

# Siloh Chapel, Oakfield Street, Pontarddulais, Swansea.

Standing Building Recording



By Richard Scott Jones (BA Hons, MA, MIFA)

CAP Report No. 606





# Siloh Chapel, Oakfield Street, Pontarddulais, Swansea.

Standing Building Recording

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Report No: 606

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## Non Technical Summary

The following report is the result of archaeological standing building recording (English Heritage Level 3) undertaken on the two Siloh Chapel buildings, Oakfield Street, Pontarddulais, Swansea, prior to the demolition of both and the subsequent construction of two new residential dwellings.

Investigation of the two buildings revealed that the earliest Siloh Chapel was built in 1894. In 1910 this was replaced by a larger chapel house located immediately to the west, with the earlier building adopting a new identity, as a vestry.

Cartographic investigation has shown that no buildings appear to have existed in the area of the two chapels prior to 1894.

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The following report is the result of an archaeological standing building recording (English Heritage Level 3) undertaken on the two Siloh Chapel buildings, Oakfield Street, Pontarddulais, Swansea, prior to both being demolished as part of a proposal for two new residential dwellings (NGR: SN 59374 03640).
- 1.2 All works were undertaken in accordance with both the IfA's Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures and English Heritage's 'Understanding Historic Buildings, a Guide to Good Practice' (2006), and current Health and Safety legislation.

#### Planning Background

- 1.3 Greenstar Developments is proposing the demolition of the Siloh Chapel and the accompanying Vestry building and their replacement with two pairs of terraced residential dwellings (Planning Application No. 2009/1387). Glamorgan and Gwent Archaeological Trust (henceforth GGAT), being advisors to the City and County of Swansea, considered that the demolition of the building would be a significant loss to the historic environment. It is of their opinion that:
  - '.... the standing buildings are of historic importance and by virtue of their history and cultural significance within the area; therefore a qualified building historian should make a full record of the structures both by the means of a drawn and photographic record, prior to any works being undertaken. We envisage this survey to be undertaken to a Level III (English Heritage 'Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice' 2006). The completed record should then be deposited in a suitable repository, such as the West Glamorgan Archives or the Historic Environment Record to enable access by future historians'.
- 1.4 In order to ensure that the work is undertaken GGAT recommended that a condition based on the model suggested by the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers in their document Analysis and Recording for the Conservation and Control of Works to Historic Buildings should be attached to any planning consent granted by the City and County of Swansea. This condition is worded:

'No site works shall be undertaken until the implementation of an appropriate programme of building recording and analysis has been agreed with the local planning authority, to be carried out by a specialist acceptable to the local planning authority and in accordance with an agreed written specification'.

#### Site Location and Description

1.3 The Siloh Chapel and accompanying vestry building are located on the corner of Oakfield Street, in Pontarddulais, near Swansea (NGR: SN 59374 03640) at approximately 10 A.O.D. Both buildings have their front façade facing southwest and each are enclosed by a low stone wall surmounted by decorative wrought iron railings split at the main entrances by a series of large decorative cast iron gateposts that give access to the chapel and vestry.

## 2. Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 The aim of the investigation was to investigate and record the buildings in plan and photographically prior to the buildings being demolished. This work was to be undertaken to an English Heritage Level 3 building record as stipulated in the English Heritage's 'Understanding Historic Buildings, a Guide to Good Practice' (2006).
- 2.2 Level 3 is an **analytical record**, and comprises an introductory description followed by a systematic account of the building's origins, development and use. The record includes an account of the evidence on which the analysis has been based, allowing the validity of the record to be re-examined in detail. It also includes all drawn and photographic records that are required to illustrate the building's appearance and structure and to support an historical analysis.
- 2.3 The information contained in the record for the most part has been obtained through an examination of the building itself. Documentary sources used are those which were most readily accessible, such as historic Ordnance Survey maps, trade directories and other published sources. The record does not discuss the building's broader stylistic or historical context and importance at any length. Although the report attempted to form part of a wider survey in which additional source material could be sought in order to contribute to the overall historical and architectural synthesis of the buildings, very little historical information pertaining to either of the buildings was readily available.
- 2.4 A Level 3 record is appropriate when the fabric of a building is under threat but time or resources are insufficient for detailed documentary research, or where the scope for such research is limited.

# 3. Methodology

- 3.1 For the purposes of compiling a lasting archaeological record of the features, the following methodology was utilised;
- 3.2 All photographs appropriated were recorded using digital format (TIFF format, to a minimum of 10 mega-pixels).
- 3.3 Where possible drawings and sketches were undertaken at a scale of 1:100. However most drawings within this report were undertaken using rectified photography techniques in conjunction with Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator.

## 4. Brief Historical & Archaeological Background

4.1 A literal English translation of the Welsh placename Pontarddulais is "Bridge on the Dulais", with Dulais meaning black stream, probably due to abundant coal dust. The name is in reference to a now dismantled bridge which previousy formed part of the main road from Swansea to Carmarthen, following the course of the River Loughor (Llwchwr). The name refers to the medieval bridge on the river Llwchwr, upstream of its confluence with the Dulais. The earlier name for the place was Pen y bont aber dulais (1550) meaning the end of the bridge near the river confluence. Today, the town is known by locals as "The Bont".

- 4.2 The town stands mostly in the parish of Llandeilo Tal-y-bont (in English "The church of St. Teilo at the end of the bridge"), which referred to the medieval church now transported stone by stone to the St Fagans National History Museum near Cardiff. The bridge referred to in that name was about half a mile down river of the Pont aber dulais bridge, located near the site of the old church. The small part of the town located on the Carmarthenshire side of the bridge, that includes the Black Horse and Red Lion public houses, stands in the parish of Llanedi (in English 'church of Edi').
- 4.3 Pontarddulais was a quiet remote hamlet for centuries. Sometime during the Middle Ages, a bridge was built across the River Loughor where Pontarddulais is now located. The bridge was called "Y Bont Fawr", which means The Great Bridge in English, giving a clue as to the origins of the Pontarddulais's modern nickname "The Bont". The bridge was an important link between Carmarthenshire and Glamorganshire. A new single span bridge was built beside Y Bont Fawr in 1938 and the old bridge was demolished at the end of the second world war. Pontarddulais first gained attention in the wider world in 1843, during the Rebecca Riots when rioters attacked the toll gate there, after crossing the bridge.
- 4.4 The path to industrialisation began in the early nineteenth century. The year 1839 saw the arrival of the railways to the town when the Llanelli Dock Company built a line to transport anthracite coal from the Amman Valley to Llanelli. In 1866, a new line was built connecting Pontarddulais with Swansea which made Pontarddulais an important railway junction.
- 4.5 Pontarddulais was transformed from a rural settlement into an industrial community during the years 1872 to 1910 when six tinplate works were established. The population expanded greatly during this period, as workers from nearby communities and as far afield as Italy, moved in to find work in the tinplate industry.
- 4.6 The 1950 saw another major transformation in Pontarddulais. New, modern tinplate works in nearby Trostre and Felindre rendered the old works in Pontarddulais obsolete. The local works were taken over by other enterprises and redeveloped as light industry. However, they did not replace all the jobs lost due to the closure of the local tin plate works. A part of the local population had to find work elsewhere. Light industry gradually began deserting Pontarddulais in the latter half of the twentieth century, transforming the community into a dormitory village.
- 4.7 With regards religious houses, Pontarddulais appears to have had a considerable number of varying faiths, which in the 19<sup>th</sup> century included six (6) Methodist Chapels, five (5) Baptists Chapels and thirteen (13) Non Conformist Chapels, to which the Siloh Chapel was attributed to. The Non-Conformist Chapels were built to meet the needs of the 'Y Bobl Ddwad'. These chapels were the social centres of the community. Choirs, orchestras, drama societies, Sunday Schools and eisteddfodau were part and parcel of these community chapels.
- 4.8 The non-conformist denominations came into being from the seventeenth century onwards as a result of differing theological interpretations of scripture and consequently of worship and church government. The main seventeenth century sects in England were the Baptists, Presbyterians and Independents, together with the much smaller Society of Friends, or Quakers. Most of these sects played a part in the religious history of Wales, although the principal ones were the Baptists and Independents (also known as Congregationalists). The eighteenth century saw the rise of Methodism, which broke from the established Church and in turn split into several divisions, the two most important being Wesleyan and Calvinistic Methodism. In Wales, the Calvinistic Methodists are the most numerous, later changing their name to the Presbyterian Church of Wales. In England Wesleyan Methodists are in the majority.
- 4.9 The first Baptist church in Wales was established at Ilston on the Gower peninsula in 1649. Baptist churches are generally self-governing within a Baptist Union. There are separate Baptist Unions for English and Welsh speaking congregations.

