

**GREAT OAKLEY METHODIST CHAPEL  
HIGH STREET  
GREAT OAKLEY  
ESSEX  
HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD**



**Essex County Council  
Field Archaeology Unit**

**September 2011**

**GREAT OAKLEY METHODIST CHAPEL  
HIGH STREET  
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ESSEX**

**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD**

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As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report.

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# CONTENTS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

## 2. BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Location and description

### 2.2 Planning background

### 2.3 Historical background

## 3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

## 4. METHODS

## 5. BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

### 5.1 General descriptions

### 5.2 External descriptions

### 5.3 Internal descriptions

## 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Archive index

Appendix 2: EHER summary

## Figures

- Figure 1. Location plan
- Figure 2. First edition Ordnance Survey map, c.1875
- Figure 3. Ground floor plan
- Figure 4. First floor plan

## Plates

- Plate 1 South-east elevation
- Plate 2 South-west elevation (schoolroom)
- Plate 3 Main entrance
- Plate 4 South-west elevation (chapel)
- Plate 5 Chapel door
- Plate 6 South-east elevation
- Plate 7 North-east elevation
- Plate 8 North-east elevation (chapel)
- Plate 9 Interior of schoolroom viewed to north-west
- Plate 10 Screen between schoolroom and chapel
- Plate 11 Historic fixtures around entrance to kitchen
- Plate 12 Interior of schoolroom viewed to south
- Plate 13 Window on south-west side of schoolroom (0.5m scale)
- Plate 14 Interior of chapel viewed to north-west
- Plate 15 Pulpit
- Plate 16 Detail of stencilled glass at north-east end
- Plate 17 Chapel viewed to south-east
- Plate 18 Detail of column and gallery panelling
- Plate 19 Screen viewed to south-west inside chapel
- Plate 20 Original back gallery viewed to east
- Plate 21 First floor viewed to north-west
- Plate 22 Back gallery detail
- Plate 23 Side gallery seating viewed to south-east
- Plate 24 Chapel roof timbers
- Plate 25 Kitchen interior, viewed to north-west

**GREAT OAKLEY METHODIST CHAPEL  
HIGH STREET  
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ESSEX**

**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD**

**Client:** Sherwood Contract Services Ltd

**FAU Project No:** 2445

**NGR:** TM 1941 2760

**Planning Application:** 11/00304/FUL

**OASIS Record:** 110774

**Date of Fieldwork:** 8th July 2011

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) undertook a programme of historic building recording works on an early 19th-century Methodist chapel at Great Oakley, prior to residential conversion. The project was funded by the client and carried out in accordance with a design brief issued by the ECC Historic Environment Management team (ECC HEM).

Copies of the report will be issued to ECC HEM and deposited with the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER). A further digital copy will be uploaded to the OASIS database (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/oasis/index.cfm>) and can be accessed through the ADS website. The site archive will be deposited at Colchester Museum.

A Wesleyan chapel was built on the site in 1817, followed by a schoolroom in c.1860. The structure has undergone a number of changes in its history but survives today as a well-preserved example of its type, containing many important Victorian features and fixtures and fittings, including the gallery. Although not listed, its importance is reflected by its inclusion as part of the English Heritage Survey of Chapels and Meeting Houses (Stell 2002).

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Location and description (fig.1)**

Great Oakley is a small village situated 6km to the west of Harwich on the B141, in Tendring District, Essex. The chapel stands to the rear of a rectangular plot facing onto the High Street next to Chapel Cottage and opposite the War Memorial (fig.1). The chapel grounds are grassed over and there are no visible signs of burials or earlier boundaries (cover plate). A narrow gravel driveway extends from the roadside to the main entrance on the south-west side, close to the neighbouring cottage.

The structure has a rectangular plan form and stands on a north-west to south-east alignment, respecting the layout of the neighbouring High Street plots. It comprises two main elements: the schoolroom at the front and the chapel behind, both brick-built with slate roofs. A small extension is attached to the school that was converted into a kitchen in the late 20th century.

On the whole, the building is a well-preserved example of its type and retains its external historic character and internal historic features, most importantly the gallery, benches, screen and stairs, plus interesting minor fixtures and fittings. Despite some leaks in the roof, the general condition appears to be good.

### **2.2 Planning background**

Tendring Uttlesford District Council received a planning application (11/00304/FUL) in March 2011 for change of use and conversion of the former Methodist chapel into two semi-detached houses with on-site parking. Mindful of the local importance of the building, its largely unaltered condition and the inevitable impact of conversion on its historic fabric, ECC HEM attached a full archaeological condition to the planning permission, based on advice given in Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (DCMS 2010).

The conversion plans include a side extension and an inserted first floor.

### **2.3 Historical background**

A summary historic background is included to place the chapel in its historical context, based largely on the English Heritage survey (Stell 2002) and assessment of material available at the Essex Records Office.

The chapel was opened in 1817 as a Wesleyan Methodist place of worship (Stell 2002). In 1829 the congregation numbered 160 (Essex Records Office Q/CR 3/2/53).

Side galleries were added to its interior in the mid-19th century (Stell 2002), significantly increasing the seating capacity inside. It would appear from the survey that around this time the chapel was extended to the north-western boundary.

Stell (2002) states that a Sunday school was built at the front c.1860-70 and the original entrance re-sited. Sunday schools were set up to teach children about the scriptures, basic reading and writing while their parents attended the service. However, the size of the 'Sunday school' at Great Oakley and the fact that it is labelled on the first edition Ordnance Survey map as a 'Methodist Chapel and School' (fig. 2, c.1875) suggests this was built as a Nonconformist school in its own right, at a time when such schools were being established by Nonconformist groups and the Church of England as part of the movement for education for all. The same map shows former houses or shops occupying the front of the plot facing the High Street, what is now the kitchen extension and a small structure on the north-east side of the chapel, most likely a store of sorts, which is no longer standing.

