

St Catherine's Chapel, Lydiate

The Chapel of St. Catherine is situated at SD 364049, 00.40km. north of Maghull, along the line of the A567 Southport Road. This siting (Fig.1) suggests that at one time the line of the Southport road ran approximately 200m west of the present line, thus passing the bank of trees fronting the chapel (Fig. 2), and skirting the cross once situated 200m east of Lydiate Hall. Gibson (1876, 174) supports this view.

Known locally as the 'Abbey', St. Catherine's Chapel was probably built as a private chapel to serve the family of Lawrence and Catherine Ireland, at nearby Lydiate Hall. Though built in the perpendicular style, its simplicity suggests the late fifteenth century. It is a scheduled monument Grade I.

According to Gibson (1876, 173-4) the chapel was built for the Ireland family and dependants, to provide a more convenient place for the hearing of Mass than the parish church of Halsall, 5km. to the north (Fig. 1). The initials of Lawrence and Catherine Ireland were originally carved over the porch on the south side of the chapel; and this suggests that they were its founders. Lawrence Ireland died before 1485 (Gibson, 1876, 28) and so it may be assumed that building began in the early 1480's. It is unlikely that the work was completed before the early sixteenth century. Despite the view of Gregson (1869, 219) that the chapel was never complete, Gibson (1876, 175) held it was used for Mass by the Ireland family. In this connection, Gibson pointed to the evidence of his own excavation in the interior of the building. In front of the altar he uncovered an area of dark mould mixed with sand; this accords with the position of the sacrarium where sacred vessels were washed after Mass, and suggests that the chapel was in use until the Dissolution. It was probably at this period that the alabaster reredos (Fleetwood-Hesketh, 1955, 10) depicting the life of St. Catherine, was removed for safe keeping to Lydiate Hall (Gibson, 1876, 175). Fragments of this are today incorporated in the pulpit of the nearby parish church of Our Lady.

After the Dissolution, the chapel was simply used as a burial ground. Although their tombstones cannot now be seen, five Jesuit Priests were buried in the chapel in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries (Notes, 1893, 8-10) Appendix 1. According to Gregson (1869, 219), Lady Anderton of Lostock, into whose family the Lydiate lands came in the eighteenth century, was also buried there, but Gibson (1876, 72) suggests she was buried in London. Excavation might resolve this.

In 1850, part of the ground to the south of St. Catherine's was used for burials by the Catholic community of Lydiate (Gibson, 1876, 182), but on the opening of the new church of Our Lady in 1862, this ground was no longer used.

A number of descriptions of St. Catherine's Chapel exist. The earliest is probably that of Pennant (1801, 51) who described it in 1773 as having:

"A tower steeple, with pinnacles and battlements, venerably overgrown in many parts with ivy."

