

**CHURCH ROOMS,
ST PETER STREET, TIVERTON
AN HISTORIC BUILDING EVALUATION**

June 2014

Martin Watts

1 Trinity Cottages
Cullompton
Devon
EX15 1PE

Project PST243

**CHURCH ROOMS,
ST PETER STREET, TIVERTON
AN HISTORIC BUILDING EVALUATION**

Contents

Summary		1
Generally		1
Location		2
Historical background		2
Description of the buildings	Church Rooms	6
	Manse	8
	Congregational Church	8
Dating and discussion		10
Conclusion		11
Acknowledgements		11
References		12
Figures		13
Photographs		24
Appendix A	Listed building descriptions	33
Appendix B	HER entries	35
Appendix C	Published descriptions	38

June 2014

Martin Watts

1 Trinity Cottages
Cullompton
Devon
EX15 1PE

Project PST243

CHURCH ROOMS, ST PETER STREET, TIVERTON, DEVON

AN HISTORIC BUILDING EVALUATION

Summary

The building known as the Church Rooms, School Rooms or Memorial Rooms, which is located between the manse and the former Congregational church on the west side of the southern end of St Peter Street, Tiverton, was built in 1837-8. It is the middle of three buildings which were apparently to the designs of the Rev. William Harvey Heudebourck, the Nonconformist pastor from 1830 to 1845. The church was built on the site of an earlier meeting room in 1831-2 and the construction of the manse was contemporary with the church rooms, it being built between 1837 and 1838. The church rooms were enlarged by the addition of a third storey in 1862-3, which provided new class rooms. The building was partly gutted by fire in February 1962, which resulted in the loss of a south-facing gable and the roof. Renovation work, including new floors and a new roof, took place after the fire and the building remained in use alongside the church it was built to serve until 2012.

Generally

This evaluation has been compiled at the request of the property owner, to assess the historic character of the former Church Rooms in St Peter Street, Tiverton, Devon, EX16 6NU, in support of a planning application for the conversion of the building into three flats. The work is being undertaken in accordance with paragraph 128 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (2012) as outlined in a Method Statement submitted to Devon County Council's Historic Environment Team (DHES ref: ARCH/DM/MD/ 20047).

The Church Rooms form part of a cohesive group of 19th century Grade II listed buildings on the west side of St Peter Street, which is within the Tiverton Conservation Area. While this evaluation is concerned primarily with this building, two adjoining buildings, the former manse to the south and the Congregational church to the north, are also briefly described and their backgrounds are considered with regard to their relationship with the Church Rooms.

The Devon Historic Environment Record Monument Report MDV 89199 refers to this site; the adjoining properties are MDV 24486 (the former manse, 2 St Peter Street) and MDV 12369 (the former United Reform Church) (see Appendix B).

Site visits for the purpose of this evaluation were made by the writer on 3 and 12 May 2014. Background and other information has been compiled from a range of sources, which are acknowledged and referenced. Much valuable background information has been taken from a booklet and an article by W.P. Authers (1960; 1974), whose research made use of original church records.

The drawings (Figures 8-13) are from a survey prepared by South West Land Surveys, Exeter, kindly made available by the property owner.

A digital copy of this evaluation will be uploaded onto the OASIS (Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigationS) database under the identification number martinwa1-178379.

Location

The former Church Rooms are situated on the west side at the southern end of St Peter Street, Tiverton (NGR SS 9537 1255). The site stands at about 70m above Ordnance Datum. St Peter Street rises steeply from Angel Hill, which runs from the east end of Exe Bridge towards the Fore Street (Figure 1). The former manse is located on the bend at the lower end of St Peter Street, with the church rooms and church uphill from it. As well as rising from south to north, towards St Peter's church and the castle, the ground level falls quite steeply to the west between St Peter Street and the river Exe, and the church hall and church have basements built in to the slope.

Historical background

Generally:

The town of Tiverton grew up on a wedge-shaped site between the rivers Exe on the west and Loman on the east side. A settlement was possibly established here as early as the mid 7th century (Hoskins 1954, 239) and the place-name *Twyfyrde* is first recorded in the will of king Alfred in the late 9th century. In Domesday Book (1086) it was listed as *Tovretona* - the farmstead or village at the double ford (Mills 2003, 464) - and it remained a royal estate into the medieval period. Tiverton was established as a borough by William de Vernon, Earl of Devon, in the late 12th or early 13th century, possibly at the same time as Honiton and Plympton (Beresford and Finberg 1973, 99) and there was a market and three fairs there by 1200. The oldest settlement is thought to have been around St Peter's church and the castle, but the main streets developed further to the south and Exe bridge was in existence by the 14th century (Cherry and Pevsner 2004, 807). The layout of medieval burgh plots, including some on both sides of St Peter Street, is still apparent on maps of the town. The plots on the west side fronted the road, extending in thin strips westwards to the bank of the river Exe. Hoskins (1954, 239-40) considered that the town was unimportant and 'badly decayed' until the establishment of kersey (a type of woollen cloth) manufacture there in the late 15th century. From that time it prospered and grew and in the early 18th century Daniel Defoe noted that, through the production of serges, Tiverton was second only to Exeter as 'the greatest manufacturing town in the county, is next to it in wealth, and in numbers of people;...' (Rogers 1971, 249). The district of West Exe, which is referred to as early as the 14th century (Keene 1996, 1), became an important industrial suburb and was developed after 1816 when John Heathcoat, who moved to Tiverton from Loughborough after machine-breaking riots at his factory there, established a lace manufactory in a former woollen mill. In 1850 Tiverton was described as 'an ancient borough and market town, formerly a principal seat of the woollen manufacture, and now noted for its extensive lace manufactory, and its numerous charities...' (White 1850, 305).

Several writers comment on the effect of a series of fires from the late 16th to the late 18th centuries which destroyed many buildings. After a particularly disastrous fire in 1731 an Act was passed for the rebuilding the town, with slated and tiled roofs rather than thatch, and widening the streets (White 1850, 307).

Nonconformity:

In the wake of the Civil War and the accession of Charles II, the Act of Uniformity, which was passed in 1662, barred Puritan clergy from retention of their livings and many of those who were ejected founded congregations. One such minister was Theophilus Polwheil, a Cornishman, who held the rectories of Clare and Tidcombe in 1654 and was ejected at the Restoration in 1660, some two years before the major ejectments. It was Polwheil who opened the public meeting house, known as Steps Meeting House, in St Peter Street in

1687 (see below) (Authers 1974, 41). In 1684 Tiverton was referred to as a 'weaving and largely Nonconformist town' (Noon 2008, 35, from a letter from the Deputy Lord Lieutenant to the Duke of Albemarle). The growth of Dissent was also helped by increasing laxity within the established church. The importance of Nonconformity in the social and political life of the town in the 19th century is underlined by the story that when Palmerston represented Tiverton in the 1837 elections, it was the Nonconformist vote that saw him elected. Lord Palmerston, statesman and prime minister, was MP for Tiverton until his death in 1865 and 'one of the first calls [he] made when visiting his Tiverton constituents was at the Congregational parsonage on Angel Hill.' (Authers 1974, 37).

The Steps Meeting House:

Martin Dunsford in his history of Tiverton (1790) records that the first meeting house was situated at the south-west end of St Peter Street, near the steps leading to Exe bridge. Built in 1687 it apparently occupied the site of an earlier chapel, dating from 1552, dedicated to St Peter. The meeting house was described as 'almost square, and built of brick, is 42 feet long, 41 feet wide within, and 19½ feet high; it has a gallery against the north and east walls, and part of the south; the pulpit is against the west wall; behind which is a garden, belonging to persons claiming a passage to it through the house, which is very disagreeable. Though the seats are generally bad and irregular, they are so disposed as to accommodate about 500 people. This house, or rather part of it, was opened for public divine service soon after King James's declaration of liberty, in the year 1687.' An elevation and plan of the old meeting house are given by Authers (1960, 18), based on sketches in the church records (Figure 4). From the description given by the Rev W.H. Heudebourck in the 1830s, a flight of steps provided access from the east end of Exe bridge up to St Peter Street, the approach being 'mean and unpleasant', with a narrow steep passage between the meeting-house and a cluster of slum houses which then stood at the end of the street (Authers 1974, 41).

The first minister was, as noted above, Theophilus Polwheil, who held the post until his death in 1698. Dunsford (1790, 150-1) notes that the congregation was originally of Independent sect but that by his time it was 'difficult to say what are now the generally prevailing religious sentiments of the people attending social worship in this house.' The meeting house had been enlarged in 1699 when Thomas Keene gave some land near the Steps and also an endowment towards the support of the minister there (*ibid*). Some 18 years later Joan Keene, Thomas's widow, gave the reversion of a house at the top of Angel Hill towards the support of the minister of the Steps Meeting House (Sampson 2004, 145, from DRO 49/9/6/211c). White (1850, 311) noted that 'The Independent Chapel, in Peter street, called *Steps Meeting-house*, has an endowment for the support of the minister, amounting to £56 18s per annum, arising from land, house, and stock left by Thomas and Joan Keene', amongst others.

Little further improvement of the meeting house appears to have taken place 'besides common necessary repairs, which have been considerable, from its exposed situation' (Dunsford 1790, 370-4), which perhaps prompted John Wesley's comment in his Journal for 30 August 1775: 'In the evening I preached in the dreary preaching-house at Tiverton; the people appeared as dull as the place.' (Authers 1960, 19). From Heudebourck's description of it in 1830 the building was by then in poor structural condition (Authers 1974, 41).