No significant further change appears to have occurred in the 20th century apart from cement render being applied to the two least-seen elevations, the chapel floor being replaced and a kitchen created in the extension. The chapel closed in the mid 1990s and was thereafter used for community use (K. Sherwood pers comm.). The gallery was effectively decommissioned relatively recently, when a ceiling was built across to enclose the open space. By 2004, when the first planning application was put forward for conversion, the building was no longer in use.

### **3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

As specified by the Brief (ECC HEM 2011), the main aim of the project was to investigate and record the chapel to English Heritage level 3 standard (2006) to 'preserve by record' the structure prior to conversion, along with an analysis and interpretation of the chapel in a local and regional context. As many as 8,000 Methodist chapels have been closed in the last 75 years and as redundant buildings they are vulnerable to demolition or conversion. It is therefore important to make a lasting record of significant examples.

The national importance of nonconformist places of worship is highlighted by a survey of chapels and meeting houses in eastern England (Stell 2002), which includes the Great Oakley chapel.

## **4.0 METHODS**

Existing plans and elevations were supplied by the client and used during the survey as a base to which historic detail was added. Descriptions were made of the structure including details on form, construction, original fixtures and fittings and any architectural detailing.

Photographs were taken internally and externally in colour digital and 35mm black & white print formats. The proximity to the Chapel Cottage boundary meant the south-west elevation was difficult to photograph. Photographs of the north-west elevation, which stands on the boundary with the grounds of 'Crooked Acres' behind, were taken from a public footpath. A representative selection of photographs is reproduced at the back of the report as plates 1-23. The remainder can be found in the archive.

## **5.0 BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS**

In the following sections, general descriptions of the main buildings are provided in chronological order, followed by external and internal descriptions that begin with the schoolroom, which is now the most prominent part of the building as viewed from the High Street. Their locations are indicated on the block plan (fig. 1) and comprise the following.

- Chapel (1817)
- Schoolroom (c.1860-70)
- Kitchen (late 19th century)

### **5.1 General descriptions**

**The chapel** has an oblong, symmetrical plan form, with a low-pitched 25° hipped slate roof. Originally the main entrance was on the south-east end, but after the schoolroom was built it was moved to the south-west elevation (Stell 2002) to become the entrance into both parts of the building complex. A second, smaller doorway is located further to the north, which is contemporary in style.

All but the north-eastern elevation and the wall above the kitchen are rendered in cement. The walls are thicker than the later schoolroom, at 14 inches, and the bricks are laid in Flemish bond apart from the north-west end which is built in English bond. General brick dimensions are 8¾ x 4¼ x 2½ inches (225 x 110 x 65mm), consistent with 18th and early 19th century forms (Ryan 1996).



The side elevations are uniform, with two eight-over-eight pane sash windows lighting each of the floors. Ground floor windows have cambered heads and employ obscured glass in the bottom sashes, while those above are built under the projecting eaves (plate 1). Some of the original timber sills have been replaced in codestone.

The interior contains few fixtures and fittings apart from the gallery, pulpit and a small level of detail to the walls. There is no evidence to show the chapel was ever heated.

**The schoolroom** is a single-storey structure standing in front of the chapel, facing the High Street, constructed between 1860 and 1870 (Stell 2002). It is brick-built and gabled to the south-east with a 30° pitched slate roof that sweeps down over the kitchen extension in catslide form. Walls are built in 8¾" brickwork arranged in monk bond; a variation of Flemish bond that uses two stretchers per header (Brunskill 1997).

Fenestration comprises the same two eight-over-eight pane sash windows as the chapel, beneath segmental arched heads and codestone sills.

The interior is open-plan, single-storeyed and open to the trusses and of similar ground area to the chapel. From the main entrance, there is access through the schoolroom into the chapel, kitchen and up to first floor gallery (fig. 3).

**The kitchen** is located on the north-east side of the schoolroom and is likely to have had a related function, though it was clearly constructed after the schoolroom was built. Its conversion into a kitchen has probably resulted in the loss of many fixtures and fittings. It is constructed in the same bond as the schoolroom but the bricks are slightly larger at 9 inches. The roof frame was not seen, but the slope of the roof continues on the same pitch as the chapel to which it is attached.

## **5.2 External descriptions**

### **5.2.1 South-east elevation**

The schoolroom forms the main elevation facing the road, obscuring the whole of the original chapel frontage. Its dominant features are the south window and simple wooden cross. The window is fixed, with multiple panes and a semi-circular arched head created from two neat rows of headers (plate 1). This is a modern window, similar in character to the others but with thicker glazing bars, that replaced a window of the same size and shape since there are no intrusions into the surrounding brickwork. However there is some disturbance in the brickwork below the window where the courses do not run true and bricks have been added on edge to level up (plate 1).

### **5.2.2 South-west elevation**

The south-west side wall forms the long, cement-rendered elevation of the schoolroom and chapel (plates 2 & 4). Set centrally on the schoolroom side is the main doorway into the building; an imposing feature with Georgian-style square pilasters and arched moulded head containing an interlacing lancet-style fanlight around a heavy semi-panelled door (plate 3). This interlacing gothic design is a Regency form, but was used up to the 1840s (Hall 2005) and may suggest the schoolroom was constructed slightly earlier than believed. Two tie plates have been added either side of the arch at a later date and there is a small iron boot-scraper sited on the ground on the left-hand side. The style of the main entrance is mimicked by the smaller side entrance on the north-west end of the chapel elevation that has the same style of doorcase around an unusual arched four-panelled door (plates 4 & 5). As the chapel is earlier, it is likely the schoolroom entrance copied the side entrance in a slightly grander form.

