OLIVER ARCHITECTURE

THE EDGAR WOOD CENTRE
71 DAISY BANK ROAD, VICTORIA PARK, MANCHESTER M14 5GH

HERITAGE STATEMENT
TO ACCOMPANY AN APPLICATION FOR
CHANGE OF USE

DECEMBER 2025
Version v.1



1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Heritage Statement accompanies an application for Change of Use at the Edgar Wood Centre (originally built as the First Church of Christ, Scientist), 71 Daisy Bank Road, Manchester M14 5GH on behalf of the Manchester City Church.

1.2 The Edgar Wood Centre is grade I listed (list entry number 1197770, listed 1963, description amended 1994) and is located within the Victoria Park Conservation Area (designated 1972). The entrance lych gate is separately listed grade II (list entry number 1292610, listed 1994).

1.3 The building has recently been described as "one of the most important new religious buildings – possibly *the* most important – of the Edwardian years."[1] Sir Nikolaus Pevsner thought it "one of the most original buildings of that time in England or indeed anywhere. One would be tempted to call the style Expressionist, if the date were 1923 and not 1903 … One can hardly drive originality and wilfulness farther, unless one is called Gaudi."[2] The building is therefore of major significance.

1.4 The building has been used for a variety of functions since the Christian Scientists departed, and is currently for sale. City Church Manchester, an evangelical church, is keen to purchase the building, to return it to ecclesiastical use. A "change of use" planning application is required to confirm the return to its original use. This document aims to explain the historical development of the church and to explain the minimal impact of the change of use, which promises to provide a beneficial public owner to this very important building.

1.5 The Statement consists of five sections, as follows:

i) A brief history and description of the building.
ii) A summary of the significance of the building in terms of its special architectural, historical and archaeological interests where they relate to the proposals.
iii) An impact assessment of the proposals on the significance defined in section ii.



[1] Christopher Wakeling, *Chapels of England: Buildings of Protestant Nonconformity* (published by Historic England, 2017), page 205

[2] Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Lancashire I – The Industrial and Commercial South*, 1969, p.322

2.0 BRIEF HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE EDGAR WOOD CENTRE

2.1 The Original Client: The Church of Christ, Scientist

2.1.1 An independent Christian sect, the Church of Christ, Scientist, was founded in Boston, USA in 1879 by Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, following a life-threatening accident in 1866 after which she studied her Bible and her health returned. The Church's special characteristic is a belief that sickness and sin are the result of human error. The Church has no ministers or sacraments, but organised services are held including hymns and prayer as well as readings. Healing meetings are also held, and many churches have Reading Rooms at which Christian Science publications are available.

2.1.2 The teachings of the Church crossed the Atlantic at the end of the 19th century, with a converted Synagogue remodelled and opened in 1897 – known as the "First Church of Christ, Scientist" as it was the first Church in London. A new build Church was opened in Hamburg in 1902 – the earliest Christian Science church in Europe. Architecturally, the Church adopted many different styles: Richardsonian Romanesque to the Mother Church in Boston, USA, 1896-94, subsequently extended with a vast Classical dome in c.1910; Indian inspiration to the First Church, London, 1904 (now Cadogan Hall); Edwardian Baroque to Third Church, London, 1905.[3]

2.1.3 Lady Victoria Murray (1877-1925)[4], the daughter of the Earl of Dunmore, and a god-daughter of Queen Victoria, had converted (with her family) to Christian Science whilst in India as a teenager, and visited Mrs. Eddy on several occasions from 1898. She became friends with another Christian Scientist, Miss Florence Coutts-Fowlie, and the two women travelled through northern England teaching and offering healing, arriving in Lancashire in 1900. Meetings were initially held in rented rooms and from January 1901 in a small warehouse in Bank Buildings, Manchester, and then 24 Dover Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock, becoming more and more popular. The First Church of Christ, Scientist was formally established on 5th July 1902, with a Board of Directors and a Board of Trustees. The need for an appropriate building became more pressing as numbers increased, but opposition to Christian Science, then a relatively new sect, meant that it was difficult to hire suitable premises, and so the decision was made to erect a new building. In early 1903, a plot of land was purchased for this purpose in Victoria Park, Manchester.[5]



Lady Victoria Murray, c.1900 *(Mary Baker Eddy Library)*

[3] See Sally Lessiter, "Christian Science: Worship, Architecture and Building Use" in *The Chapels Society Journal*, Vol.3, 2018, pp.55-66.

[4] www.marybakereddylibrary.org/research/lady-victoria-murray/ (accessed 4th December 2025).

[5] This account of Christian Science in Manchester is derived from B. Tatham Woodhead, *An Historical Sketch of the Beginnings of Christian Science in Lancashire and the North of England, and the Early Days of First Church of Christ, Scientist, Manchester*, (privately published), 1934.

2.2 The Site: Victoria Park

2.2.1 Manchester at the end of the 19th century was a city of huge growth, fuelled by the industrial revolution, in particular the cotton industry. Rich industrials sought more pleasant places to live whilst being close to the centre and one of these was Victoria Park, located within the then separate town of Rusholme, later incorporated into Manchester County Borough in 1885. A development company was formed in 1836 and the 70-acre private estate was launched in 1837. Unfortunately the company failed in 1842 and the Victoria Park Trust was established in 1845.

2.2.2 The park was set out by Richard Lane and some of the houses were erected to his designs. The layout is picturesque, with sinuous curving tree-lined roads. Houses were generally asymmetrical Tudor Gothic with steep gables and stucco walls. Those on Daisy Bank Road, opposite the First Church site, are listed grade II. The site was vacant at the time it was acquired by the Christian Scientists in 1903.



