

Statement of Significance

St Andrew's United Reformed Church, Cheam

Address

Northey Avenue, Cheam, Sutton,
Surrey, SM2 7HF

Dedication

To the Glory of God by the
Presbytery of South London on 8th
July 1933

Parish

London Borough of Sutton

Diocese

URC Southern Synod



Contents

Existing Scheduling and Orders	3
The Setting	3
Churchyard and/or Site	4
Interior Features	7
Exterior Features	9
Social history	10

Statement of Significance

St Andrew's United Reformed Church, Cheam

Sources 11

Existing Scheduling and Orders

Statutory listing of building

795/36/10011

Presbyterian Church. 1933. Maxwell Ayrton. Red brick exterior with red pantile roof. Birch plywood and plain walls to interior.

PLAN: Wide nave to 3-sided apse with narrow, low side aisles. Recessed entrance porch behind three arches to deep entrance hall with matching cloakrooms to each side. Staircase to each side up to gallery that extends over entrance and small narthex. Chapel to southeast. Corridor and church rooms off aisle to northeast connecting to 1927 church and 1950s and 1960s halls (not of interest). Drive-through porch behind east end.

EXTERIOR: Pitched roof to tall nave with slightly-stepped gabled parapet section to west (with single lancet) and to east (blank). West facade with large central lancet with stone hood and thin brick voussoirs. Flanking hipped-roof stair towers and cloakroom and 3, 4-sided arches to entrance arcade. Long elevation of 8, 4-sided arch lancets each slightly recessed with stone hoods and thin brick voussoirs. String course of different brick extending from the base of the lancet hoods. Flat-roofed lower side aisles with fixed 6 and 8-light windows with brick lintels.

INTERIOR: A large open nave with raised gallery to west end, low side aisles through colonnade and raised 3-sided apse. Recessed porch to deep entrance hall with stepped ceiling beyond porch and cloakrooms and staircase to gallery at each side. Stone dedication plaque. Plain walls to nave with 8, 4-sided arch lancets to each side. Lower side aisles of 4-sided arch section. 4-sided arch ceiling over nave and apse of birch plywood panels laid to alternating grain. Wooden floor with unfixed seating. Choir stalls, furniture (including raised pulpit with hood) and panelling to apse installed 1950 to original design and all with 4-sided arch motif. 3 blind, 4-sided arch openings to apse wall. Abstract jowled posts to nave aisle colonnade. Light bowls with 4-sides to upper wall between each lancet. Chapel with birchwood panel tray ceiling and 3-sided arch lancets.

SOURCE: St. Andrews, church history.

The first ecclesiastical building (1933) of Maxwell Ayrton, known mostly for his concrete bridges Ayrton uses material (plywood birch panelling) and form (4-sided arch motif) within simple massing to create a striking interior space.

The Setting

Statement of Significance

St Andrew's United Reformed Church, Cheam

The built environment

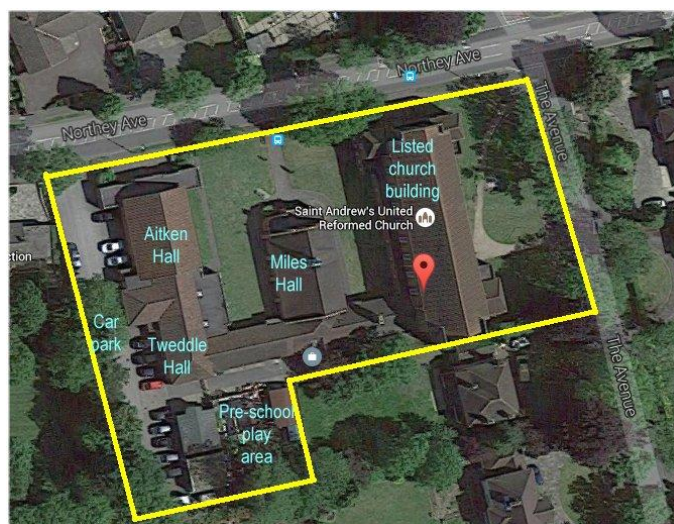
The listed church is connected to several rooms and three halls by a long corridor. The 1920s Miles Hall is built in traditional style typical of churches built in the late Victorian years. The 1950s Tweddle Hall is a plain brick rectangular structure. The 1960s Aitken Hall is in a style typical of its period. All the buildings have outside walls mainly of red brick, but their architecture otherwise forms a contrasting rather than complementary set.