### **5.2.3 North-west elevation**

The north-west elevation lies on the boundary of the chapel grounds and the garden of 'Crooked Acres' at the back, and was recorded from a nearby public footpath. This aspect shows the building at its most distinctive as a chapel (plate 6). This side is also rendered and contains two large multi-pane windows with interlacing lancet heads in the same style as the fanlight over the main entrance. They contain red and yellow-tinted glass that define the lancet heads, best seen from the inside (plate 21).

### **5.2.4 North-east elevation**

The north-east elevation is not rendered although some brickwork has been re-pointed over the original lime mortar. Windows on the north-east elevation of the schoolroom (plates 7 & 8) are equally-spaced with those on the opposite side but are set 0.5m higher up to the eaves. Almost half of the schoolroom elevation is taken up with the kitchen. The kitchen has few external features apart from a modern window replacement over the sink on the south-east side, somewhat out of proportion with the others, and the doorway at the back (north-east), with an original ledged and braced utility door that retains all original fixtures and fittings (plate 8).

On the chapel side of this elevation is evidence for the former small outbuilding depicted in figure 2. Its size and lack of access into the chapel suggests it was a utility structure, perhaps a tool shed for looking after the grounds. It is represented today by a small plastered area below the scar for a lean-to roof (plate 8). Leading up from the roof scar is a straight joint in the brickwork (fig. 3 & plate 8) that suggests the north-west end of the chapel was extended or rebuilt at some stage. Closer inspection shows a clear variation in build, with the extension built in English bond rather than the Flemish bond like the rest of the chapel. Unfortunately this detail is only discernible on this side,

since it is hidden on the opposing side by render. The extension is a curious feature since it is very short, at only 2.1m, and throws out the symmetry of the windows.

Just above the ground floor windows of the chapel are three iron T-brackets that hold the side gallery, one of which has a tie plate bolted to it. Since the side galleries are believed to have been built in the mid-19th century, the north-westward extension may be contemporary.

### **5.3 Internal descriptions**

#### **5.3.1 Schoolroom**

The main entrance on the south-west side leads directly into the schoolroom and gives access into the chapel. The schoolroom is a large open hall of four bays and a high ceiling, providing one large single classroom. At the north-west end the former chapel wall is plastered and in the centre is a light, semi-glazed panelled screen with doors that lead into the chapel itself (plates 9 & 10). It is likely that these replaced the original doorway at the front of the chapel. The doors have locks bearing an anchor motif and the screen is fitted with obscured glass perhaps to enable the chapel and Schoolroom to be used simultaneously.

On the right-hand side of the doors is a waiting area, where there is a low wooden bench, and to the left is the stair up to the first floor gallery (fig. 3 & plate 9). The stair, close to the main entrance, adopts a quarter-turn form and has a panelled balustrade. The top landing extends outwards from the gallery doorway, with a moulded four-panel gallery door situated directly above the ground floor doors into the chapel. On the newel post at the bottom are fittings for a stair guard to prevent children from ascending (plate 9).

Below the stair is a small cupboard whose ledged and braced door has a fancy cut-out at the top, presumably for air-flow (plate 10). The door is fitted with rudimentary iron T-hinges; above it is a row of well-preserved curved metal coat hooks. Inside the cupboard is a modern shelf but no earlier fittings.

Beside the doorway into the kitchen is another row of coat hooks (plate 11). The doorway into the kitchen is a plain four-panelled type, reflecting its more utilitarian nature. Beside the doorway is a chimney breast for the old fireplace, which would have heated the schoolroom. The fireplace is now blocked-up and the chimney no longer remains. High up over the fireplace and between the breast and doorway are two original narrow wooden shelves that probably supported pictures of a religious nature (plate 11).

Viewed to the south-east from the chapel, there are few fixtures and fittings remaining inside the schoolroom (plate 12). The roof trusses of the schoolroom are fully-exposed and the wooden floor is original, though its boards finish some 2m from the south-east end (fig. 3). Here concrete was added between the floor joists in the modern period (fig. 3 and plate 12). The size of this exposed area suggests originally there may have been a dais here, like in the chapel, presumably used either by the teacher or as a stage.

The arched window at the south-east end is clearly modern and there are fittings in the window arch for the original top-opening window. The windows on either side of the schoolroom are identical apart from those on the north-west side are lower in height. They have metal fixtures for wooden shutters on the sides and later hooks for blinds at the top (plate 13).

Original internal décor is hard to identify, but there are traces of stucco ashlar work higher up on the walls, and also in the chapel. Judging from similar chapels studied, the lower parts of the walls were probably panelled originally. No original lighting fixtures remain.

The roof frame is built from bolted king post strut trusses in machine-sawn timbers, suiting the later 19th century date of the schoolroom (plate 12).

### **5.3.2 Chapel**

#### **Ground floor**

Entry into the chapel is through the schoolroom via the narrow semi-glazed doors of the partition screen which open out into a similar-sized space to the schoolroom, with the gallery above on three sides (fig. 3, plate 14). The dais and pulpit is situated at the northern end gallery. The walls are plastered and in neutral colours, while the wall behind the pulpit and galleries are painted pink, in contrast with the other walls. Like the schoolroom, the interior was probably originally panelled below stucco plasterwork.

The floor is tiled in 9-inch red and cream-coloured quarry tiles laid in a diamond pattern, except for the aisle and dais (plates 14, 15 & 17), which have red tiles within a black tile border. Around the base of the walls is a coved tiled skirting, likely to be modern, contemporary with the tile sills of the chapel windows. The windows have metal fixtures for calico blinds.