Addison Terrace, 84-106 Daisy Bank Road (grade II listed)

2.3 The Architect: Edgar Wood[6]



2.3.1 The architect selected for this prestigious project was Edgar Wood (1860-1935), a local man with a burgeoning international reputation. He was "a man of great energy, vitality and confidence …. artistic and flamboyant …. the sort of man who always gets his own way."[7] Born in Middleton in 1860, the son of a mill-owner who was destined to take over the business, Wood rejected his father's work as he wished to become an artist. He compromised with his father and agreed to train as an architect, working for the firm of Mills & Murgatroyd in Manchester, "droned into the

[6] Wood was fortunate to be the subject of detailed research and publication by the Manchester academic John H.G. Archer from the 1950s onwards, including first hand correspondence with Sellers and with Wood's only assistant Bertie Schwabe (1877-1960). His writings include: "Edgar Wood: a Notable Manchester Architect" in *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, vol.s 73-74, 1963-64, pp.152-187; "Edgar Wood and J.H. Sellers: a Decade of Partnership and Experiment" in Alastair Service (ed.), *Edwardian Architecture and Its Origins*, 1975; *Partnership in Style: Edgar Wood and J. Henry Sellers*, exhibition catalogue, 1975; "Edgar Wood and Mackintosh" in Patrick Nuttgens (ed.), *Mackintosh and His Contemporaries*, 1988; "Edgar Wood and Henry Sellers: a corrected note on their partnership and practice" in *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, vol. 103, 2007, p.151-152.

[7] *Partnership in Style: Edgar Wood & J. Henry Sellers* (Manchester City Art Gallery), 1975, p.5

solemnity of commerce, tracing paper and the checking of quantities"[8], until he became an Associate of the RIBA and set up his own practice in 1885, in Oldham, moving to Manchester by 1893. His early work was inspired by local vernacular precedents, using Tudor and Jacobean motifs with greater and greater freedom. As well as much domestic work, some of his projects were for non-conformist churches, for example the interior of the Old Road Unitarian Chapel, Middleton, 1892 and the extension and fitting out of the Lindley Methodist Church, Huddersfield, 1895. Wood's work began to be published nationally, initially in 1888 in *The British Architect*, with longer biographical pieces in *Architecture* in 1897 and the German architectural magazine *Moderne Bauformen* in 1907.

2.3.2 Wood, as with most of his contemporaries, was influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement, founded in a love of good craftsmanship, inspired by vernacular details and materials, and aiming for a close collaboration with artists. He was familiar with the writings of William Morris, quoting him on occasion. Wood was influential in establishing the Northern Art Workers' Guild in 1895, acting as Master in 1897-98 and contributing the majority of works exhibited in 1898, 1903 1911, both architectural drawings and craft work, such as furniture and metalwork.[9]

2.3.3 An example of Wood's mature work is the Long Street Wesleyan Church and School, Middleton, 1899-1901 – a complex of buildings grouped informally around a courtyard with an open side, and dominated by a white gable – familiar features which would recur at First Church.



Edgar Wood, watercolour view of original design for Long Stret Wesleyan Church and School, Middleton, 1894-96
(edgarwoodsociety.org/long-street-methodist/)

2.3.4 Wood met the architect J. Henry Sellers in 1903-04, after which they worked together in an informal partnership, working separately but bringing out the best in each other. Sellers had a similar background, but his experience in the use of concrete allowed both partners to design flat-roofed buildings which were remarkably "advanced" for their date. This brief but productive period began to decline after the death of Wood's father in 1909, after which Wood did not have to rely on his architectural work for a living, and he travelled extensively. He retired from practice in 1922, moving to Italy. First Church's initial phase is therefore Wood's work alone, but the subsequent extension 1907-08 might show the influence of Sellers, in particular the use of concrete.

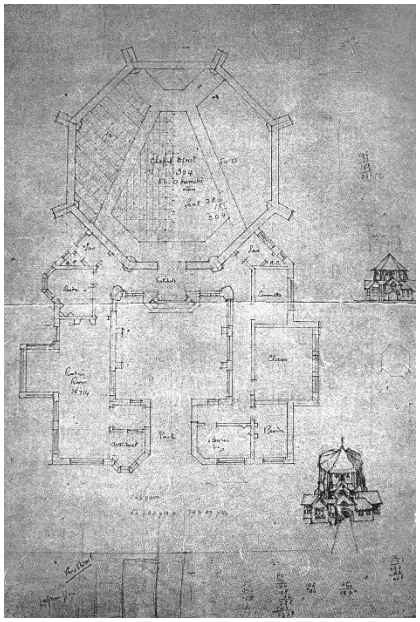
[8] *Partnership in Style*, op.cit., p.19

[9] See Barry Clark, Stephanie Boydell and Richard Fletcher, *The Northern Art Workers' Guild and the Arts and Crafts Movement in Manchester*, 2004

2.4 The Construction of the First Church

2.4.1 Woodhead states "after examining a number of buildings, it was decided to employ the services of Mr. Edgar Wood, all of whose work was most artistic and of a somewhat original character."[10] This is an elegant explanation of what attracted the Christian Scientists to Wood – his artistry and originality, no doubt in conjunction with examples of his previous work for other Non-Conformist sects. Wood was commissioned in early 1903. Intriguingly, Woodhead notes that "Dr. Wilding [an important member of the Church] had made a sketch somewhat similar in outline to the present structure, and this was adopted as the basis on which Mr. Wood worked out his finished drawings."[11] This is perhaps not exactly correct, as Wood worked on a number of schemes, but in a very compressed period – the Building Committee met for the first time on 10th March 1903, at which Wood's plans were presented, and a contract was placed with Messrs. George Macfarlane & Sons on 9th May 1903, for the sum of £1,807 (excluding the two wings) – an extremely tight timescale!

