

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

United Reform Church, Haughley, Suffolk

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Archaeological Record

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**United Reform Church,
(Former Congregational Chapel),
Old Street, Haughley,
Suffolk
(TM 027 629)**

An Archaeological Record

This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a redundant chapel and associated hall. The report has been prepared to a brief written by the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council (Dr Jess Tipper, 23 October 2008, Ref. /FormerUnitedReformChurch_Haughley2008) and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for residential conversion partial demolition (Mid Suffolk District Council application 2202/08).

Introduction

The following report is accompanied by a CD containing a full photographic record in the form of 50 8.2 megapixel digital images (Appendix 1) but also includes printed photographs of key features (Appendix 2). Each image is separately described in the report, and a white metre scale rod with centimetre sub-divisions was included wherever possible. The site was inspected on 1st December 2008.

Summary

The redundant United Reform Church at Haughley was built in 1835 or 1843 as a daughter establishment of the Congregational Church in neighbouring Stowmarket (there is conflicting documentary evidence of the precise date). The chapel is set back from the medieval street frontage behind a small yard, but there is no evidence that it possessed a burial ground. Designed as a timber structure with a rendered exterior it was cased in red brick during the 20th century and its original arched windows lost, but the northern entrance porch and panelled benches survive from its foundation. These benches are fine examples of their type, with raised tiers for children flanking the central entrance, but the building has been too heavily altered to merit listing. A small side-vestry was added to the simple rectangular hall in the mid-19th century, and replaced with the present example in 1995. A detached wooden hall

to the rear was built in 1932 to accommodate a Sunday school and other ancillary activities and is not of sufficient age or rarity to merit listing or retention.



Figure 1
Existing Ordnance Survey Site Plan
Outlining the Chapel and attached vestry and showing Old Street to the north and the rectangular profile of Chapel Hall (1932) to the south

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Historic Context: Documentary & Cartographic Record

The redundant United Reform Church in Haughley lies on the southern side of Old Street, approximately 300 m south-east of the parish church of St Mary. The building is set back by 13 m (43 ft) from the street frontage, as defined by a number of medieval listed buildings, behind a small yard. This yard is now open and laid to grass, but is shown enclosed by iron railings and containing what appear to be examples of topiary in an early-20th century photograph in the possession of the present owners (figure 5). It is possible that the yard

overlies the site of a demolished medieval property, and that archaeological evidence of early occupation may lie beneath.

An ostensibly well-researched but unpublished 'History of Haughley' written in c.1967 by Revd Nigel McCulloch states that the URC was founded in 1843 as a daughter church of the Congregational Church in neighbouring Stowmarket (extract in possession of present owners, and see 'A Suffolk Bibliography', SRS, 1979). In that year Mr William Prentice and eleven other men, members of the Stowmarket Chapel, were 'dismissed to Haughley to found a church there'. McCulloch refers to a Sunday School held in 1835, and this may explain a contradictory statement in a typed notice pinned to the wall of the Chapel Hall at the time of inspection: 'the Chapel was built in 1835 and was officially opened in September of that year'. A date of foundation appeared on a plaque on the northern gable prior to its re-facing in brick during the 20th century, and this may prove legible on the original of the photograph in figure 5 (which could not be traced for the purpose of this report).



Figure 2

Haughley Tithe Map of 1844, showing the layout of the town to the south of the castle motte, with detail of the 'Chapel and Yard' (no.16) beneath. Ipswich SRO

