Former Presbyterian Church, Holt
Heritage Statement



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Presbyterian Church, Holt
Heritage Statement

Prepared for Gary Conway

by

Jenny Wetton Conservation

February 2024

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was commissioned from Jenny Wetton Conservation in 2024 by Gary Conway. Its purpose is to assess the significance of the Grade II-listed building which lies within the Holt Conservation Area and within the setting of the adjacent and listed former Manse and to assess the impact of proposals to carry out alterations. *Planning Policy Wales* requires significance to be assessed when changes are proposed to heritage assets, and for the impact of proposals to be assessed in relation to significance.

Sections 3, 4 and 5 of this report provide an assessment of the significance of the former Presbyterian church and its setting. The former church is dated to 1865 and served as a place of worship from its construction until closure in 2012. The chief aspects of significance are considered to be the external survival of T. M. Lockwood's design dating from 1865, with the Gothic Revival style with bar tracery intact; the survival of much of Lockwood's internal scheme design, with a timber lobby, pulpit and pews, although some pews have been removed from their seatings; the association with the Rev. Ebenezer Powell, who opened the Academy School opposite and instigated construction of the church building; the association with monumental masons, Mossfords Memorials of Overton and now of Wrexham.

The former Presbyterian church and schoolroom are considered to be of **high significance overall** and to merit their national designation. However, **the internal significance of both parts of the building is being negatively affected by their poor condition**. Indeed, according to the CPAT Regional Historic Environment Record, the buildings appear on the Council's Buildings at Risk Register. In a hierarchy of elevations, the east front and north elevations are considered to be the most important as these contain the main entrance and are the most visible. The other elevations have all been altered or views are largely obscured and are less important.

Section 6 outlines the heritage planning policy context. The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 is the primary legislative document; there is a presumption in favour of preserving and enhancing heritage assets. The Act amends the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. *Planning Policy Wales* provides national policy on heritage assets and development and sets out a proportionate approach taking account of significance. The public benefits of a proposal likely to affect the character of a designated asset should be balanced against the harm to heritage assets.

Section 7 assesses the impact of carrying out work to the listed buildings. The approach has been to retain as much historic fabric as possible while enabling a new use for the building. The building has been vacant for over ten years, having only been used for storage since closure of the church, and are now in a poor condition. Repair and maintenance are needed soon to ensure the retention of their special interest.

Externally, there will be little visible change to the building, apart from the replacement of some obscured windowpanes with clear glass, the insertion of eight small rooflights and the replacement of the poor-quality late 20th century extension with a smaller

extension in a better-quality design. Two new windows will be inserted to the west gable of the church, in a sympathetic design, but will be largely obscured by the schoolroom roof. The historic main entrance will remain in use as such, and all external doors will be retained and repaired where possible. A door and window schedule accompanies the application, indicating proposed repair work. Importantly, all the vegetation growth along the south side will be cleared, opening up views of this elevation, and appropriate landscaping work will enhance the neglected rear of the building.

Internally, a freestanding structure will provide first-floor accommodation, with views of the historic roofing structure kept open. Although this would result in the loss of the pews, the historic lobby and pulpit, one bay of the dado panelling and the internal doors will be retained.

Although some of the work will be mildly to moderately harmful, other work is considered to be beneficial in impact. **With the proposed mitigation, the proposals are considered to constitute less than substantial harm in planning terms. This is offset by the very significant public benefits of enabling a sustainable future for the listed building by meeting modern requirements and of much needed repair and maintenance work.**

Pre-application feedback from an independent consultant for the Council has indicated support for the proposals in principle. *Planning Policy Wales* is clear that there 'should be a general presumption in favour of the preservation of a listed building and its setting' but also acknowledges 'the need for flexibility where new uses have to be considered in order to secure a building's survival or provide it with a sound economic future.' This approach is needed here in order to ensure a sustainable future as modern family home.

The proposals are considered to be consistent with national and local planning policy.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background to the Report

This report was commissioned from Jenny Wetton Conservation in 2024 by Gary Conway. Its purpose is to assess the significance of the Grade II-listed building which lies within the Holt Conservation Area and within the setting of the adjacent and listed former Manse and to assess the impact of proposals to carry out alterations. *Planning Policy Wales* requires significance to be assessed when changes are proposed to heritage assets, and for the impact of proposals to be assessed in relation to significance.

2.2 Purpose of the Report

The report is designed to provide the author's professional opinion of:

- A brief history of the site;
- An assessment of the significance of the exterior and interior of the listed building and of the contribution made by the setting;
- An assessment of the impact of the proposals.

This report has been written by Jenny Wetton, BA MSc (Arch Cons) IHBC, Consultant, based on evidence from documentary sources and a survey of the site.

2.3 Limitations

Wrexham Archives was closed at the time of research for this report, during a move to Wrexham Library. This prevented access to early historic maps and photographs of the application site.

2.4 Copyright

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3 HISTORY OF SITE

Occupation of Holt dates back to the Roman period but Powell is of the opinion that the present village was founded as an English lordship after Edward I's conquest of Wales in 1282. Holt was granted to John de Warenne as an important crossing point of the River Dee from England. Remains of a castle which probably dates from the 13th century survive and the present river bridge dates from the 15th or early 16th century.

According to the Holt Local History Society, Robert Evans, founder of the Holt Ladies College, opened his house (Holt Hall) in 1838 for 'Sunday School and Exhortation[1].' After five years, he had 30 students in the school and a congregation of 50. In 1843, a small chapel on a site almost opposite the present Presbyterian church, with additional preaching in the open air at the Medieval cross.

In 1847, the Presbytery of Merioneth sent the Rev. Ebenezer Powell as minister to Holt (also commemorated on a memorial plaque in the church). He instigated the construction of the present church and donated the land on which it was built.

According to Powell, Rev. Powell and his wife opened a school in 1855 in a room in their own house[2]. This became popular and they built a school room known as the Academy on Castle Street; at one time, there were over 80 students. According to Holt Local History Society, many of the students came from North Wales to learn English[3].

