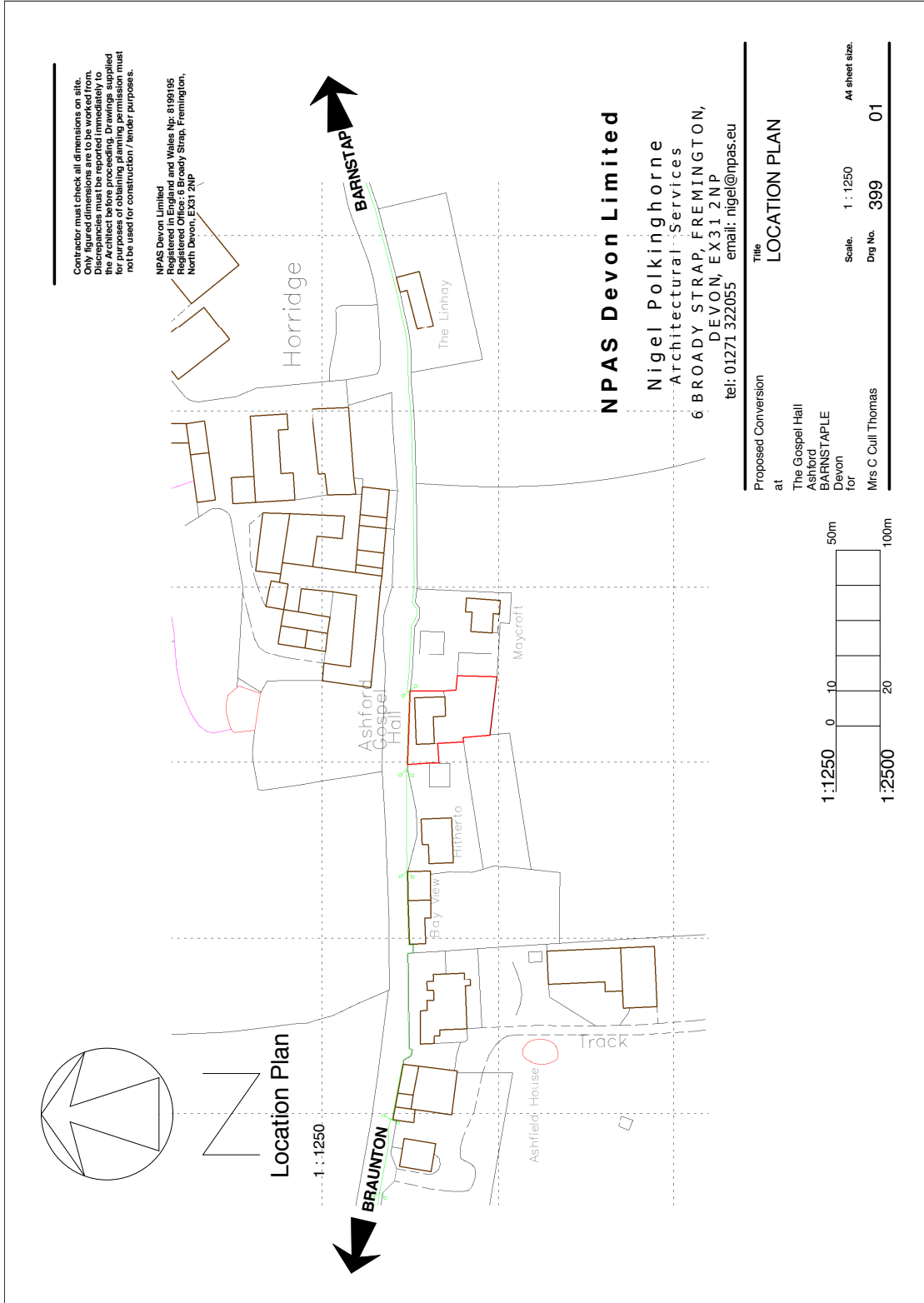
9 PERSONNEL & MONITORING

9.1 The project will be managed by Catherine Cull Thomas (catherinecullthomas@gmail.com 07515 945825 postal address: 54 Queensmill Road, London, SW66JS). Should any further sub-contractors be employed (see section 3.5 of this WSI), then their contact details will be provided to the HET and this WSI updated to show their contact details.