The Church/Chapel, Church Rooms and Manse:

The Steps Meeting House was replaced by a new Independent church in the early 1830s (Authers 1974, 41). The rebuilding of the church in its present form, along with the adjoining school or church rooms and minister's house or manse, was due to the dynamism of William Harvey Heudebourck, who began his ministry in Tiverton in February 1830 at the age of 24. One of his first actions was to launch an appeal to pull down the old meeting house and 'build an edifice worthy of the cause.' The last services in the old meeting house were held on 10 April 1831 and the foundation stone of the new building was laid on 18 April 1831 (Heudebourck's birthday). The church opened exactly a year later, on 18 April 1832 (Authers 1960, 37-9). According to the 1855-95 town map the church had seating for 700 (Fig 3).

The proposal to construct a new building adjoining the south side of the church followed shortly afterwards. To quote directly from Authers (1960, 64):

'In 1835 the Pastor and six brethren (Messrs F.S. Gervis, W. Anstey, J. Gath, R. Were, J. Manley and J. Richards) purchased the property on the lower side of the Chapel, a loan from the Rev. Thomas Luke of Taunton for £550 permitting the purchase to be made the following year. In 1837 Heudebourck appealed to the young people again and they responded nobly by undertaking to raise £180 towards the erection of the School House. The foundation stone was laid in 1837 (on the Pastor's birthday, April 18th, of course) and the opportunity was taken to make a big improvement at the entrance to St Peter Street by removing the steps, levelling out the hill and straightening the road. In August of the same year the foundations of the Parsonage were laid. The School House was opened (inevitably) on April 18th 1838, and the Parsonage was occupied in July on completion of the whole block. These developments in the Queen's Coronation year created an atmosphere of joyous activity...'

Snell (1892, 286) noted that after the building of the chapel was completed 'it was now desired to erect a school and a house for the minister on the adjoining site. With this view the trustees approached the Improvement Commissioners and requested leave to remove the steps leading from St Peter-street to Exe-bridge. Permission was granted, and the Commissioners on their part undertook to complete the road and foot-path over a part of the way and to take all the available materials.'

As a result of the new building work the entrance to St Peter Street was doubled in width and 'a miserable bank of earth', which was removed at a cost of £40 to the congregation, became the site of an obelisk with three lamps on it in 1840 (Authers 1960, 41). The obelisk was replaced by an ornamental cast-iron lamp-stand on a stone plinth in 1878, the gift of Mr John Lane. This still stands and is listed Grade II (English Heritage listing description).

The design of the three church buildings appears to be attributable to Heudebourck himself, with advice from his 'his long suffering architect brother-in-law', Samuel Pollard of Taunton (Authers 1960, 81). Authers (1960, 89-90) makes the following comment about the architecture of the church buildings in St Peter Street: '... one cannot help wondering whether the mixture of architectural styles embodied in the St Peter Street buildings was an expression of Independency or the result of compromise between the professional architect and his strongwilled client, who certainly had ideas of his own and considered every constructional detail very carefully.' When the church was built in 1832

it was the first in the town to be roofed with Welsh slates and it was lit by thirty burners fed by the town's new gas supply (Authers 1974, 41). The builder or builders who carried out the works are at present unknown.

The cost of the buildings was recorded in the Deacon's Minutes of 1845 (Authers 1960, 83):

Total Expense of the New Buildings From April 1831 to July 10 1844			
The Chapel	2393	12	6
The School House	660	0	0
The Chapel Parsonage	875	0	0
The Land	560	0	0
Elmore Chapel	410	5	6
The Cemetery	334	15	5¼
	£5233	13	5¼ ¹

Heudebourck's ministry at Tiverton lasted for fifteen years and he was succeeded by the Rev. H. Madgin and Rev. W.R. Noble, during whose ministry 'the Independent community enjoyed a period of unexampled prosperity' (Snell 1892, 286). In 1862 a second floor was added to the church rooms and all the buildings were renovated, to celebrate the bicentenary of the main ejections of 1662 (Authers 1960, 88). The new upper floor class rooms were opened in 1863, their date being commemorated by the carved stone on the south elevation. At this time the carved stone band bearing the words MEMORIAL HALL was also added.

Buildings are shown on the site of the manse, church rooms and church on the Tithe Map of c.1841 but no detail of individual buildings is apparent (Figure 2). On the Ordnance Survey town map of 1855-1895, however, the church rooms are shown as integral with the church. The plan is annotated with 'Independent Chapel, seats for 700, on site of St Peter's Chapel.' (Figure 3).

The Congregational church schoolroom was used for emergency accommodation, as were other buildings in Tiverton, for people evacuated from Exeter during the air raids of 1942. (Sampson 2004, 316)

Shortly after midnight on Wednesday 21 February 1962 a fire broke out in the church rooms. From a newspaper report published the following week, it appears to have started in the middle schoolroom and swept upwards through the roof. The first floor then fell through to the ground floor, which was described as a lecture hall (*Devon and Somerset News*, 28 February 1962, 1; 16). The report provides further information in that extensive redecoration of the church had been carried out a year before. The fabric of the church does not appear to have been fire damaged, but a 'constant hail of exploding slates and falling stonework' was reported and contemporary photographs show that the upper floors and roof of the church rooms were severely affected (Figure 7).

The church buildings were last occupied by the United Reformed Church in 2012, being vacated following the congregation's union with Tiverton Methodist Church. The three buildings were put up for sale in September 2012 (*The Gazette*, 25 September 2012).

¹ White (1850, 311) noted that 'The Independent Chapel, in Peter street, is a large stone building, erected in 1831-2, at the cost of £4683, including the cost of the land, and the school and minister's house.' Snell (1892, 286) put the total cost to the congregation, including the chapel, at £4184 11s 11d.

Description of the buildings

Church Rooms

(see plans and elevations: Figures 8-13)

The entrance to the church or memorial rooms is set back from the pavement in the south-east corner of the east elevation, within a small triangular raised area which also gives access to the manse. There were formerly iron railings and a double gate forming the entry at the pavement edge (see Figure 6) and there are remains of steps and a marble threshold built in at the pavement edge.

The church rooms are of three storeys with a basement accessible from the church. The principal east and south elevations are faced with coursed grey ashlar limestone blocks. The limestone is similar in appearance to that quarried at Westleigh, although its precise source is not known. There is a projecting base course to the south and east elevations and the entrance doorway and windows in the east elevation all have pointed arched heads, with projecting hood mouldings and there are bold projecting string courses close below the cills at first and second floor levels. The hood mouldings appear to be of different stone, possibly from Beer or Bath. The lower ends of the mouldings on both sides of the central window have broken off or weathered away at all three levels. Close below the string course at second floor level is a stone band carved with the words MEMORIAL ROOMS in what the listing describes as Lombardic script. The central window of the three at second floor level is taller than those on both sides and is glazed with diamond pane leaded lights. The coping on the steeply-pitched gable end is weathered with lead sheet and there is a stone finial at the apex.

High up on the south elevation is a carved stone with the date 1863. This now appears in a somewhat isolated position, which is explained by the upper part of this wall having been rebuilt to eaves level after the fire of 1962. To the west of this is a stone chimney stack with three terra cotta pots. These served the manse rather than the church rooms, the flues apparently being built into the thickness of the south wall. The roof is slated, with two small roof lights in the lower slope on the south side and one on the north (the latter from the survey drawings).

The rear elevation of the church rooms is not closely accessible. The wall is of rubble stone with double lancet windows at each floor level; those to the second floor are widely spaced. The coping on the gable appears to be flat slabs, with a roll moulding at the apex. From changes in the colour of the stonework and pointing, it appears that a substantial section of the south-west corner of the upper part of the rear elevation may have been rebuilt after the fire of 1962.

There is a projecting stair turret, built of rubble stone with a castellated top, at the north-west end of the rear elevation. Externally this has three faces, whilst internally it is circular on plan. The turret extended from the basement, giving access to the ground and first floors, but does not extend to second floor level. It has a flat asphalt roof below the castellations.

The entrance doorway leads directly into the ground floor, which is an open space with a low stage on the west side. The floor is suspended timber construction, with hatches giving access to the basement area below. The lower parts of the walls to the south, east and north are clad with vertical tongued and grooved boards capped with a dado rail at about 1.13m above the floor. A straight flight of stairs along the inside of the front wall rise to a doorway through to the church in the north-east corner, with a cupboard beneath.

The wall panelling and dado continue under the stairs, with some earlier decoration surviving on the wall above the dado. At the west end of the south wall is a pair of lancet windows, the right one of which has been converted to a doorway leading out onto a modern platform which gives access to the rear of the manse. In the north-west corner a WC has been inserted in the former circular stair turret. This retains two small lancet windows with diamond leaded light glazing. There is an iron wall safe set in the north wall, which although it has a modern steel security bar across the door, appears to be original, or at least 19th century. At the rear of the stage, across the west wall, is a flight of stairs leading up to the first floor. The ceiling, which is of three bays, appears modern, presumably part of the rebuilding after the 1962 fire.

The first floor is an open space, with a modern timber-boarded floor and an inserted ceiling which runs across the heads of the lancet windows on both elevations. The walls are plastered and dry-lined, with plasterboard on timber studs. Some of the cladding has been removed in the north-east corner, for dry rot treatment, exposing the stonework. The walls are of coursed rubble stone, a mixture of local sandstone, breccia and limestone. The former stair turret in the north-east corner is built of rubble stone. It is now a WC, a floor and ceiling having been inserted, and a concrete lintel and brickwork around and above the doorway into it indicate rebuilding and alterations. As on the ground floor, the former stair turret retains lancet windows with diamond paned leaded lights. The principal windows on the west and east sides have timber frames, each with three fixed lights and a bottom-hinged opening lower light.

There is a doorway through to the church gallery in the north-east corner, which is a later insertion. In the north wall to the west of this is a cupboard which appears to have been an earlier doorway, its threshold at about 0.8m above the present floor level. There is a nosed step within the cupboard at about 1m above floor level. There is also a blocked up former doorway through to the manse in the south wall.

The present stairway to the second floor is partially enclosed in stud and plasterboard and rises from west to east along the north wall. There is a landing with a doorway through to the church gallery which is a later insertion, cutting through one of the blind arches on the south wall of the church.

