

## Design and Access Statement: St Mary Magdalene Church, Munster Square NW1



### Context

Our site, a Grade II\* listed Victorian church is sandwiched between two distinct areas. To its South, the area just- north of the Euston Road the land has been radically redeveloped over the past ten years and has been an area of constant change but of some aspirational commercial quality. By contrast to the north there is a large residential estate of little distinction that replaced the development by Nash of housing (part of his Regent's Park development) and the old York Market that was destroyed in the Blitz. The present square is rather forlorn but still enjoys in diminished form the green centrepiece of the garden with fine mature trees.

As a consequence the church of St Mary Magdalene Munster Square sits uncomfortably as a lone element of any age or dignity within the sixties housing estate. It forms the southern side of the present square but with the hard-landscaping of the current parking layout seems to offer continental atmosphere.

As a listed church under the Church of England in the London Diocese it comes under Ecclesiastical Exemption under the Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (England) Order 2010. Because of this the Listed aspects of the Planning process are covered under Faculty procedure which is monitored by the Diocesan Advisory Committee with assistance from Historic England, however external changes are still subject to Planning Approval.

## Site

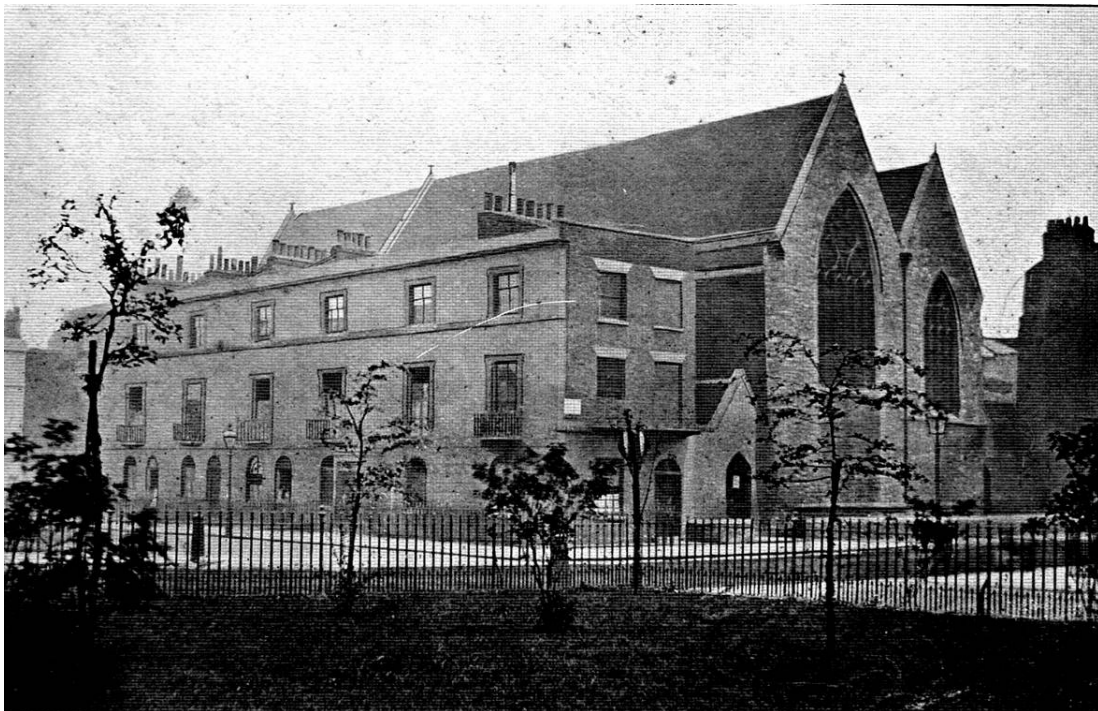
The church has three outward-facing elevations though none forms an obvious front and this role is given to the northern elevation which curiously was the last section of the church to be built. The church seems masked on its southern side by a block of flats that occupy the site of the former church school. Its entrance front is on the north side where there is grand and beautiful vaulted porch. Adjacent to this there are steps leading down to the Crypt premises and a lowered area of garden. The Crypt is used by the Third Age Project.