The Presbyterian church at Holt is dated on a foundation stone to 1865, laid by 'Robert A Macfie' of Liverpool. The building is shown on the 1872-86 O.S. map on a T-plan opposite the Academy, with the rectangular church to the east and a cross-wing providing a school room at the west end. The Manse is also shown to the south and was built a year after the church.

According to Holt Local History Society, the new church could seat 350 worshippers and had a school room with accommodation for 150 students. The total cost including hymn books and harmonium was £1600 and the church opened on Christmas Day 1865, by which time £960 had been raised towards its cost.

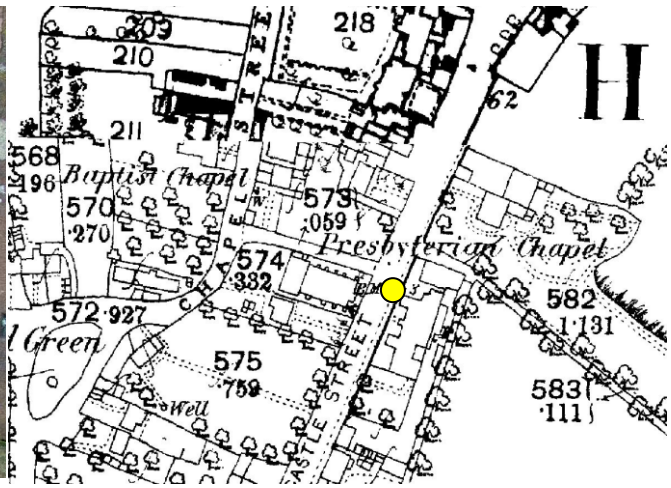
[1] Holt Local History Society. *Holt a Pictorial History* (2000), 124

[2] Powell, J. *Holt and its Records through the Centuries* (self publ., 1982), 55

[3] Holt Local History Society. *Holt a Pictorial History* (2000), 78



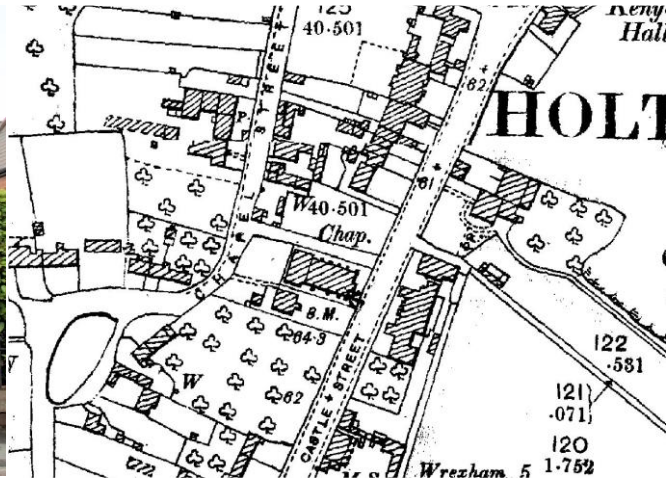
Foundation Stone



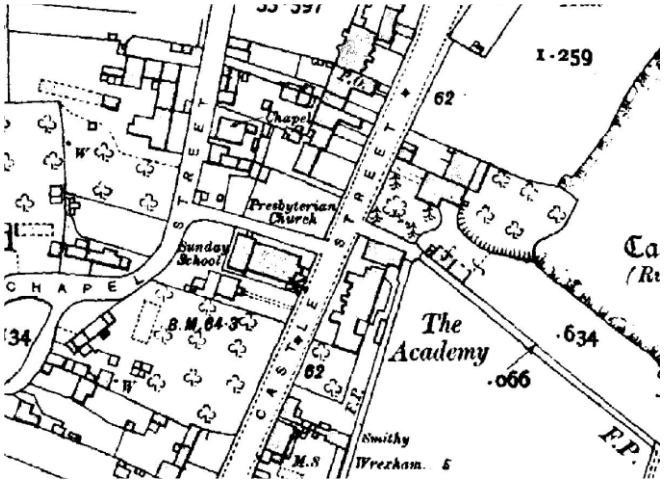
1872-86 OS Showing Site



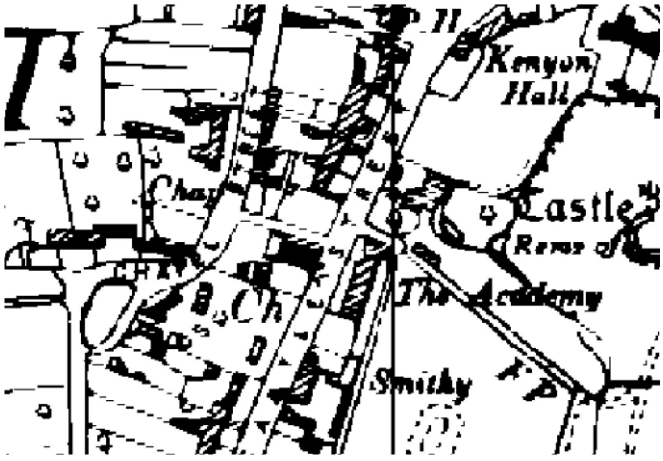
The Manse



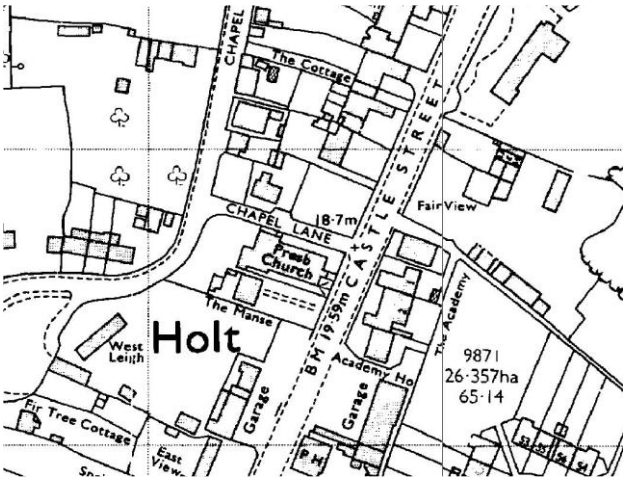
1899 OS



1911 OS



1954 OS



1971 OS



Rear Extension

Rev. Powell sold the Academy to Oliver Jones and retired as minister of the Presbyterian church in 1873.