The dais contains a pine panelled pulpit with integral lectern in the centre. The south-west side of the pulpit is open, presumably giving direct access from the chapel side door (plate 15). The interior of the side door has been boarded over and ivy has managed to penetrate through the frame, but otherwise the door is intact and is a nice feature. The lectern still has the cloth over it

from the last service. Décor around the pulpit is austere, with a simple cross hung below a moulded arch. Flanking the arch are the two tall north-west windows, whose heads are hidden from view by the inserted ceiling. The windows are glazed with stencilled glass in a variety of patterns (plate 16), while the yellow and red upper lights of the gallery would have provided an interesting contrast.

The gallery above is believed to have been built in two phases, which accounts for the fact that the panelling of the main gallery is different to the side galleries (plates 17 & 18). The main, or back gallery, is deeper than the side ones and slopes downwards from the back wall towards the pulpit. It is supported at the front by two fluted wooden columns upon stepped capitals (plate 18) while the side galleries are supported on iron T-joists, the ends of which can be seen on the north-east elevation. Panelling on the back gallery is in a plain sunken rectangular form, whilst the side galleries have narrow lozenge bands to top and bottom (plate 18).

The light panels of the doorway screen are detachable on this side and the doors have locking draw-bolts. Just in front of the screen are two carved consoles that provided additional support over the doorway (plate 19).

### **First floor**

Seating in the first floor gallery was tiered to enable the congregation a full view of the proceedings below. According to the English Heritage survey, only the back gallery is original, so there was either an internal stair or, more likely, a projection containing the original entrance and stairs, for which there is no obvious sign. The current stairs were almost certainly added when the schoolroom was constructed.

All seating has been removed on the back gallery, exposing only the four tiers (fig. 4 and plate 20), but the side gallery seating remains. Originally the timber partition at the front (plate 21) extended all the way across, but it was cut back when the side galleries were added and the ends are now finished with ovolo-carved terminals (plate 22). Members of the congregation sitting at the front of the gallery could lay their hymn and prayer books on its sloping top.

The side galleries retain their long wooden benches, arranged on two tiers. The benches on the top tier are fixed to the walls, while the bench in front has a simple single-rail back to it (plate 23). The benches are only 250mm wide, and legroom is limited. Although the seating is austere, the legs are carved (plate 23), applying detail where it would not normally be seen.

The bottom parts of the first floor walls are fitted with 0.9m-high dark-stained panelling, below vague remains of stucco decoration. Wall panelling around the back gallery comprises oblong panels (plate 20) while the side galleries comprise alternating square and rectangular panels (plate 23), in 9 foot (2.8m) long sections. Part of the floor in the south corner was disturbed when new electricity cables were inserted (plate 20, right).

The false ceiling between the galleries is a modern feature added as a safety or heat retention measure after the chapel phase of use finished. The ceiling is made from hardboard fitted to the undersides of long joists that span the gallery walls (plate 21).

The ceiling to the first floor is plasterboarded, replacing a former lath and plaster one. Overhanging the gallery space is the old chain for a hanging lamp or candelabra (plate 21), the only early light fitting observed in the survey. The roof structure was partially observed through a hole in the ceiling and showed two phases of development; four pegged king post trusses from the original roof and the existing later nailed collar purlin frame (plate 24). All the later timbers are machine-sawn.

### **5.3.3 Kitchen**

The interior of the later extension to the chapel and schoolroom is fitted-out with 1960/70s kitchen units and a sink. There is no indication of former use. The external ledged and braced door is utilitarian in design and one of the few historic features to remain, apart from a former flue aperture in the ceiling (plate 25, top left), probably for a modern (20th century) stove. However, there are no other indications, apart from the blocked-in fireplace in the schoolroom on the other side, that the rooms were heated. Modern carpet obscures any earlier flooring.

## **6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Methodists were split into two groups, the Wesleyans, after the founder, Thomas Wesley, and the so-called 'Primitives'. The main distinction between the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists was mainly to do with their background and approach. The Wesleyan ministry tended to be drawn from the wealthier socially-conscious middle classes who felt responsible to help the masses morally and socially: described at the time as "for the people" (Cooper 2000), while the Primitive ministry tended to be the grittier rabble-rousing preachers from the lower classes, i.e. "of the people" (ibid). It was not unusual for communities to have both Wesleyan and Primitive chapels in the 19th century, catering essentially for two different classes (Visions of Britain).

The early chapel was constructed in 1817, consisting of the main building with its rear gallery. Outwardly, the chapel was probably similar to today, though its brickwork was probably rendered over and the low-pitched roof probably gabled either end. There is no record of the original façade but, if the main gallery were original, there was probably some form of porch at the front enclosing a stair and main entrance. Dating of the existing main doorway to the Regency period suggests it may have been the original chapel entrance, relocated and refitted when the schoolroom was added. Equally however, the design of this door may have been copied from the existing side door and embellished with gothic style, since architectural fads tended to fluctuate a lot in the Victorian period, and combinations of styles became the norm. In addition, the stylised lancet design would reflect its use as a place of worship. The same design is repeated on the north windows that faced the congregation during the service. Similar windows were included in the 1818 refurbishment of Bocking End Chapel, Braintree.

The interiors seem quite bare, but based on similar examples and the walls around the upstairs gallery, the lower parts of the walls would probably have been panelled, though this was probably removed when the ground floor was refurbished. The survey established that the upper parts of the walls were decorated with incised stucco work resembling stonework, since obscured by repeated coats of paint. The windows were fitted with blinds to block out the sun and their lower panes had obscured and stencilled window glass to maintain privacy and aid concentration. Many of these features survive. Otherwise the interiors would have been quite austere, with only limited artificial light and heating.