- 4.10 Welsh Independent chapels have for the most part remained separate from the English-based Congregational Union of England and Wales and the United Reformed Church (created in 1972 from a union of the English Congregational and Presbyterian churches). They belong instead to a loose association, the Union of Welsh Independents (Annibynwyr).
- 4.11 The history of nonconformity in Wales is one of steady growth in the eighteenth century and explosive expansion in the nineteenth, with communities having at least one chapel, often several vying for prominence in inter-denominational rivalry. Baptist and Independent congregations are self-governing, whereas the Wesleyan Methodist and Welsh Presbyterian Churches (formally the Welsh Calvinist Methodists) have a central administration. This affects both the form and the survival of their records. Apart from registers, typical records include contributions books and other accounts, deeds and trust papers, minutes and Sunday School records. Many chapel histories have been written, particularly in celebration of the centenary of a chapel building.
- 4.12 According to the Royal Commissions (RCAHMW) Welsh Chapels database the first 1894 Siloh Chapel cost £700 to build and it had a capacity to hold 308 sittings. The number of class leaders was 5. The number of communicants was 105 and the number of adherents was 104. In 1910 the new Siloh Chapel was built to contend with a growing number of adherents. Details about this later chapel, however, are not readily available from the usual sources. It is clear that the earlier chapel was turned into the vestry building, following construction of the later chapel in 1910.

## 5. Cartographic Sources

- 5.1 Cartographic sources covering both of the two Siloh Chapel buildings, spanning the years 1879 1916 were examined and each map has been reproduced in the Figures and Illustrations section in Appendix I.
- 5.2 All of the ordnance survey maps prior to 1894, the date for the construction of the first Siloh Chapel show that the area was open pasture land with the absence of any earlier features or structures.
- **6.** Results of Standing Building Recording (see Figures and Photo Plates in Appendices I and II)
- 6.1 The building recording work entailed the investigation of two buildings built side by side, the new Siloh Chapel, built in 1910, and the old Siloh Chapel built in 1894. All plans of the elevations were undertaken using rectified photography techniques in conjunction with Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator. Drawn ground plans were made of each of the two buildings accompanied by a photographic record. At the time of the site visit, access to each of the two buildings was not possible, as each was locked for safety reasons, the interior of each building was considered structurally unsafe to allow access for inspection of interior features. Each of the buildings will be described in turn.

#### The Old Siloh Chapel (1894)

6.2 This building is the initial Siloh non-conformist chapel built in 1894. The building is an open, two storey, structure built from locally sourced ironstone with its exterior walls rendered in a grey grit and cement, in order to make it complement the later Siloh Chapel built in 1910. The building has a purple slate roof. The building measures approximately 13.50m x 10.20m in extent and is orientated NE-SW. Its front southwest facing façade is simple in design with only two fairly tall round arched windows set either side of a central porch. The porch appears to have once been open at its front southwest facing side, suggesting that this was the original entrance to the church, however this original entrance has been blocked in and a later modern doorway inserted into the porch's northwest side. This change likely happened at the same time as the building having been rendered, most likely post 1910, following the opening of the new Siloh Chapel. Above the porch building in

the front façade is a stone dedication plaque with the words 'Siloh - 1894 - Capel Annybynol' carved into its face. Above this dedication is a small round headed arched window that gave light to the chapels interior attic space.

- 6.4 Both side elevations were originally characterised by four tall round arched windows fitted with clear mottled glass panes. However, although the southeast facing elevation is still as such, the northwest facing elevation has had its original windows greatly reduced to half-moon shapes in order to accommodate the new extension and toilet block linking the chapel to the adjacent Siloh Chapel built in 1910.
- 6.5 The rear northeast facing elevation is the only elevation still un-rendered and as such still displays its original stone build. Built into this elevation, as per the front elevation, there are two tall round headed arched windows positioned equidistant from each other into the wall. Because this elevation still retained its original bare stonework, it is evident that each of the two windows, and a further small round headed arched window at the apex of the roof, were bordered by a course of yellow brickwork.

The New Siloh Chapel (1910)

- 6.3 The new Siloh Chapel was built in 1910 next to the old Siloh Chapel on its southwestern side, which was to later become the vestry building. This new chapel build was constructed and designed in the new Arts and Crafts style, which meant a simplicity of form without superfluous decoration. The new Siloh Chapel is indeed modest in its overall design with straight simple lines with decoration only been lent to the front façade and the enclosing stone wall with railings and cast iron gateposts.
- 6.4 The building is a large two storey stone built structure with an attic space in the roof. All exterior elevations are rendered in a smooth beige coloured cement, as if imitating a beige sandstone. The roof is covered in grey roofing tiles with terracotta decorative roof ridge tiles. Surmounting the apex of the roof are two decorative curve top copper *cupolas* or air vents. The building measures 16.5m x 12.80m in extent and is orientated NE-SW.
- 6.5 The front southwest facing elevation is the decorative façade, characterised by a projecting gable with two entrances with steps at ground level, each flanked by a pair of tall straight edged columns complete with a straight edged capitals linked by moulding or kneelers of the same design. Between the two entrances is a tabular plaque detailing the service times and dates. Beside each of these pair of entrances are two fairly tall rectangular windows with decorative moulding above their lintels. Below the eastern window is a small and very worn dedication plaque cut into the rendered cement with the date February 28<sup>th</sup> 1910, citing the opening of the chapel, exactly 100 years to the day of the writing of this report.
- 6.6 The upper floor of this elevation is characterised by two tall round arched windows in the projected porch gable, directly above the two ground floor entrances. Both of the window frames in these openings are modern PVC replacements. Between these two windows is another cement moulded dedication plaque with the words 'SILOH ANNIBYNWYR ADEILADWYD 1910'. Above each of these windows is a decorative lintel moulding. Flanking this pair of tall windows, one on each side, is a smaller round arched window, again with each with a decorative lintel moulding. The uppermost level of this façade, the attic space, is characterised by a group of three small round arched windows side by side, the central one being slightly taller than the other two, thus creating a balance with the projected gable itself. Each of the four corners of this façade, the main corners and the projected gable/porch are highlighted by a series of imitative rectangular dressed stones with an upper panel of grit stone render. At the uppermost point of this projecting gable, on the apex of the roof, is a small decorative terracotta *finial*, best described as a group of three closely touching leaves or feathers holding a ball.
- 6.7 Both of the buildings side elevations are characterised by a group of eight (8) rectangular window openings, four (4) on the ground floor and four (4) on the upper floor. Each of these windows have clear mottled glass panels with a border of alternate red and blue glass panes. Occasionally, where a

few of these coloured panes have been broken over the years, they have been either replaced by yellow or clear mottled glass. Although the southeast facing side elevation is almost identical to the northwest facing elevation in terms of window openings, it has had the addition of a two storey extension that links the older Siloh Chapel. However, even though this is the case, it still retained its symmetry by keeping the same number of windows. The later addition of a small kitchen at ground level did manage to obscure one window, but this was retained within the buildings interior, thus allowing light into the kitchen as well as keeping the original feature in place. On both side elevations a series of air vents is visible, built into the original fabric in the upper levels. Both elevations also have two cast iron drain pipes that took rainwater to a ground drain from the roof.