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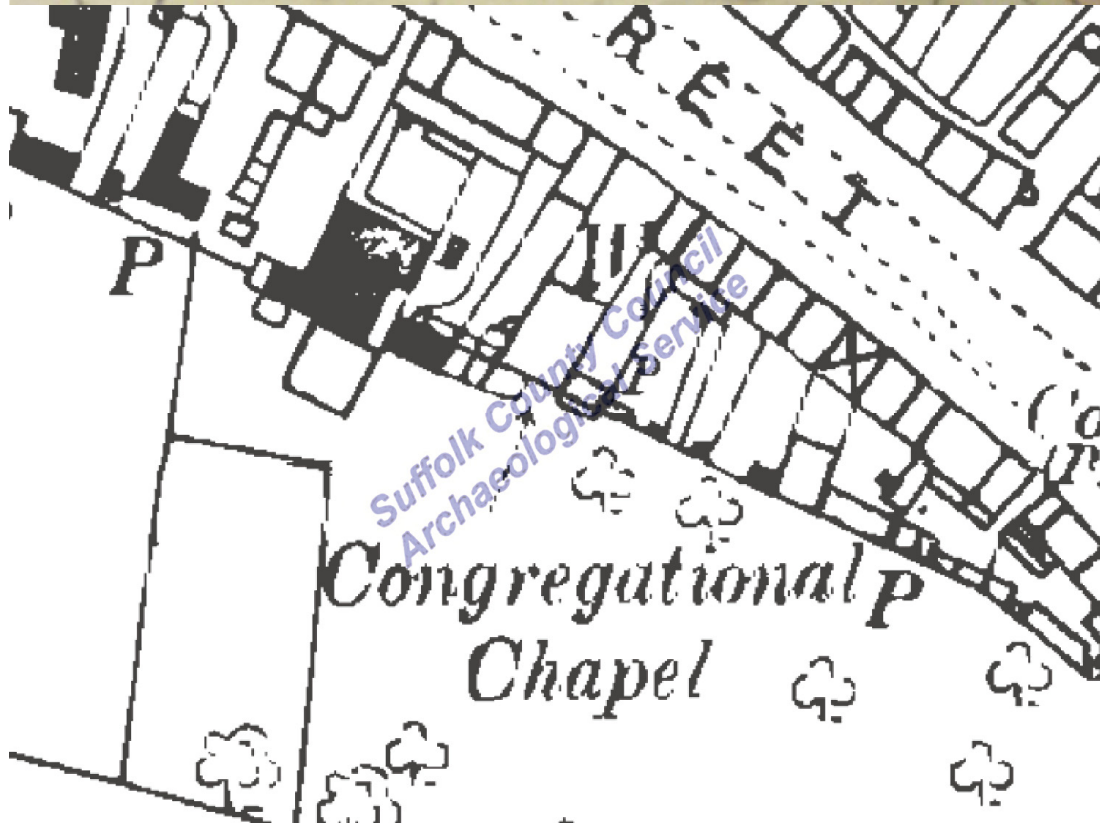


Figure 3
First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey (1886)

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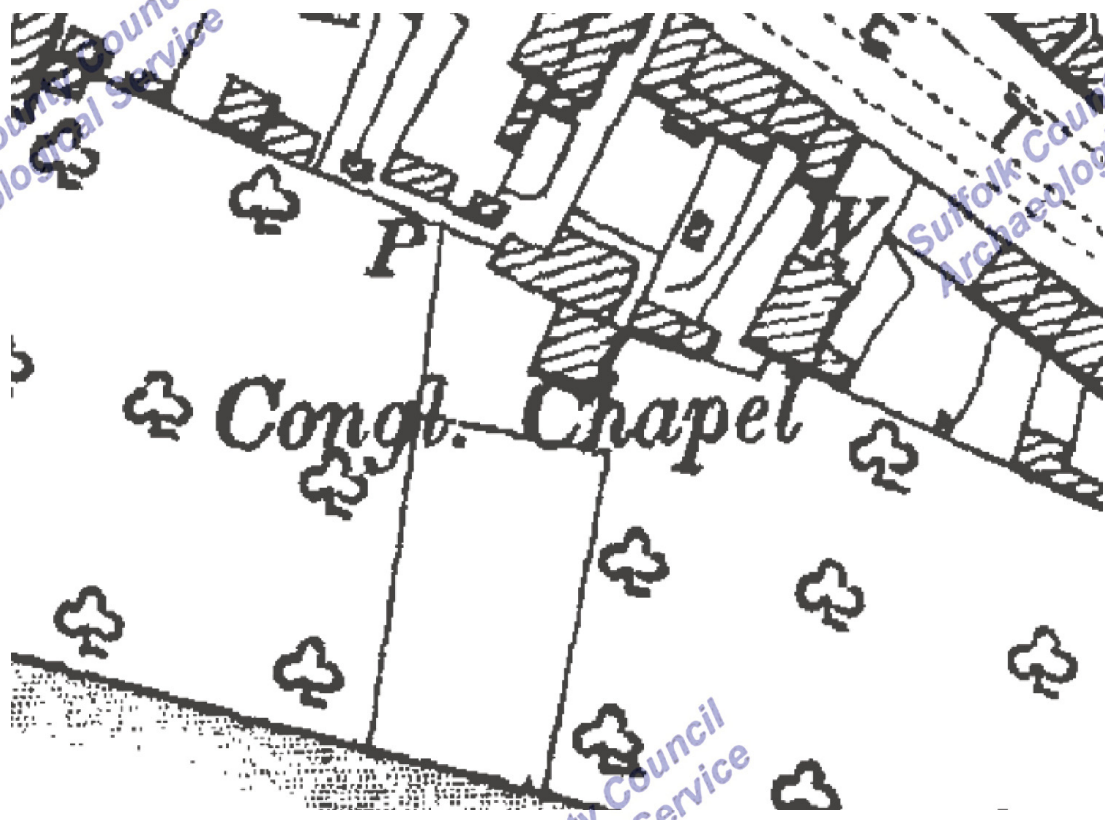