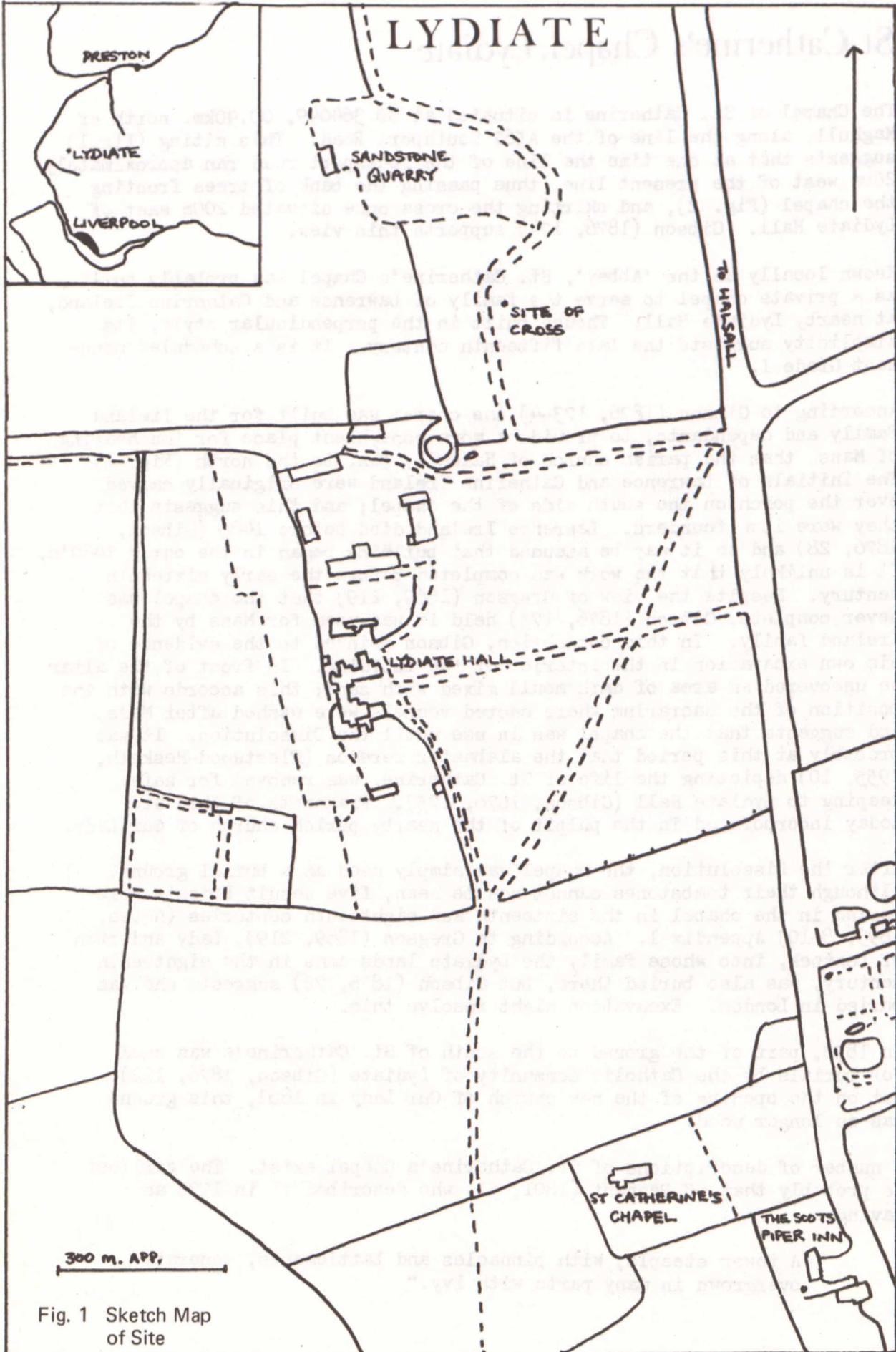


Fig. 1 Sketch Map of Site

According to the engraving (Fig. 3), the Chapel, although roofless, still retained unbroken the tracery of all the windows except the big east window. Four finials can still be seen crowning the stepped buttresses along the south wall, while two tower finials remain. Over the porch door, which is still largely intact, can just be seen the dripstone on the terminals of which (Roberts, 1848, 147), the initials of Lawrence and Catherine Ireland were carved. Ivy and bushes have encroached at the base of the south wall.

In 1848, St. Catherine's Chapel was again described (Roberts, 1848, 146-153). He described the belfry of the tower as having four two light windows, which seem (Figs. 3 and 4) to have been intact in the mid-nineteenth century. These were strengthened by iron bars which were added about this time by the then landowner, Blundell of Ince Blundell. The discrepancy in the number of finials shown on the tower in the two engravings (Figs. 3 and 4) casts some reflection on their reliability.

The big three light window in the west wall of the tower was also intact at this period.

By the end of the century, however, these internal features were vanishing (Fig. 5). All the tower windows, together with those on the south wall, still carried dripstones with simple angled returns. According to Figs. 3, 5 and 6, the internal features of the great west window behind the altar had gone by the mid-nineteenth century. Roberts suggests (1848, 147) that the window originally carried five lights with tracery. According to Fig. 7, the east window supported a dripstone similar to those over the tower and south wall windows. By the mid-nineteenth century it seems clear that the finials on the north-east and south-east corners of the building had gone, to be followed by those on the south wall. By 1876, the battlements of the east wall were also vanishing. The stepped buttresses supporting the entire building were, however, still intact at the end of the nineteenth century (Fig. 8).

The porch on the south wall was perhaps the most interesting feature of the building. According to Roberts (1848, 147) and Gibson (1876, 174) the initials LI and CI could still be seen on the terminals of the dripstones above the outer doorway. By the end of the century it is clear that the four centre arches of the porch had collapsed (Fig. 9).

Roberts and Gibson also describe the mutilated condition of the mullions of the windows of the south wall, and imply that the apparent violence used in removing the glass indicated that their destruction took place during the Dissolution.

By the eighteenth century, the chapel was roofless, but grooves in the east wall of the belfry suggest the prior existence of two roofs of varying pitches, which according to Gibson (1878, 174) certainly supported a slate roof during the period when the chapel was in use.

