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Client: Hunter and Clark



# AULD AISLE WATCH-TOWER, KIRKINTILLOCH

Level 1 Historic Building Recording

Allison H. Borden  
*BA MSc MCRPAICP*



**HEADLAND**  
ARCHAEOLOGY Ltd

## PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET

<i>Client</i>	HUNTER AND CLARK
<i>National Grid Reference</i>	NS 6654 7310
<i>Address</i>	OLD AISLE ROAD
<i>Parish</i>	KIRKINTILLOCH
<i>Council</i>	EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE
<i>Planning Application Ref No</i>	N/A
<i>NMRS No</i>	N/A
<i>Oasis No</i>	N/A
<i>SMR No</i>	N/A
<i>HB/SAM No</i>	36646
<i>Listing Category</i>	A
<i>Project Manager</i>	MARK ROBERTS
<i>Text</i>	ALLISON BORDEN
<i>Illustrations</i>	CAROLINE NORRMAN
<i>Typesetting</i>	CAROLINE NORRMAN
<i>Fieldwork</i>	JAMIE HUMBLE
<i>Specialists</i>	N/A
<i>Schedule</i>	
<i>Fieldwork</i>	21 <sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2009
<i>Report</i>	25 <sup>TH</sup> -29 <sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2009

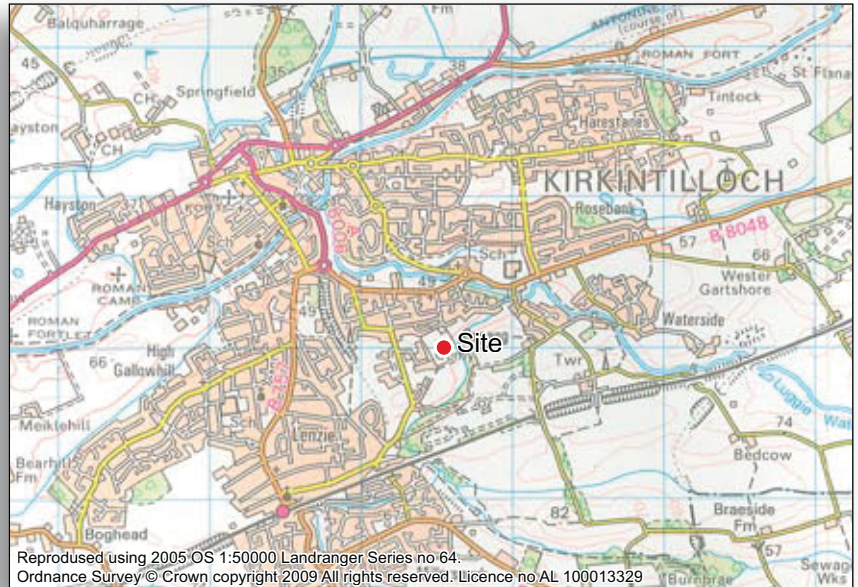
Signed off by: .....

Mark Roberts BA(Hons) MIA, Project Manager

Date:.....