2.4.2 Wood's concept for the plan of the building derived from his recently completed work at Middleton – an open courtyard with a grouping of buildings facing northwards onto Daisy Bank Road. Initially, an octagonal plan was proposed for the worship space, with a square courtyard, but this was subsequently amended so that the wings splayed out from the octagon. Finally, the Y-shaped plan of the wings was retained but incorporated with a rectangular north-south worship space – perhaps to allow for future extensions.



Edgar Wood, preliminary sketch plan for octagonal scheme with square courtyard (reproduced in Sarah Hill, "The First Church of Christ Scientist" in *Chapels and Chapel People: Miscellany Two*, 2010, p.60)



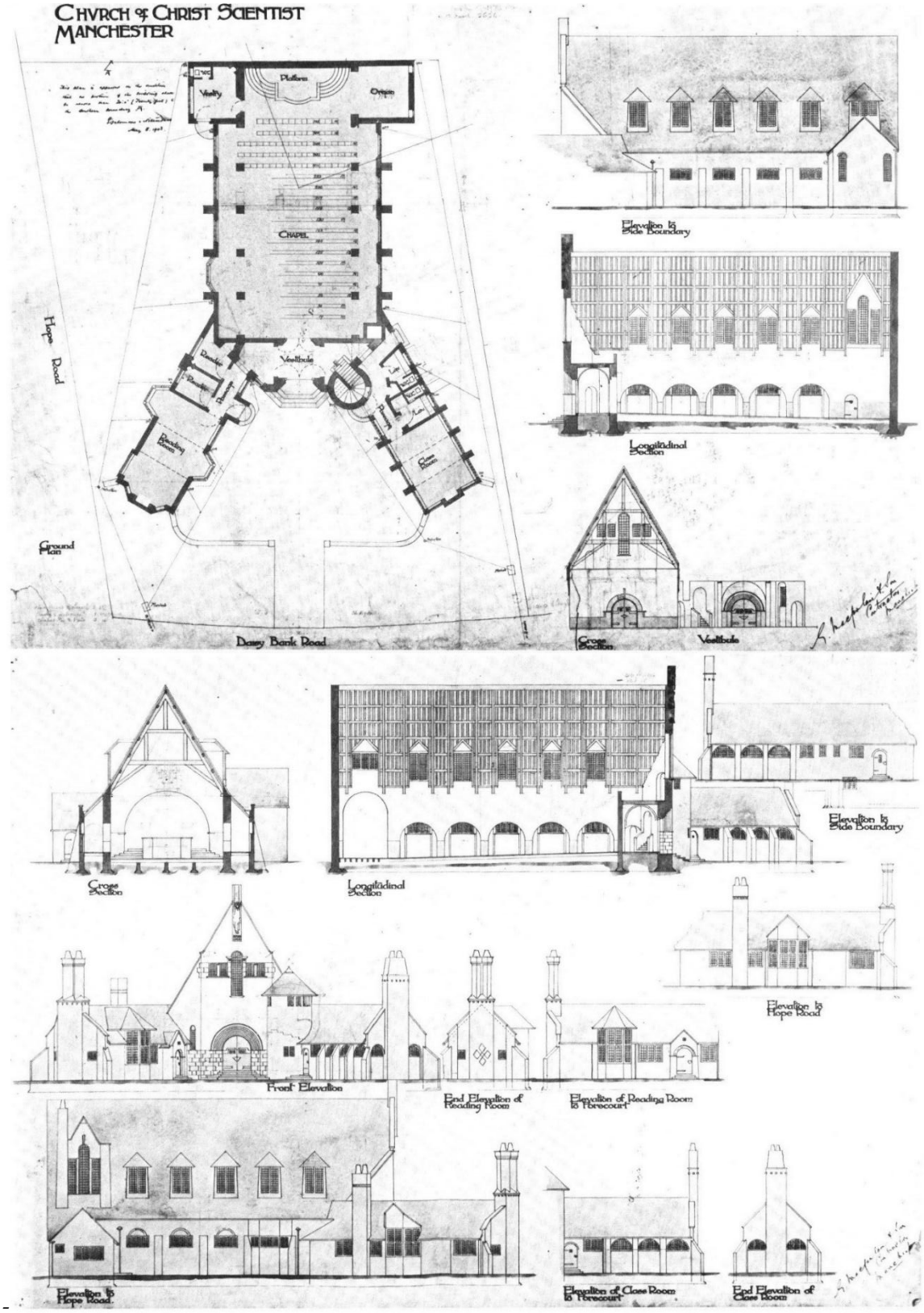
Edgar Wood, view of octagonal scheme with splayed wings (reproduced in Barry Clark et al., *The Northern Art Workers' Guild*, 2024, p.34)

2.4.3 Fundraising continued, with some contributions from America, and obstacles over the purchase were overcome so that the Church was opened (without the wings) on 20th April 1904. Two substantial donations in September 1904 allowed for the construction of the two wings to complete Wood's Y-shaped plan and for the provision of Reader's chairs and a lectern (now at the Whitworth Gallery,