In 1975 a group of students from Christ's College Archaeological Society visited St. Catherine's Chapel and decided to record as fully as possible the existing fabric of the Chapel, and to consider ways of conserving the remains. Accordingly a project was undertaken to construct a ground plan (Fig. 2) and measured drawings (Fig. 10). Few of the students, studying History, have had experience of this kind of work, and so the plans must be regarded as provisional. The techniques employed included the use of a plane table and simple clinometer.

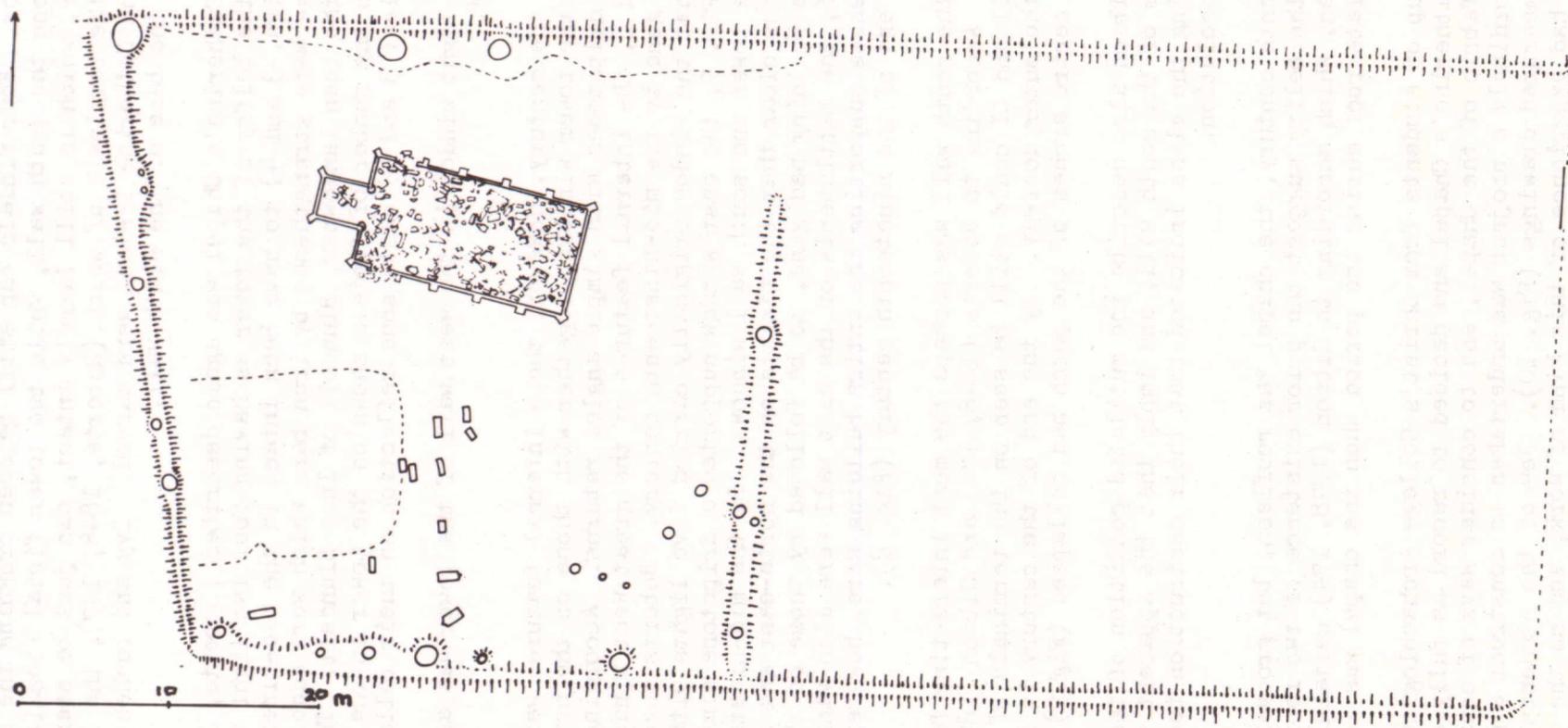


Fig. 2 St Catherine's Chapel, Lydiate.

Description of existing remains of St. Catherine's Chapel

The Chapel is built of local yellowish sandstone, possibly taken from a nearby quarry (Fig. 1). The Chapel forms a small rectangle enclosing an area of 14.5 x 5.10m. At the west end, the tower forms a small rectangle. The orientation is east-west.