## Original Design

The church was first built in 1852, and extended in 1884 by the architects, both called Richard Carpenter who were in fact father and son. It houses works, windows and memorials, designed by A.W. Pugin, Butterfield and Shaw and its fine interior makes it well-deserving of its Grade II\* listing.

It is a simple arrangement consisting of nave and aisles of equal height under three parallel steep-gabled roofs. The central one extends further to make a chancel with a beautiful gallery of wall-painted saints round the altar.

The exterior is finely detailed stonework where visible so it is clear that the south (yard) elevation which is in brick was never intended to be seen. Originally the north aisle was a terrace of brick-built housing. When it was built great attention was given to gothic detailing and buttresses which gave great grandeur to the elevation. They were quite unnecessary as a means to support the simple trussed roof-form as the absence of such detail on the unseen south side indicates.



*Above: North and West elevations before the rebuilding of the North Aisle*

The fact that the church was formed in two builds is evident in the basement where the older part is formed of brick-vaulted tunnels that run transversely. The north-aisle was much more conventionally conceived and makes space that is easily utilised by the Third Age Project.

The East elevation is rightly impressive even if it is shielded from the road by a twentieth century addition and it is difficult to get far enough away to appreciate it.

## **Proposed Alterations**

The proposal is to site a new boiler in a space in the basement vaults. The original boiler room was also in the basement but changes in legislation mean that its ventilation principle of the dilution of exhaust gases is no longer acceptable at the point where the boiler had to be upgraded. The proposed boiler would have two exhausts which will produce water vapour. In addition the boiler would have a requirement for fresh air supply.

The flue outlets along with the boiler have been located in the only available vault. The outlets and inlet grilles are sited in the zone of wall beneath the window above though their formal distances apart are set by technical requirements set out by the building regulations. They are also kept within the part of the wall that is brickwork. This means that it should be possible to replace and match the existing bricks if at any point these outlets were to be filled-in for a future heating arrangement. This means that this alteration is relatively reversible and involves minimal loss of listed material in an area where it is less valuable. The Kentish Ragstone in the wall above is much harder to source for instance.

The rainwater-goods to the building are in cast-iron and painted in black-gloss paint and although the grilles etc. will be steel they will be in similar decorative finish.

## **Visibility**

There is a narrow gap along the south side of the church giving a glimpse of the church. This is unlikely to be an intended feature as the school and church used to connect across this defile. The reason for the gap is more that the flats stand back from the delicate statue of St Mary Magdalene and that also the church had land on which to stand a scaffold if maintenance was essential.

The nature of the narrow gap and the distance to the proposed flue outlets makes it unlikely that the proposed alterations would be noticed in themselves and it seems unlikely that they would appear offensive to the flats that overlook this small courtyard. Indeed this courtyard is ringed by small flues and overflow-pipes to each of the residential properties that have used this back-space for their functional paraphernalia. For this same reason it is unlikely that the plume of steam that will emanate from the proposed flue outlets will be distinguished from the steam from the much closer existing-flues in the gap leading to Osnaburgh Street.