By 1911, the cross-wing at the west end is marked as a Sunday School. There is no change on the site by 1954. The Presbyterian church celebrated its centenary in 1965 with a celebration tea at Kenyon Hall and a thanksgiving service at the church.

By 1971, a rear kitchen, W. C. and service extension had been added. According to the Holt Local History Society, the ministries were combined and the minister for Holt lived in Rossett, the Manse being rented as a private dwelling[4]. The Presbyterian Church Luncheon Club was meeting in the church school room in 1999[5] but the church closed in 2012[6].

[4] Holt Local History Society. *Holt a Pictorial History* (2000), 126

[5] Holt Local History Society. *Holt a Pictorial History* (2000), 158

[6] Gary Conway pers. Comm. 5.02.2024

4 ARCHITECTURAL ASSESSMENT AND CONTEXT

4.1 Exterior

The former church is designed in a Gothic Revival style with bar tracery, is constructed of sandstone blocks of irregular sizes laid in courses and covered with a pitched slate roof. The east gable end has a central gabled entrance porch with a pointed arched stone door surround with carved foliated capitals and a double-leaf timber door with ironmongery with a quatre-foil, stained glass light above, large traceried windows either side and a small central window. The church retains a stone belfry to the left with decorated stone buttresses. The windows throughout are of Early English, `First Pointed' style with quatrefoil and cinquefoil detail and retain leaded glass with coloured edging. Views of the south elevation are very constrained by the southern boundary but both long sides retain projecting central gables with taller windows. Both the east and west gable ends retain pointed arched openings, that in the east end retaining a hoodmould with scalloped detailing and a decorative timber vent, that in the west end being boarded over. The west gable end also retains a stone chimney stack.



East Front and North Elevations



North Elevation



South Elevation



Detail of Vent in Gable



West Gable of Church Above Schoolroom

To the rear is an adjoining school room, of sandstone block construction and also covered with a pitched slate roof. This building retains simple lancet windows with clear glass and a timber single leaf door in a pointed arched surround at either end. The south elevation of the school room is not accessible and is largely covered in ivy. There is a 1960s single storey, flat-roofed extension to the rear.



North Elevation of School Room



West Elevation

4.2 Interior

4.2.1 Church

Internally, the church consists of a chamber with the main entrance at the east end and two doors at the west end leading to aisles between pews. It retains decorative arch-braced trusses rising from painted stone corbels and a purlin with a decorative frieze. Four and five-pointed star shapes are motifs which are carried through from the glass in the tracery to pierced designs in the roof joinery and incised shapes on the pew ends. Where the windows are paired, they are separated by stone shafts with foliated capitals. The walls and ceiling are plain plastered, with a timber panelled dado which is level at the easternmost bay and then slopes down, and the timber floor is raised.

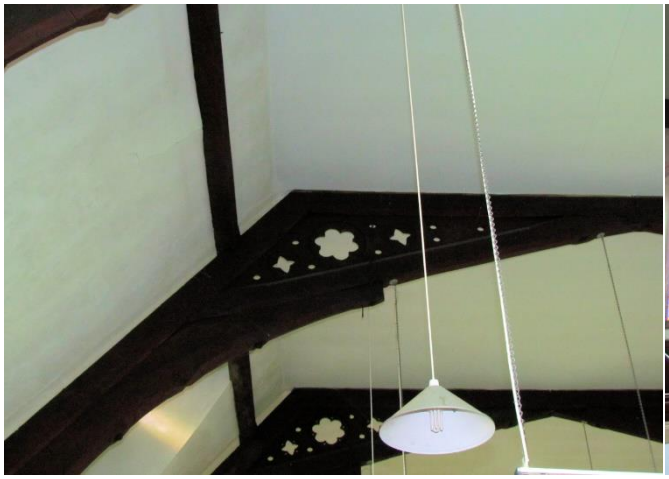
At the liturgical east end, there is a pitch pine lobby with blind cusped arcading, a collection box at either end, a part-glazed door at either end and, internally, a small shelf with a mirror above. The porch has plain plastered walls and ceiling and a stone-flagged floor but retains paired lancet side windows in recessed niches.