[10] B. Tatham Woodhead, *op.cit*, p.33

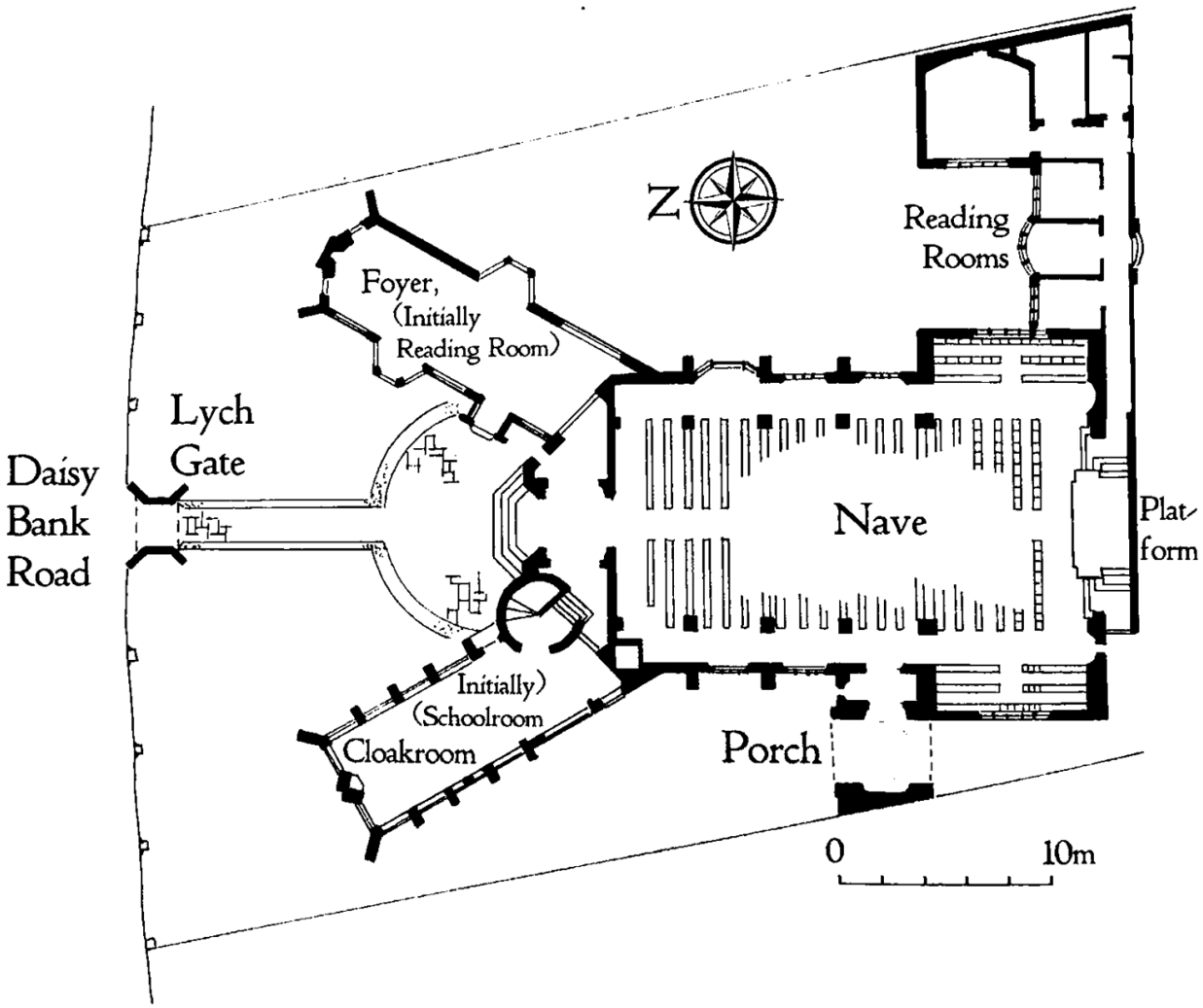
[11] *Ibid.* p.34

Manchester). A small organ was donated and the decision was made to erect the entrance gateway and fencing. The wings were completed by March 1905 – the western (Sunday School) wing being a single open space without partitions. Wood's contract drawings dated 8th May 1903 are held at the RIBA Drawings Collection.



Edgar Wood, contract drawings, dated 8th May 1903
(reproduced in Margaret Richardson, *Architects of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, 1983, p.124-125)

2.4.4 A second phase of construction was undertaken due to the growing congregation as early as 1906. A Building Committee met in October 1906 and agreed to extend the church, aiming to accommodate 500-600 people. The southern part of the Church was extended with larger side sections and a larger platform. A Reading Room had been opened in the City centre, allowing the removal of partitions in the eastern wing, whilst the construction of a new single-storey flat-roofed wing south-east of the Church to form vestries meant that the western wing could be partitioned to create cloakrooms. At the end of 1907, the Church was closed in order to allow construction work to take place to extend the building. The newly extended Church was reopened on 4th and 5th January 1908, a golden key being used by Lady Victoria Murray, presented by Mr. Macfarlane, the builder. A series of stained glass windows, designed by Benjamin Nelson, were donated by the pupils of Lady Victoria (the locations of the glass within the Church are not known). The 1907-08 extensions also included a porte-cochere with domed roof on the west side of the church, and a single-storey wing projecting east from the south end of the church. In 1909, a larger organ, built by Messrs. J. Lewis & Sons Ltd. was installed at a cost of £160. Mrs. Baker Eddy, who had been kept in touch with developments in Manchester wrote on 5th January 1908, rejoicing in the dedication of "our prayer in stone."[12] The Second Church of Christ, Scientist, Manchester was opened in Didsbury in 1909, and many others followed in the region, all deriving from First Church.



