

### *Context*

Like many Nonconformist (Reform) or Evangelical Christian denominations, the pulpit in Yon Chapel (former United Reform Church) is found at the front and centre of the 'chancel' part of the chapel, directly under the chancel window. The pulpit is typical in form: an elevated, enclosed platform, raised to ensure the best sound projection and incorporates an integral book stand. It would have been the largest single piece of church furniture, and this was intentional to evidence the importance of the *Word of God* within the liturgy (as the focus of the weekly service), the sermon where the pastor read from the bible and interpreted for the congregation. Originally this pulpit would have been for the exclusive use of the pastor and possibly an assistant lay preacher. However, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the nature of services changed and many of these more open platform pulpits also doubled up as lecterns, for congregational readings and church notices.

The pulpit is respected by the beaded stair plate and skirting which rises with it along the wall but is ultimately a freestanding structure built over a base with a few tying in timbers affixing it to the wall. It is of typical design with single-storey raised platform accessed via a set of steps to the west and is of mid-later 19<sup>th</sup> century Jacobethan (Jacobean Revival) design, a freer, more vernacular Gothic style mixing Elizabethan geometric, typical Gothic details, with Jacobean decorated forms, popular in domestic country house architecture and institutional buildings from the c.1820s, popularly used in carpentry and stairs into the late 1800s and early 1900s, where a bolder version morphed in Edwardian Baroque. This example exhibits well executed, artisan carpenter details like pegged joints and dovetails, but is pine, stained dark, not particularly decorative and is of surprisingly heavy scantling for such a small space.

This rather heavy style is interesting when considered in relation to the stained glass in the lancet window to the south, which is of accomplished Art Nouveau style, later than the construction date of the chapel (c.1856). The windows have the typical central panel of Edwardian elongated flower stalk motifs, with stylised petals and stamens, possibly lily flowers. The pulpit seems fairly cohesive in style with the Gothic scissor-truss roof, the trusses of which sit on short wall posts, in turn on corbels, attempting to give an impression of early crucks. Several of the four-panel doors in the building also have the typical Gothic run-out chamfering on their plain panels, also seen on the pulpit, and the dado-height panelling around the chapel is of plank boards with a chunky bead to the top, echoing the panelled base of the pulpit platform. The chapel as it currently stands was built in at least three phases (the chapel, the vestry to the south-west, and the school room), so there is a context for later work to the building. However, the historic maps indicate the chapel achieved its current layout by 1885×86, so they must have occurred in quick succession during that 30-year period.

The built form of the chapel with its steeply pointed gables is obviously plain English Gothic revival; this developed in the 1840s and 1850s, as a particularly minimalist adaption of the exuberant early Gothic revival, focusing far more on solid forms and taking influence from secular military-castle architecture instead of decorated European-Gothic associated with the Catholic church. Much of this chapel's sturdy undecorated build, is typical of the Protestant adoption of Gothic for many of its chapels, designed to convey the ancient and serious nature of religion.

### *Description of the Pulpit*

Its Jacobean-style newel and corner posts are combined with more typical Gothic incised plat band detailing and run out chamfered details. The breadth of this pulpit would suggest the pastor sat in a chair behind his book stand for the entire service, an additional small shelf beneath the book stand

provided for his notes, glasses etc. Three steps access the platform from the west, carpet-covered plank treads and risers beneath, the bottom step is noticeably deeper to shorten the pastors time in ascension. The stairs are of closed string form, with plank boarded string board to front, with raised separate handrail above; the strong board has a chunky framed rail bracing it with deeply chamfered outer band and incised detail, with repeating geometric circles within closed incised bands. The string board and handrail are braced by Jacobethan style newel posts, forming a balustrade, which then continues around the front north and east side of the platform. The newel posts are square in profile with incised roundels formed by lozenge-shaped chamfer details, turned above to form square bead with integral turned blocky pyramidal chamfered finials above, also with incised roundel to each face. The handrail is chunky, chamfered to top and sides, with narrow hollow-chamfered detail to underside. Between the handrail and stair board the open space is screened by curtains on brass rods. The balustrade continues in the same style around the pulpit. To the centre of the balustrade is the book stand which has two newel posts braced by a chamfered screen with central recessed panel with plank framing, covered by green baize and above it has a plain book stand carried on elaborate carved scrolled brackets, with chunky roll moulding detail connected by a moulded band. To either side of the book stand the gap between handrail and base board is again open, screened by green curtains on a brass rod. Beneath the base board is a deep projecting roll moulded kerb and beneath is plank boarded framed panelling with deep chamfered skirting. Two later cupboards or openings have been cut into this, presumably for a sound system, and two single electrical switches, and one double electrical socket, have been attached. To the east side a low door has been created to access the cavity beneath the pulpit; this reuses the existing planks etc., is carried on simple hinges, and is fastened by both a single small rim latch and a brass turn button catch. The south-eastern side has also dropped (presumably due to the floor beneath failing) and some of the vertical planking has been lost.



