The second floor has a landing with four rooms leading off, with a softwood boarded floor and modern stud and plasterboard partitions with flush doors. The floor level cuts across the pointed heads of the first floor windows and the ceiling across the second floor window heads. It appears that the internal floor levels were altered after the 1962 fire, when the upper floors and roof are known to have been destroyed. A brick course and other patch repairs in the stonework which has been exposed for dry rot treatment in the north-west corner suggest that the top floor was originally about 0.76m higher than the replacement.

All the ceilings are plastered with light wells over the window heads. There is a roof hatch in the north-west corner of the third floor ceiling giving visual access only to the roof space at the time of the survey. The roof structure is modern, dating from after the fire in 1962, of three bays with two lightweight steel angle trusses. The trusses have vertical steel 'king struts' and angle struts to the middle purlin position. The purlins, three on each slope with a pair of ridge purlins, are of box-section steel. The rafters are of sawn softwood and the roof slopes are felted over the rafters.

The basement does not extend fully under ground floor (see plans), the east end of the ground floor being suspended timber close over the former ground level. It is accessed via a short flight of concrete steps through a modern door from the south-east corner of the church basement. The floor is also of concrete. On the west side of the basement at the bottom of the steps is the base of the former stair turret in whitewashed stone. From evidence of the positions of cantilever supports in stone wall the stairs rose anti-clockwise, which is confirmed by the positions of the lancet windows on the ground and first floors. Beyond this, through a fine wrought iron gate with a lock, is a short passageway. On the east side of the passageway are two whitewashed brick arches over two small spaces under part of church room floor and at the southern end is door leading to narrow covered passage behind the manse.

The Manse

The manse or parsonage, which occupies a restricted site on the corner of Angel Hill and St Peter Street, is a neo-Tudor style building, L-shaped on plan and of four storeys - basement, ground, first and second - under slated gable roofs. The walls of the principal visible elevations are of coursed limestone rubble. The south elevation has two bays of symmetrical windows with vertical sashes, those to the ground and first floor having hood mouldings. There is a projecting string course at second floor cill level. The elevation to St Peter Street is of three storeys, with the entrance doorway at ground floor level, with a castellated porch. The entrance is within the same small triangular raised area which also gives access to the church rooms. The ground floor window is double width, with two bays of sash windows to the first and second floors, those to the first floor with hood mouldings. The interior of this building has not been examined (see listing description, Appendix A).

Congregational Church

The principal, east elevation of the church is of grey ashlar limestone, similar to that used for the facade of the church rooms. It is of three bays with a central open pediment and two tiers of round-arched windows. The central window of the three at second floor level is taller than those on both sides. The central round-arched doorway is accessed direct from St Peter Street up two steps and has a decorative lamp bracket over. Both the windows and doorways have projecting hood mouldings. The applied ornamental lettering INDEPENDENT CHAPEL that formerly ran across bottom of the open pediment was removed between 1985 and 1988. At the apex of the parapet above the gable is a large stone finial. The roof is not visible from ground level, being hidden behind the parapet.

The rear elevation is of random coursed rubble stone, with a projecting central block and splayed walls on either side, with three tall arched-headed windows. The central window opening is louvred and the side openings are glazed with two rows of small square panes. Some of these appear to be of plastic. Projecting from the north west corner of the central block is a two storey stone-built room with a lean-to slated roof. Its lower floor is at basement level, accessed from the small rear garden area. Adjacent to this extension and at a slightly higher level is a modern lean-to slate-roofed brick-built room, the vestry, which is entered from ground floor level at the rear of the church. Its structure is supported on steel beams and columns (see photograph).

Inside the main doorway from St Peter Street is a panelled and glazed entrance lobby with a decorative tiled floor, which in character appears to be late 19th - early 20th century. The interior of the church is polygonal on plan, with rows of angled pews against the north

and south walls and straight pews to the centre. A doorway in the south-east corner gives access to the church rooms.

Two flights of timber stairs lead up from each side of the entrance lobby to the gallery. This runs around the whole of the church and is supported on cast-iron columns with decorative cast-iron railings and a timber rail along the gallery edge. There are two doorways leading through to the church rooms on the south side of the gallery. At the western end of the gallery is the organ, which can also be accessed by a narrow curved stair up from the ground floor. Along the front of the gallery at the east end is the inscription:

'This Church was founded *A.D. 1660* by the Revd THEOPHILUS POLWHEILE M.A.' Among other plaques and dedications within the church is a memorial to Samuel Plumbe, one of the four brethren responsible for raising the money for building the church (see Appendix C). The installation of electric light, in memory of William Thorne, deacon from 1892-1927, is also commemorated.

Projecting from the western end, of the church are two vestries, within the extensions referred to above. Within the stone building is a small room with a fireplace and decorative plaster ceiling. The larger vestry is in the brick extension supported on steel columns, which can be dated from a plaque commemorating that it was given by Grace Winton in memory of her father Ebenezer Musgrave Winton, who died in 1926.

A timber spiral staircase gives access to the basement of the church. This comprises an open space divided into two unequal areas by two stone columns with brick arches. The main part of the room has a suspended timber floor but the northern section of the room is tiled. A doorway in the south-east corner gives access to the basement of the church rooms (see above). The western elevation is lit by two arched windows and a heavy studded door opens onto a small garden with a small outbuilding, now a WC.

Dating and discussion

The manse, church rooms and church on the west side of the southern end of St Peter Street form an interesting and contrasting group of buildings. The church is the earliest of the three, being constructed in 1831-2, with the manse and church rooms being added between 1837 and 1838. A sketch from an engraving (Figure 5) shows the buildings as they were in 1845, the church rooms then having just two storeys over a basement. This building had an upper floor added in 1862-3 and, from the evidence of the sketch, it appears feasible that the original first floor windows on the east elevation were re-used on the second floor, with new first floor windows to match those of the ground floor. The raising of the building by an extra storey is further confirmed by the stair turret at the rear, which stops short of the second floor. The addition of the third floor is commemorated by the small stone plaque bearing the date 1863 which was formerly placed above the window of the gable which stood above the eaves on the south elevation. This is shown on the photograph dated c.1870 (Figure 6) and also on subsequent views up to 1962.

The church rooms appear to have been self-contained at ground floor level until the late 19th century, when it appears that the new lobby and internal stairs were put into the church. Stell (1991, 98) dates the cast-iron gallery front to this period and there appears to have been some significant refurbishment of the church at about that time.

The interior of the church rooms was badly damaged by fire in 1962 and consequently very little original material survives inside and the roof structure is entirely modern. The stairway leading up from the ground floor to the church is probably late 19th century in date, as is probably the safe in the north wall of the ground floor. The cupboard in the north wall of the first floor, which appears to have formerly been a doorway through to the church gallery, is also likely to be a survival from this period. The doorway (now blocked) through from the manse at first floor level appears to be a later alteration, possibly dating from after 1962.

Several photographs exist of the church buildings as they were from about 1870 into the 20th century, the dominant view being that looking up St Peter Street from the south-west. These indicate only minor changes to the street scene since the upper storey of the church rooms was added in the 1860s. The obelisk with its three lamps was replaced by the present ornamental cast-iron lamp stand in 1878 and a cast-iron lamp bracket was also added above the entrance door of the church sometime after c.1870. The only significant change is the loss of the small gable on the south elevation of the church rooms, which was not rebuilt following the fire in 1962. The iron railings along the pavement edge in front of the entrance to the manse and the church rooms were also removed, perhaps during World War II. The words INDEPENDENT CHAPEL across the base of the pediment on the front of the church were removed between 1985 and 1988.

Conclusion

The heritage significance of the church rooms lies in its frontage to St Peter Street. It forms part of a cohesive yet contrasting group with the former manse and the church. St Peter Street has been described as 'the finest street in Tiverton, and one of the most unspoilt Georgian residential streets in Devon. The street has a strong sense of enclosure emphasised by its substantial tall 3-storey buildings with parapets, and the narrowness and curvature of the carriageway.' (Devon Historic Environment Record Monument Report MDV 78990). The street contains a rich variety of contrasting architectural periods, styles and building materials and the early 19th century church rooms, together with the adjoining manse and church, form an important part of the townscape at its southern end. It may be concluded that it is the facade of the former church rooms with its fenestration that forms the main contribution to the streetscape at the lower end of St Peter Street.

Martin Watts

May 2014

minor revision: June 2014

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Pippa Griffith, Director and Museum Development Officer and the volunteers at the Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life, for much help with information and photographs; to Roger Thorne, for valuable insights from his wide knowledge of Nonconformist churches; and to Sue Watts, for her assistance with the site survey and map work and in the preparation of this report.

Disclaimer

The material contained in this report was designed as an integral part of a report to an individual client and was prepared solely for the benefit of that client. The material contained in this report does not necessarily stand on its own and is not intended to, nor should it be, relied upon by any third party. To the fullest extent the author of this report will not be liable by reason of breach of contract, negligence or otherwise for any loss or damage (whether direct, indirect or consequential) occasioned to any person acting or omitting to act or refraining from acting in reliance upon the material contained in this report, or arising from or connected with any error or omission in the material contained within the report. Loss or damage as referred to above shall be deemed to include, but is not limited to, any loss of profits or anticipated profits, damage to reputation or goodwill, loss of business or anticipated business, damages cost expenses incurred or payable to any third party (in all cases whether direct indirect or consequential) or any other direct indirect or consequential loss or damage.