Plan showing 1907-08 alterations
(drawn for inclusion in Roger Button, *Arts and Crafts Churches of Great Britain*, 2020, p.164)

[12] *Ibid*, p.58

2.5 Brief Description of First Church

2.5.1 The building is constructed of stock red brick, with sandstone and render details, and a slate roof, mostly Westmorland slate but the Y-plan wings are covered in Welsh slates. The entrance façade composition is justly famous, creating a focus on the steeply pitched white rendered gable with a cruciform window and splayed sides, offset by the conical roof of the stair turret, and with projecting lower wings either side and a tall brick chimney behind (NB: the tall chimney is not shown on the contract drawings). The contract drawings indicate that sandstone strip in the gable apex was intended to have a sculptural element. "The angular plan, canted bay and conically topped tower, all dominated by the towering gable over the main entrance produce a powerfully expressive, dramatic form, and the interior spaces are equally telling."[13] The arch headed entrance doors, reminiscent of work by Edwin Lutyens at Deanery Garden, Berkshire 1899-1901, have elegantly detailed bronze lock plates, the work of George Wragge (a fellow member of the Northern Art Workers' Guild) and tiny leaded light windows. The corner-stone (a block of granite from Concord, New Hampshire – the home of Mrs. Baker Eddy) was laid on 30th May 1903.





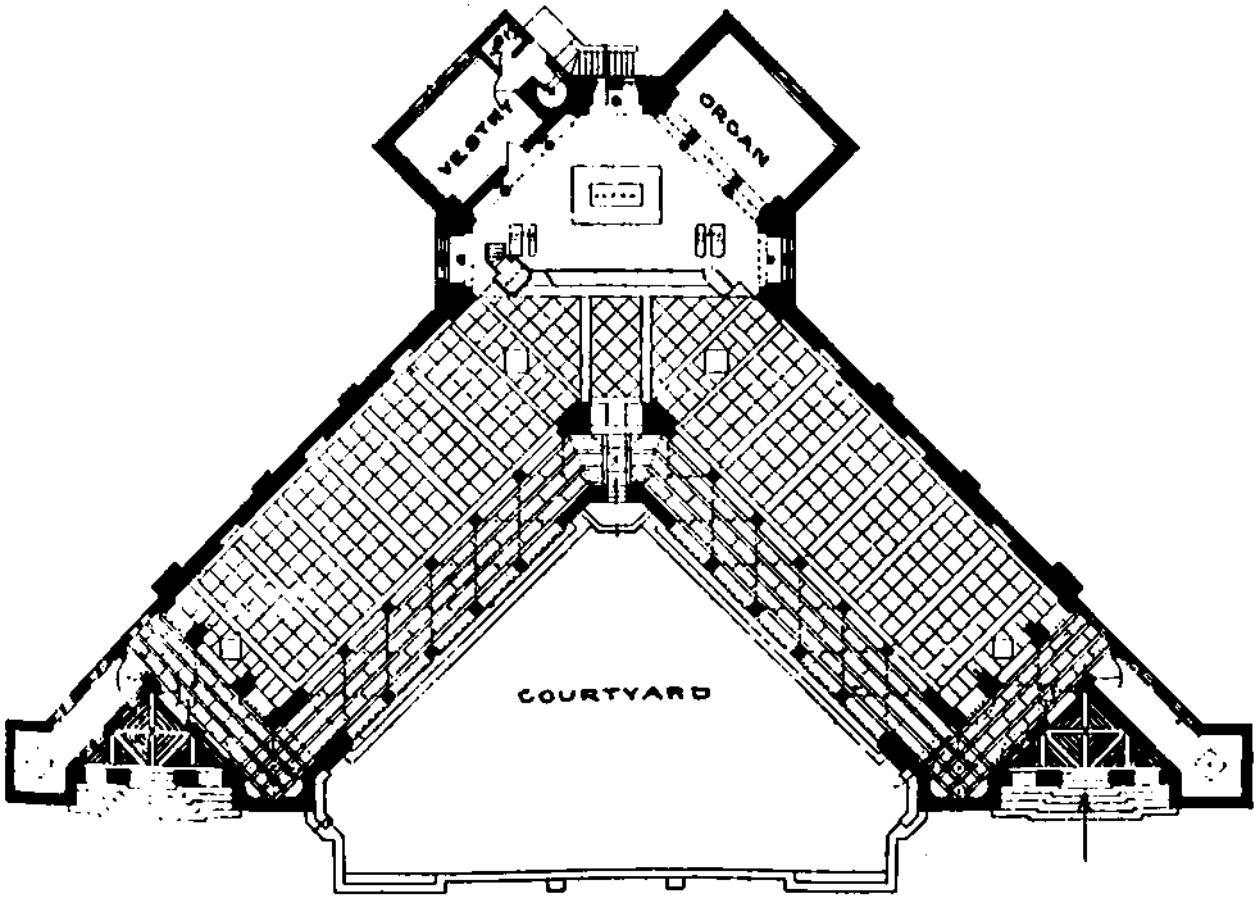

2.5.2 The angled wings are symmetrical in plan, but differ in detail, with round headed 'thermal' windows on the west side – perhaps always intended for cloakrooms? There is an archway in the north-westernmost corner, proclaiming the name of the church. The use of non-perpendicular angles was an important theme in Arts and Crafts work, ultimately deriving from the 'butterfly plan' houses of E.S. Prior (1852-1932), but Wood may also have been influenced by the work of M.H. Baillie Scott (1865-1945) such as his House for an Art Lover, 1901-02, which also featured conical towers.