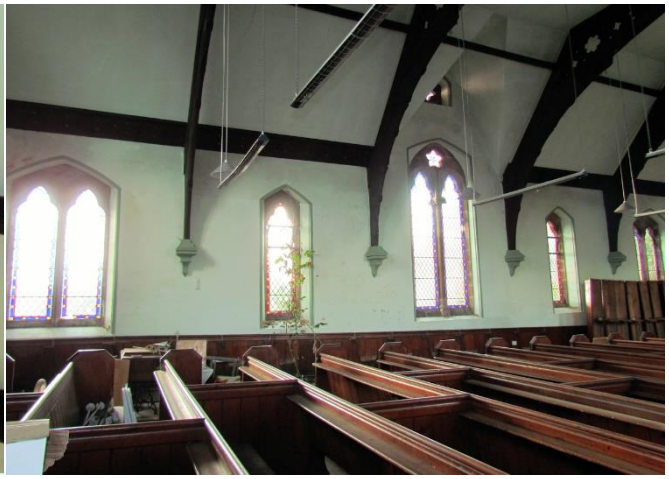
Church Looking East



Church Looking West



Detail of Truss



View of Windows on South Side



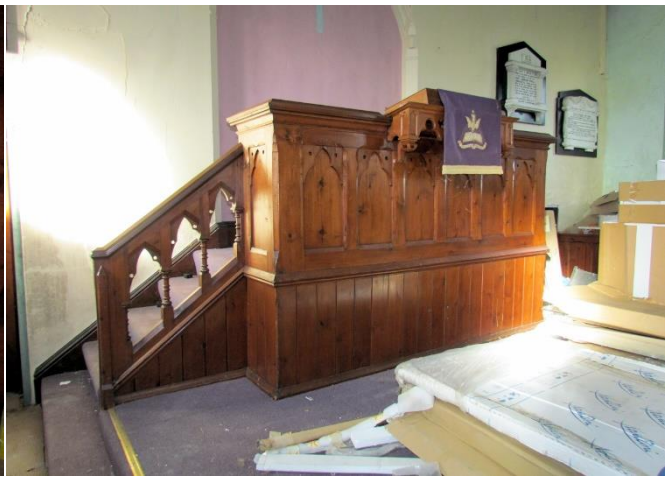
Lobby



View Into Lobby



Porch Side Window



Pulpit



View Across Central Pews



Detail of Pew End



Monument to Samuel Dale



Monuments to Rev. E. Powell and Rev. R. L. Roose

At the liturgical west end is a central pulpit of similar character to the lobby, on a platform with steps up on each side with arcaded balustrading. A door on each side with a pointed arched head leads off to the schoolroom. Windows have coloured and painted glass in the tracery but are otherwise plain with coloured glass margins. Pews are of pitch pine with painted numbers and incised detailing on the ends. On the liturgical east wall are three later 19th century monuments in Neoclassical style commemorating former ministers and elders of the church. One to the left of the pulpit

commemorates Samuel Dale, Superintendent of the Sunday School for nearly 50 years who died in 1896, another to the right commemorates Rev. Ebenezer Powell; both these are by Mossford of Overton and may have been erected at the same time. Another to the right commemorates Rev. Richmond Leigh Roose, who was Minister at the church for 40 years and, before that, at Hay in Breconshire for nine years and who died in 1917. It also commemorates his wife, Eliza, who died in 1881.

4.2.2 Schoolroom

The schoolroom is currently used for storage but is an open space. It retains the lower parts of braced trusses exposed in the roof, rising from stone corbels over the moulded doorways to the church and a moulded central beam with brackets. The walls and ceiling are plain plastered, and the floor is again raised timber. A pointed arched timber door provides access at either end. An opening has been inserted to the late 20th century extension, which is of no historic interest.



View Across Schoolroom, Looking South



View Across Schoolroom, Looking North



Roofing Timber



Detail of Beam



External Door



Inserted Opening to Extension

4.3 Architectural Context: Nonconformist churches and chapels in Denbighshire

In the area's nonconformist chapels, rectangular chambers are common, with seating focussed on the pulpit and arrangements were also ideal for singing. Some early chapels also accommodated single cottages under the same roof, often developing into the chapel houses and school rooms which were integral elements in later plans. Early chapels had the pulpit in the middle of one of the long walls, opposite a single door in small buildings or between twin doors in larger buildings. Restrictions in towns led to the placement of the pulpit on the inner end wall and matured chapel plans also incorporated galleries around three sides, usually on cast-iron columns, with an organ behind the pulpit.

Generally, classical and Italianate styles were preferred to Gothic, especially by Welsh-speaking congregations. Gable-ended buildings provided an opportunity for architectural display and a place to mount plaques which provide valuable information on dates of building, re-building or alteration.

The Presbyterian church at Holt is typical in its combination of chapel and schoolroom. The east gable has been used for architectural display and the west gable to display commemorative plaques.

5 SIGNIFICANCE

5.1 Assessing significance

Assessing significance is a key principle for managing change to heritage assets and is embedded within current national policy; *Planning Policy Wales* policies 6.5.1. A key objective is 'to give more effective protection to listed buildings'. *Conservation Principles for The Sustainable Management of The Historic Environment in Wales* expects informed decisions about proposed changes to be based on a full consideration of the significance of an historic asset. CADW issued *Conservation Principles* in 2011 to explain its philosophical approach to significance and managing change and identified four main aspects of significance: evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal. There are three levels of significance as well as neutral and an intrusive grade:

Exceptional Level of Significance

The element is relatively intact, has a special interest, and makes an important contribution to the wider significance of the site. This would correspond to an individual grade I or II* listing. The NPPF advises that substantial harm should be wholly exceptional.

High Level of Significance

A designated asset important at national and regional level, including Grade II listed buildings. The NPPF advises that substantial harm should be exceptional.

Medium Level of Significance

An undesignated asset important at a local to regional level, including locally (non-statutory) listed buildings. The element has been altered, has less special interest, and its contribution to the wider significance of the site is less important. May include less significant parts of listed buildings. Buildings and parts of structures in this category should be retained where possible, although there is usually scope for adaptation.

Low Level of Significance

An undesignated asset important at a local level, including buildings which make a positive contribution to a conservation area. The element has been significantly altered, has a low level of integrity, the special interest has been lost and it makes little contribution to the wider significance of the site. Buildings and parts of structures in this category should be retained where possible, although there is more scope for adaptation.

Neutral

The element is historically unimportant but does not have a negative visual impact on the surrounding buildings. May include insignificant interventions to listed buildings and buildings that do not contribute positively to a conservation area. The removal or adaptation of structures in this category is usually acceptable where the work will enhance a related heritage asset.

Intrusive

The element is historically unimportant and has a negative visual impact on the surrounding buildings. Wherever practicable, removal of negative features should be considered, taking account of setting and opportunities for enhancement.

5.2 Significance of Presbyterian Church

Following the methodology for assessment of cultural significance set out in the CADW *Conservation Principles*, the former Presbyterian Church can be identified to have the following heritage values:

Evidential Value:

The former Presbyterian Church is dated to 1865 and served as a place of worship from its construction. Records are not clear when the church ceased use as a place of worship. The National Library of Wales records that the Church was officially closed by a representative of the Cheshire, Flint and Denbigh Presbytery in June 1971,[7] although information from the current owner indicates that it was still in use until 2012.