2nd September, 2014

Appendix 2 – Photographs and Figures

Figure 1 – Location Plan



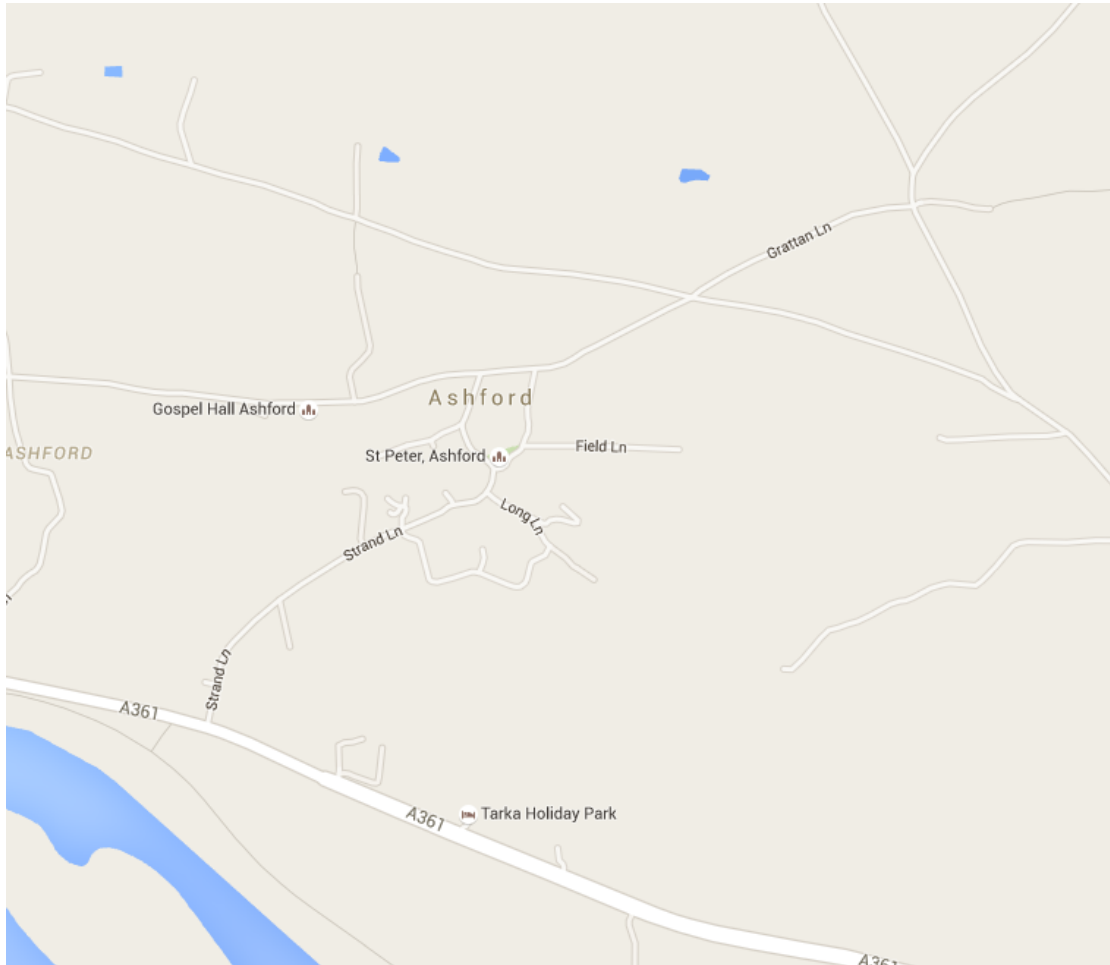


Figure 2- Map showing location of the Gospel Hall