M.H. Baillie Scott, ground floor plan and aerial view of the House for an Art Lover, 1901-02
(www.mackintosh-architecture.gla.ac.uk/catalogue/images/?filename=a399_002&xml=img)

[13] *Partnership in Style, op.cit.*, p.8

2.5.3 The use of splayed wings is extremely rare in an ecclesiastical setting. An intriguing possibility is that there were cross-influences between Wood and another non-conformist architect with origins in the north-west, Charles Holden (1875-1960), who had moved to London to work on large schemes for H. Percy Adams, a hospital specialist. Hospitals had already adopted the splayed wing plan, so as to allow fresh air for the wards, and as seen in Adams & Holden's 1901-02 British Seamen's Hospital, Constantinople. However, contemporary with the First Church is Holden's remarkable design for a Y-shaped plan of two Y-shaped open air chapels at King Edward VII Sanitorium, Midhurst, Sussex, with a unique brief for men's and women's wings.



Charles Holden, plan of King Edward VII Sanitorium Chapel, Midhurst, Sussex, 1903-0
(reproduced in Eitan Karol, *Charles Holden: Architect*, 2007)

2.5.3 The conical stair turret with its small windows below the sprocketed eaves is reminiscent of the work of Baillie Scott. It contains a wide stair to a gallery overlooking the main Church (previously containing an organ, although the original plans showed an organ recess south-west of the Church), and down to the boiler house, which is served by the tall square chimney.

2.5.4 The main Church is rectangular in plan, with a steeply pitched roof structure visible from below, in dark stained timber with expressed steel strengthening. NB: the northernmost truss has been altered, perhaps when the organ was introduced. The floor rakes very slightly. There are a series of arches creating passage aisles to east and west, with marble cladding at their bases. The northern doors are clad in marble, with a highly unusual painted and gilded timber screen above – perhaps introduced to conceal the organ. This has been described as "Arabic" inspired. The southern wall is clad in marble, in a variety of different types, with small black and white squares, which are reminiscent of contemporary Austrian work by Hoffmann and Loos, with a central carved cross and crown – the symbol of the Christian Scientists. The recesses either side of the southern platform have barrel-

vaulted concrete roofs, with a Byzantine feel. Wood owned a copy of *The Monastery of Saint Luke of Stiris in* Phocis, 1901, by the Arts and Crafts architects' Robert Weir Schultz and Sidney Barnsley, which demonstrated the use of book-matched marble cladding in Byzantine churches. In 1972, there were painted inscriptions on the walls, now lost.



North wall screen and marble cladding



South wall marble cladding with cross and crown



The interior of the church in 1972 (reproduced in Roger Button, *Arts and Crafts Churches of Great Britain*, 2020, p.165)

2.5.5 On the west side of the Church is a porte-cochere, with a shallow concrete dome internally, surmounted by a brick drum externally. The west wall is splayed, presumably following the original plot boundary. This is a remarkable geometric composition, presaging the abstracted classicism of the

later work of Lutyens. Above the church door is a massive sandstone lintel, now badly eroded, inscribed GOD IS LOVE.





2.5.6 The single-storey Vestry wing, east of the Church platform, has a deliberately low-key exterior, with small amounts of stone detailing to the brickwork. The interior is utilitarian, apart from one fine marble and tiled fire surround.





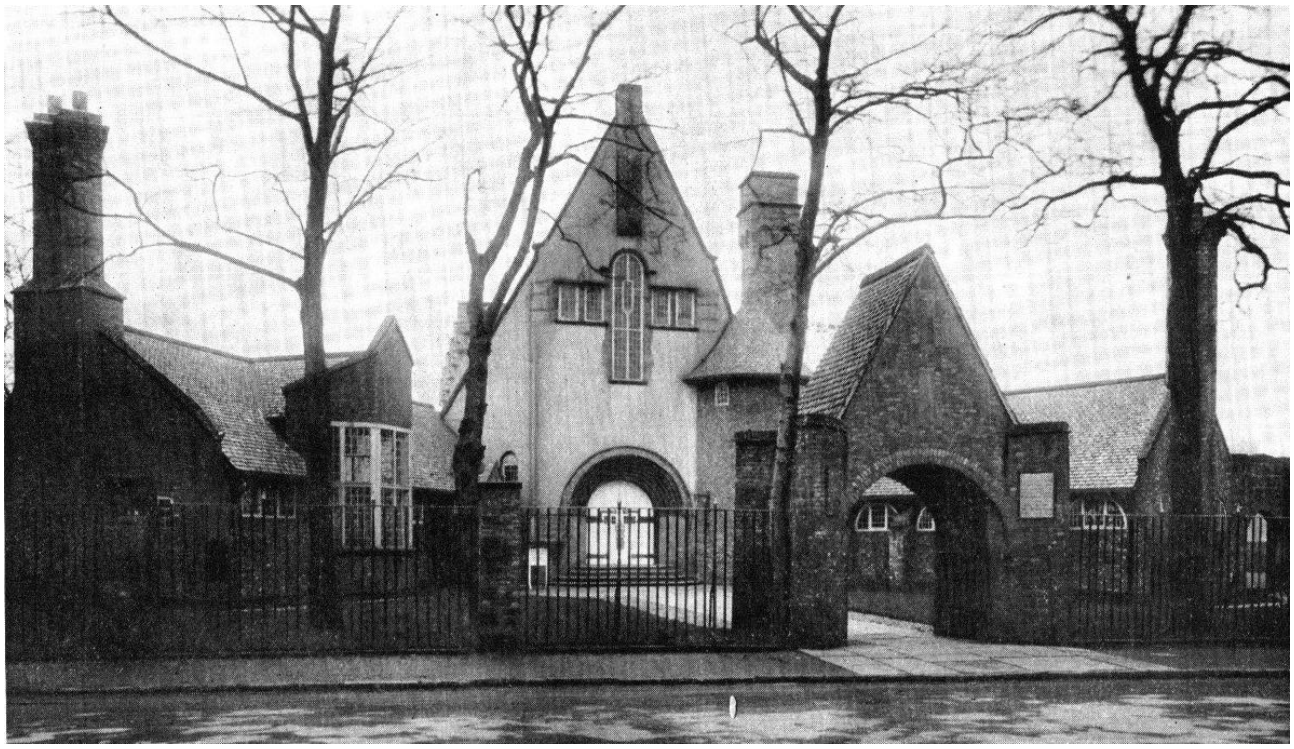
2.5.7 The northern boundary retains the iron railings and brick piers shown in early photographs, albeit now swallowed by a hedge. The trees on the boundary have also gone. In the centre is the delightful lych gate, with a steeply pitched Westmorland slate roof, brick walls with sandstone detailing and a tiny leaded oriel window.