The tower is built in three stages. The base is pierced in the west wall by a large window, the tracery of which is now completely gone. The window arch is loosening (Fig. 11c), thus weakening the whole fabric of the tower. The window sill is reduced to rubble at ground level, allowing comparatively easy access to the interior. The stepped diagonal buttresses supporting the four corners of the tower show evidence of stone robbing. No trace of the finials crowning these buttresses remains. The small belfry still surmounts the second string course of the tower. Of the four windows, those on the north and west sides have lost their tracery, while all sign of the battlements and finials above these has gone. Only a fragment of iron indicates Blundell's repair. The masonry at the top of the tower is loose and dangerous. The archway leading from the tower into the interior is weakening, rendering the condition of the tower still more hazardous.

The porch at the west end of the south wall is extensively ruined. A heap of masonry (Fig. 11b) partially blocks the entrance. There is no apparent evidence of the stones bearing the initials of the founders, but it is possible that these may still be recovered. The doorway is rebated and has a bolt hole.

The south wall has become considerably dilapidated since the turn of the century. Finials and battlements have vanished, and rubble lies close to the base of the outside wall, which is heavily overgrown. The windows at the west and east ends of the south wall have lost their arches and little evidence of tracery remains in the others. Between the windows, the stepped buttresses have been much robbed at their bases.

The east wall of the chapel shows the greatest dilapidation. The arch of the big window has collapsed. The sill is ruined and access across the rubble into the interior is comparatively easy. The walls, unsupported by the robbed buttresses show signs of bulging outwards. (Fig. 11d).

The north wall, in the absence of windows, seems the most stable, possibly because the buttresses there have suffered less than the others from stone robbing. Nevertheless, a large crack apparent on the interior of the wall runs from top to bottom and constitutes an obvious hazard. The unusual bonding of the masonry together with numerous putlog holes can be most easily discerned here. The doorway at the west end of the north wall, though less ruined than that on the south wall, is almost blocked by fallen masonry. It is rebated and has a bolt hole.

There is little trace now of internal fittings. No certain evidence can be seen among the stones lying in the interior (Fig. 2) of the altar, or of gravestones. A number of masons' marks can be seen, some corresponding to those which occurred at Burscough Priory (Appendix II).

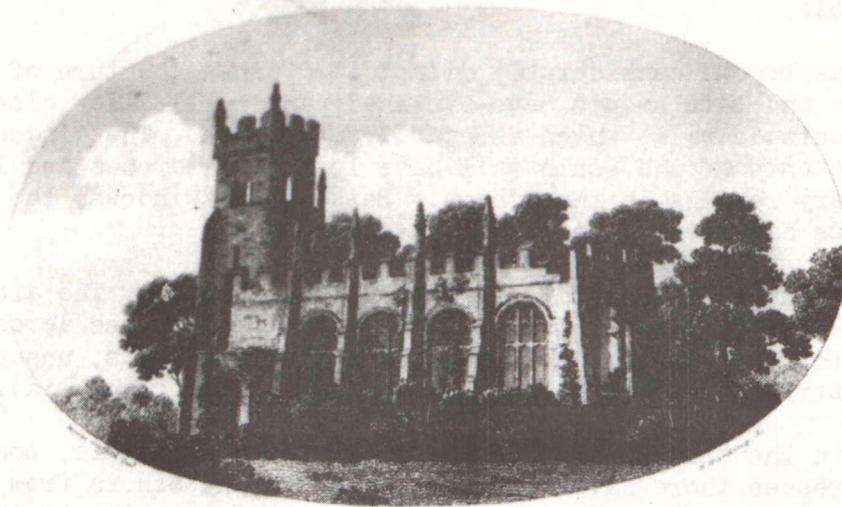
The entire building is in a very decayed state. A heavy undergrowth of ivy and young saplings is considerably undermining the fabric, and accelerating the rate of decay.

During the course of the survey, some work was carried out to clear the interior of the building of undergrowth. It was, however, deemed advisable to keep this to a minimum to prevent further weakening of the fabric. It was decided to make no attempt to clear the undergrowth surrounding the exterior, despite the difficulties this caused in the survey. The reason for this was to protect the building from the very real threat of vandalism. During the summer the heavy foliage obscures the chapel from the road and from the casual observer.

Despite the very precarious state of the building, there is still sufficient masonry upstanding to make this chapel a remarkable ancient monument. In that it is a one period Medieval site, it is unique on Merseyside, and to allow it to fall into further decay is to be deplored.

It is felt that at present the first aim of the survey has been completed. By bringing this report to the notice of the Department of the Environment it is hoped that steps may be taken to carry out the second aim.