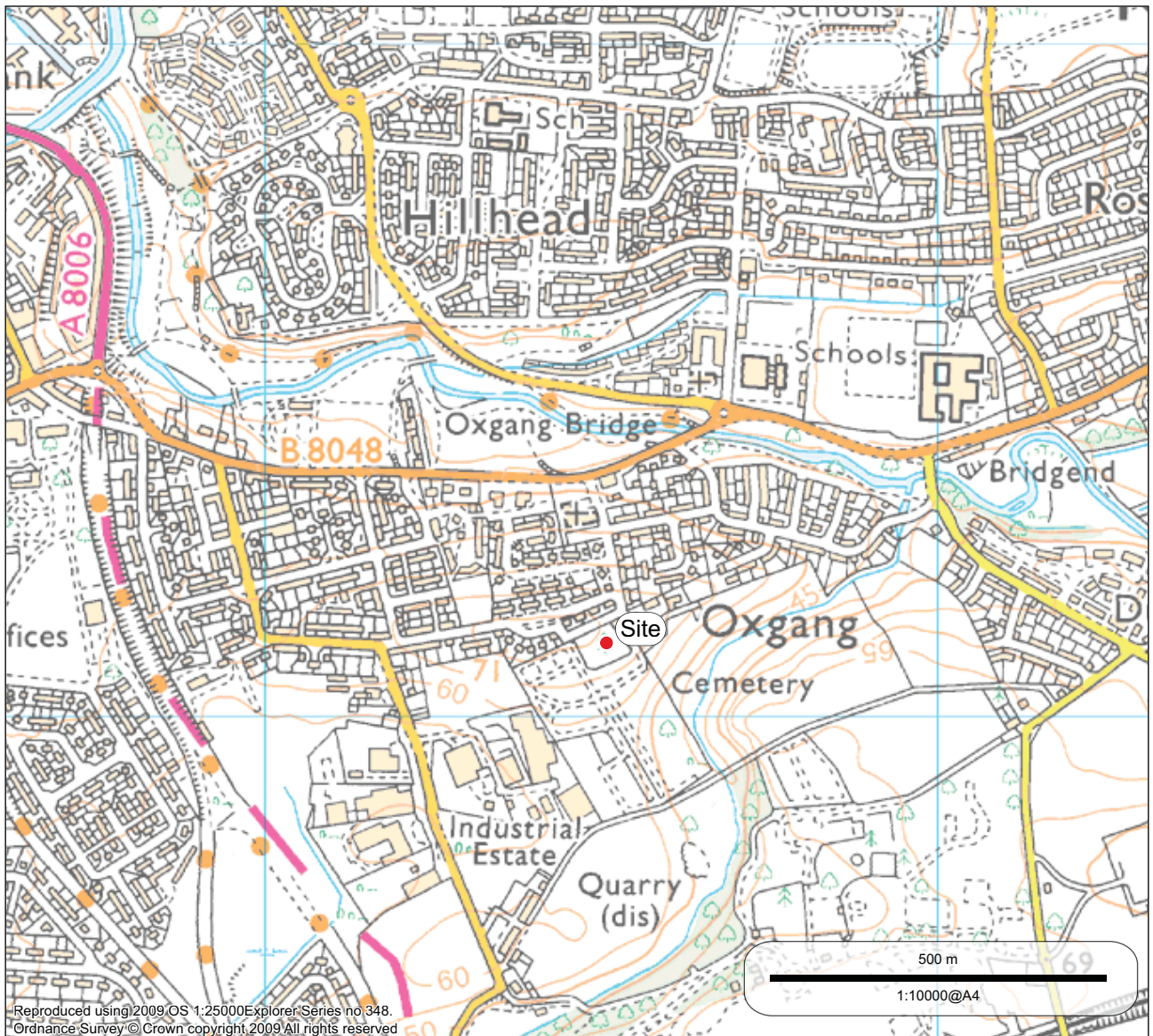
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**Illus 1**  
Location plan

# AULD AISLE WATCH-TOWER, KIRKINTILLOCH

## Level 1 Historic Building Recording

by Allison H. Borden

*Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Hunter & Clark to undertake a site visit and a preliminary desk-based assessment of the Auld Aisle Watch-tower at Kirkintilloch.*

### INTRODUCTION

The project involved exterior photography and preparation of a written description to a Level 1 standard (English Heritage 2006). This report describes the methodology and results of the fieldwork and presents the results of the survey as a brief illustrated report.

The watch-tower is located in the Auld Isle cemetery on Old Aisle Road in Kirkintilloch. Its position is shown in Illus 1. The six-inch 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map (Illus 2) shows the cemetery in its historical context.

### METHODOLOGY

The building survey utilised the general standards set out by English Heritage (2006), the RCAHMS (2004) and the IfA (2008).