References

- Authers, W.P. 1960: *The Tiverton Congregational Church 1660-1960*
- Authers, W.P. 1974: Notes from the Nineteenth Century Records of the Tiverton Congregational Church. *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* 106, 33-45
- Beresford, M.W. and Finberg, H.P.R. 1973: *English Medieval Boroughs, A Hand-List*
- Cherry, B and Pevsner, N. 1991: *Devon. The Buildings of England*
- Dunsford, M. 1790: *Historical Memoirs of the Town and Parish of Tiverton*
- Hoskins, W.G. 1954: *Devon*
- Hoskins, W.G. 1968: *Devon and its People*
- Keene, B. 1996: *Window on Westex*
- Mills, A.D. 2003: *A Dictionary of British Place Names*
- Noon, C. 2008: *The Book of Tiverton*
- Rogers, P (editor), 1971: *Daniel Defoe. A tour through the whole island of Great Britain* [1724-6]
- Sampson, M. 2004: *A History of Tiverton*
- Snell, F.J. 1892: *The Chronicles of Twyford*
- Stell, C. 1991: *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting Houses in South-west England*
- White, W. 1850: *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Devonshire* (White's Devon: facsimile reprint 1968)



Figure 1: Tiverton, extract from map by C. Tozer, surveyor, from Dunsford 1790, fp293. The position of the Steps Meeting House is indicated by the red circle



Figure 2: Extract from the Tiverton tithe map, c.1841 (DCC HER)



Figure 3: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1:500 town plan of Tiverton, 1855-1895
Not reproduced to scale (DCC HER)

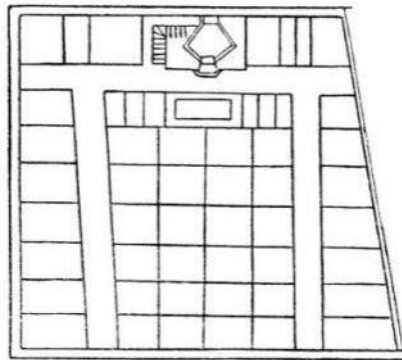
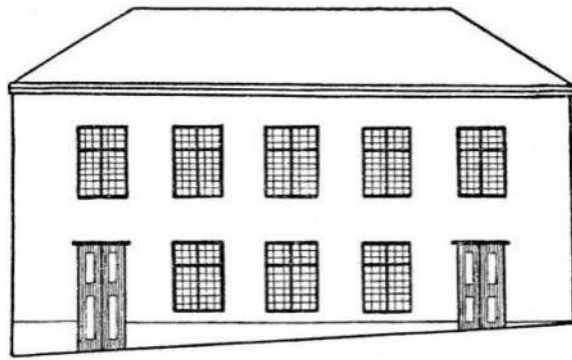


Figure 4: The Steps Meeting House
'copied from an old sketch' (from Authers 1960, 18)

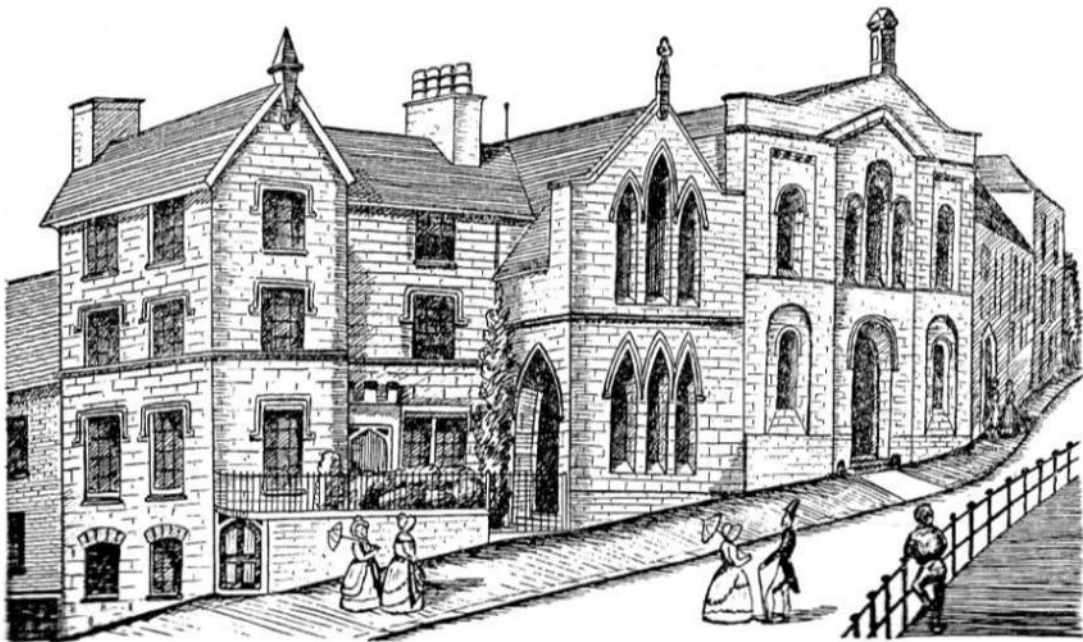


Figure 5: The Manse, School Rooms and Independent Chapel 'as it was in 1845'
sketch from an old engraving (Authers 1960, 2)

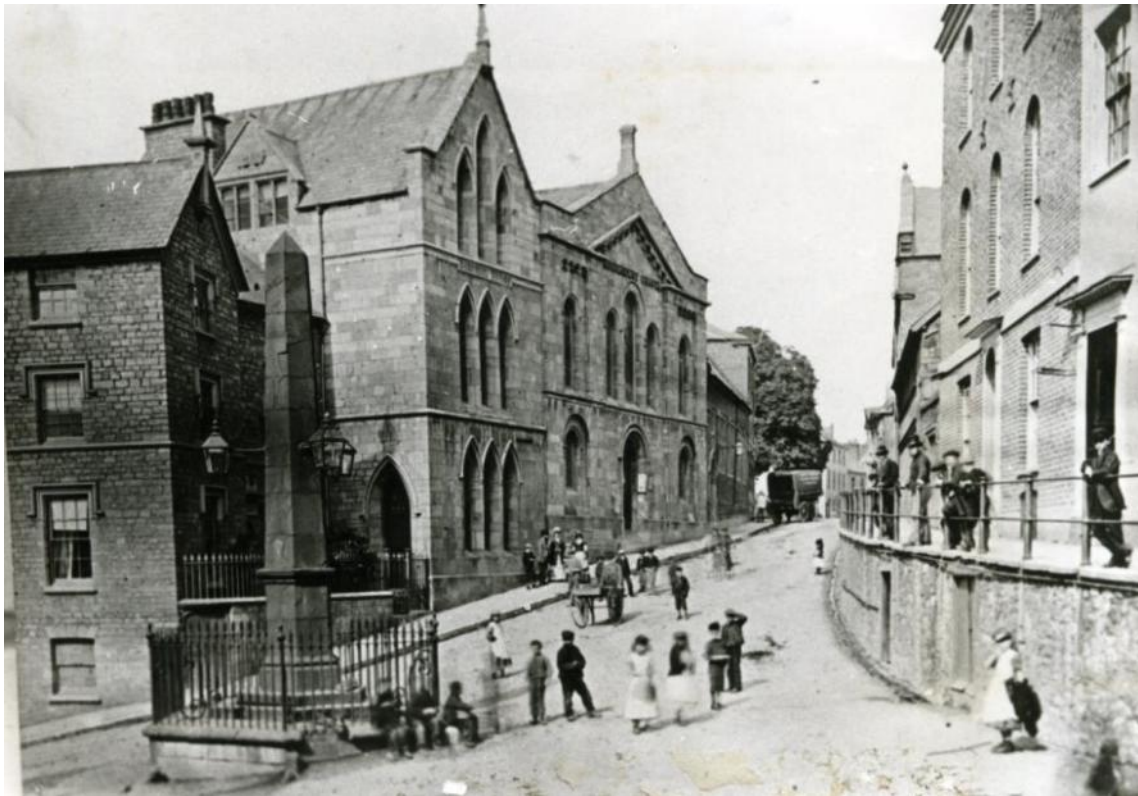
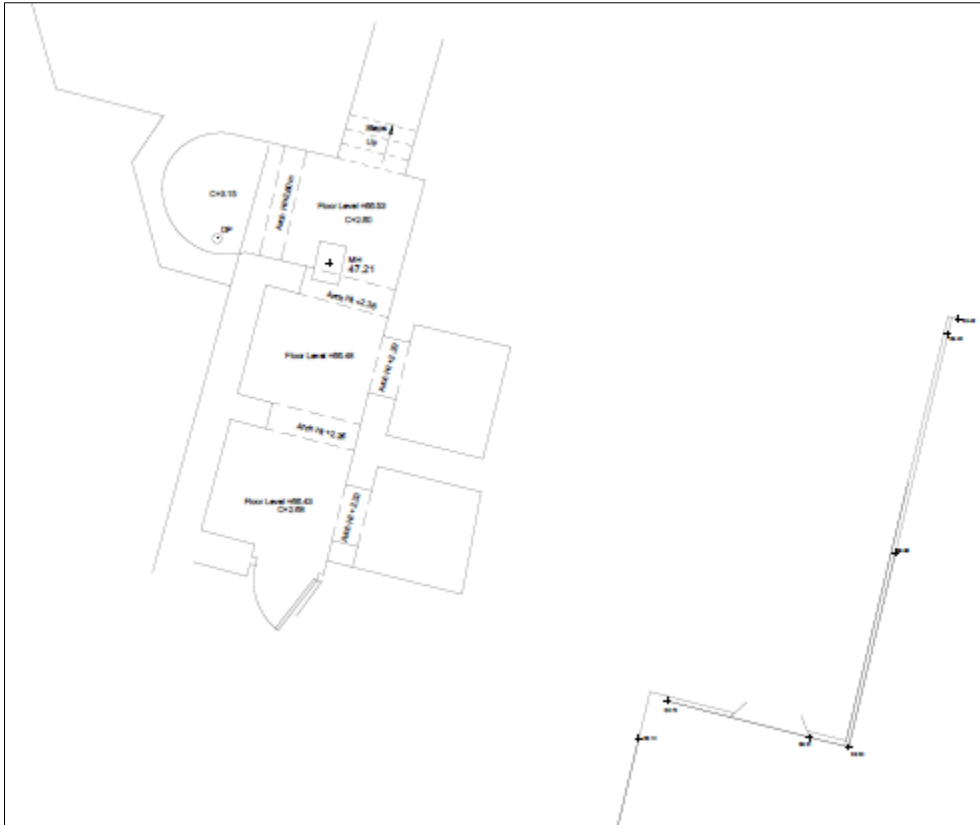