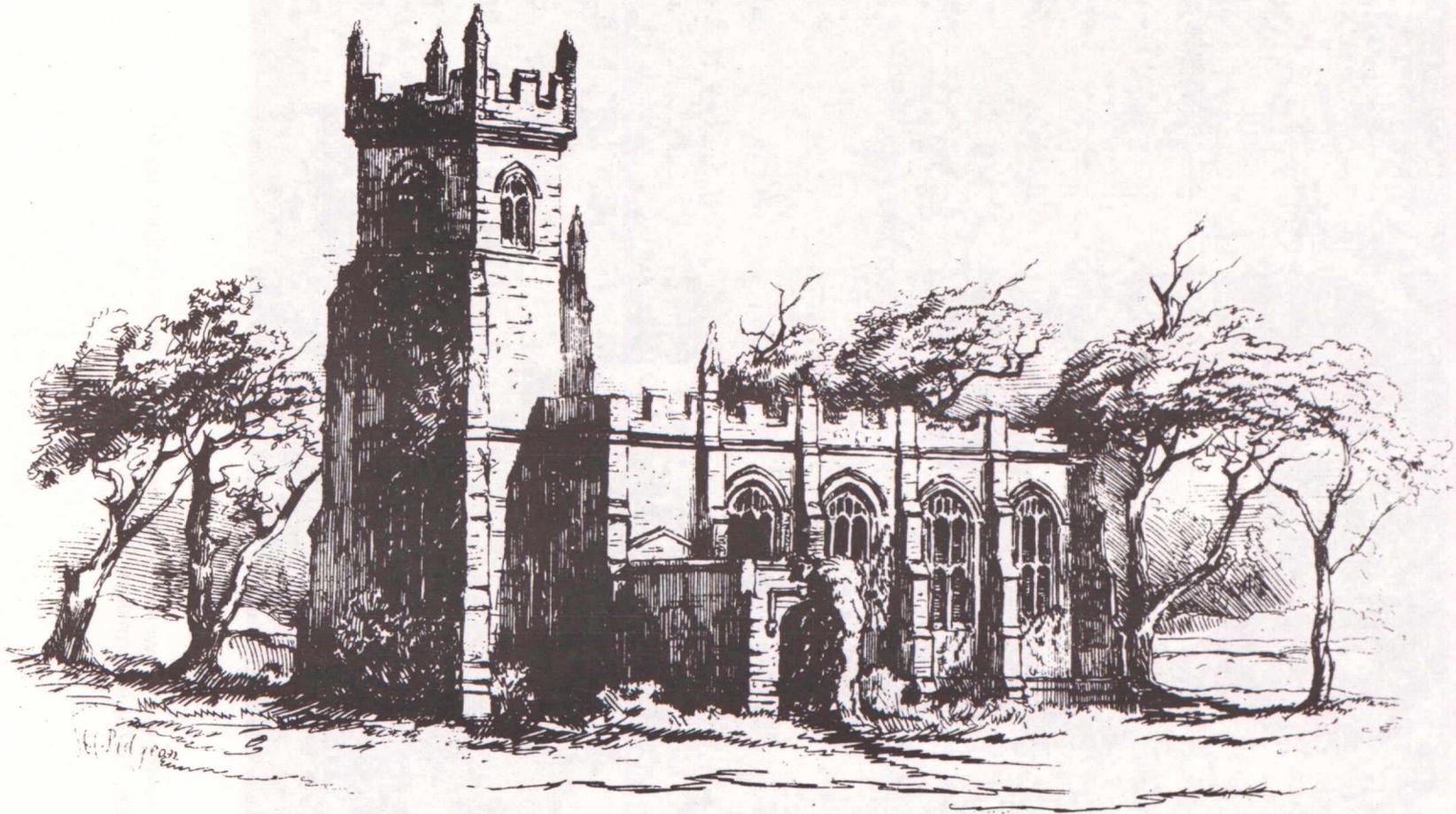
Dorothy O'Hanlon.



LYNDENE CHAPEL

Fig. 3 St Catherine's Chapel, 1773. (Pennant, 1801, 51)

Plate 8



CHAPEL AT LYDIATE.