There has been one phase of extension which reflects the changing needs and aspirations of the congregation, with the addition of the rear kitchen and service area by 1971. This extension at the west end partially obscures the west elevation of the school room.

There is a record of the building on the CPAT Regional Historic Environment Record.

Historical Value:

The former Presbyterian Church was designed by Chester architect, T.M. Lockwood. Hubbard describes Lockwood as 'the only late 19th Chester architect other than Douglas with a national reputation[8]'. He trained with T. M. Penson and set up on his own in around 1860. His output consisted of domestic, public and commercial work in Cheshire, Shropshire and North Wales and he also received commissions from the Duke of Westminster. Lockwood often designed in Tudor and Jacobean styles in brick and stone.

The former Presbyterian Church also has a locally important association with Rev. Ebenezer Powell who opened the Academy School and instigated construction of the church building. He was Minister at Holt from 1847 until 1873 and also established a savings bank and reading room in the village. He later became Chairman of the Lancashire and Cheshire Presbytery of Welsh Calvinistic Methodists and died in Chester in 1876.

The former Presbyterian church also has a regionally important association with Robert A. MacFie of Liverpool, who laid the foundation stone. He was a member of the MacFie Family, sugar refiners, of Greenock in Scotland and Liverpool. According to the JISC

[7] National Library of Wales. GB 0210 GLANPW - CMA: Records of Glan-y-pwll Presbyterian Church, Holt, 1946-1971. [online]. Accessible at: https://archives.library.wales/index.php/cma-records-of-glan-y-pwll-presbyterian-church-holt-2 [Accessed 29.01.24]

[8] Hubbard, E. *The Buildings of Wales: Clwyd (Denbighshire and Flintshire)* (London: Yale, 1994), 77

Archives Hub, Robert Andrew MacFie (1811-1893) was MP for the Leith Burghs from 1868 until 1874[9]. The Liverpool branch of MacFie & Sons was opened in 1838, at Temple Street, Liverpool, and continued to operate under family management for a century, until it was purchased in 1938 by United Molasses, who later transferred its quota to Tate & Lyle. The company was finally wound up in 1946. A possible connection of the MacFie Family with the slave trade should be acknowledged, in their importation of sugar.

The former church also has a nationally important association with Leigh Richmond Roose. His father, Rev. Richmond Leigh Roose, was Minister at the church in the late 19th century. He became a very proficient association footballer and played for Aberystwyth Town, later being picked as goalkeeper for Wales[10]. He also played for Everton, Sunderland, Stoke and Glasgow Rangers as an amateur, while working in London hospitals. He joined the Forces in the first World War but was posted among the 'missing' in France in 1916.

The former church also has a regionally important association with monumental masons, Mossfords Memorials of Overton, who made two of the commemorative plaques. By 1895, James Arther Mossford was operating from Overton-on-Dee and Ruabon but, soon after, he moved to Wrexham where the business is still operating today. According to information added to the Wrexham Cemetery website, Mossford's work includes the War Memorials at Coedpoeth, Johnstown, Rhos and Pen-Y-Cae[11].

Aesthetic Value:

The former Presbyterian church is constructed in locally sourced stone in a Gothic Revival style and appears to be typical of its period. Externally, it retains a gabled entrance porch on the east front with a pointed arched stone door surround with carved foliated capitals and a double-leaf timber door with ironmongery with a quatre-foil, stained glass light above, large traceried windows either side and a small central window and a vent within the gable. It also retains a stone belfry to the left with decorated stone buttresses. The windows throughout are of Early English, `First Pointed' style with quatrefoil and cinquefoil detail and retain leaded glass with coloured edging.

Internally, the church retains much of its historic layout, together with pews, a decorative lobby and pulpit and four and five-pointed star shapes repeated throughout the scheme design. It also retains three historic monuments commemorating former ministers and elders of the church. The schoolroom retains exposed roofing timbers and a decorative moulded beam.

The building is in a poor condition, having suffered from water penetration and neglect over a period of years, resulting in peeling paint, collapsed plasterwork and a rotting

[9] *Papers of the MacFie Family, sugar refiners, Greenock and Liverpool* [online]. Available at: https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/71884d4b-2348-3b6a-813a-31c30636a4ce [Accessed 3.02.24]

[10] ROOSE, LEIGH RICHMOND (1877 - 1916), Association football player [online]. Available at: https://biography.wales/article/s-ROOS-RIC-1877 [accessed 6.02.24

[11] One of the oldest businesses on Ruabon Road [online]. Available at: https://wrexhamcemeterystories.com/story/694 [Accessed 6.02.24]

floor in the schoolroom, particularly in the north-east corner. Paintwork has peeled off within the church. Much of the south elevation is obscured by vegetation growth, some of which is intruding into the church and will lead to further water penetration. Repair and maintenance are needed soon to ensure the retention of significance of the building.

The building has also suffered from unauthorized work, including removal of some of the side pews by a previous owner.



Collapsed Plaster and Crack in Schoolroom



Rotting Floor



Pews Removed from Seatings



Vegetation Growth in Church

Communal Value:
The church serviced as a place of worship for local people from its construction until around the late 20th century. The schoolroom provided a place of education for local children and a social meeting place for local groups.

5.3 Summary of Significance

The chief aspects of significance are:

- Survival of T. M. Lockwood's design dating from 1865, with the Gothic Revival style with bar tracery intact externally.
- Survival of much of Lockwood's internal scheme design, with a timber lobby, pulpit and pews, although some pews have been removed from seatings.

- Association with Rev. Ebenezer Powell, who opened the Academy School opposite and instigated construction of the church building; he was Minister at Holt from 1847 until 1873.
- Association with monumental masons, Mossfords Memorials of Overton and now of Wrexham, who made two of the commemorative plaques.

The former Presbyterian church and schoolroom are considered to be of **high significance overall** and to merit their national designation. However, the internal significance of both parts of the building is being negatively affected by their poor condition.