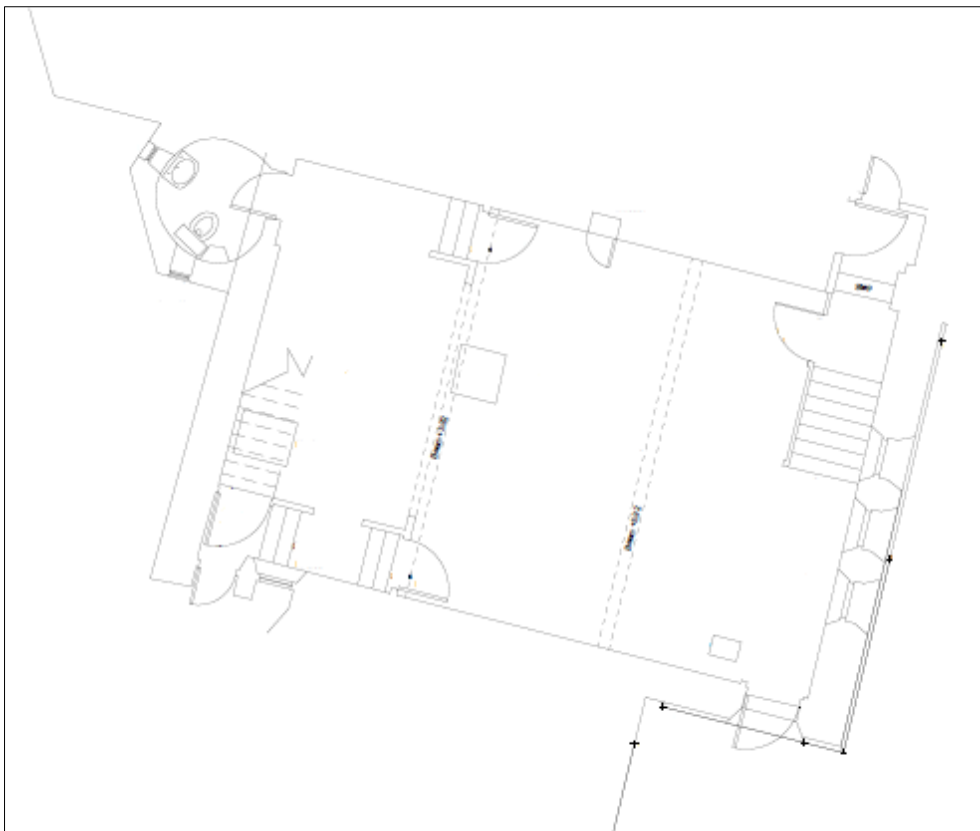
Figure 6: The church buildings, looking up St Peter Street, circa 1870
(Tiverton Museum 1990.2038.1)



Figure 7: The church building after the fire of February 1962
(Tiverton Museum 1993.135.81)