- 6.8 The rear northwest facing elevation of the new Siloh Chapel is characterised by a series of narrow two storey extensions that gave access to the rear of the building as well as to a series of stairwells to the upper floor. All of the window openings in these extensions are cut into either the northwest facing elevation or the south east facing elevation of the extensions. Each of these windows were narrow in form and each is characterised as being a round arched window, again with a border of alternating red and blue glass panes. Access to the building at the rear was from a narrow doorway at ground level at the far northwest corner of this elevation. This entrance way was accessed through a gateway between a decorative stone gatepost and another decorative cast iron gatepost positioned at the end of a long line of wrought iron railings that encircled the entire Siloh Chapel.
- 6.9 It is apparent from the exterior roof that a fireplace is inserted in the building in this rear elevation, as two chimney pots are evident at the apex of the roof. As access to the interior of the building was not possible because of safety concerns, it was not possible to record these potential fireplace openings. However, following communication with the developer, it is apparent that a boiler was once in use in one of the small lean-to structures at the rear of the building. The ground plan suggests that this gave access to the upper floor, but it also served partly as a chimney.
- 6.10 The area between the two chapels, as already mentioned, is characterised by a two storey extension contemporary with the 1910 built chapel. This linked the two chapels together and allowed the older chapel to adopt a new identity as the vestry. The exterior of this extension is characterised by a rectangular window, similar to those in the front façade of the new Siloh Chapel, in that it has a straight line decorative moulding above its lintel.
- 6.11 Attached to this two storey extension at the rear is a later kitchen extension, likely built in the 1960s or 70s. Within the open area in front of this kitchen extension is a series of red brick built structures, namely a closed ladies and gentlemen's toilet block, a urinal area and a tool shed. All of these red, brick built, structures were constructed after 1910 and are most likely 1920-1930 in origin.

### 7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The investigation, recording and rapid desk based assessment of the two Siloh Chapels showed that prior to the construction of the first chapel in 1894 there were probably no structures on the site, implying that the area was formerly open pasture or meadow land. The first Siloh Chapel was built in 1894 in response to a growing, and increasingly industrialised, population. In 1910 a new chapel was built next to the older chapel. Its architecture was in the Arts and Crafts Movement style, having a simple design with little decoration, yet still highlighting it as a religious building.
- 7.2 All of the exterior elevations were recorded for each of the buildings, but investigation of the interior of the chapels was not possible due to safety concerns over the structural integrity of both buildings. Despite this, all significant features of both chapels were recorded and interpreted to the required level.

# 8. Acknowledgements

Thanks to; Rupert Mathias of Greenstar Development for allowing access to the site, and also staff at the RCAHMW in Aberystwyth.

# 9. Bibliography

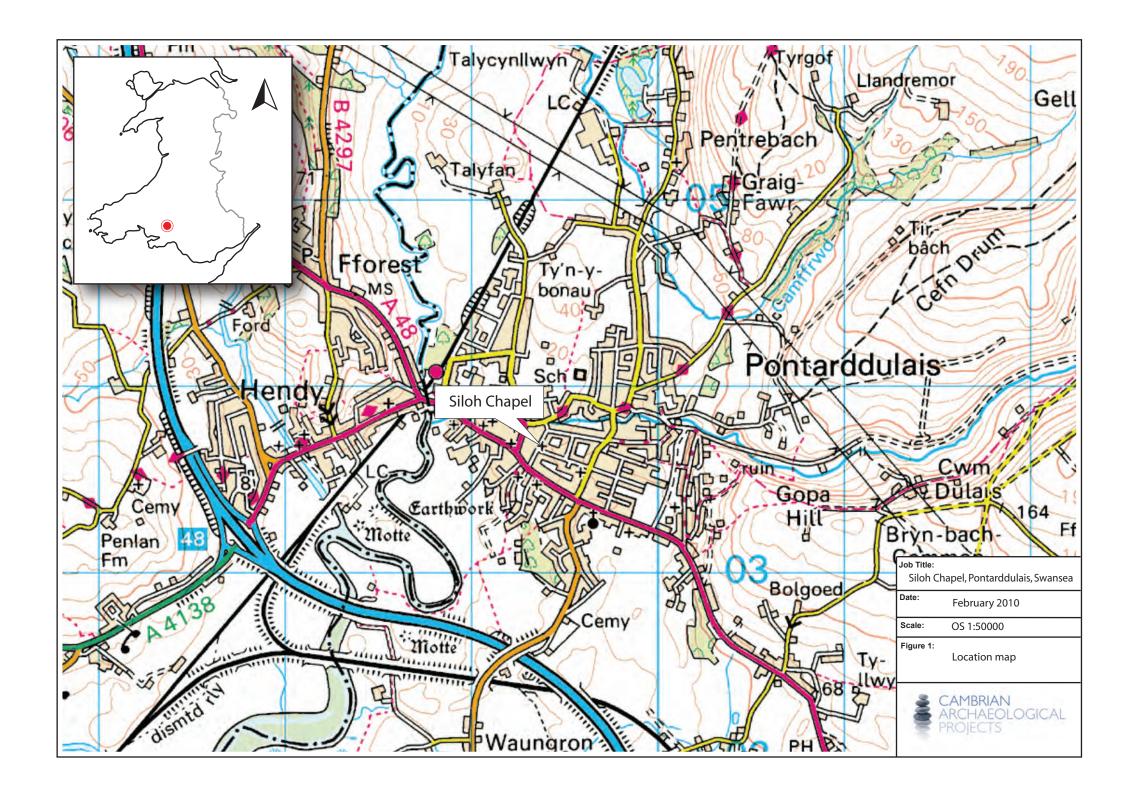
Cartographic Sources

- Ordnance Survey 2 inch to one mile 1819
- Tithe Map (Llanrwst, 1841)
- Ordnance Survey 25 inch 1st Edition 1879
- Ordnance Survey 25 inch 2nd Edition 1898
- Ordnance Survey 1906 25 inch edition map
- Ordnance Survey 1916 25 inch edition map

Other Sources consulted

RCAHMW Welsh Chapels database.







ob Title:

Siloh Chapel, Pontarddulais, Swansea.

Date:

February 2010

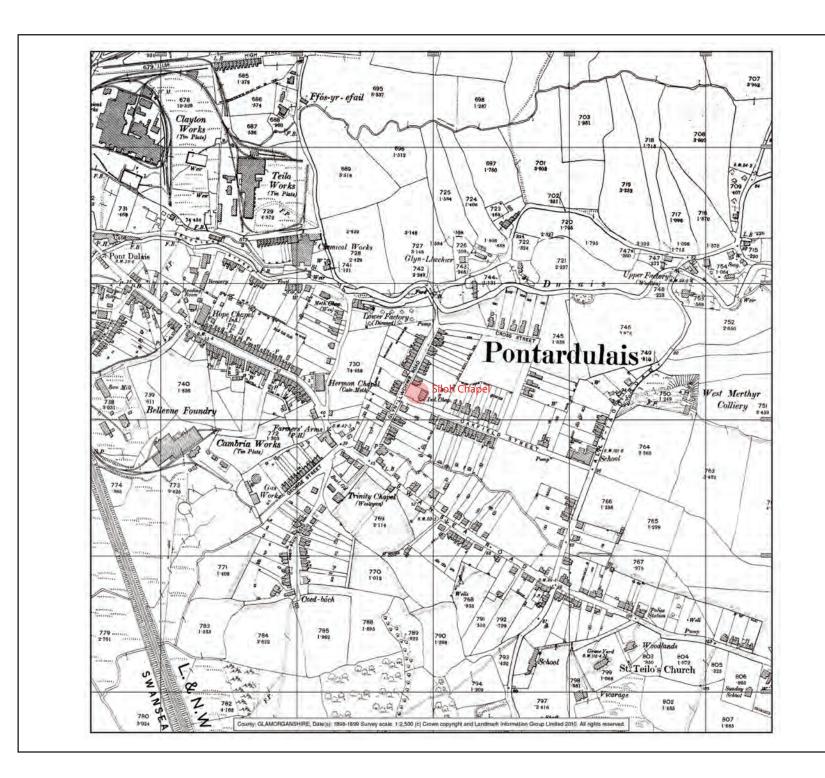
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Figure 2:

OS First Edition map (1879)





b Title:

Siloh Chapel, Pontarddulais, Swansea.