In a hierarchy of elevations, the east front and north elevations are considered to be the most important as these contain the main entrance and are the most visible. The other elevations have all been altered or views are largely obscured and are less important.

5.4 Contribution Made by Setting to Significance

Planning Policy Wales *Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment* defines the setting of a heritage asset:

> 'The setting of an historic asset includes the surroundings in which it is understood, experienced, and appreciated embracing present and past relationships to the surrounding landscape. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral. Setting is not a historic asset in its own right but has value derived from how different elements may contribute to the significance of a historic asset.[12]'

The former Presbyterian church was constructed on Castle Street in an area of growing development. The setting of the building can be defined as Castle Street in both directions, Chapel Lane and Chapel Street.

There are two Grade II listed buildings within the setting of the former church: the former Baptist Chapel lies to the north-west on Chapel Street. Dated 1827 and constructed of red brick, it retains a centrally placed doorway with an open pedimented hood in a moulded wooden architrave surround with console details. Under the apex of the gable is a stone plaque with a heavily eroded inscription and the date. The former Manse to the adjacent Presbyterian Church (identified in its listing description as 'Puddleducks') lies adjacent to the south-west. Possibly also designed by T.M. Lockwood at the same time as the church, the building retains its red brick symmetrical front with brick end chimneys, a central gabled porch with a brick dentilled eaves cornice and large canted bay windows to the ground floor. Both these listed buildings contribute positively to the significance of the former church, although the former Baptist Chapel is boarded up.

[12] Welsh Assembly Government. *Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment* (May 2017), parag. 1.25

Opposite the former church is the former Holt Academy, of local interest as the early home of the Presbyterian Minister and the location of the Academy set up by Rev. Ebenezer Powell. This building also contributes positively to the significance of the former church.

Castle Street is a busy road with buildings of a variety of styles and dates but including several Georgian Classical style houses. South of The Manse is a garage forecourt which intrudes on the setting of the listed former church and Manse.

The former church has historic stone boundary walls on the west and north sides with historic iron gates. At the rear of the church is a small car park with small, planted areas. The western stone boundary wall of this space has an inserted opening to allow access for cars.

The **setting is considered to make an overall positive contribution** to the significance of the former Presbyterian church.



former Baptist Chapel



The Manse



The Academy



View South-west Along Castle Street



View North-east Along Castle Street



View Towards Rear of Church from Smithfield Green



Northern Boundary Wall of Church



Northern Boundary Wall of Church

6 HERITAGE PLANNING CONTEXT

6.1 Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11)

CADW's website explains the statutory position in Wales affecting listed buildings and the historic environment. The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 became law in March 2016. It has three main aims:

- to give more effective protection to listed buildings and scheduled monuments;
- to improve the sustainable management of the historic environment; and
- to introduce greater transparency and accountability into decisions taken on the historic environment.

The Act amends the two pieces of UK legislation — the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 — that previously provided the framework for the protection and management of the Welsh historic environment.

Historic Environment Policies included in Chapter 6 Distinctive and Natural Places of *Planning Policy Wales* (PPW) comprise national policy:

6.1.4 PPW provides the national planning policy framework for the consideration of the historic environment and this is supplemented by guidance contained in *Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment* and Cadw associated best practice guidance on the historic environment.

Listed Buildings

6.1.10 There should be a general presumption in favour of the preservation or enhancement of a listed building and its setting, which might extend beyond its curtilage. For any development proposal affecting a listed building or its setting, the primary material consideration is the statutory requirement to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

6.1.11 For listed buildings, the aim should be to find the best way to protect and enhance their special qualities, retaining them in sustainable use. The continuation or reinstatement of the original use should generally be the first option, but not all original uses will now be viable or appropriate. The application of planning and listed building controls should recognise the need for flexibility where new uses have to be considered in order to secure a building's survival or provide it with a sound economic future.

6.1.13 Applicants for listed building consent must be able to justify their proposals, show why the alteration or demolition of a listed building is desirable or necessary and consider the impact of any change upon its significance. This must be included in a heritage impact statement, which will be proportionate both to the significance of the building and to the degree of change proposed.

6.2 Conservation Principles for the sustainable management of the historic environment in Wales

28. New work or alteration to an historic asset will normally only be acceptable if:

a. the need for the work is fully justified; and
b. there is sufficient information comprehensively to understand the impacts of the proposal on the significance of the asset; and
c. the proposal would not materially harm the values of that asset, which, where appropriate, would be reinforced or further revealed; and
d. the quality of design and execution must add value to the existing asset; and
e. the long-term consequences of the proposals can, from experience, be demonstrated to be benign, largely reversible or be designed not to prejudice alternative solutions in the future.

35. Where proposals for new work involve some intervention into the existing fabric of an historic asset, there will be a 'presumption in favour of preservation' (doing no harm). If new work is designed to be reversible then it will not prejudice alternative solutions in the future.

39. Changes which would harm the heritage values of an historic asset will be unacceptable unless:

a. the changes are demonstrably necessary either to make that asset sustainable, or to meet an overriding public policy objective or need; and
b. there is no reasonably practicable alternative means of doing so without harm; and
c. that harm has been reduced to the minimum consistent with achieving the objective; and
d. it has been demonstrated that the predicted benefit decisively outweighs the harm to the values of the asset, considering
    a. its comparative significance;
    b. the impact on that significance; and
    c. the benefits to the asset itself and/or the wider community or society as a whole.

45. The assessment of the degree of harm to an historic asset needs to consider the impact of any proposal on its heritage values, and the likely consequences of doing nothing. In the case of a derelict historic building, for example, should a viable, but modestly damaging, proposal be refused in the hope that a better or less damaging scheme will come forward before the place reaches the point of no return? In such circumstances, the known or predicted rate of deterioration is a crucial factor, and hope must be founded on rational analysis. The fact that somewhere has been neglected should not, of itself, be grounds for agreeing to a scheme that would otherwise be unacceptable. The impact of the proposals being put forward need to be assessed by comparing the significance of the historic assets to be affected in their current condition and after the completion of the works. The potential availability of subsidy as an alternative to harmful change, or to limit its impact, should be considered.