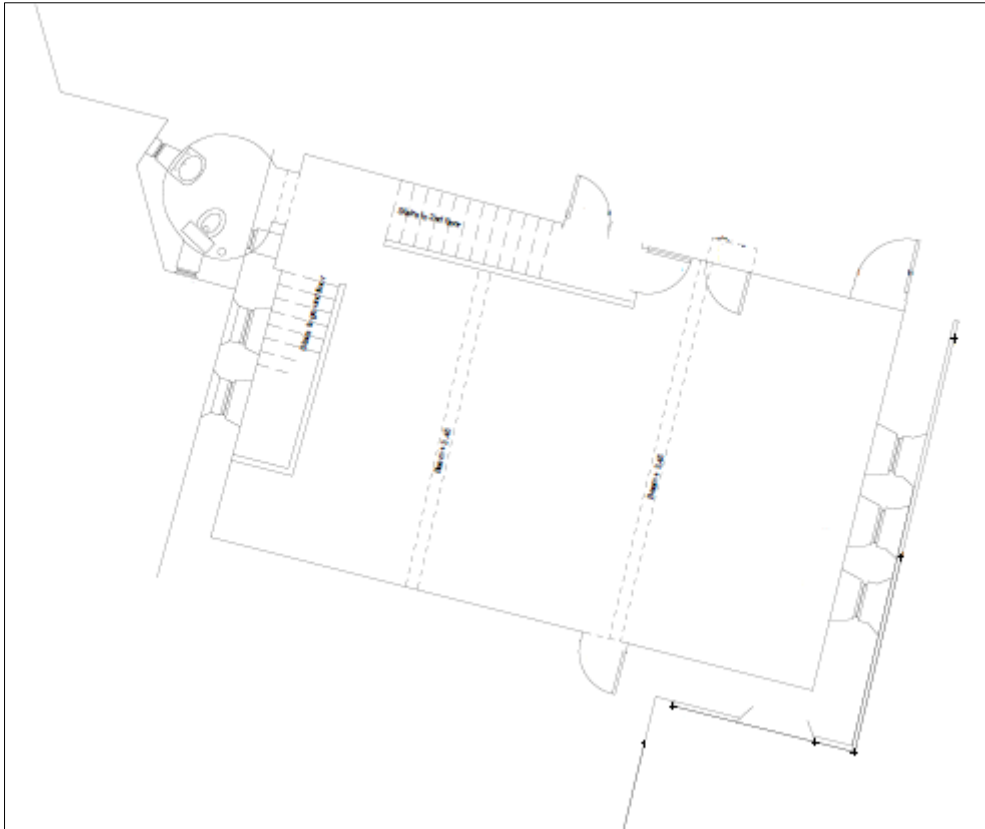


Basement plan



Ground floor plan

Figure 8: Church Rooms. Basement and ground floor plans



First floor plan



Second floor plan

Figure 9: Church Rooms. First and second floor plans

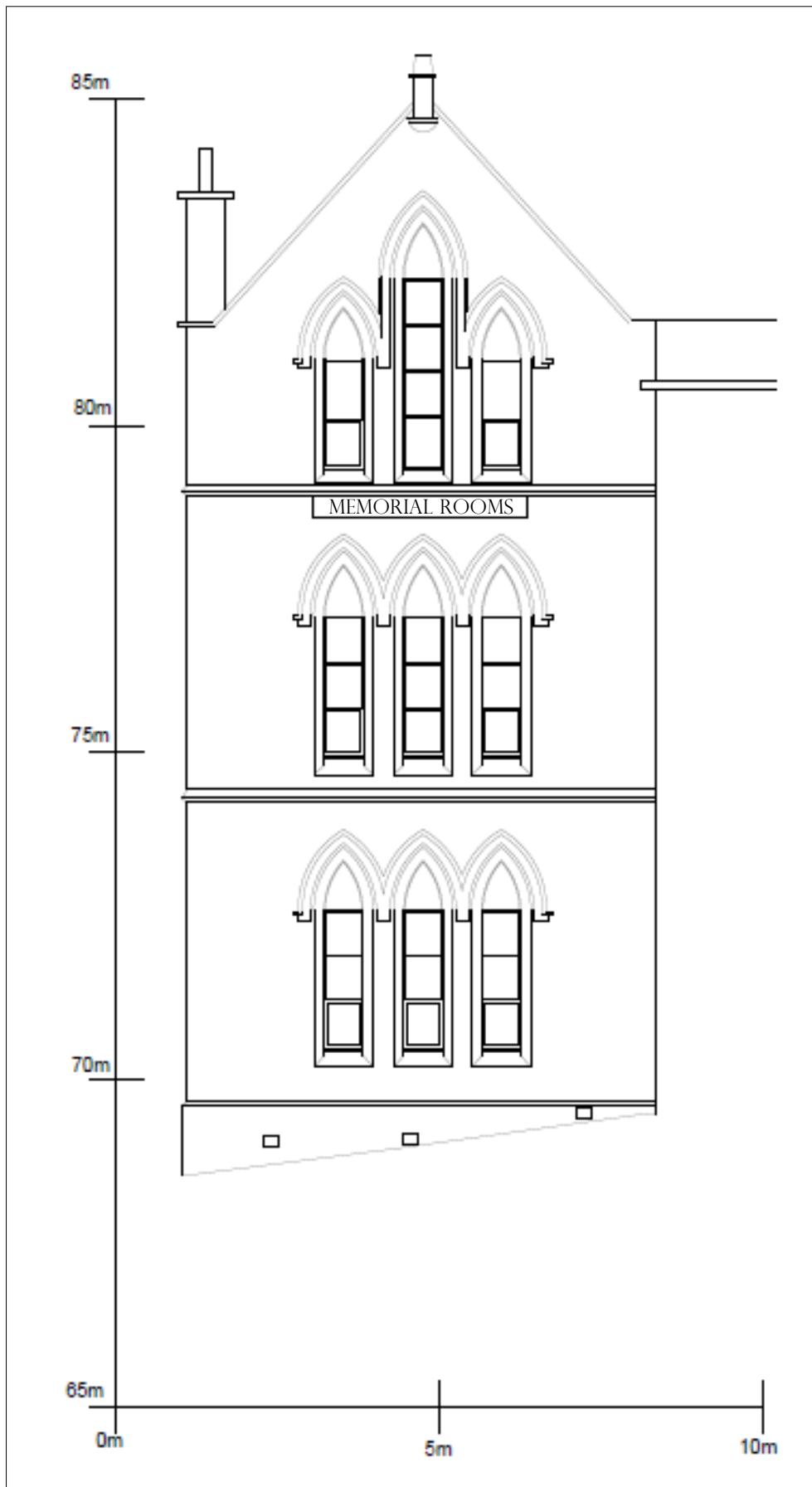


Figure 10: East elevation: the principal elevation to St Peter Street

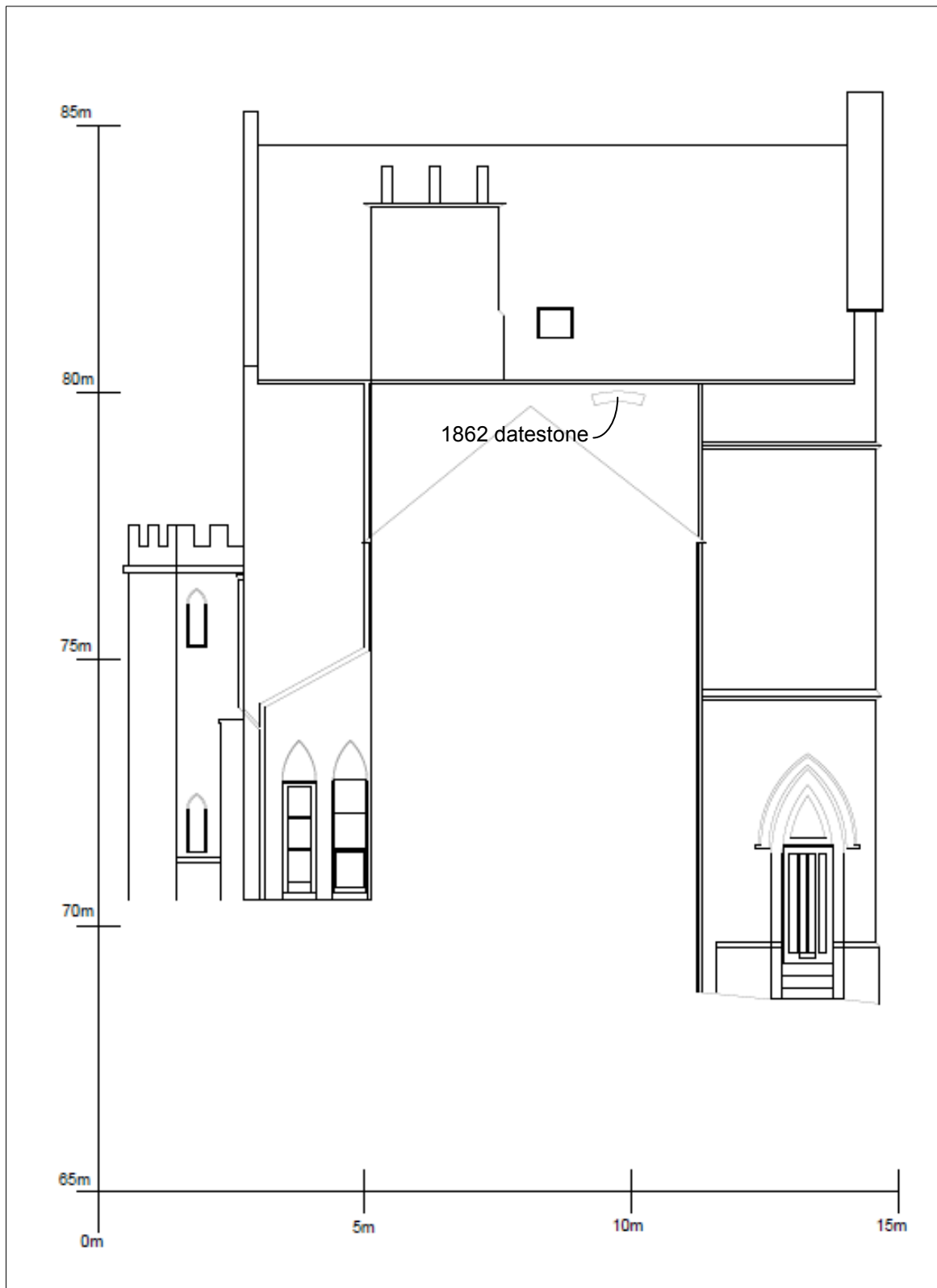


Figure 11: South elevation

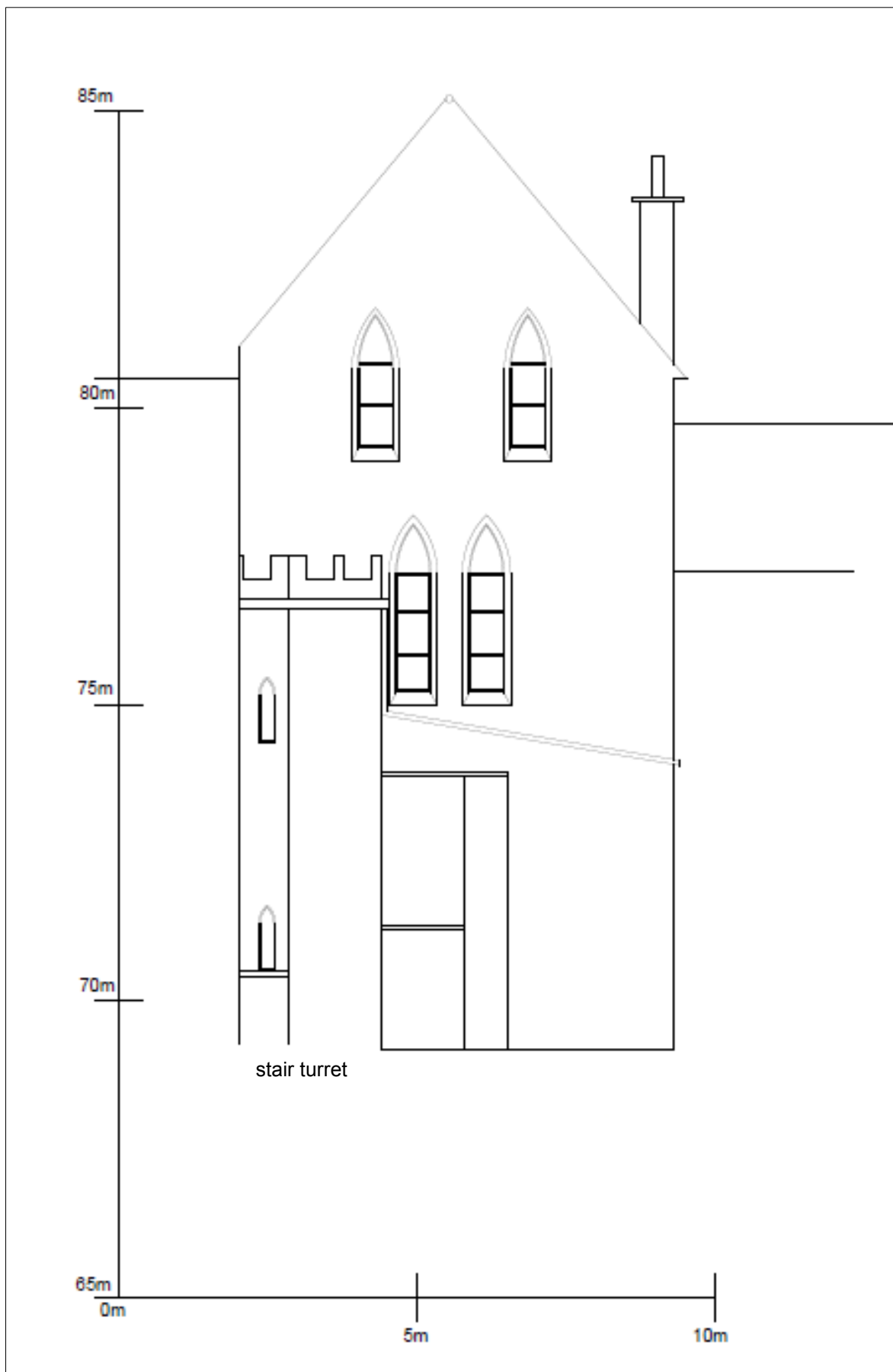


Figure 12: West elevation

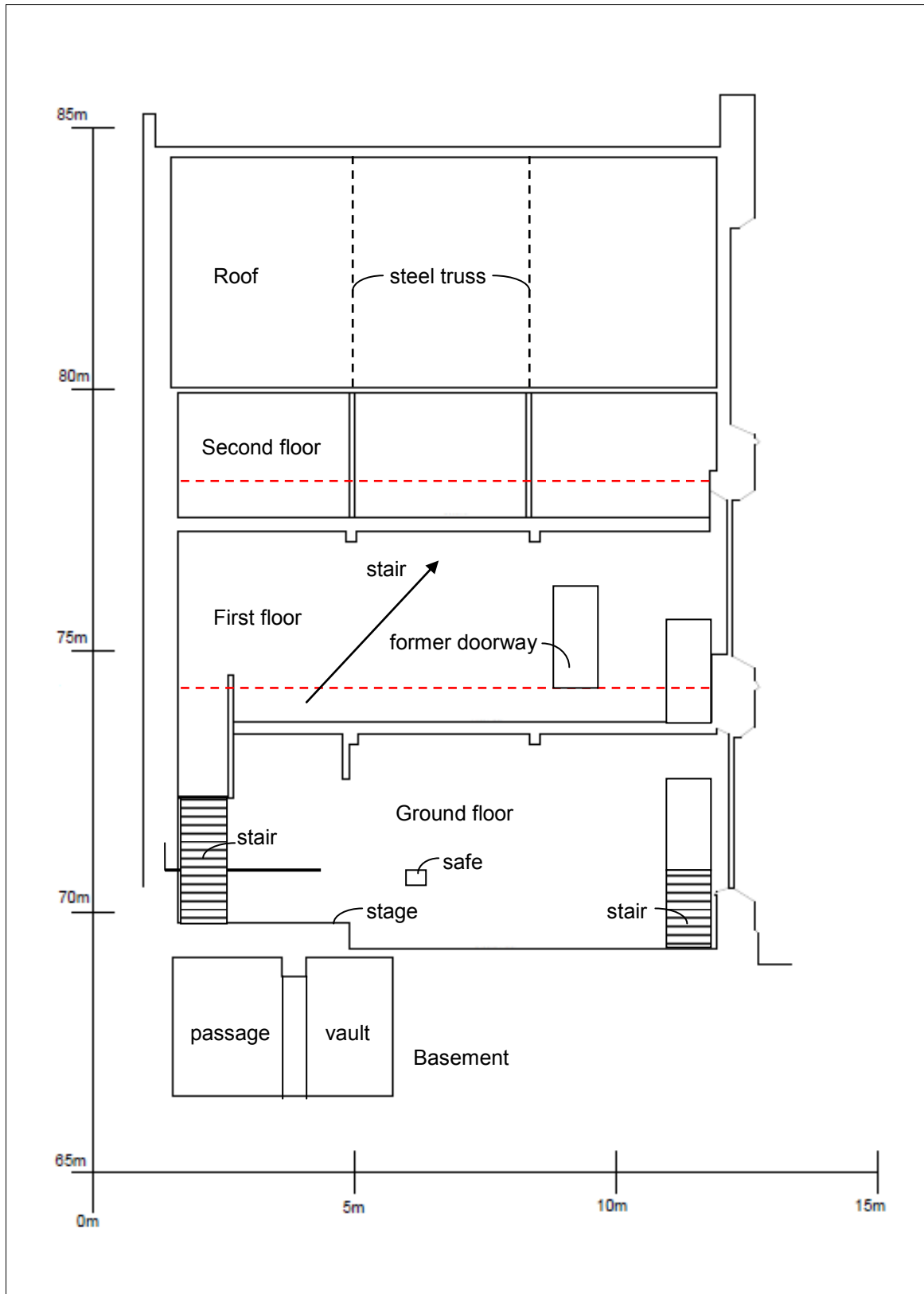


Figure 13: West – east section
Broken red lines indicate possible earlier floor levels



The manse with the church rooms beyond from the south, looking up St Peter Street towards the parish church. The 1878 cast-iron decorative lamp post stands in the foreground



The manse, left, church or memorial rooms, and church, from the south-east



The entrance, left, and principal elevation of the church or memorial rooms



The upper floor and roof of the church rooms, added in 1862-3. The dated stone is just below the gutter by the chimney stack on the left



The west (rear) elevation of the church, left, with brick vestry projecting from the rear, and church rooms, right, with the stone stair turret with its castellated top



Church rooms basement passage
looking north, with wrought iron gate



Inside the bottom of the stair turret



Church rooms, ground floor, looking west, with inserted stage and staircase



Ground floor, showing stairway to church in north-east corner



First floor, looking north-west, with stairway to upper floor on right



First floor, looking east, with blocked former doorway to manse in wall to right



Second floor, stair head and landing



Second floor, showing head of first floor window above floor level and light well in ceiling



Roof structure of church rooms, looking to east



North wall at first floor level, showing former doorway into church, centre, and modern entrance to right



Church interior, view from gallery looking west towards organ



Church interior, looking east, with dedication to Theophilus Polwheile along gallery base

Appendix A

Listing Descriptions from The National Heritage List for England

Memorial Rooms, St. Peter Street

List Entry Number: 1384951

Grade: II

Date first listed: 10 Apr 2000

Memorial rooms, probably associated with the United Reformed (formerly Congregational) Church. 1863 (datestone). Local grey limestone ashlar with a slate roof gabled at ends; coursed grey limestone chimney stack and shaft with cornice and three old terracotta pots. Early English style. PLAN: sited between No.2 St Peter Street (qv) and the United Reform Church (qv), forming an attractive C19 group. The Memorial Rooms project forward from No.2, to the left (south) and are end on to the street with an entrance on the south side. EXTERIOR: 3 storeys. Symmetrical 3-window front, gabled to the front with a coped gable with kneelers and a finial. Deep chamfered string courses at first and second-floor levels. Ground floor has a triple lancet with 3 large lights and a continuous hoodmould with label stops. Windows have horizontal glazing bars. Similar triple lancet to first floor with plaque at second floor string course with 'Memorial Rooms' carved in Lombardic script. Similar first floor triple lancet, but here the centre light is taller and glazed with diamond leaded panes, possibly the original glazing pattern. The left (south) return is blind except for a 2-centred doorway with a hoodmould. The door has vertical sunk panels and intersecting blind tracery in the tympanum. The rear elevation has two first and two second floor lancets with chamfered architraves. INTERIOR: not inspected but may be of interest.

United Reformed Church, St. Peter Street

List Entry Number: 1384959

Grade: II

Date first listed: 12 Feb 1952

United Reformed Church (formerly Congregational). 1831 (Pevsner), with later C19 features inside, foundation date of chapel on site 1660 (datestone). Grey limestone ashlar; slate roof concealed behind parapet. STYLE: described as "cheerfully eclectic" by Pevsner. PLAN: end on to the street, immediately north of the memorial rooms (separately listed). Rectangular galleried plan. EXTERIOR: 3-bay, the outer bays slightly broken forward, shallow pedimented gable over the central bay with a large square-on-plan finial. String course below upper tier of windows and coved cornice to outer bays below plain coped parapet with modillion frieze below centre bay and short sections of horizontal modillion frieze in outer bays. Central round-headed doorway with hoodmould with label stops; steps up to sliding doors with vertical sunk panels and blind timber arched fanlight with Gothick detail. The doorway was lit by a good late C19 lamp at the apex on a fancy, stout, scrolled cast-iron bracket. Ground-floor windows have round-headed recessed arches with hoodmoulds to the inner order, windows glazed with 6-pane fixed lights. Tall, round-headed gallery windows in the outer bays with hoodmoulds. Fixed windows with glazing bars and a roundel in the head. Similar triple window in the centre bay with continuous hoodmould. Rear elevation has hipped roof and one very tall round-headed louvred opening. INTERIOR: partially inspected. C19 gallery on columns with cast-iron