Date:

February 2010

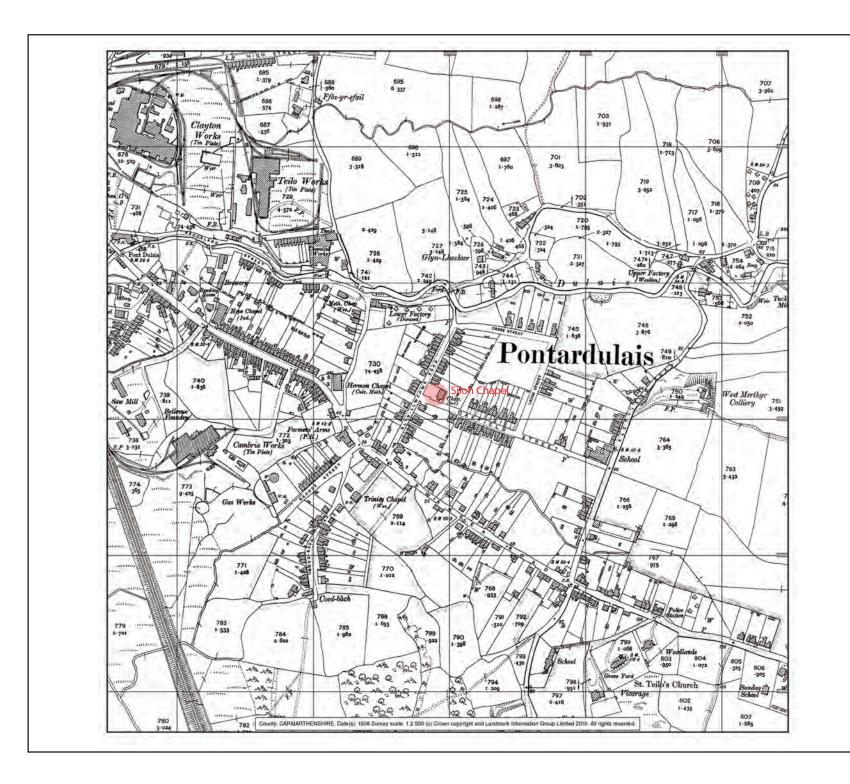
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Figure 3:

OS Second Edition map (1898)





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Siloh Chapel, Pontarddulais, Swansea.

Date:

February 2010

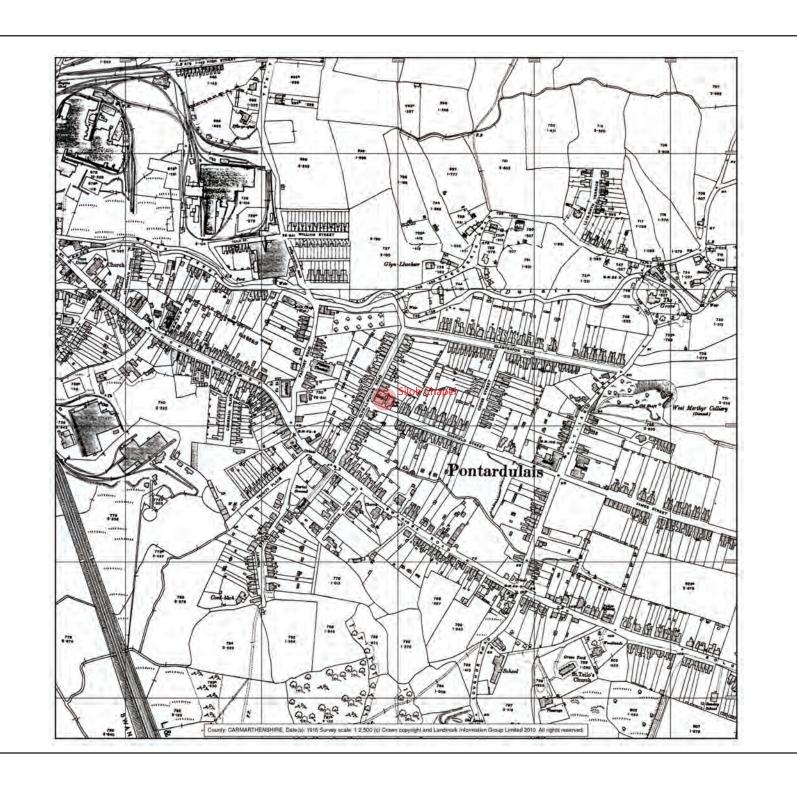
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Figure 4:

OS 1906 map edition





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Siloh Chapel, Pontarddulais, Swansea.

Date:

February 2010

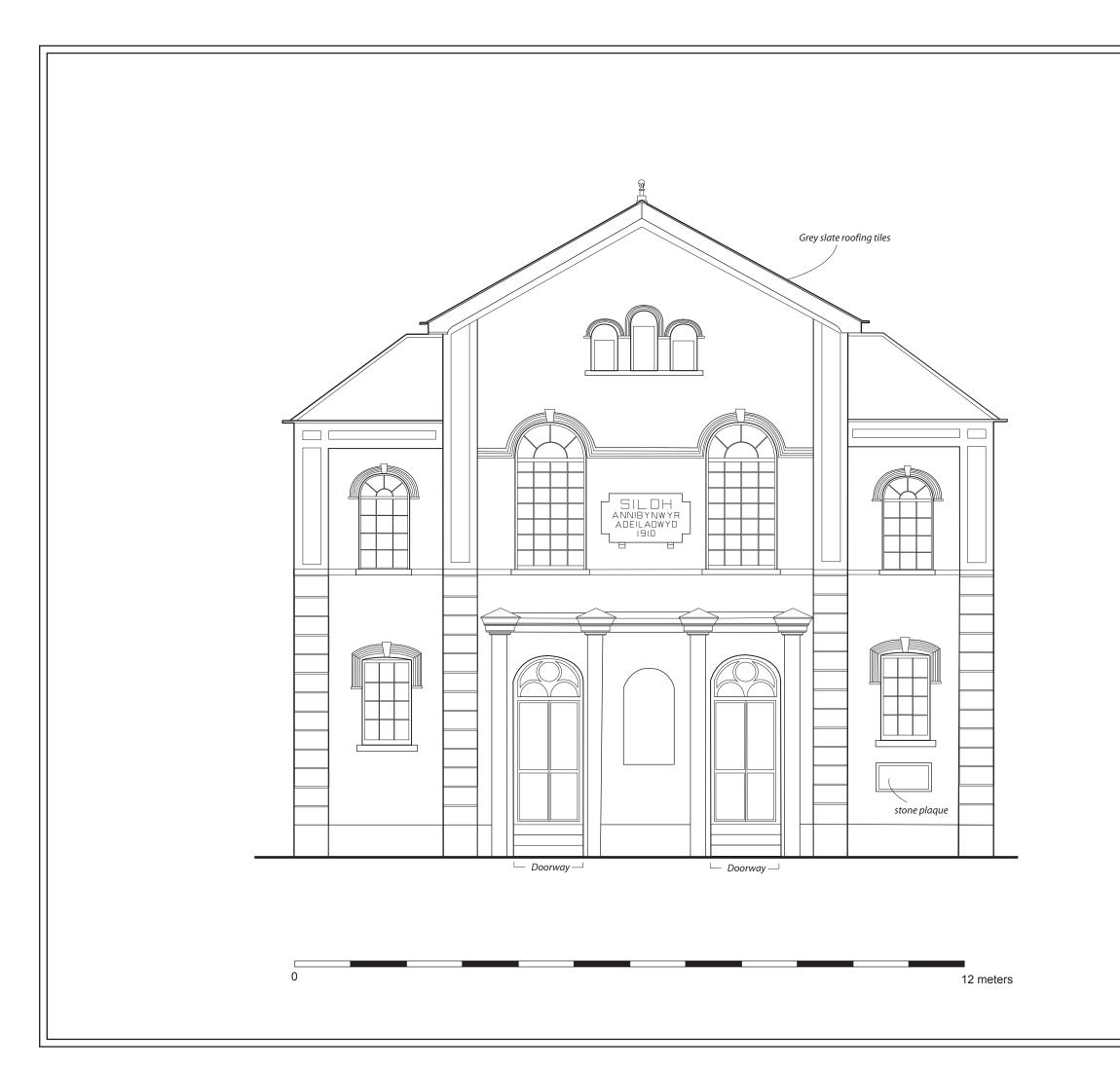
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Figure 5:

OS 1916 map edition





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Siloh Chapel, Pontarddulais, Swansea.