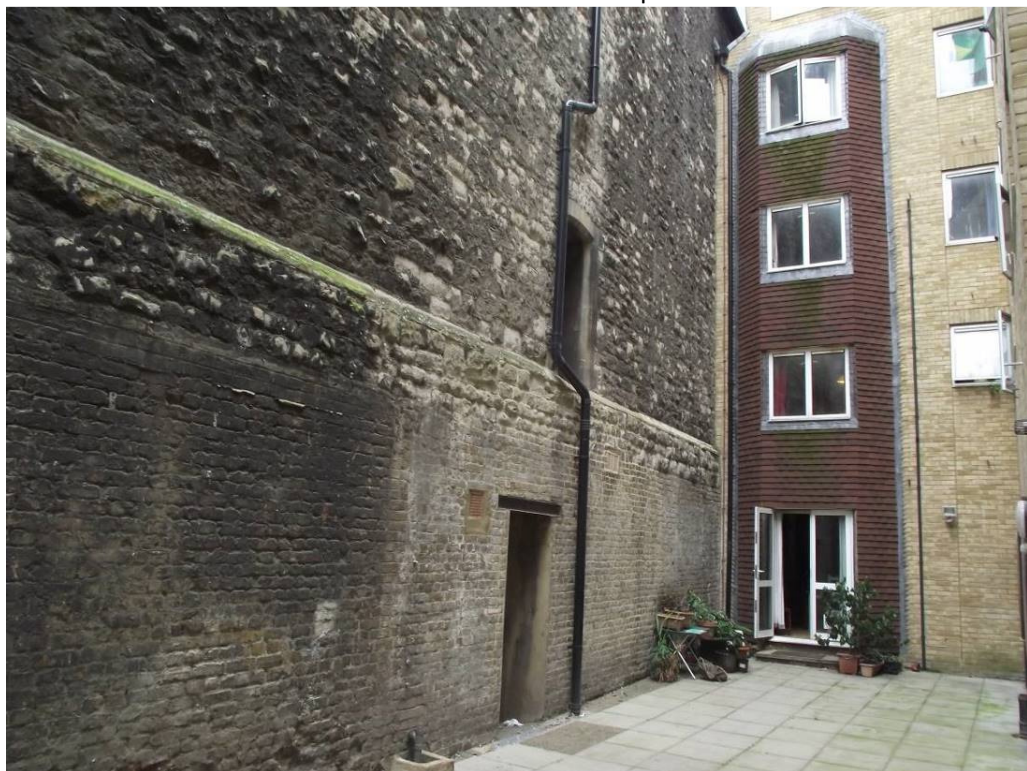
## **Access**

There is nothing in this application that will diminish access to this Heritage Asset and it is to be hoped that the building and its celebrated interior will enjoy much more access in the Winter months with heating restored.

## Photographs



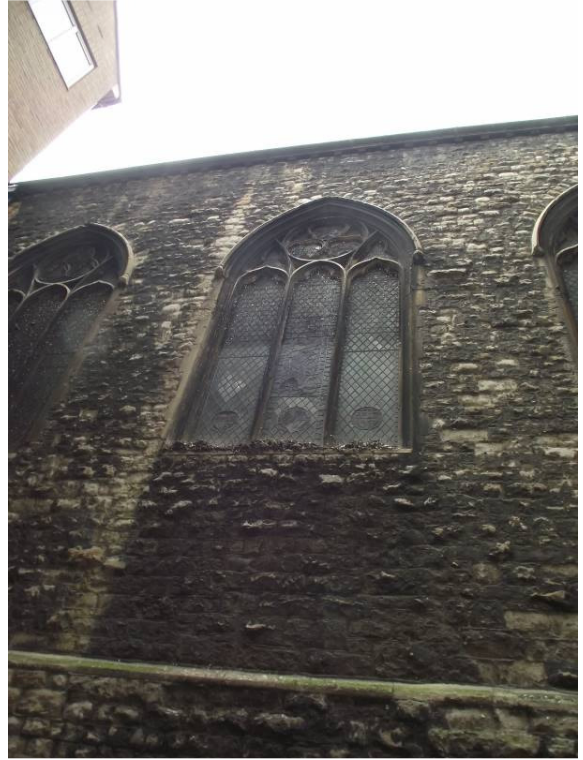
Basement vault fire escapes



Courtyard with vault fire-escape.