balustrade; stout late C19 benches with shaped ends; late C19 or early C20 organ case. This building forms a good C19 grey limestone group with the Memorial Rooms and No.2 St Peter Street (qqv) to the south.

2 St. Peter Street

List Entry Number: 1384905

Grade: II

Date first listed: 14 Dec 1972

House now used as offices. c1835 to 1845. Local grey limestone rubble, brought to course, natural slate roof, gabled at ends; stacks not seen on survey. Tudor style. PLAN: built on a constricted site on a steep corner between Angel Hill and St Peter Street. L-plan, the block fronting Angel Hill has an acute angle to the block fronting St Peter Street. Stair in semicircular turret off rear of St Peter Street block. EXTERIOR: 3 storeys and basement to St Peter Street, basement exposed to Angel Hill elevation. Chamfered string at first floor cill level. Windows have chamfered stone cills and principal windows have heavy hoodmoulds with label stops. 2-bay Angel Hill elevation has coved eaves cornice. Windows glazed with 12-pane hornless sashes, basement and second-floor windows have no hoodmoulds and second-floor windows are glazed with 3 over 6-pane sashes. The St Peter Street elevation consists of the 1-bay gabled end of the Angel Street block to the left and a 2-bay block, set back and at right angles, to the right. The gabled block has a large timber finial and windows to match those on the Angel Hill elevation with a hoodmould to the second-floor window. The right-hand block has a shallow Gothick timber porch to the left with an arched head and sunk spandrels, a stout cornice and timber embattled parapet. Panelled Gothick door with 4 arched lights above the middle rail and 4 blind panels. Paired ground floor 12-pane sash windows to right; 4-pane sash above porch; first-floor windows are a 1 over 2-pane sash to the left and a 3 over 6-pane sash to the right. INTERIOR: some original joinery and plaster cornices survive. Attractive curved stair in projecting turret has stick balusters. This building is in a prominent position.

(<http://list.english-heritage.org> - accessed 08 May 2014)

Appendix B

Devon Historic Environment Record Monument Full Report

30/04/2014



HER Monument ID	Site Name	Record Type
MDV89199	Memorial Rooms, St Peter Street, Tiverton	Building

Memorial rooms, 1863, probably associated with the United Reformed (formerly Congregational) Church. Local grey limestone ashlar with a slate roof gabled at ends.

Monument Types and Dates

MEETING HALL (Built, (Throughout) XIX - 1863 AD)
Evidence EXTANT BUILDING

Description and Sources

Description

Cartographic: Ordnance Survey, 2012, MasterMap

National Heritage List for England. English Heritage, 2012, National Heritage List for England
Memorial rooms, probably associated with the United Reformed (formerly Congregational) Church. 1863 (datestone). Local grey limestone ashlar with a slate roof gabled at ends; coursed grey limestone chimney stack and shaft with cornice and three old terracotta pots. Early English style.
Plan: sited between No.2 St Peter Street (qv) and the United Reform Church (qv), forming an attractive 19th century group. The Memorial Rooms project forward from No.2, to the left (south) and are end on to the street with an entrance on the south side.
Exterior: three storeys. Symmetrical three-window front, gabled to the front with a coped gable with kneelers and a finial. Deep chamfered string courses at first and second-floor levels. Ground floor has a triple lancet with three large lights and a continuous hoodmould with label stops. Windows have horizontal glazing bars. Similar triple lancet to first floor with plaque at second floor string course with 'Memorial Rooms' carved in Lombardic script. Similar first floor triple lancet, but here the centre light is taller and glazed with diamond leaded panes, possibly the original glazing pattern. The left (south) return is blind except for a two-centred doorway with a hoodmould. The door has vertical sunk panels and intersecting blind tracery in the tympanum. The rear elevation has two first and two second floor lancets with chamfered architraves. Interior: not inspected but may be of interest.