Fig. 4. St Catherine's Chapel in 1848 (Roberts, 1848, op. p.147)

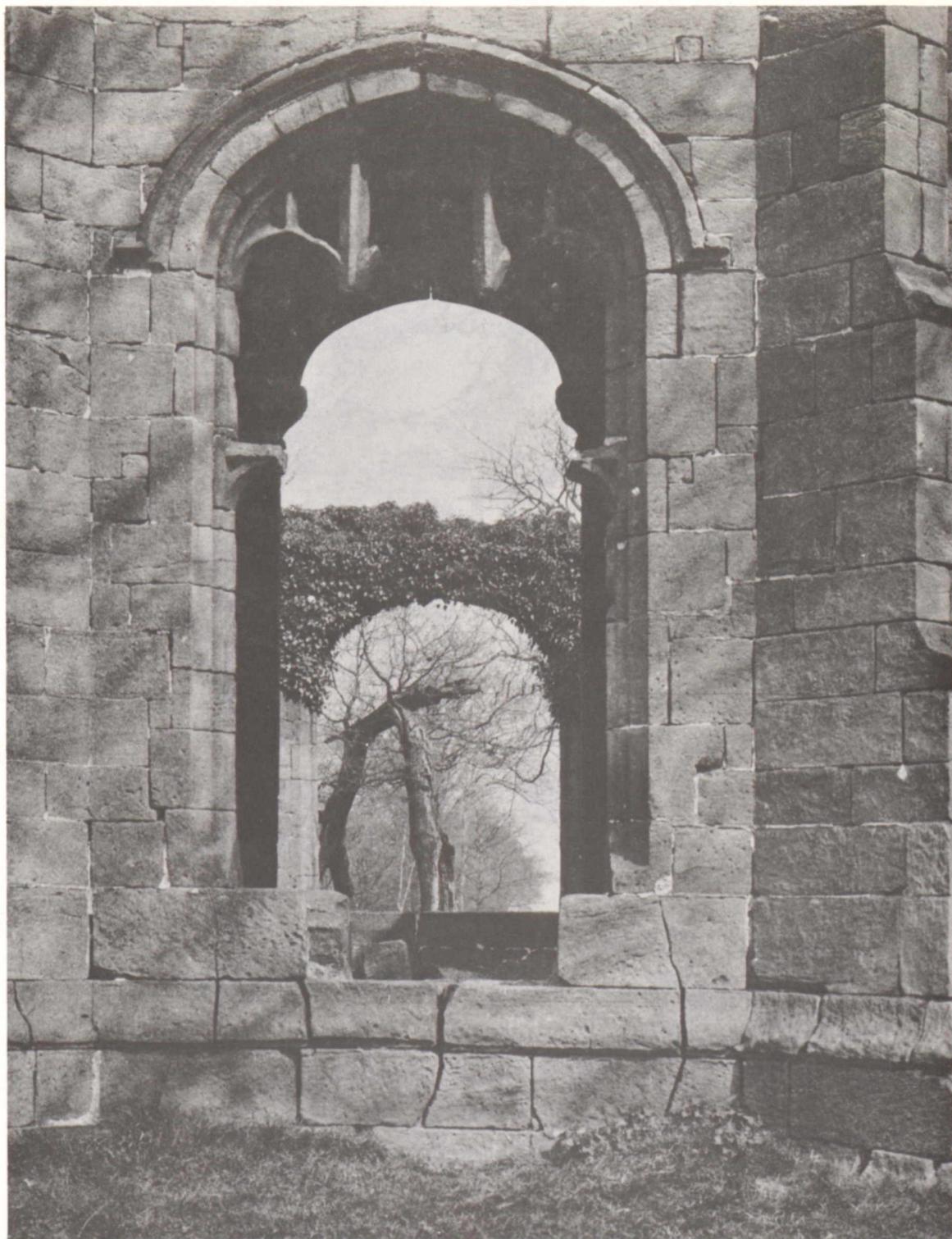


Fig. 5. West window of tower (from a photograph inserted in the copy of Gibson, 1876, in Ormskirk Public Library).



Fig. 6. The chapel in the mid-nineteenth century (Binns Collection II)

APPENDIX I

Tombstones located within St Catherine's Chapel: Inscriptions.

Father Christopher Small, S.J., 1589.

Here lyeth the body of Frances Wallsgrve who departed
this life on 28th day of November 175(1) in the
75 yare of his eage. (S.J.).

Here lyeth the body of Joseph Draper who departed this life
on the 26th day of April 1703 in the 33rd year e of his eage.
(S.J.).

John Mostyn 1721 (S.J.).

Rs. Ds. Joannes (Blachburne) Stae Roae Caae Eccae Bacer.
ob. die 2 Apr. Ano. Domini 1728, Aet. suae 70.

Lady Anderton ?