Flats and upper elevation of church

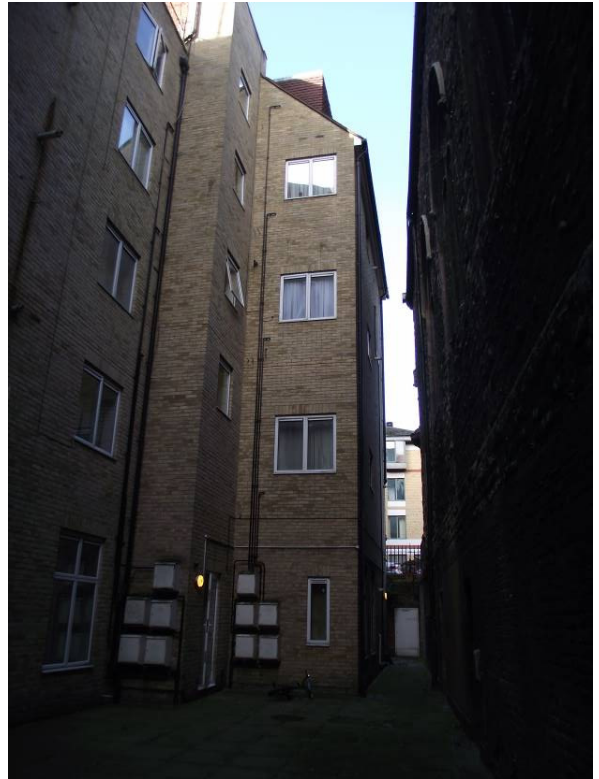


Upper elevation of church

The Church from Laxton Street (North-East) & Munster Square...



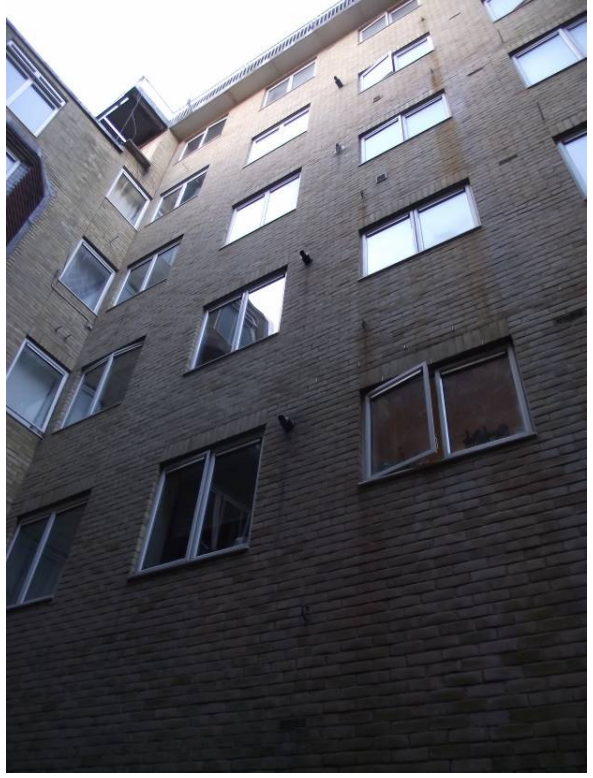
Courtyard facing church



Courtyard & narrow gap to church. Street beyond.