Sources

National Heritage List for England: English Heritage. 2012. National Heritage List for England.
Cartographic: Ordnance Survey. 2012. MasterMap. Ordnance Survey.

Location

National Grid Reference

Centred SS 9537 1255 (13m by 9m) SS91SE Area

Administrative Areas

Admin Area Devon
Civil Parish Tiverton
District Mid Devon
Ecclesiastical Parish TIVERTON

Address/Historic Names - None recorded

Designations, Statuses and Scorings

Associated Designations

Listed Building (II) - 1384951 MEMORIAL ROOMS Active DDV19754

Other Statuses and Cross-References - None recorded

Related Monuments - None Recorded

Finds - None recorded

zMonFullRpt

Report generated by Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Page 1

HER Monument ID	Site Name	Record Type
MDV24486	2 St Peter Street, Tiverton	Building
Tudor style three storey house, Angel Hill elevation four storeys. Early to mid 19th century, now used as offices.		

Monument Types and Dates

HOUSE ((Between) XIX - 1801 AD to 1900 AD)
Evidence EXTANT BUILDING

Description and Sources

Description

List of Blds of Arch or Historic Interest. Department of Environment, 1972, Tiverton
Early/mid 19th century. Coursed rubble. Slate roof with gabled ends, and narrow coved wooden eaves. Tall, three storeys. Three windows. Left hand end projects with gable with large finial with cornice and pointed arch panels. Sashes with glazing bars, all windows have moulded labels. Four-centred arch porch with label, moulded cornice and battlements. Stringcourse at first floor level. Angel Hill elevation, four storeys, two windows, sashes with moulded labels. Chimney stack with cornice.

Cartographic. Ordnance Survey, 2012, MasterMap
Map object based on this Source.

National Heritage List for England. English Heritage, 2012, National Heritage List for England
House now used as offices, circa 1835 to 1845. Local grey limestone rubble, brought to course, natural slate roof, gabled at ends; stacks not seen on survey. Tudor style.
Plan: built on a constricted site on a steep corner between Angel Hill and St Peter Street. L-plan, the block fronting Angel Hill has an acute angle to the block fronting St Peter Street. Stair in semicircular turret off rear of St Peter Street block.
Exterior: three storeys and basement to St Peter Street, basement exposed to Angel Hill elevation. Chamfered string at first floor cill level. Windows have chamfered stone cills and principal windows have heavy hoodmoulds with label stops. Two-bay Angel Hill elevation has coved eaves cornice. Windows glazed with 12-pane homless sashes, basement and second-floor windows have no hoodmoulds and second-floor windows are glazed with three over six-pane sashes. The St Peter Street elevation consists of the one-bay gabled end of the Angel Street block to the left and a two-bay block, set back and at right angles, to the right. The gabled block has a large timber finial and windows to match those on the Angel Hill elevation with a hoodmould to the second-floor window. The right-hand block has a shallow Gothick timber porch to the left with an arched head and sunk spandrels, a stout cornice and timber embattled parapet. Panelled Gothick door with four arched lights above the middle rail and four blind panels. Paired ground floor 12-pane sash windows to right; four-pane sash above porch; first-floor windows are a one over two-pane sash to the left and a three over six-pane sash to the right.
Interior: some original joinery and plaster cornices survive. Attractive curved stair in projecting turret has stick balusters. This building is in a prominent position.

Sources

List of Blds of Arch or Historic Interest: Department of Environment. 1972. Tiverton. Historic Houses Register. 47
National Heritage List for England: English Heritage. 2012. National Heritage List for England.
Cartographic: Ordnance Survey. 2012. MasterMap. Ordnance Survey.

Location

National Grid Reference

Centred SS 9537 1254 (9m by 13m) SS91SE Area

Administrative Areas

Admin Area Devon
Civil Parish Tiverton
District Mid Devon
Ecclesiastical Parish TIVERTON

Address/Historic Names - None recorded

Designations, Statuses and Scorings

zMonFullRpt

Report generated by Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Page 1

HER Monument ID	Site Name	Record Type
MDV12369	United Reformed Church, formerly Congregational Church, Tiverton	Building

United Reformed Church (formerly Congregational), early 19th century, with later 19th century features inside. Grey limestone ashlar with slate roof concealed behind parapet.

Monument Types and Dates

CHAPEL ((Between) XIX - 1830 AD)
Evidence EXTANT BUILDING

Description and Sources

Description

Monograph. Polwhele, R., 1793 - 1806, The History of Devonshire

Monograph. Lysons, D. + Lysons, S., 1822, Magna Britannica

Article in Monograph. Reichel, O. J., 1928 - 1938, The Hundred of Tiverton in Early Times

Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division Card. Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division, 1950 - 1978, SS91SE3
Congregational chapel, St. Peter's Street. Independent Chapel on site of St. Peter's Chapel.

St. Peter's Chapel, now the Steps Meeting House, was still in existence in 1554. This meeting house for Calvinistic Methodists was opened in 1687 (citing Lysons and Polwhele).

List of Blds of Arch or Historic Interest. Department of Environment, 1972, Tiverton

Rebuilt 1830, on the site of an early dissenting chapel, the Steps Meeting House. The north part is 1830, stone, central arched entrance, arch windows with glazing bars. The back of this, overlooking River Exe, has three-sided end with very tall round-headed windows.

Cartographic. Ordnance Survey, 2012, MasterMap

Map object based on this Source.

National Heritage List for England. English Heritage, 2012, National Heritage List for England

United Reformed Church (formerly Congregational). 1831 (Pevsner), with later 19th century features inside, foundation date of chapel on site 1660 (datestone). Grey limestone ashlar; slate roof concealed behind parapet.

Style: described as "cheerfully eclectic" by Pevsner.

Plan: end on to the street, immediately north of the memorial rooms (separately listed). Rectangular galleried plan.

Exterior: three-bay, the outer bays slightly broken forward, shallow pedimented gable over the central bay with a large square-on-plan finial. String course below upper tier of windows and coved cornice to outer bays below plain coped parapet with modillion frieze below centre bay and short sections of horizontal modillion frieze in outer bays. Central round-headed doorway with hoodmould with label stops; steps up to sliding doors with vertical sunk panels and blind timber arched fanlight with Gothick detail. The doorway was lit by a good late 19th century lamp at the apex on a fancy, stout, scrolled cast-iron bracket. Ground-floor windows have round-headed recessed arches with hoodmoulds to the inner order, windows glazed with six-pane fixed lights. Tall, round-headed gallery windows in the outer bays with hoodmoulds. Fixed windows with glazing bars and a roundel in the head. Similar triple window in the centre bay with continuous hoodmould. Rear elevation has hipped roof and one very tall round-headed louvred opening.

Interior: partially inspected. Nineteenth century gallery on columns with cast-iron balustrade; stout late 19th century benches with shaped ends; late 19th or early 20th century organ case. This building forms a good 19th century grey limestone group with the Memorial Rooms and No.2 St Peter Street to the south. (The Buildings of England: Pevsner N: Devon: London: 1989: 807).

Sources

List of Blds of Arch or Historic Interest: Department of Environment. 1972. Tiverton. Historic Houses Register. 47

Article in Monograph: Reichel, O. J., 1928 - 1938. The Hundred of Tiverton in Early Times. The Hundreds of Devon. 17

Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division Card: Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division. 1950 - 1978. SS91SE3. Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division Card.

National Heritage List for England: English Heritage. 2012. National Heritage List for England.

Published Descriptions

ST PETER'S STREET... On the same side the large CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH with a stone front, 1830, and S of this the MEMORIAL ROOMS, plain Gothic stone front of 1862.

Pevsner, N. 1952: *South Devon. The Buildings of England*, 286

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, St Peter's Street. Built by the Congregationalists in 1831 on the site of their 1689 meeting house. Cheerfully eclectic, grey ashlar front with pediment and traceried round-arched windows. The interior is an irregular polygon with a continuous gallery with late C19 cast-iron front: pulpit (altered) and seating also late C19. The typical attendant buildings step down the hill: tall granite [*sic*] Gothic Memorial Rooms, three storeys of lancet windows under a steep gable, and a robust neo-Tudor manse.

Cherry, B and Pevsner, N. 1991: *Devon. The Buildings of England*, 811

(179) CONGREGATIONAL, St Peter's Street (SS 953126). The church (now URC) which originated with the ejection of the Rector of Tiverton, Theophilus Polwheile in 1660, has occupied the present site since 1687. In that year the 'Steps Meeting-house' was built, of irregular plan with a frontage of five bays with two tiers of windows and entrances in the two end bays. A secession *c.*1700 led to the erection of a second meeting-house also in St Peter's Street which passed through a variety of uses and was demolished in 1844. A third congregation, which occupied the 'Pitt meeting-house', built *c.*1689, united with that at the Steps *c.*1787. The present chapel, built in 1831, has a grey ashlar front of three principal bays with a central open pediment and two tiers of round-arched windows. The interior, an irregular polygon, has a continuous gallery with a late 19th-century cast-iron front, at which period the pulpit and seating were also replaced.

Fittings – *Flute*: 'John Sharland's Flute played during services around 1833', signed 'L. Drouët, London, 537'. *Inscriptions*: on front wall below pediment, 'INDEPENDENT CHAPEL', applied ornamental lettering (removed before 1988); on front of gallery, painted legend 'This Church was founded *A.D.* 1660 by the Revd. THEOPHILUS POLWHEILE M.A.'. *Lamp Bracket*: over front entrance, cast-iron, mid 19th century. *Monuments*: in chapel (1) Rev W.E. Bailey, 1829; (2) Samuel Plumbe, '...one of the four brethren who undertook on behalf of the people the pecuniary responsibility in the erection of this House of God in the year 1831', 1840; (3) William Stratton, 1841; (4) Robert Ellis, 1836.

Stell, C. 1991: *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting Houses in South-west England*, 98