6.3 Adopted Wrexham Local Development Plan (LDP) 2013 to 2028

Policy SP15: Historic and Cultural Environment

Development will only be supported where it conserves, protects, preserves or enhances the following cultural and historic assets of the County Borough and their setting:

i. Listed Buildings;
ii. Conservation Areas;
iii. Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site;
iv. Registered Historic Parks, Gardens and Landscapes; and
v. Scheduled Monuments and Archaeological Remains.

7 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 The Proposals

McCormick Architecture have prepared a scheme of external and internal alterations. The former Presbyterian church is listed at Grade II and proposals should protect or enhance the significance of the listed building.

Taking account of the Statement of Significance and paragraphs 6.1.10, .11 and .13 of *Planning Policy Wales*, the impact of the proposal on the aspects of significance of the designated asset is considered below. The building is listed at Grade II and there is a presumption in favour of its preservation. There are further details in the Design and Access Statement and the drawings which accompany the application.

7.2 Impact of Changes on the Significance of the Listed Building

The impact of proposals has been considered in the context of the significance of the building as a whole, and the relative significance of affected fabric and areas. The impact of each principal alteration on the significance of the listed building is summarised below.

Exterior

There are several proposed changes to the exterior of the former church and schoolroom. The rear later 20th century extension will be demolished and replaced with a new single-storey, flat roofed extension which will be slightly taller than the existing although on a smaller footprint and stepped in slightly from the building line of the schoolroom. This will have metal-framed mullioned windows in a sandstone frame, surfaced in render, and topped with a red sandstone coping.
The impact of the proposal is considered to be **beneficial.**

Four 'conservation style' rooflights will be inserted to the longer sides of the church. Although this will result in the loss of a small amount of historic fabric and a change to the appearance of the north and south elevations, the rooflights are required to provide light at first-floor level.
The overall impact of the proposal is considered to be **mildly harmful.**

The obscured glass in four of the single lancet and 2-light windows on the north elevation will be replaced with clear glass. Although this will result in the loss of a further small amount of historic fabric and a change to the appearance of the north and south elevations, the clear glass is required to improve light at ground-floor level. Any missing or damaged coloured glass in these windows should be replaced on a like for like basis. The larger windows in the gables will remain unchanged.
The overall impact of the proposal is considered to be **mildly harmful.**

Two 3-light mullioned windows in metal frames will be inserted to the west gable of the church. Although this will again result in the loss of some historic fabric, these will be below the level of the schoolroom roof and very little of the frame is likely to be visible from the exterior; they are required to provide light at first-floor level. The vent here,

currently boarded over, will be reinstated and that at the east end in poor condition will be repaired, which constitutes a public benefit.
With the proposed mitigation, the impact of the proposal is considered to be **mildly harmful overall**.

All external doors will be repaired and retained. Any repointing should be in lime mortar in a colour to match any surviving historic mortar.

Much of the existing rear garden/parking area will be retained, although the access will be laid with stone setts, the parking area surfaced with resin bound gravel which should be of an appropriate colour, a small area laid with stone paving and a new screen hedge will be planted, of suitable native species. A short section of new boundary wall on the south side will be constructed to match the existing. All the vegetation growth along the south side will be cleared, opening up views of this elevation.
The impact of the proposal is considered to be **beneficial.**



Rear Gable of Church



Pointing in Poor Condition on South Gable



2-light Mullioned Window on South Elevation



Rear Garden/Parking Area

Interior

Proposal	***Significance of affected area***	***Impact***	***Mitigation***
Church:			
Remove pews, level floor, remove dado panelling from bay 2 at the east end westwards, insert freestanding pods on steel columns to provide first-floor accommodation with central staircase, add secondary glazing to all windows	High	Moderately harmful – pews appear to be part of the historic design but are likely to prevent any other use of space. First-floor pods would retain historic roofing structure open to view. Proposed insulation between floor joists and above ceiling and secondary glazing would improve thermal performance of building.	Dado panelling in bay one at east end to be retained where level. Floorboards to be re-used where possible. Historic lobby, pulpit and internal doors to be retained. One or two pews could be retained as examples. Staircase to be freestanding in sympathetic materials: timber and glass balustrade to allow views through.
Schoolroom:			
Insert partition under historic beam and further partitions to provide services, infill inserted opening to extension and convert service hatch to doorway, add secondary glazing to all windows.	Medium	Mildly harmful – would subdivide the space but is required to provide modern services, although inserted opening to late 20th century extension will be infilled. Proposed insulation above ceiling and secondary glazing would improve thermal performance of building.	Historic roofing structure to remain open to view. Stud partitions would be removable.



Change in Level of Panelling



Surface Beneath Floor Joists

7.3 Overall Impact on Significance

The approach has been to retain as much historic fabric as possible while enabling a new use for the building. The building has been vacant for over ten years, having only been used for storage since closure of the church, and is now in a poor condition. Repair and maintenance are needed soon to ensure the retention of their special interest. Indeed, according to the CPAT Regional Historic Environment Record, the building appears on the Council's Buildings at Risk Register. The Building Conservation Officer has advised that, although related information has not been kept up to date with the lack of relevant officer time, the last adopted BAR strategy was to cover the period 2012-2016 and has no entry for the Presbyterian Church, so may have been added after this document was compiled[13].

Externally, there will be little visible change to the building, apart from the replacement of some obscured windowpanes with clear glass, the insertion of eight small rooflights and the replacement of the poor-quality late 20th century extension with a smaller extension in a better-quality design. Two new windows will be inserted to the west gable of the church, in a sympathetic design, but will be largely obscured by the schoolroom roof. The historic main entrance will remain in use as such, and all external doors will be retained and repaired where possible. A door and window schedule accompanies the application, indicating proposed repair work. Importantly, all the vegetation growth along the south side will be cleared, opening up views of this elevation, and appropriate landscaping work will enhance the neglected rear of the building.