With the spread of nonconformity in the 19th century, and its increasing influence, the chapel was enlarged and adapted to suit the needs of a larger congregation. This was common practice: most chapels were either improved or rebuilt in the latter half of the period at a time of middle class prosperity. The exact order and dates of these events is not known and other changes have come to light during the survey which suggest a more complex picture of development. It is possible that much of this enlargement and alteration work occurred when the schoolroom was built. The main alteration was the extension of the north-west end of the chapel, which is likely to be contemporary with the creation of the side galleries and replacement roof in the latter part of the century. The need to build such a short (2.1m) extension is difficult to understand, but is verified by the resultant loss of symmetry to the elevations. The fact the extension is built differently suggests the chapel was traditionally rendered, which would suit the Georgian/Regency adversity to brick. Perhaps the same ashlar stucco effect was used externally as well as internally.

Internally, the main surviving feature in the chapel is the gallery and the benches upstairs. Apart from that, the flooring and pulpit appear to be 20th century replacements. There are no remains of

ground floor seating or indication of where the organ stood - though probably at one end of the dais with the pulpit. Much of the schoolroom interior features probably date from the 1860-70 period and are well-preserved, particularly around the stairs and screen. The kitchen extension was probably built with or shortly after the school and is presumed to have had a related function.

In architectural terms, the chapel is an interesting Regency-style structure whose galleried form is largely typical of chapels of this date. Similar examples have been studied by the FAU at Stebbing, Langley Green and Castle Street, Saffron Walden (Letch 2006; 2007; 2009) though it is rare find one so well-preserved. Although the schoolroom at the front is a more functional structure of lesser architectural interest, the combination of a chapel and schoolroom on the same site is unusual and provides extra group value. Together the buildings provide a rare, well-preserved example of a near-complete 19th century nonconformist chapel and school, retaining its Victorian spatial layout, form and fixtures and fittings. As such, this record presents a 'model type' that may be compared and contrasted to others in the future. In more general historic terms, Great Oakley Methodist Chapel is important as a product of the Nonconformist movement that challenged the existing hierarchical religious establishments and helped bring education to the masses.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was commissioned by Mr Kevin Sherwood of Sherwood Contract Services Ltd. Drawings were provided by the architects, CFL Planning & Design Ltd. The survey was carried out by the author and illustrations produced by Andrew Lewsey of ECC FAU. Adrian Gascoyne of ECC HEM monitored the work on behalf of Tendring DC planning department.

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## **Appendix 1: Contents of Archive**

**Site name: Great Oakley Methodist Chapel**

**Project no. 2445**

### **Index to the Archive**

Document wallet containing:

**1. Research Archive**

- 1.1 ECC HEM design brief
- 1.2 ECC FAU written scheme of investigation (WSI)
- 1.3 Two copies of the client report (one unbound)
- 1.4 CD containing digital images, pdf-formatted report, etc