Figure 4
Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey (1905)

The Haughley tithe map (figure 2) shows the square outline of the chapel (ostensibly without its porch), but dates from 1844 and does not contribute to the local debate over its year of construction. The accompanying apportionment describes the property (no. 16) as a 'Chapel and yard' owned by William Prentice along with the two adjoining cottages and gardens (nos. 15 and 17); the three properties were occupied by 'Charles Burrs and others'. No earlier detailed maps of Haughley village are known. The first and second edition Ordnance Surveys (figures 3 and 4) show a similar situation, but the porch is clearly defined and the smaller predecessor of the present vestry is shown attached to the southern end of the eastern elevation. The 'W' in the front yard refers to a well of which no trace is now apparent.



Figure 5
The northern gable in an old photograph
(from a copy in the possession of the present owners)

The photograph above probably shows the building in its original condition, with a rendered exterior, arched windows and a circular cartouche containing its (illegible) date of foundation. This elegant façade was provided with a skin of red brick during the 20th century and its windows replaced, leaving only the porch *in situ*. The wooden hall used for Sunday School and other ancillary functions and known as the ‘Chapel Hall’ was erected in 1932, according to the aforementioned note pinned to its notice board (entitled simply ‘Haughley Chapel 2000’). The same note dates the eastern brick extension to 1995, when it replaced an earlier Chapel vestry and included a kitchen, toilet and new vestry. The building became part of the United Reform Church when the ‘Presbyterian Church of England’ and the ‘Congregational Church of England and Wales’ amalgamated in 1972, but was recently sold for residential conversion. The Congregational church derived from the Protestant Nonconformist tradition, and was based on a theory of union published by the theologian Robert Browne in 1592.

There is no record of burials at Haughley, and members of the congregation were probably interred at Stowmarket. The presence of a short-lived burial ground beneath the northern yard cannot be ruled out, however.

Building Analysis

Chapel

The original chapel of 1843 or 1835 formed a simple rectangular hall with a central entrance in its northern gable and extended internally to 11.75 m in depth by 6.25 m in width (38.5 ft by 26.5). Its walls rose to 5.1 m in height (17 ft) at the eaves and consisted of softwood studs on a tall plinth of flint rubble with dressings of red brick (1 m in height). A rendered horizontal ceiling of tall-sectioned softwood joists concealed the low-pitched rafters and the

wall fabric was clad in lath-and-plaster both inside and out. The original external plaster and arched windows shown in figure 5 were removed in the 1930s or 40s when the present rectangular window apertures were inserted and the existing four-inch skin of red brick applied. A small vestry was added between 1844 and 1886, as shown by figures 2 and 3, but this was replaced by the present eastern extension in 1995. The door to the earlier vestry at the southern end of the eastern elevation remains in use, and the shallow, flat-roofed northern porch with a decorative eaves board probably survives from the original building. The porch door is shown in figure 5 and is also probably original.

Given its much-altered external appearance, the building does not merit listing but is of considerable historic interest due to the survival of its internal fittings. The painted benches with panelled and chamfered backs and square ends which adjoin the eastern and western elevation, (facing a 20th century reading desk or platform in the centre of the southern gable) are fine examples of their type. Tiers of benches without backs flank the internal entrance porch and seem to have been designed for children given their relatively low height. Each tier was provided with a small cross-bench to serve as a table (one of which contained toys at the time of inspection). The side walls are protected with pine wainscot to a height of 1.4 m (56 ins), but this may have been renewed.