View from Daisy Bank Road
(reproduced in B. Tatham Woodhead, *An Historical Sketch of the Beginnings of Christian Science in Lancashire*, 1934)

3.6 Influence

3.6.1 Edgar Wood's design was influential on several architects of the period. W. Alexander Harvey's Quaker Meeting House, Bournville, Birmingham, 1905 is a lower-budget copy of the front gable (in brick, less steep) and stair turret composition (octagonal not circular) with smaller splayed wings.



W. Alexander Harvey, Quaker Meeting House, Bournville, Birmingham, 1905

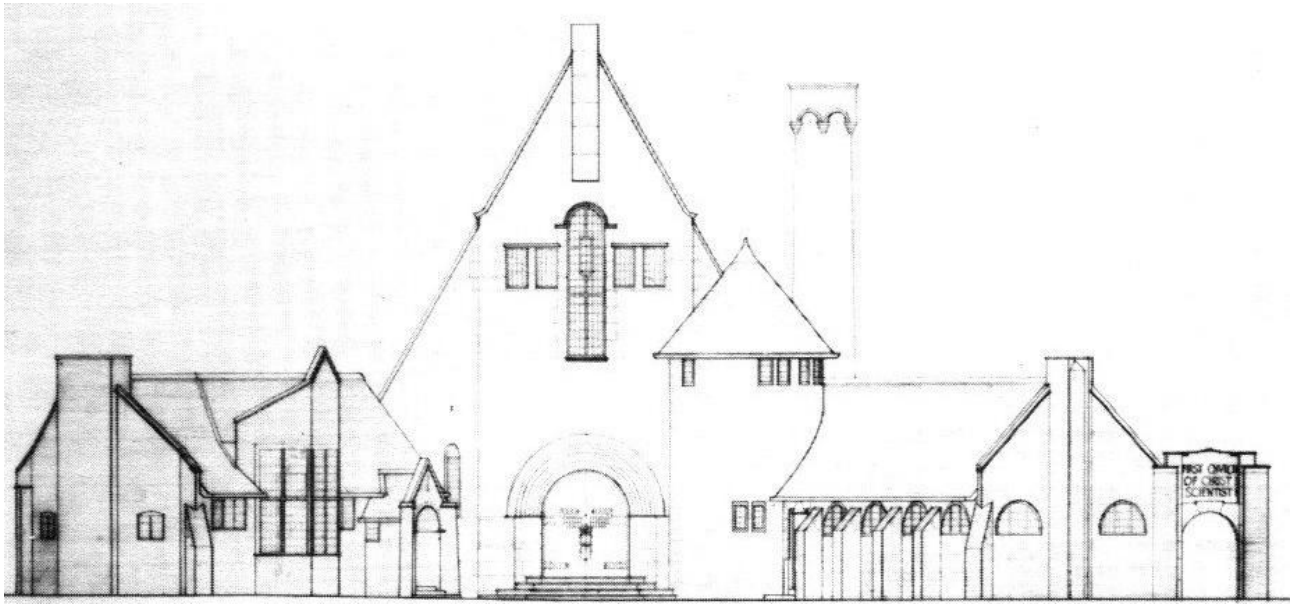
3.7 **Subsequent Occupiers**

3.7.1 Following a decline in the popularity of Christian Science, the church closed suddenly in 1971, and thieves quickly looted valuable and portable metals, and other vandalism followed. Fortunately, Manchester City Council stepped in and restored the building in 1974-76, to become "Domski" (an annexe to the Manchester School of Domestic Economy). The scope of the 1970s work is not yet fully understood, but it would appear that inappropriate materials were used, as was frequently the case at this time – cement mortars, gypsum plasters, and suchlike. Some areas of brickwork were renewed, in a hard machine made red brick. The chimneys on the wing elevations have been removed.