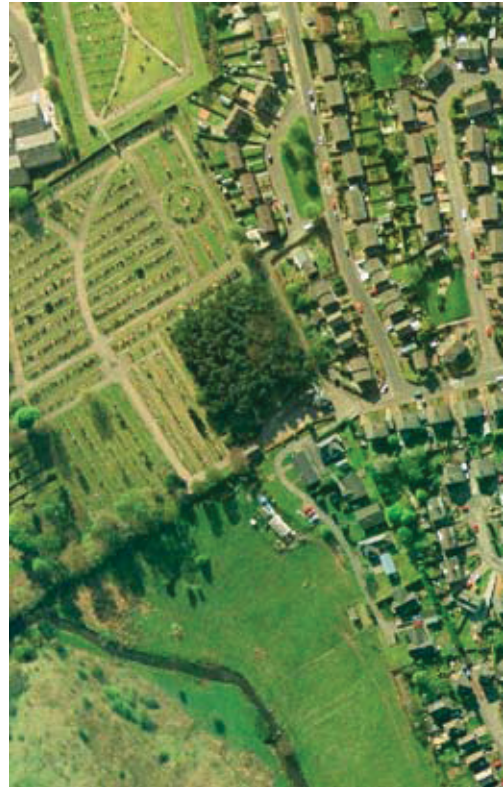
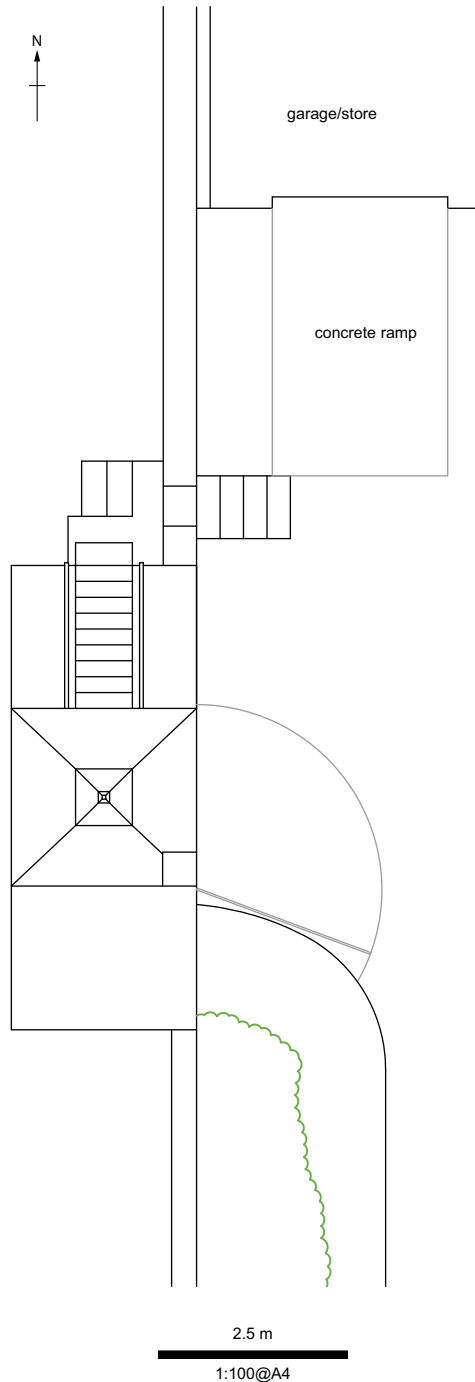
The scope of the survey was a Level 1 Basic Visual Record (English Heritage 2006). This involved a combination of written description, plan drawings and photographs. Plan drawings were provided by Hunter & Clark. Photographs were taken using a 5.0 megapixel digital camera and a 35 mm SLR camera loaded with colour slide film.



**Illus 2**

1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey

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**Illus 3**  
Plan and aerial photograph of site  
Aerial photograph by courtesy of Martyn Gorman

## RESULTS

### **Auld Aisle (Alternatively spelled Old Aisle, Auld Isle, Old Isle) Watch-tower**

NGR:	NS 6654 7310
Parish:	Kirkintilloch
County:	East Dunbartonshire
NMRS:	N/A
Listing:	Category A
Date:	early 18 <sup>th</sup> c.
Current Status:	In use (cemetery gate)
Photographic Survey:	Yes
Additional Written Description:	Yes
Drawings:	Illus 1 Overall location map Illus 2 Historic map, First Edition OS 1843-1882 Illus 3 Plan and aerial photograph of site Illus 4 East and west elevation with photograph Illus 5 South and north elevation with photograph

### Description

Kirkintilloch was originally at the western extent of the parish of Lenzie. The original parish church for Kirkintilloch, St. Ninian's, was on the present site of Auld Isle cemetery at Oxgang. St. Ninian's was in use as the parish church until 1644, when a new parish church was built at Kirkintilloch cross (Thomson 1907). This location was more convenient for residents of the village.