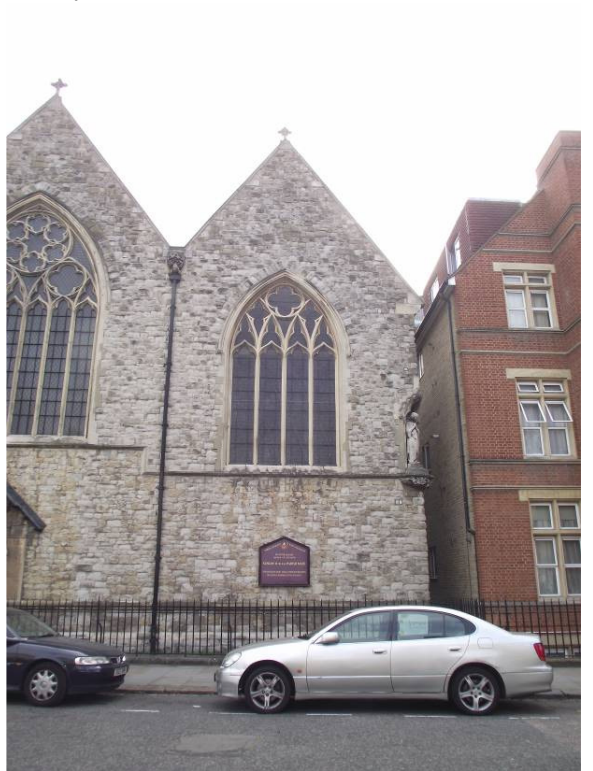
Courtyard against church



Courtyard



Gap between the church & flats (vicarage at rear)



That gap from across the street



A similar instance of a flue installed to a church elsewhere, where there twin flues at half-a-metre apart.

This is different from our proposal in that there would be adjacent grilles finished in black gloss at 400x250mm and the flues may not require the vertical extensions like these.

## Listing Statement

CAMDEN TQ2882SE MUNSTER SQUARE 798-1/92/1170 Church of St Mary Magdalene 10/06/54 GV II\* Church. 1849-52 by RC Carpenter for Rev Edward Stuart, alterations 1866-7 by Slater and Carpenter; north aisle & crypt added 1883-4 by RH Carpenter and B Ingelow. Snecked Kentish ragstone with Bath stone dressings. Tiled pitched roofs with ornamental ridge tiles. STYLE: Decorated. EXTERIOR: large sanctuary, 6-bay nave with 2 aisles of almost equal widths and height under separate roofs. No clerestory. Uncompleted south-west tower. North-west facade with octagonal bell turret terminating in gabled louvres under a conical roof with finial. Gabled entrance porch at north-west corner with hood-mould and ball-flower decoration to pointed arch moulding; cast and wrought-iron gates with scrolled decoration. In the gable, a relief cross added 1921 with quatrefoil enrichment on a patterned background. Aisles buttressed between traceried windows. East end has 7-light window with reticulated tracery and wheel; west end has 6-light window with quatrefoils and quatrefoil rose window. INTERIOR: arch-braced collar-truss type roof of Baltic fir with cross windbraces. Pointed aisle arcades on piers of 4 clustered columns; moulded chancel arch on clustered columns. White plastered walls. Nave floored in red tiles from the first, and always with movable free seating. Arcaded chancel with shafts and spandrels of St Ann's marble. Sedilia and roof coloured by Mssrs. Crace. Piscina 1895 by Norman