Fig. 7. St. Catherine's Chapel, Lydiate, south side circa 1876. (Gibson, 1876, p.172)

APPENDIX II

Mason's Marks —

St Catherine's Priory	Burscough Priory	Ormskirk Church
∞	∞	∞
4	4	
⌈		⌈
□		□
∩		∩
*		
x		
4		4
⌈		⌈

REFERENCES

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Fleetwood-Hesketh, P., 1955 | <u>Murray's Lancashire, an Architectural Guide</u> |
| Gibson, T.E., 1876 | <u>Lydiate Hall and its Associations</u> |
| Gregson, M., 1869 | <u>Fragments relating to the History and Antiquities, Topography and Genealogies of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster</u> |
| Notes, 1893 | <u>Notes on the Township of Lydiate</u>
(Lancashire Record Office, Preston, Ref. No. 1586/11/A) |
| Pennant, T., 1801 | <u>A Tour from Downing to Alston Moor</u> |
| Roberts, W.J., 1848 | On the Ruined Chapel at Lydiate in Lancashire.
<u>Tr. Lancs. & Ches. Hist. Soc. I</u> |
| Rylands, W.H., 1891 | Masons Marks at Burscough Priory, et. al.
<u>Tr. Lancs. & Ches. Hist. Soc. 43-44</u> |

APPENDIX II
—



St Catherine's Chapel, Lydiate, 1903.
—

Fig. 8. St Catherine's Chapel, Lydiate, south side circa 1903. (Photograph inserted in the copy of Gibson, 1876, in Ormskirk Public Library).

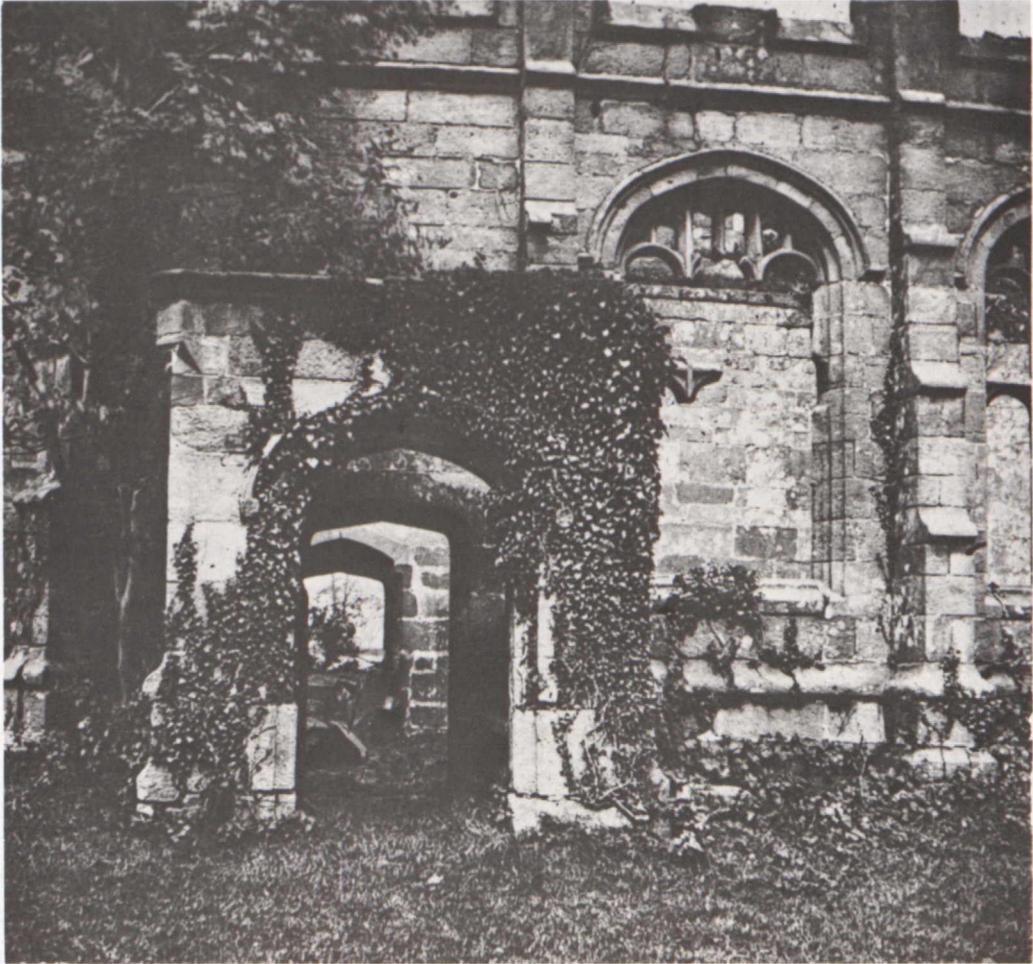


Fig. 9. St Catherine's Chapel, Lydiate, the porch. Gibson, 1876, Frontispiece)