Internally, a freestanding structure will provide first-floor accommodation, with views of the historic roofing structure kept open. Although this would result in the loss of the pews, the historic lobby and pulpit, one bay of the dado panelling and the internal doors will be retained.

Although some of the work will be mildly to moderately harmful, and other work is considered to be beneficial in impact. With the proposed mitigation, the proposals are considered to constitute less than substantial harm in planning terms. This is offset by the very significant public benefits of enabling a sustainable future for the listed

[13] Pers. Comm. 12.02.24

building by meeting modern requirements and of much needed repair and maintenance work.

8 CONCLUSIONS

The information in Sections 3, 4 and 5 of this report provides an assessment of the significance of the former Presbyterian church and its setting. The former church is dated to 1865 and served as a place of worship from its construction until closure in 2012. The chief aspects of significance are considered to be the external survival of T. M. Lockwood's design dating from 1865, with the Gothic Revival style with bar tracery intact; the survival of much of Lockwood's internal scheme design, with a timber lobby, pulpit and pews, although some pews have been removed from their seatings; the association with the Rev. Ebenezer Powell, who opened the Academy School opposite and instigated construction of the church building; the association with monumental masons, Mossfords Memorials of Overton and now of Wrexham.

The former Presbyterian church and schoolroom are considered to be of **high significance overall** and to merit their national designation. However, **the internal significance of both parts of the building is being negatively affected by their poor condition**. In a hierarchy of elevations, the east front and north elevations are considered to be the most important as these contain the main entrance and are the most visible. The other elevations have all been altered or views are largely obscured and are less important.

Section 6 outlines the heritage planning context and Section 7 assesses the impact of carrying out work to the listed buildings. The approach has been to retain as much historic fabric as possible while enabling a new use for the buildings. The building has been vacant for over ten years, having only been used for storage since closure of the church, and is now in a poor condition. Repair and maintenance are needed soon to ensure the retention of their special interest. Indeed, according to the CPAT Regional Historic Environment Record, the buildings appear on the Council's Buildings at Risk Register.

Externally, there will be little visible change to the building, apart from the replacement of some obscured windowpanes with clear glass, the insertion of eight small rooflights and the replacement of the poor-quality late 20th century extension with a smaller extension in a better-quality design. Two new windows will be inserted to the west gable of the church, in a sympathetic design, but will be largely obscured by the schoolroom roof. The historic main entrance will remain in use as such, and all external doors will be retained and repaired where possible. A door and window schedule accompanies the application, indicating proposed repair work. Importantly, all the vegetation growth along the south side will be cleared, opening up views of this elevation, and appropriate landscaping work will enhance the neglected rear of the building.

Internally, a freestanding structure will provide first-floor accommodation, with views of the historic roofing structure kept open. Although this would result in the loss of the pews, the historic lobby and pulpit, one bay of the dado panelling and the internal doors will be retained.

Although some of the work will be mildly to moderately harmful, and other work is considered to be beneficial in impact. **With the proposed mitigation, the proposals are considered to constitute less than substantial harm in planning terms. This is offset by the very significant public benefits of enabling a sustainable future for the listed building by meeting modern requirements and of much needed repair and maintenance work.**

Pre-application feedback from an independent consultant for the Council has indicated support for the proposals in principle. *Planning Policy Wales* is clear that there 'should be a general presumption in favour of the preservation of a listed building and its setting' but also acknowledges 'the need for flexibility where new uses have to be considered in order to secure a building's survival or provide it with a sound economic future.' This approach is needed here in order to ensure a sustainable future as modern family home.

The proposals are considered to be consistent with national and local planning policy.

9 SOURCES

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Wrexham County Borough. *Adopted Wrexham Local Development Plan (LDP)* (Adopted 20/12/23)

Maps and Plans (online)

1872-86 1:2500 Ordnance Survey
1899 1:2500 Ordnance Survey
1911 1:2500 Ordnance Survey
1954 1:10560 Ordnance Survey
1971 1:2500 Ordnance Survey

10 APPENDIX – LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Summary Description of a Listed Building

Reference Number 16957
Building Number

Grade II
Status: Designated
Date of Designation 17/07/1996
Date of Amendment 17/07/1996
Name of Property: Presbyterian Church (including forecourt walls and railings)

Description

Broad Class
Religious, Ritual and Funerary
Period

History
Designed by T.M. Lockwood, architect of Chester, and built in 1865. The building was instigated by the Rev. Ebenezer Powell who opened the Academy School.

Exterior
Gothic Revival style with bar tracery. Sandstone blocks of irregular sizes laid in courses with slate roof. Gable end facing street has central gabled entrance porch, ordered stone door surround with carved foliated capitals, wooden door. Stone belfry to left with decorated stone buttresses. Windows throughout of Early English, `First Pointed' style with quatrefoil and cinquefoil detail. To rear adjoining school room, sandstone block construction with simple lancet windows. Late C20 single storey flat roofed extension to rear.

Interior
There is a fairly complete contemporary scheme. Arch-braced roof timbers rise from painted stone corbels; there is a decorative timber frieze. 4 and 5 pointed star shapes are motifs which are carried through from the glass in the tracery to pierced designs in the roof joinery and incised shapes on the pew ends. Where the windows are paired they are separated by stone shafts with foliated capitals. At the liturgical W end there is a pitch pine lobby with blind cusped arcading. At the liturgical E end is a central pulpit of similar character with steps up on each side with arcaded balustrading. A door on each side leads off to a schoolroom. Windows have coloured and painted glass in the tracery but are otherwise plain with coloured glass margins. Pews are of pitch pine with painted numbers. On the liturgical E wall are 3 later C19 monuments in Neoclassical style commemorating former ministers and elders of the church; two of them are by Mossford of Overton. The schoolroom has exposed timbers in the roof.

Reason for designation
Listed as a good example of Presbyterian church architecture by a noted architect containing a good contemporary interior scheme.

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