The Auld Isle Cemetery was planned in at least two phases. The first phase was the kirkyard for St. Ninian's. The second phase was the 1863 expansion of the burying ground. The watch-tower is combined with the entrance gateway for what was St. Ninian's kirkyard and it is integrated with the kirkyard's coped boundary wall. The watch-tower is in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century style and thought to be built from stones taken from St. Ninian's upon its demolition (Watson 1894). New gate piers and a gate lodge for the cemetery were added when it was expanded in 1863.

**In the early 19th century, the need for cadavers for medical training and research, particularly at University medical colleges and private schools of anatomy in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow, outstripped the supply (Gorman 2008). Grave-robbers or resurrection men provided corpses for a fee to anatomists at the schools, digging up fresh graves and making off with the bodies under cover of darkness.**

**Fear of grave-robbing influenced the operation and design of graveyards. To protect the graves of loved-ones, local people began to organise armed night-time watches over graveyards. Watch-houses and watch-towers provided shelter and warmth for the men. They typically consisted of a small, single-room cottage heated by a fireplace that had one or more windows allowing a view over the cemetery. There is a record in 1831 of 'a farmer set[ting] his hounds on four men attempting to lift a body from the Old Isle Graveyard' (Adams 2002).**



**Grave-robbing lessened with the passage of the Anatomy Act in 1832. The act required anatomists to be licensed and provided a legal supply of cadavers for medical research.**

The structure has already been described in Historic Scotland's Statutory List (HB36646), Canmore (Canmore ID 45231) and the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland (SCT RefNo 3455). Per Historic Scotland's List Description (1971), the Auld Aisle Watch-tower is two structures in one. It consists of a rubble gateway with a round-arched opening of rusticated V-jointed ashlar surmounted by a coursed sandstone ashlar square-plan watch-tower with a square birdcage belfry at the apex of its slabbed pyramidal roof (Historic Scotland 1971).

The room in the watch-tower is reached by an open stairway built into the north side of the archway. The room has small square openings to the east and west elevations and a doorway opening on its north elevation. All three of these

openings have been blocked up. A square chimneystack in the Southeast corner of the roof indicates the location of the fireplace on the interior. Gifford and Walker (2002) support Watson's (1894) use of the belfry style to date the structure to the early 18th century.