Shaw and made by Farmer and Brindley. Chancel floored in encaustic tiles when raised in 1866 by Slater and Carpenter and frescoes added by Bell, Redfern and Almond 1867. Memorial to Edward Stuart on lowest step. High altar lengthened 1912 by MCC Durston. Crucifix 1884 moved to south aisle. Reredos 1929 by Sir Charles Nicholson; his also the clergy and choir stalls, the latter moved to back of nave in 1971. Reordered 1990. Roodbeam (1903) and screens (1906) by JT Micklethwaite and Somers Clarke. South or calvary chapel with altar and communion rails by Nicholson (also glass, see below). Altar in the north or Blessed Sacrament chapel from Christ Church Albany Street, its lamps are Spanish, donated in 1895. Font restored 1886, cover 1930 by Nicholson. Attractive settle in children's corner dated 1929. Stained glass: east window of special interest as being one of AWN Pugin's last designs, made by Hardman. One chancel window the only other Hardman glass to survive. South aisle from east: east window replacing Hardman's designed by Nicholson in 1931-2 and made by Scharlieb; two memorial windows to Sir Edward Hall Anderson, 1857 by Clayton and Bell under the supervision of William Butterfield. Nativity window 1862 by Lavers and Barraud; west aisle window 1884 by Clayton and Bell. North aisle from east: east window and one next to it by Clayton and Bell, Last Supper 1891; two windows of 1884 by Heaton, Butler and Bayne; memorial to George J Palmer dated 1892 by Heaton, Butler and Bayne; west aisle window 1891 by Clayton and Bell. West nave window by AA Orr replacing memorial window to RC Carpenter 1857 designed by John Clayton and made by Hardman, destroyed in Second World War. Painting on south aisle wall over former schools entrance by Clayton and Bell. Stations of the Cross given in 1895. Windows in north aisle of crypt filled by 1975 with delightful stained glass from St Augustine's Haggerston, of 1930-2 by Margaret Rope. HISTORICAL NOTE: the plan of the church with its nearly equal nave and aisles and intended tall tower, together with its wholly English style, demonstrate the influence of AWN Pugin. The design was based, however, on the Austin Friars Church in the City. It was a leading centre of Tractarian worship from its foundation. On its consecration in 1852 the Ecclesiologist described it as "the most artistically correct new church yet consecrated in London". Norman Shaw worshipped here for 42 years and described it as "the beau ideal of a town church". (The Builder: 11 August 1855: 372; The Builder: 28 July 1858: 354-5; The Builder: 3 November 1866: 818; The Builder: 1 March 1884: 322; Thomas E Sedgwick, with J T Micklethwaite, R Norman Shaw et al.: Description and History of the Church of St Mary Magdalene: London: -1902; Survey of London: Vol. XXI, Tottenham Court Road and Neighbourhood, St Pancras III: London: -1949: 140).

## Statement from the Survey of London Vol. 21

This is a daughter church of Christ Church, Albany Street, and it owes its foundation to the Rev. Edward Stuart, who was one of the assistant clergy at Christ Church. A man of means, he resolved to devote his estate to the Church, and after consultation with the Bishop of London he chose the neighbourhood of York Square (now Munster Square) for the sphere of his labours. A fund already existed at Christ Church to provide for a new church, and with this money the site was purchased. Mr. Stuart paid for the building.

The architect was Richard Cromwell Carpenter (1813–1855), the designer of two Brighton churches, SS. Stephen and Andrew, and S. Paul. In designing this church he had in mind the now destroyed Austin Friars, London, and he made the nave and aisles of almost equal width, giving them parallel independent roofs. The nave has five bays and at the end of each aisle a further bay forms a chapel, divided from the aisle in each case by an oak screen. A tower of three stages with a lofty stone steeple was designed to be placed south of the south aisle, but this has not



yet been built. There is a north gabled porch to the western bay of the north aisle. The length of the nave is 72 ft. and the chancel 38 ft. 10 in. The height of the nave roof is 54 ft. There is a crypt beneath the whole building. (Plates Plate 79, Plate 80.)

The church was consecrated on the 22nd April, 1852. The north aisle was not built until 1884 and was then carried out by Richard H. Carpenter, following his father's design. It was built as a memorial to the founder. The Clergy House was commenced in 1894. The Church Schools are an important part of the church's activities and were started by Mr. Stuart who invited children to his house before the church was built.

Among the internal fittings and memorials the following may be mentioned. The rood-beam and figures, as well as the chapel screens, were designed by J. T. Micklethwaite, the latter being a memorial to the Rev. W. H. H. Jervois. The aumbrey in the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament was designed by Paul Waterhouse who was also responsible for the 1914–18 war memorial, a crucifix on the exterior of the west front. The memorial inscription to the founder is on the lowest step to the altar and a tablet to the second vicar, the Rev. Frederick J. Ponsonby, designed by Norman Shaw, is on the north wall, just west of the piscina. The stained glass includes the east window, designed by A. Welby Pugin, the cartoons for which were drawn by his pupil and son-in-law, John Powell, while Messrs. Hardman carried out the work, and the two easternmost windows in the south aisle were made by Messrs. Clayton and Bell under the direction of Butterfield.