Figure 3 – The Ashford Title Map of 1842

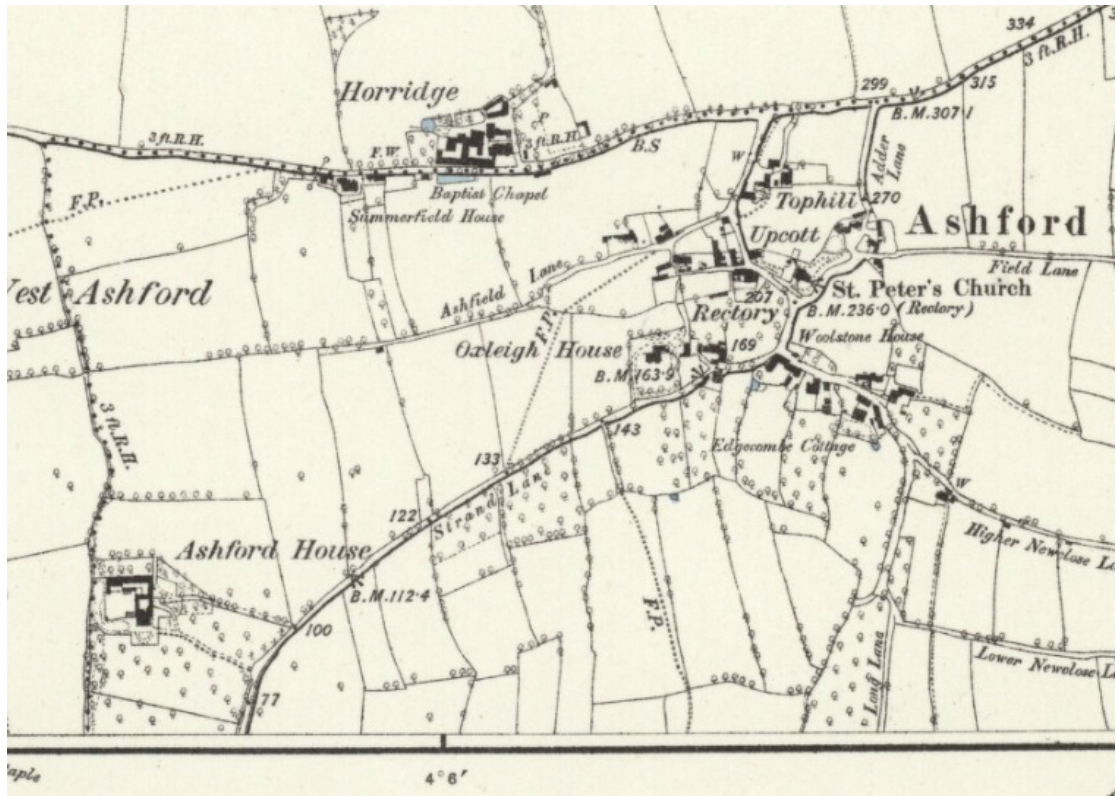


Figure 4 – The First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of Ashford. 1888