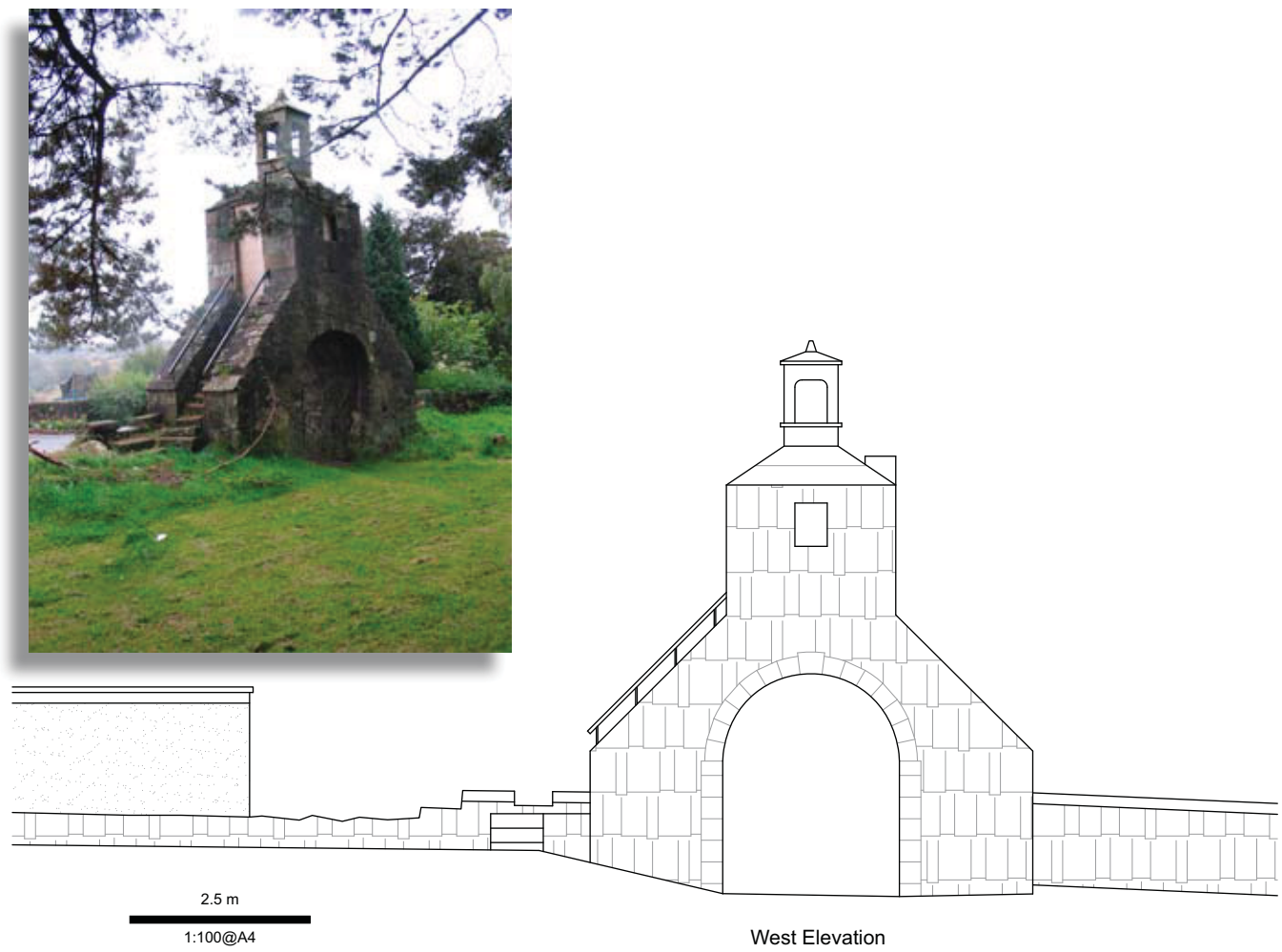
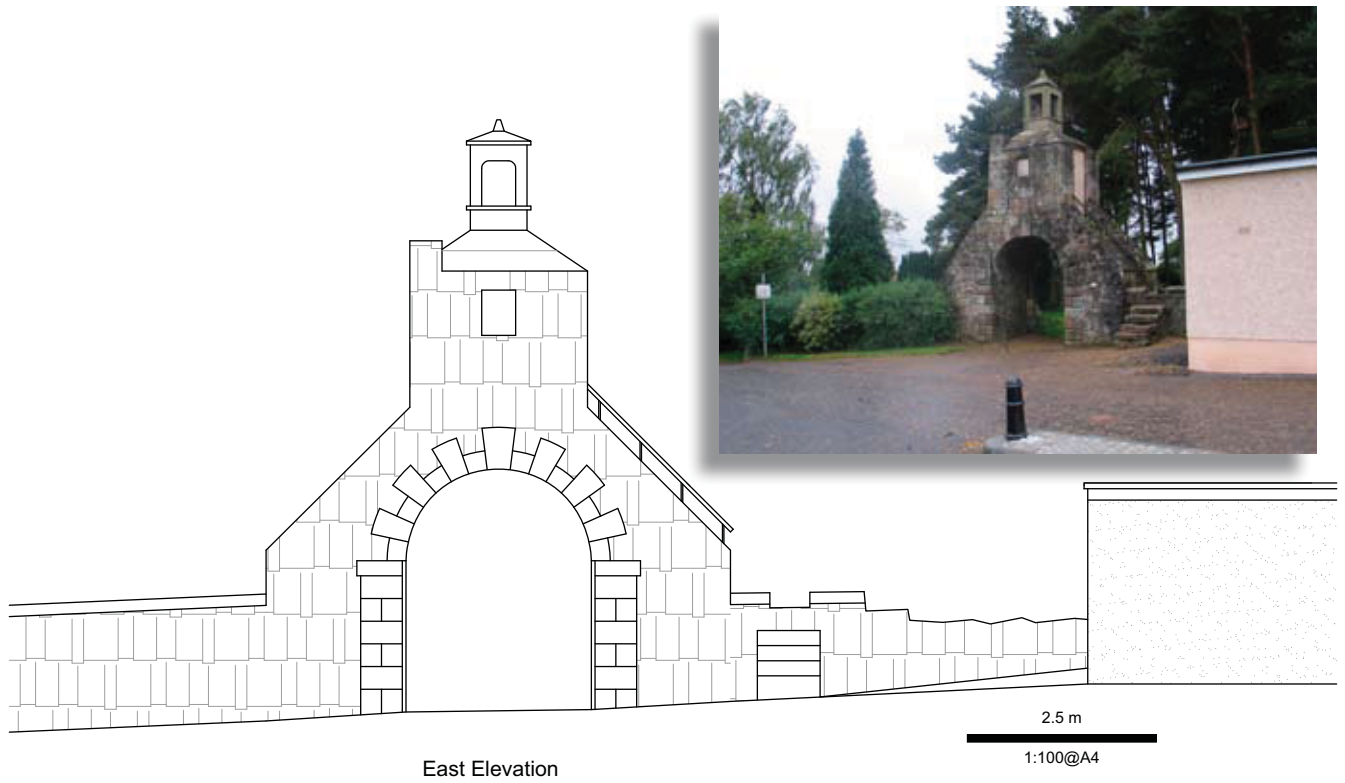
### SOURCES