North Elevation, Manchester School of Architecture, perhaps 1970s
(reproduced in John Archer (ed.) *Art and Architecture in Victorian Manchester*, 1986)

3.7.2 Around 1980 it became the Edgar Wood Centre, a drama and music department of Manchester College of Higher Education, and subsequently offices for the City Council. At the start of the 21st century, it became a church again, serving an evangelical church of Brazilian origin, the United Churches of the Kingdon of God. In 2005 it was empty.[14] After 2015, it was developed as a wedding and event venue, known as Daisy Bank Manor.[15] Some hygienic internal finishes in the Vestry wing appear to date from this period. The interior is therefore mostly stripped of original fittings, apart from the timber screen above the entrance and the marble cladding behind the reading platform. The stained glass windows have apparently been saved.[16]

[14] Barrie and Wendy Armstrong, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the North West of England*, 2005, p.115
[15] See planning application, Manchester City Council, ref. PP-119354
[16] Alec Hamilton, *Arts & Crafts Churches*, 2020, p.231 provides a helpful summary of the recent history.

3.0 SIGNIFICANCE

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines significance as 'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historical'. Understanding the values that contribute to that significance, and how they relate to the fabric of the place, is vital to understanding the best means of conservation of the heritage asset.

3.2 Statutory Designations

3.2.1 The starting point for any assessment of significance is the consideration of a 'heritage asset', the more important of which are designated assets. The list description of the building reads as follows:

Christian Science church, now offices. 1903, by Edgar Wood.

Red brick with some render, steeply-pitched tiled roof to the main range (wings re-roofed with slate). Y-shaped plan formed by very tall narrow main range set back and at right-angles to the street, with low splayed wings projected to the front, and a cylindrical turret clasped in the angle between the gable of the main range and the right wing. Unusual Expressionist style with Art Nouveau detailing. The gable of the main range is mostly rendered, and has a wide semicircular-headed doorway with splayed sandstone sides and multiply-stepped brick head, above this a cruciform window feature with arched centre light and two-light arms all in a stone surround, and a plain stone pilaster breaking through the apex. The turret on the right, rising to eaves level, has a window of two small rectangular lights at ground floor and an interrupted band of 1, 2, 2, and 2 similar lights under the eaves of a conical roof. To the rear of this rises a tall rectangular chimney. The right-hand side wall of this range (not visible from the front) has low buttresses, two small four-light windows in the wall and six tall gabled dormers in the roof; and attached to the further end an unusual porch or porte cochere with a segmental-headed arch.

The projected wings differ: that to the left has a gabled porch to the right, a tall canted window breaking through the eaves left of centre with transomed lights and a high parapet rising to the centre, low three-light windows under the eaves either side of this bay, and a curved gable wall with a long diagonal corner buttress, a parapet and a square chimney in the centre; that to the right has five buttressed bays with a door in the first, simplified Diocletian windows under the eaves of the other bays, a corner buttress like that of the other wing, and a gable wall with diagonal chimney flues flanked by Diocletian windows. Attached to the west corner of this gable is a screen with a round-headed entrance archway under a stone panel lettered "FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST SCIENTIST" (this entrance leading a drive to the porch attached to the west side of the main range).

Interior not inspected.

3.2.2 The list description of the Lych Gate is as follows:

Arched gateway to former First Church of Christ, Scientist. 1903, by Edgar Wood. Art Nouveau style.

Red brick in Flemish bond with some sandstone, slate roof. Segmental arch with sandstone springing, very steeply pitched gable with small semi-cylindrical oriel window, canted side buttresses with flat tops. Forms group with former First Church of Christ, Scientist. (q.v.).

3.3 Significance

3.3.1 A Grade I listed building's historical and architectural special interest can be graded as being of *exceptional significance*. In the case of the First Church, architectural significance is paramount, due to

its association with Edgar Wood, his importance within the Arts and Crafts movement, his international and local significance. The building has numerous features of great interest, such as the Y-shaped plan, and individual details which are characteristic of Wood. There are also important historical associations with the Church of Christ, Scientist.

4.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework

4.1.1 The government's policy with regard to proposed development that affects heritage assets is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF", revised 2024). It states that, heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations (para. 202).

4.1.2 The NPPF requires a proper assessment of the significance of the heritage assets and their setting, an assessment of the level of harm that would befall the assets if the development were to take place and, if that level of harm were to be 'less than substantial', a clear and convincing justification for the harm with an assessment of the 'public benefits' can outweigh harm (para. 215).

4.2 The Proposed Change of Use and its Impact

4.2.1 This statement accompanies an application for Change of Use for the building. There are no physical changes proposed, so there is no physical impact on the heritage asset. Listed building consent is therefore not required. Whilst it is possible that some work will be required in the future, not least a programme of repair, this will be dealt with in a future application. Pre-application advice from Manchester City Council will be sought prior to any future application.

4.2.2 The only impact to be assessed is that relating to the change of use. The current use is "sui generis" but the previous use was class D1. The building was constructed as a place of worship for a non-conformist Christian sect, who emphasised the importance of music and readings (as opposed to a 'high-church' emphasis on liturgy and ceremonial) and with a community outreach programme – a strikingly similar user to that now proposed by City Church Manchester. This use lasted from 1903 to 1972, and a subsequent church use lasted for a further c.10 years prior to the current use, so the building has been used as a church for about 65% of its 122 year history. The new user is sensitive to the special significance of the church, will be able to return the building to its original use, and will not need to make major changes to allow the building to be used almost immediately.

4.2.3 A historic building needs a use to allow it to be maintained. It is therefore important to secure a beneficial user for First Church. No better use could be envisaged than the original use.

4.2.4 In addition, it should be noted that City Church Manchester hope to use the building throughout the week, not just on Sundays, and so will bring life back to the building. They will be able to offer public access, by appointment, as well as public worship, training and outreach to serve the local community. There is thus an opportunity to revive the original purpose of First Church.

4.3 Conclusion

4.3.1 The proposed change of use will allow a suitable and beneficial new owner to care for this highly significant building.