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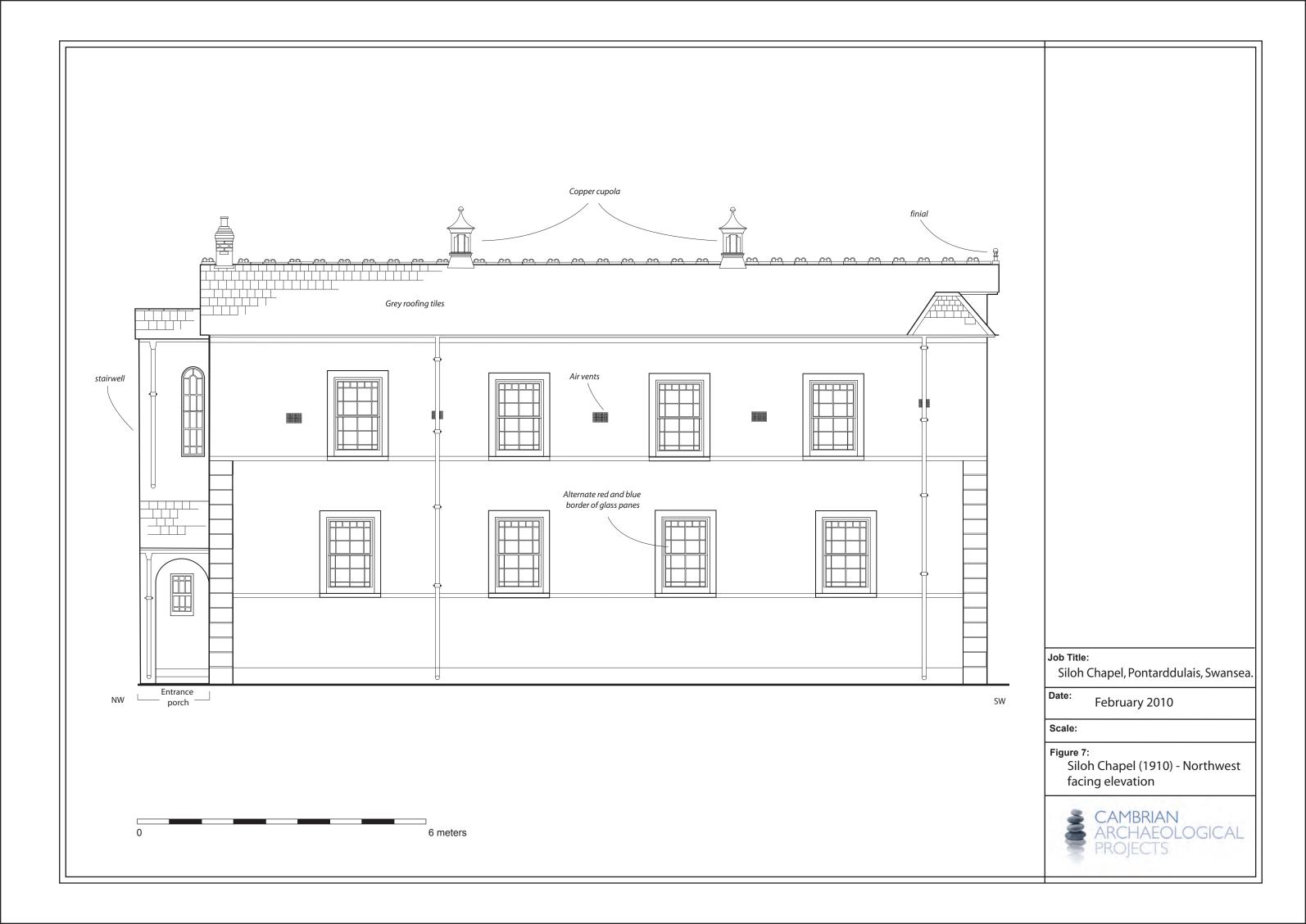
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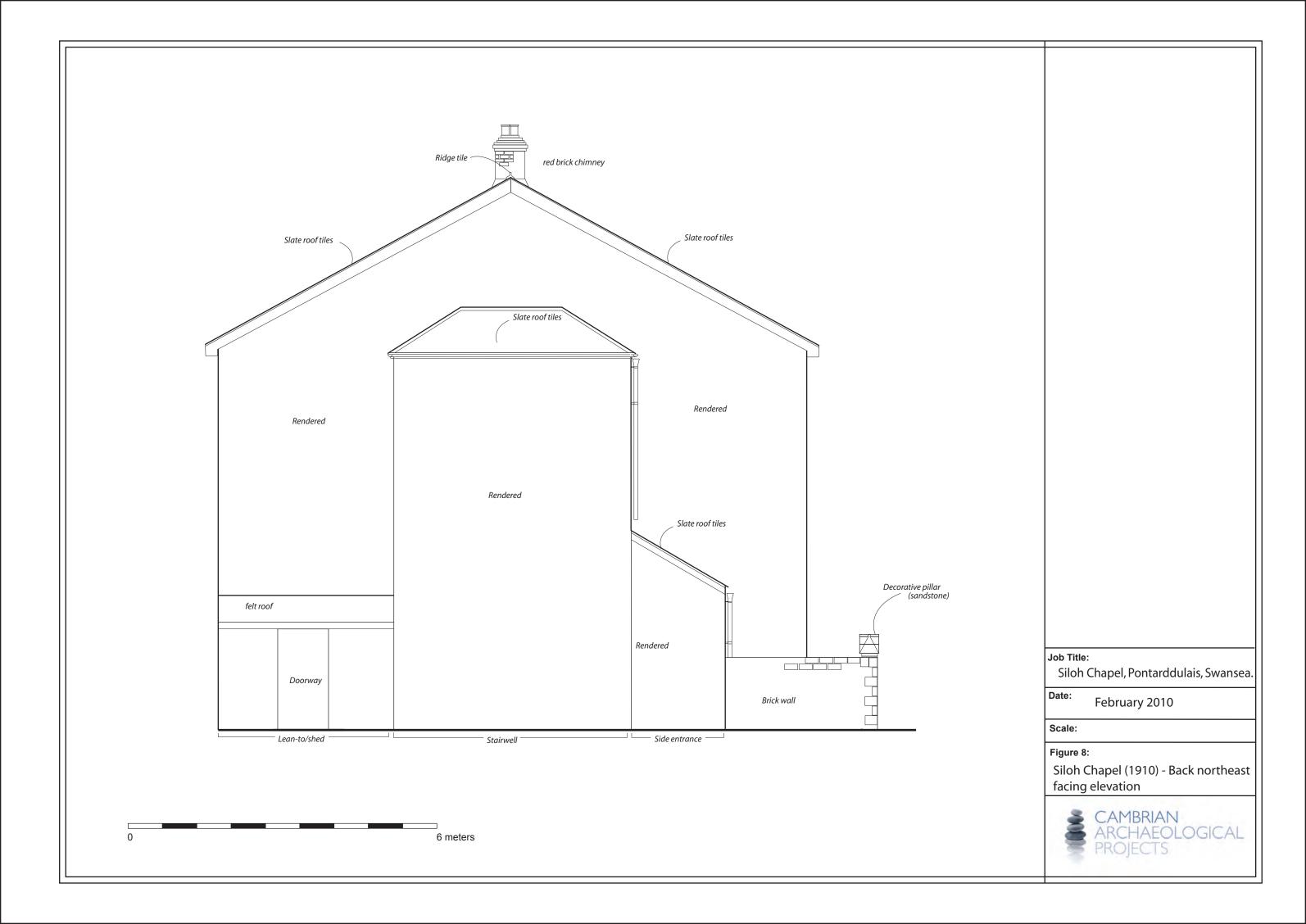
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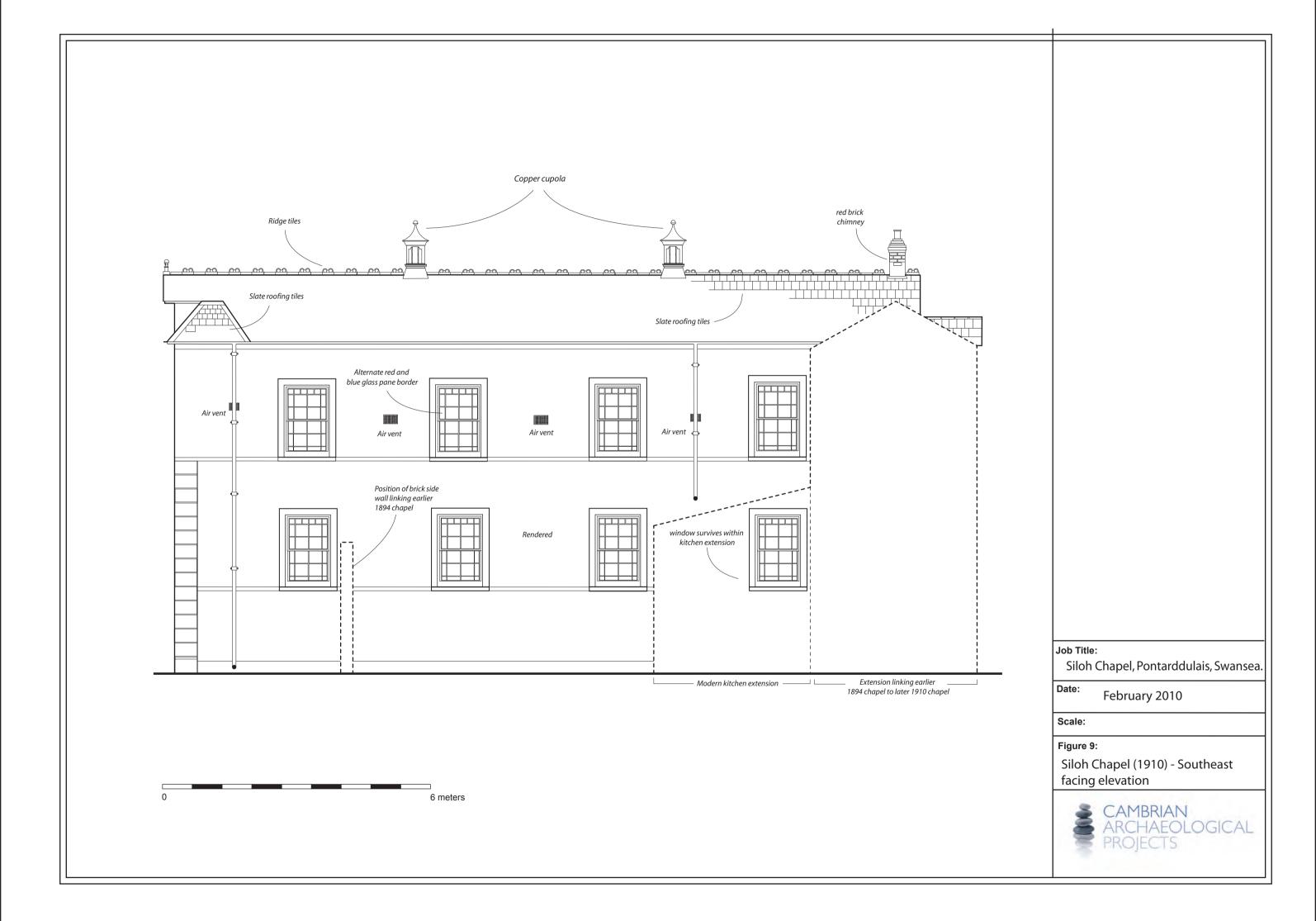
Figure 6:

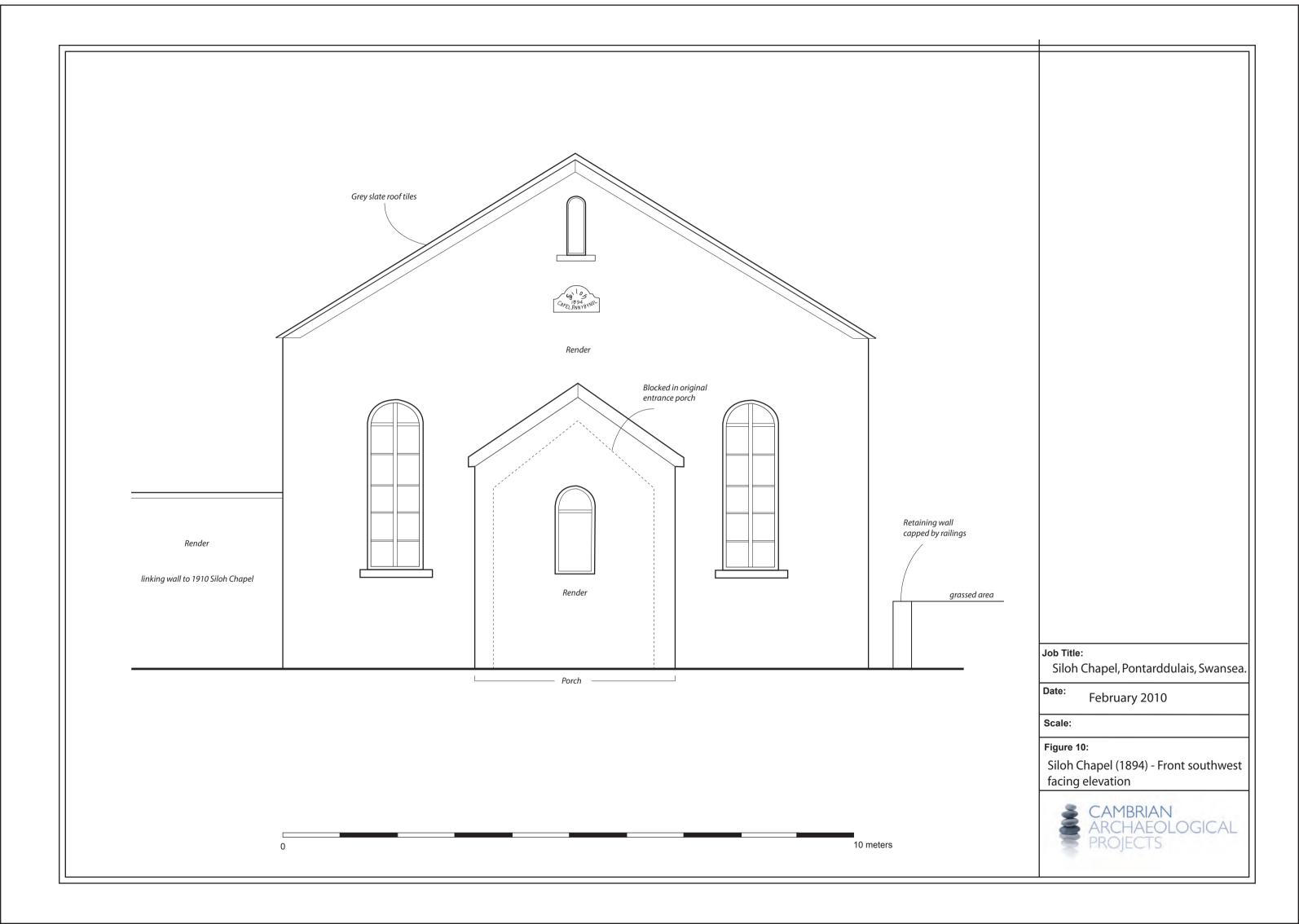
Siloh Chapel (1910) - Southwest facing Front Facade