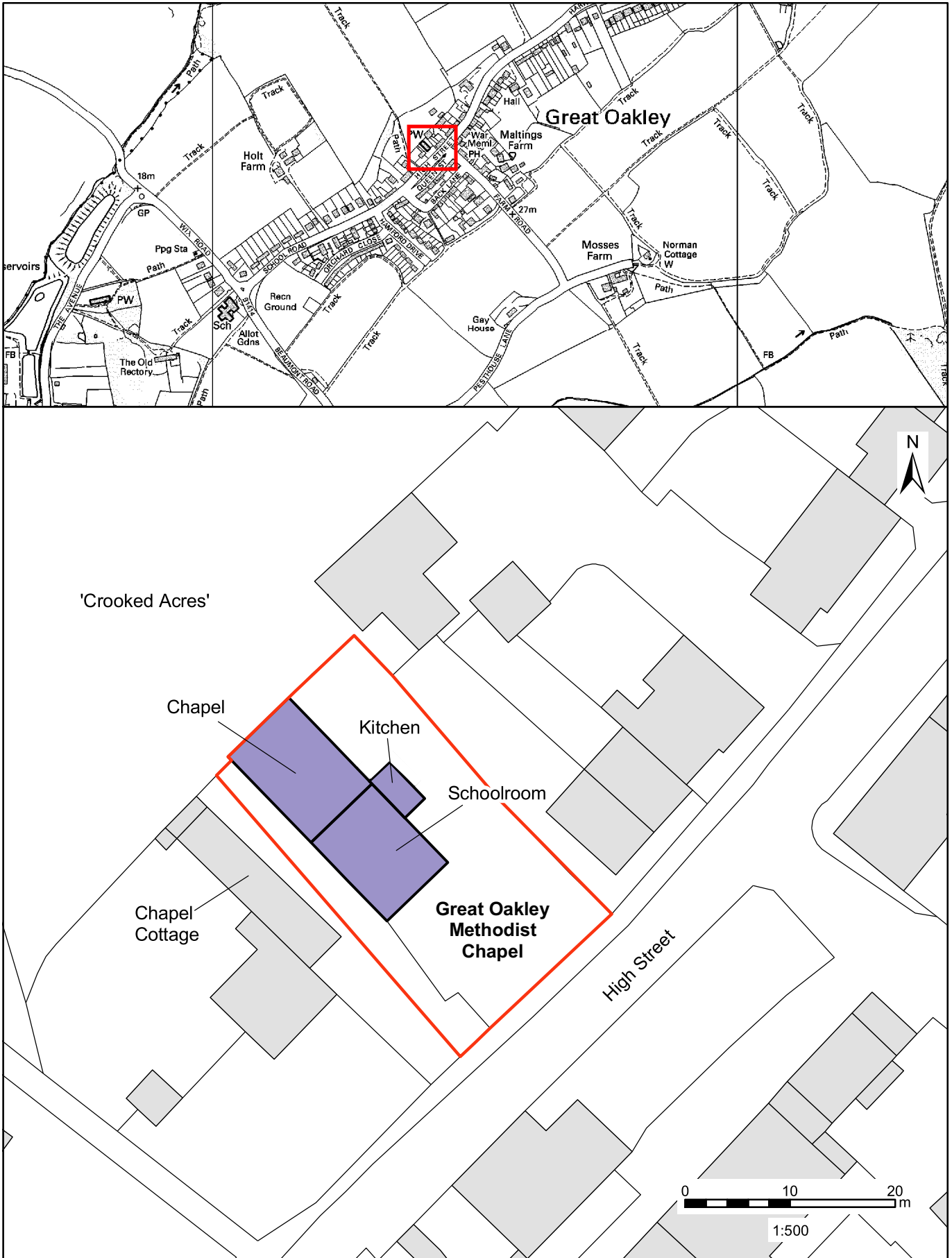
**2. Site Archive**

- 2.1 Photographic registers
- 2.2 Photographic record (colour digital & 35mm monochrome prints)
- 2.3 Site notes & annotated survey plans

## Appendix 2: EHER Summary Sheet

<b>Site Name/Address:</b> Great Oakley Methodist Chapel, High Street, Great Oakley, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Great Oakley	<b>District:</b> Tendring
<b>NGR:</b> TM 1941 2760	<b>Oasis ref.:</b> 110774
<b>Type of Work:</b> Building recording	<b>Site Director/Group:</b> Andy Letch, ECC FAU
<b>Dates of Work:</b> July 2011	<b>Size of Area Investigated:</b> N/A
<b>Curating Museum:</b> Colchester	<b>Funding Source:</b> Sherwood Contract Services Ltd
<b>Further Work Anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related HER Nos.:</b> none
<b>Final Report:</b> Summary in EAH	
<b>Periods Represented:</b> Regency & Victorian	
<p><b>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</b></p> <p>A Level 3 building record was undertaken on an unlisted early 19th-century Methodist chapel and later schoolroom at Great Oakley, prior to residential conversion into two houses. The buildings are included as part of the English Heritage Survey of Chapels and Meeting Houses (Stell 2002), though the schoolroom is referred to as a Sunday School in this.</p> <p>The chapel was built as a Wesleyan chapel in 1817, with the schoolroom added to its front in c.1860-70. A further extension, latterly used as a kitchen, was later added to the side of the schoolroom.</p> <p>The structure has undergone a number of changes in its history. The original chapel was a Regency structure of red brick, multi-pane sash windows and good symmetry, probably with a low-pitched gabled roof. It is likely to have been slightly shorter, as the NW end of the building was extended slightly later on. Before the schoolhouse was built onto the south-east end, the main entrance was here and the present doorway has features dated to this period and may have been re-sited at the time. The interiors are sparse, but contain a gallery (built in two phases) with seating, and some surviving panelling. The floor tiling and pulpit are 20th century.</p> <p>The schoolroom is a single storey open hall that incorporates the same style of external fixtures as the chapel. Internally there are many surviving Victorian fixtures around the doorway between the chapel and schoolroom, including a glazed screen, bench, cupboard and stairs. A small room, of unknown original function, was built onto the side of the schoolroom but was converted into a kitchen in the later 20th century.</p> <p>The main historic structures are significant for their group value and are a well-preserved example a nonconformist chapel and schoolroom, containing many Victorian features and fixtures and fittings.</p>	
<b>Previous Summaries/Reports</b> gazetteer entry in: Stell, J. 2002 <i>Nonconformist Meeting-houses in Eastern England</i> , English Heritage	
<b>Author of Summary:</b> Andrew Letch	<b>Date of Summary:</b> 28th September 2011