Chapel Hall

A single-storied wooden shed with boarded interior and exterior is aligned on an approximately east-west axis at right-angles to the Chapel and 3.3 m (11 ft) from its rear gable. This structure, which extends to 10.4 m in length by 4.5 m in width (34 ft by 15), was built in 1932 according to the information sheet on its notice board. It contains an entrance door at both ends of its southern elevation, and an area 1.5 m in length at its western gable can be partitioned by a sliding screen to form a separate compartment. This hall was designed to accommodate Sunday schools and other ancillary activities, and is not of sufficient age or rarity to merit listing or retention.

Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record

Description of Photographs in Appendix 1

Photograph no.

1. General view of Old Street from east showing Chapel on left & St Mary's Church to right.

2. General view of site from Old Street to north.
3. General view of site from south showing length of plot with Chapel Hall in foreground.
4. Front yard from Old Street to north.
5. Front yard from north-east showing Chapel notice board.
6. Front yard from south-east showing Chapel facade to left and Old Street to right.
7. Northern facade of Chapel from front yard to north, showing original porch with later brickwork.
8. Original northern porch from north-west.
9. Detail of original northern porch showing eaves board with later brick cladding to right.
10. Detail of northern gable showing scar of demolished wall or gate to left.
11. Eastern elevation of Chapel from north-east, showing modern side vestry to left.
12. Eastern elevation of Chapel showing window blocked by vestry to left.
13. Detail of secondary brick skin to eastern external elevation of Chapel.
14. Northern elevation of modern vestry (built 1995) from east.
15. Rear elevation of Chapel from south-west showing western elevation to left.
16. Rear elevation of chapel from south-east showing proximity of Chapel Hall to left.
17. Detail of flint plinth to rear elevation of Chapel showing modern vestry to right.
18. Southern elevation of Chapel Hall from south-west showing rear gable of Chapel to left.
19. Southern elevation of Chapel Hall from south-east showing modern vestry to right.
20. Northern elevation of Chapel Hall from north-west showing entrance doors to right and left.
21. Northern elevation of Chapel Hall from north-east.
22. Entrance door at western end of Chapel Hall's northern elevation.
23. Interior of Chapel Hall from east.
24. Interior of Chapel Hall from west.
25. Interior of Chapel Hall showing sliding screen at western end.

26. Interior of Chapel Hall showing western entrance with screen to right.
27. Interior of Chapel Hall showing eastern entrance door.
28. Interior of Chapel Hall showing detail of roof structure from east.
29. General view of interior of Chapel from south showing original entrance.
30. General view of interior of Chapel from north showing reading desk opposite original entrance.
31. Detail of reading desk from north.
32. Detail of reading desk from east.
33. Detail of internal porch and raised benches against northern elevation.
34. General view of interior of western elevation.
35. General view of interior of eastern elevation showing vestry entrance to right.
36. View of benches to western elevation.
37. Detail of square bench ends to western elevation.
38. Detail of boarded bench backs to western elevation (from south).
39. Detail of boarded bench backs to eastern elevation (from north).
40. View of benches to eastern elevation.
41. Entrance to raised benches in north-western corner.
42. Detail of raised benches in north-western corner (from east).
43. Detail of table-bench in north-western corner.
44. Internal entrance porch seen from raised benches to west.
45. Detail of boarded side of raised benches in north-western corner (from west).
46. Detail of table-bench in north-eastern corner showing contents as found.
47. Detail of original tall-sectioned ceiling joists and roof structure from south.
48. Detail of flint plinth and studwork to interior of eastern elevation with vestry door to right.
49. Detail of studwork and laths with later brickwork to northern gable (inner porch to left).
50. Detail of flint plinth to interior of western elevation.

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Appendix 2 (pp. 11-15): Selected Printed Photographs

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A2.1 General view of Old Street from east showing Chapel behind street frontage on left & St Mary's Church in distance to right

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A2.2 Front yard from Old Street to north showing relationship to adjacent properties

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A2.3 Detail of original northern door and porch of 1843 showing decorated eaves board with early-20th century brick cladding

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A2.4 Southern elevation of Chapel Hall from south-west showing rear gable of Chapel to left

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A2.5 Interior of Chapel Hall of 1932 from west

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A2.6 General view of interior of Chapel from south showing original northern entrance with internal porch

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A2.7 General view of interior of Chapel from north showing reading desk opposite original entrance with blocked window and door to vestry of 1995 on left

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A2.8 Detail of internal porch and raised benches against northern elevation

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A2.9 Detail of chamfered boarded bench backs to western elevation (from south)

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A2.10 Detail of flint plinth and studwork to interior of eastern elevation with vestry door to right