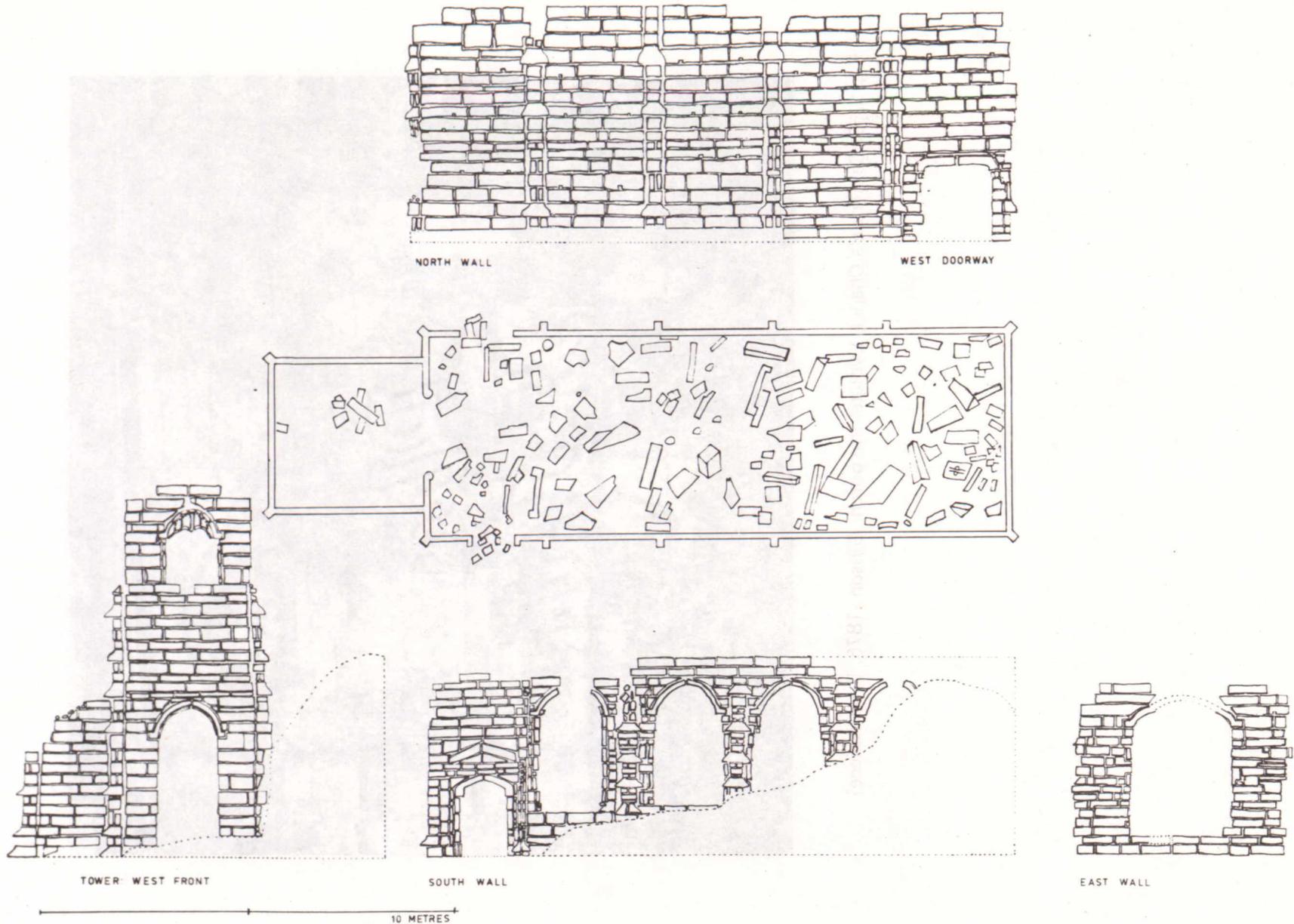


Fig. 10. St Catherine's Chapel, Lydiate. Measured drawings, 1975.

REPORT OF THE RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION PROJECT

1975



11a. North Wall..



11b. Porch, west end of south wall.



11c. Tower, west wall.



11d. East wall.

Fig. 11 Photographs taken in 1975.