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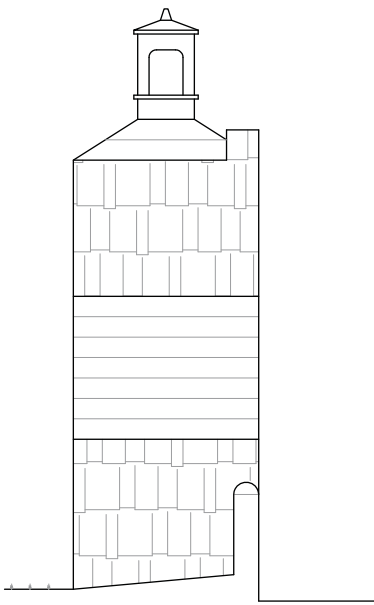
#### Maps

- Ordnance Survey (1843-1882) *Six-Inch 1<sup>st</sup> Edition*

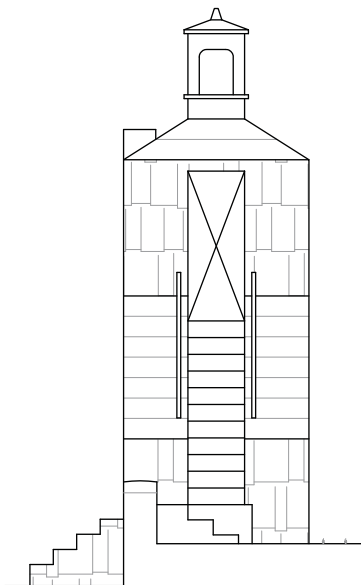


**Illus 4**  
East and west elevation with photograph





South Elevation



North Elevation

2.5 m  
1:100@A4



**Illus 5**  
South and north elevation with photograph

## APPENDIX

### Photographic register

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Photo No.	Direction	Description
1	S	Entrance piers c. 1863
2	SW	General view of watch-tower
3	SW	General view of watch-tower
4	W	E Elevation
5	W	E Elevation - shot 1 moving S to N
6	W	E Elevation - shot 2 moving S to N
7	W	E Elevation - shot 3 moving S to N
8	W	E Elevation - shot 4 top of arch and tower
9	S	N Elevation
10	S	N Elevation
11	S	N Elevation - shot 1 base of stair
12	S	N Elevation - shot 2 top of stair
13	E	W Elevation
14	E	W Elevation - detail of stair
15	E	W Elevation - shot 1 moving N to S
16	E	W Elevation - shot 2 moving N to S
17	E	W Elevation - shot 3 top of arch and tower
18	N	S Elevation
19	N	S Elevation - base
20	N	S Elevation - top
21	NE	General view of watch-tower
22	NE	Detail - interior of arch
23	SE	General view of watch-tower
24	SW	General view of watch-tower
25	SW	Detail - interior of arch
26	SW	Detail - interior of arch
27	NW	General view of watch-tower
28	SE	Detail - belfry
29	SW	Detail - watch-tower and belfry
30	W	General view of watch-tower
31	W	General view of watch-tower
32	E	W Elevation viewed from cemetery
33	E	W Elevation viewed from cemetery
34	E	W Elevation viewed from cemetery
35	NE	General view of watch-tower
36	S	General view of cemetery
37	S	General view of cemetery (c. 1863 phase)
38	NW	General view of cemetery

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