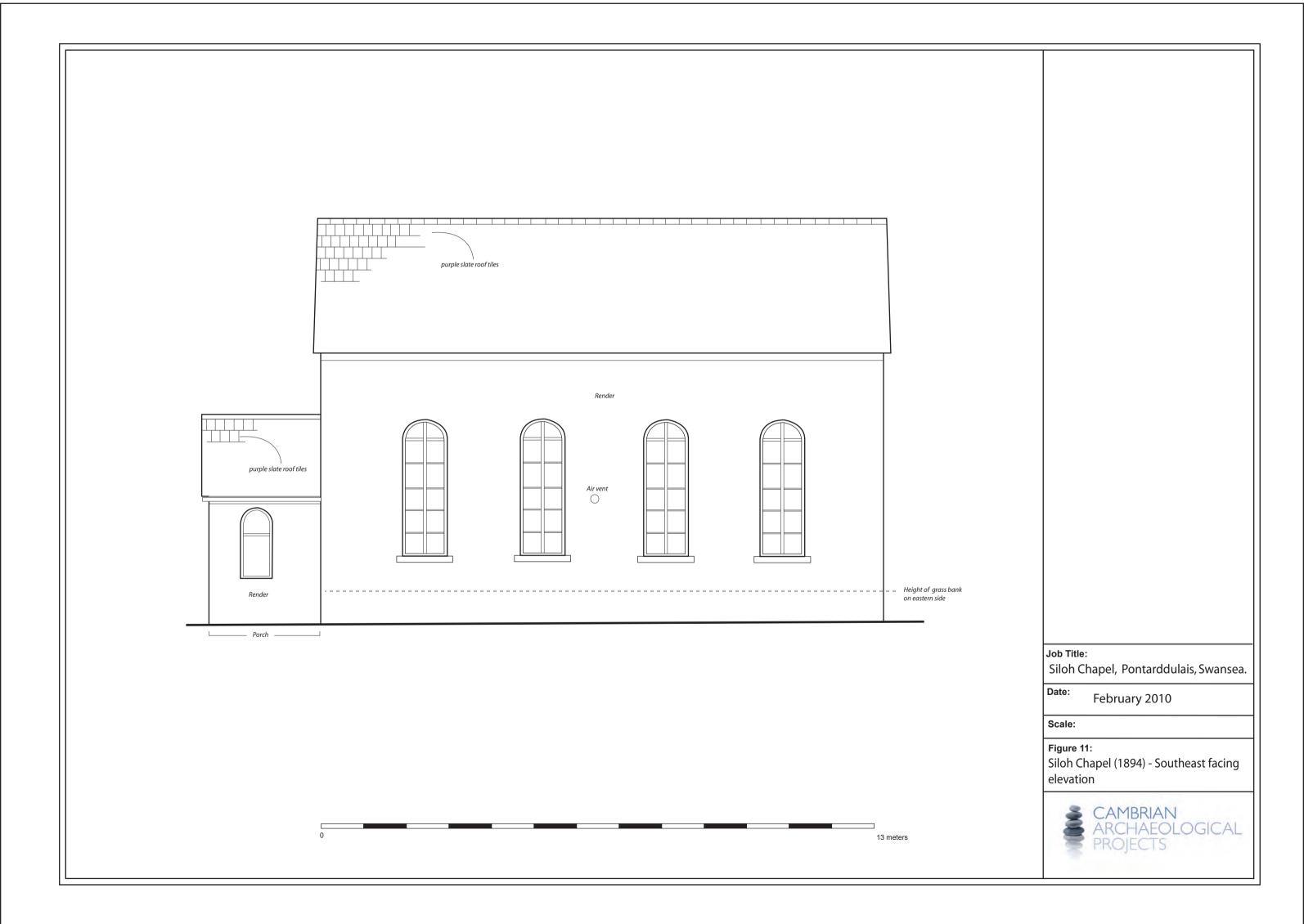












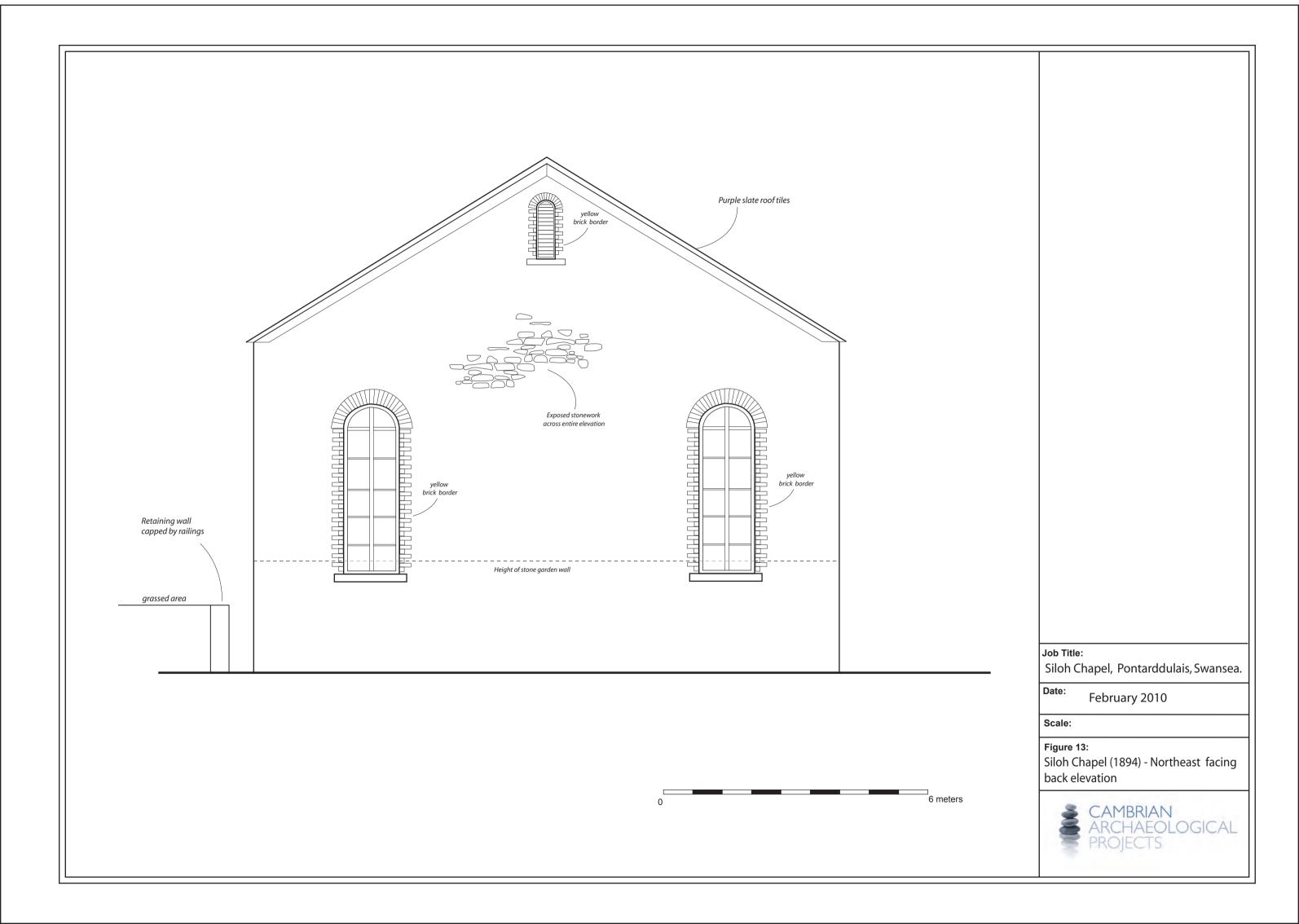


Siloh Chapel, Pontarddulais, Swansea.

February 2010

Siloh Chapel (1894) - Northwest facing







Job Title:

Siloh Chapel, Pontarddulais, Swansea.

Date:

February 2010

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Figure 14:

Siloh Chapels side by side (1894 and 1910)
- Southwest facing front elevation



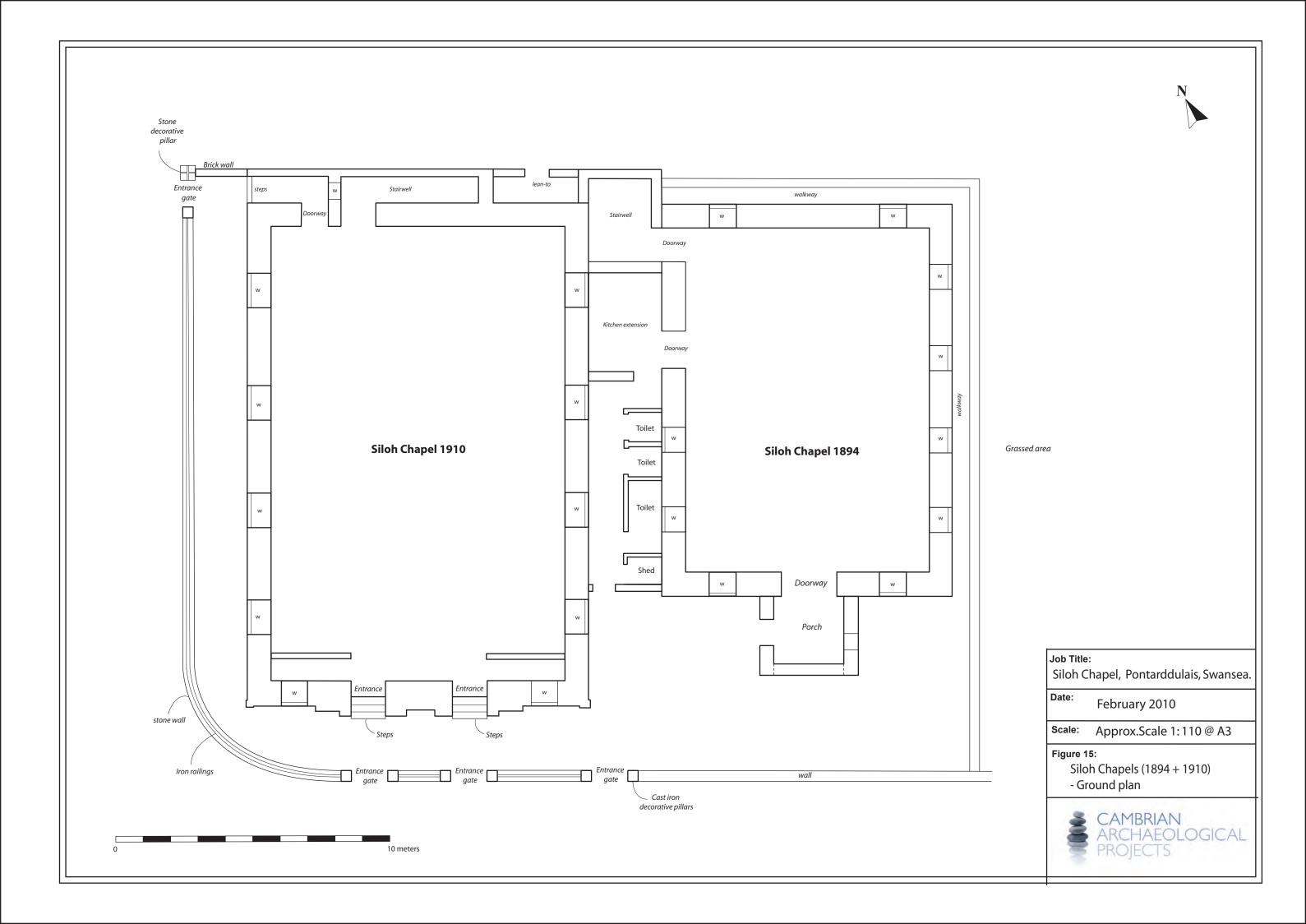






Plate 1. Siloh Chapels side by side (1894 and 1910). Looking northwest.



Plate 3. Siloh Chapel (1910). Looking northwest.



Plate 2. Siloh Chapel (1910). Looking northeast.



Plate 4. Siloh Chapel (1910) southwest front facing elevation . Looking northeast.



Date: February 2010

Photo plates:

General views of both Siloh Chapels (1894 and 1910)





Plate 5. Siloh Chapel (1910). Looking north.



Plate 7. Siloh Chapel (1910). Looking south.



Plate 6. Siloh Chapel (1910). Looking southeast.



Plate 8. Siloh Chapel (1910). Detail of railings surrounding chapel on western side. Looking south.

Date: February 2010

Photo plates:

General views of Siloh Chapel (1910)





Plate 9. Siloh Chapel (1910). Looking eastward.



Plate 10. Siloh Chapel (1910). East facing elevation. Looking northwest.

Date: February 2010

Photo plates:

General views of Siloh Chapel (1910)





Plate 12. Siloh Chapel (1910). Detail shot of roof features. Looking northwest.



Plate 13. Siloh Chapel (1910). Detail shot of entrance gateposts at western side. Looking northeast.

Photo plates:

Detail shots of Siloh Chapel (1910)





Plate 13. Siloh Chapel (1910). Detail shot of gate post. Looking northwest.

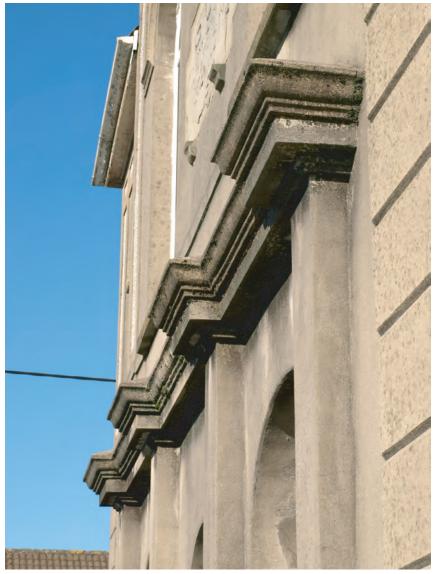


Plate 14. Siloh Chapel (1910). Detail shot of architectural features, 'kneelers', above columns at front entrance. Looking westward.

Date: February 2010

Photo plates:

Detail shots of Siloh Chapel (1910)





Plate 15. Siloh Chapel (1910). Detail of cast iron gateposts at front of chapel. Looking northeast.



Plate 17. Siloh Chapel (1910). Detail of dedication plaque in front facade. Looking northeast.



Plate 16. Siloh Chapel (1910). Detail of stone gatepost at northwest entrance in west facing elevation. Looking northwards.

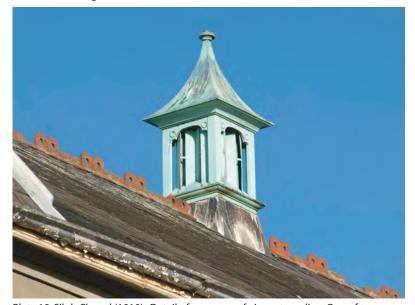


Plate 18. Siloh Chapel (1910). Detail of copper roof air vent cowling. One of two. Looking northwest..

Date: February 2010

Photo plates:
Detail shots of Siloh Chapel (1910)





Plate 19. Siloh Chapel (1910). Detail of ground floor window moulding.. Looking north.



Plate 21. Siloh Chapel (1894). Front southwest facing elevation. Looking northwest.

Photo plates:



Plate 20. Siloh Chapel (1894 and 1910). Area linking the two chapel together. Looking northwest.



Plate 22. Siloh Chapel (1894). Southeast facing elevation. Looking northwest.

Job Title: The Siloh Chapel, Pontarddulais, near Swansea.

Date: February 2010

: Views of Siloh Chapels (1894 and 1910)





Plate 23. Siloh Chapel (1894). East facing elevation. Looking west.



Plate 25. Siloh Chapel (1894). Rear northeast facing elevation Looking southeast.



Plate 24. Siloh Chapel (1894). East facing elevation with porch and 1910 chapel in background. Looking westward.



Plate 26. Siloh Chapel (1894). Detail of stone at threshold of entrance to chapel. Looking northeast.

February 2010

Photo plates: Views of Siloh Chapel (1894)





Plate 27. Siloh Chapel (1894). Detail of porch elevation. Looking southeast.



Plate 28. Siloh Chapel (1894). Detail of porch elevation. Looking northwest.

Date: February 2010

Photo plates:

Views of Siloh Chapel (1894)





Plate 29. Siloh Chapel (1894). Kitchen at extension elevation. Looking northeast.



Plate 30. Siloh Chapel (1894). View at rear of 1894 chapel looking northwest toward 1910 chapel.

Date: February 2010

Photo plates:

Views of Siloh Chapel (1894)





## ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

### Siloh Chapel, Oakfield Street, Pontarddulais, Swansea

Site Name:

Site Name:	Siloh Chapel, Oakfield Street, Pontarddulais, Swansea
Site Code:	SCP/10/BR
PRN:	N/A
NPRN:	
SAM:	
Other Ref No:	
NGR:	SN 59374 03640
Site Type:	19 <sup>th</sup> century Welsh Non-conformist Chapel
Project Type:	Standing Building Recording
Project Officer:	Richard Scott Jones
Project Dates:	February 2010
Categories Present:	N/A
Location of Original Archive:	CAP Ltd
Location of duplicate Archives:	Glamorgan and Gwent Archaeological Trust
Number of Finds Boxes:	
Location of Finds:	N/A
Museum Reference:	Not assigned
Copyright:	CAP Ltd
Restrictions to access:	None



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