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Fig.1. Location plan

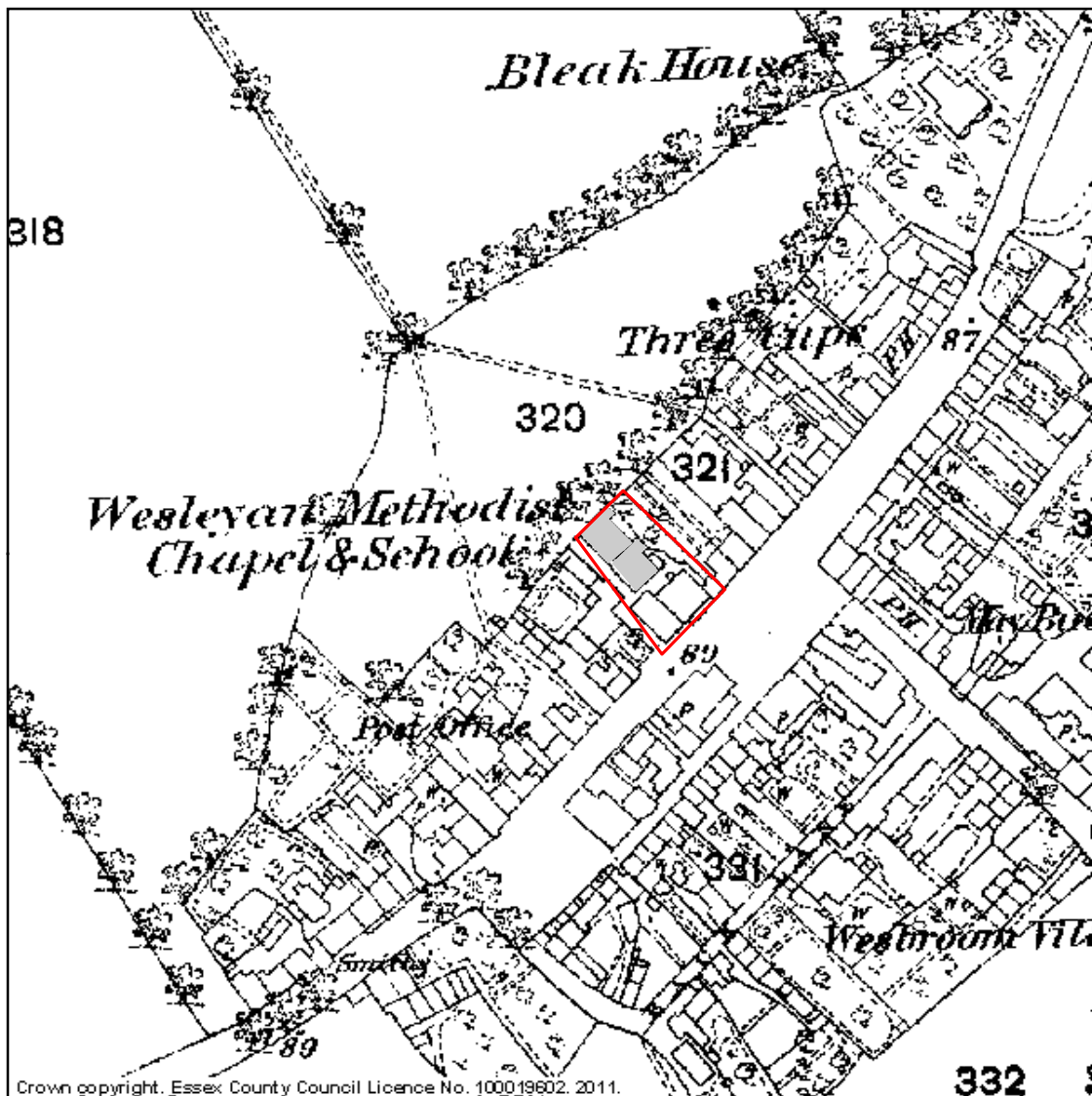


Fig.2. First edition Ordnance Survey map, c.1875

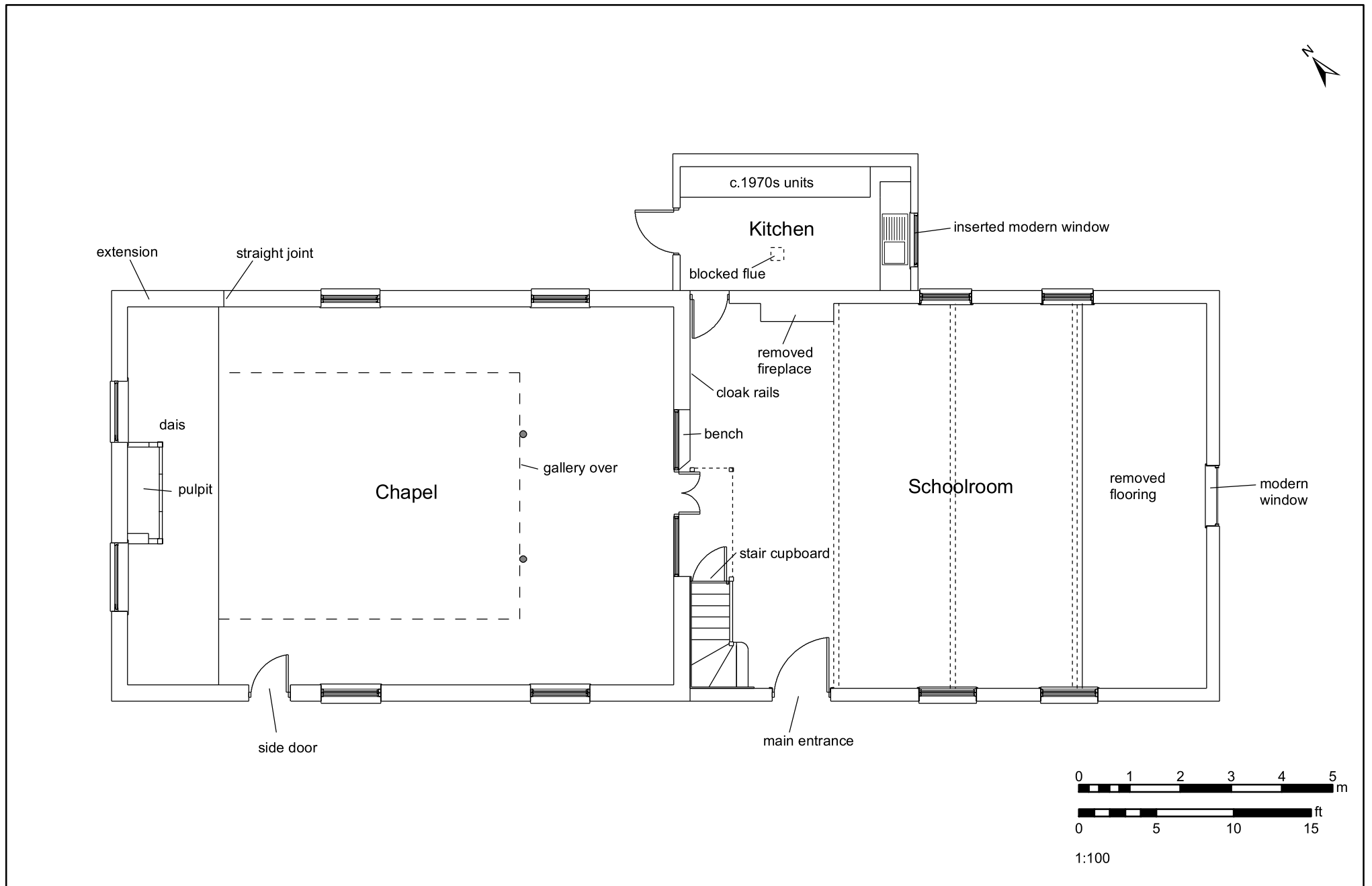


Fig.3. Ground floor plan

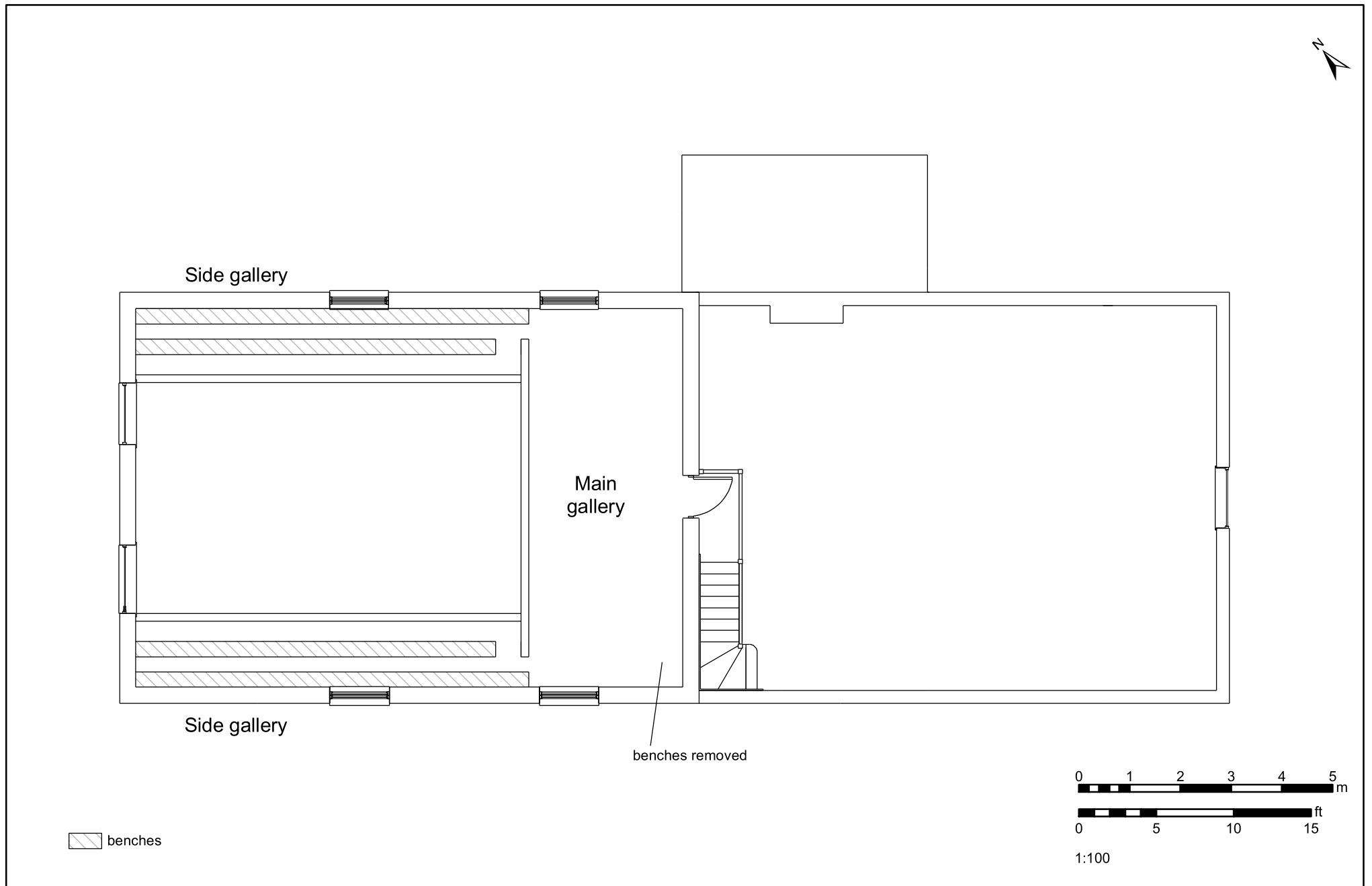


Fig.4. First floor plan





Plate 1 South-east elevation



Plate 2 South-west elevation (schoolroom)



Plate 3 Main entrance



Plate 4 South-west elevation (chapel)



Plate 5 Chapel door



Plate 6 South-east elevation



Plate 7 North-east elevation



Plate 8 North-east elevation (chapel)



Plate 9 Interior of schoolroom viewed to north-west



Plate 10 Screen between schoolroom and chapel



Plate 11 Historic fixtures around entrance to kitchen



Plate 12 Interior of schoolroom viewed to south



Plate 13 Window on south-west side of schoolroom (0.5m scale)



Plate 14 Interior of chapel viewed to north-west



Plate 15 Pulpit





Plate 16 Detail of stencilled glass at north-east end



Plate 17 Chapel viewed to south-east



Plate 18 Detail of column and gallery panelling



Plate 19 Screen viewed to south-west inside chapel



Plate 20 Original back gallery viewed to east



Plate 21 First floor viewed to north-west



Plate 22 Back gallery detail



Plate 23 Side gallery seating viewed to south-east



Plate 24 Chapel roof timbers



Plate 25 Kitchen interior, viewed to north-west