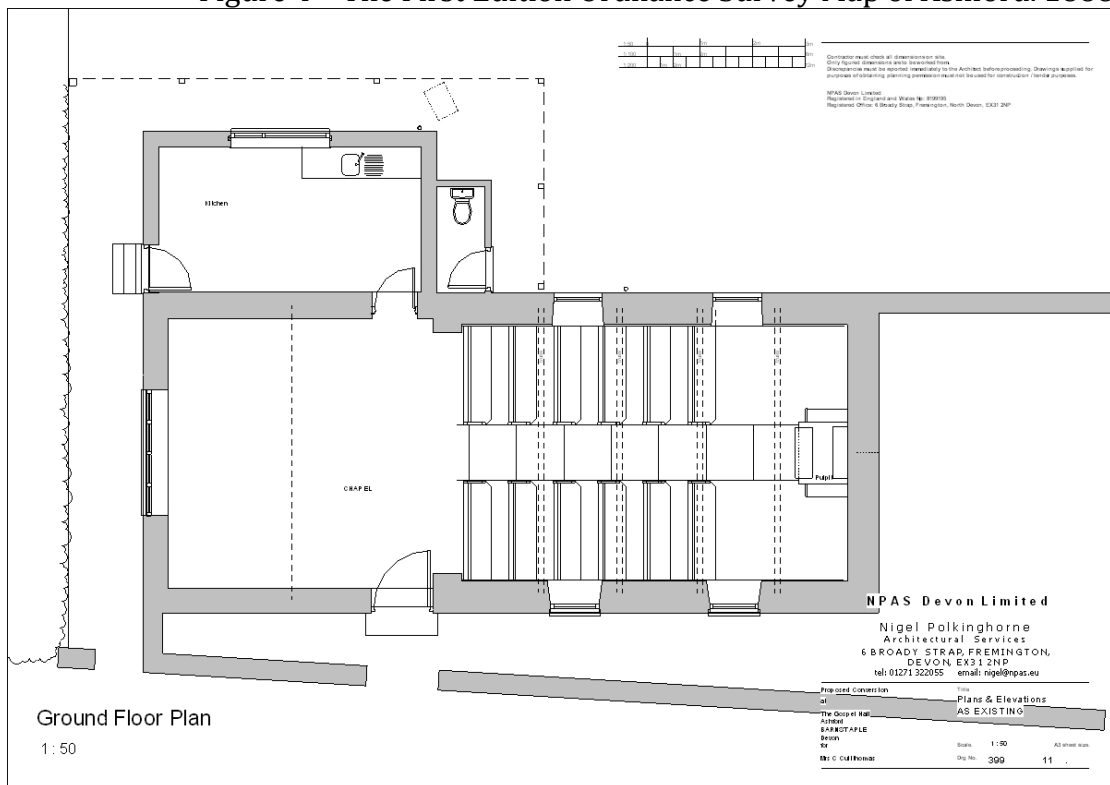


Figure 5 – Floor plan of the chapel showing position of king beams

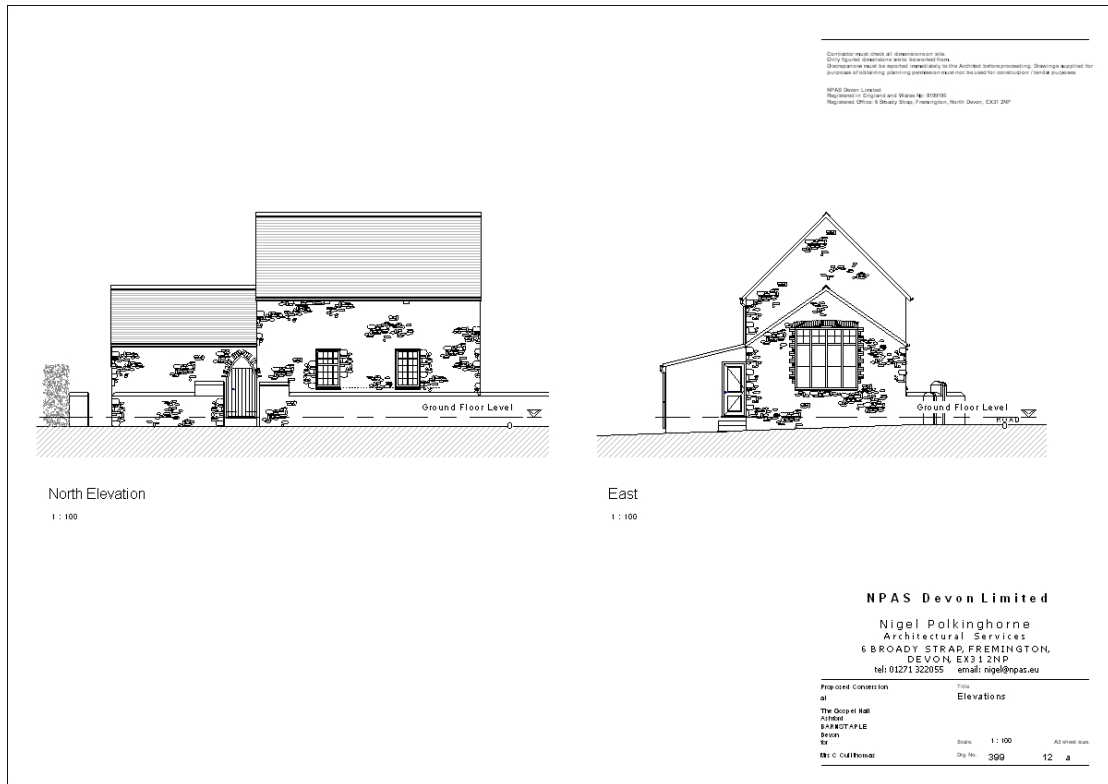


Figure 6 – North and East Elevations



Figure 7 – South and West Elevation

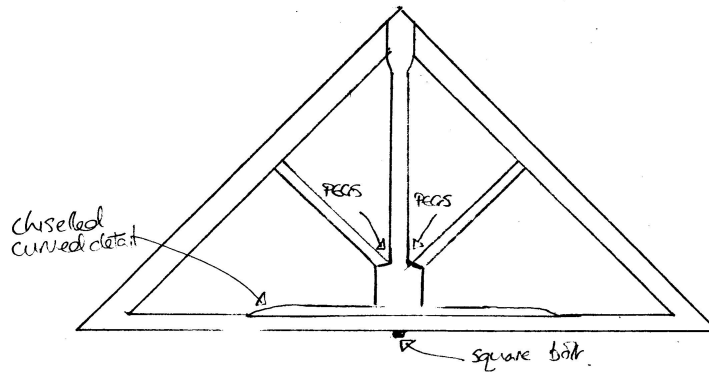


Figure 8 – Diagram of a kingbeam

Precious Seed 1949

In 1897 only 3 held the Fort at Ashford Gospel Hall God has led a succession of His faithful servants there - for more than a century the work has carried on. The Chapel was built in 1834 & the yearly rent according to the deeds was to be on grain of wheat if demanded! In 1897 the congregation had dwindled to 3 humble souls. One day Miss Cutcliffe was busy scrubbing the floor when Mr L. H. Alford came. He and his family were coming to live at Horridge. The governess to the Alford family (Miss Smith) started a S. School. Some months after the Darch family came to another farm (the Scotts) Mr Fred Darch accepted responsibility of the S.S. & later his brother Albert carried on. About 1907 the assembly was inherited by Mr John Elliot who was almost blind, a remarkable Evangelist - Mr Alford read for him Archie Brown

Figure 9 – Page 1 of Precious Seed

Visits by Messrs Dawson & Co., Fred Glover
W.D. Dunning & later W. Molland & Mr. C. Mc
Ewen. Annual May Missionary Conventions
have always been a great attraction & raised
much money for Missionary Work.

Figure 10 - Page 2 of *Precious Seed*



Figure 11 – View of the original section of the hall



Figure 12 – one of the windows in the original section of the hall



Figure 13 – View of the interior side of the door in the North elevation of the c1910 addition



Figure 14 – View of the large window in the c1910 addition



Figure 15 – View of the kitchen in the c1950 addition



Figure 16 – View of the door and iron gates



Figure 17 – View of the chapel from the road



Figure 18 – View of the pulpit