Beyond the site boundary the church is in a residential area of substantial detached houses built just after the church in the 1930s. These are of varying designs, but generally in accord with houses of their age and they share little in common with the church.

The natural environment

The church building has lawn and garden on the geographic east side and presents a striking view when approached from the east. There is further grass and planting between the church and the halls.

Churchyard and/or Site



Design and history

Aerial photography © 2016 Google.

The church was designed by the architect Maxwell Ayrton, better known for his concrete bridges although he did also design the chapel of Gresham's School in Norfolk and the buildings for the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley. It was this latter project which caught the eye of the Revd Edwin Miles, first minister of St Andrew's, and led to Ayrton being commissioned to produce a

contemporary design for the church.

The church buildings were constructed on a greenfield site, before most of the immediately surrounding housing. As detailed above, the first building on site was the Miles Hall in 1927, with the church built in 1933 and the remaining halls in 1955 and 1964. There has been no significant change to the footprint of these connected buildings since then.

The church itself - the only listed structure - has remained largely unchanged structurally. Minor changes include one of the original cloakrooms being equipped as a small kitchen, and the wooden external doors to the chapel being replaced with glass doors as part of a project to increase access to and use of the chapel.

Entrances and boundaries

The listed part of the premises has four entrances. The main entrance from Northey Avenue comprises three large wooden double doors, of which two are approached by a few steps and the third by a concrete wheelchair ramp. A second entrance from The Avenue leads into the vestibule of the chapel, with a communicating door from there into the church.

Within the church on the geographic west side of the building a steel ramp installed over stone steps connects the church with the unlisted halls, and a door in the panelling of the chancel leads via a small storage area to a corridor which gives access to the halls and to the alley at the south side of the premises.

The boundaries of the site to adjoining properties are variously hedge, wooden fence and concrete fence. The boundaries to Northey Avenue and The Avenue are marked with low walls. The church building extends to the south boundary, and the paved area in front of the main doors extends to the boundary with the pavement of Northey Avenue.

Most of these structures and plantings are contemporary with the church buildings or the neighbouring houses, though some have been repaired or replaced. The pre-school play area is recent, and its east and south boundaries were fenced when it was built.

Built features

There are no historic structures or monuments on the site, and it has not been used for burials since acquisition by the church. Within the car park at the end of the site distant from the church are a Scout hut and garage, and there is a wooden shelter in the pre-school play area. There are some wooden benches in the garden areas.

Natural features

There are no substantial trees or rare plant species on the site. As noted above, there is a considerable area laid as lawn and some planted areas, notably in the chapel garden between

Statement of Significance

St Andrew's United Reformed Church, Cheam

the church and The Avenue.

Archaeological features

There are no known archaeological features on the site. So far as we are aware the site was in agricultural use before the church was built, and again so far as we are aware no archaeological work has ever been performed.

Interior Features

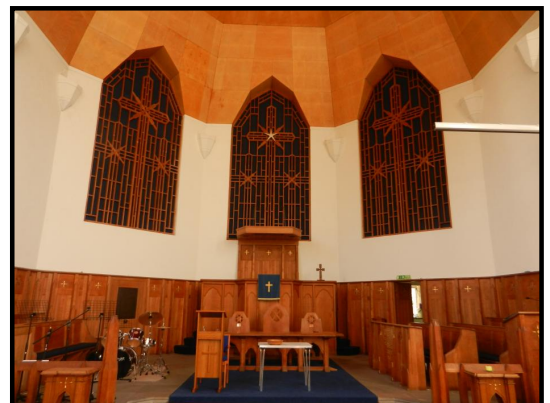
The interior of the church

As described in the listing, the interior of the church is a large open space. The seating is not fixed, but can be arranged to seat around 600 when the gallery is in use. Other than a war memorial and a plaque in memory of the first minister, there are no fixed memorials. The chief aspect of interest is the art deco architecture, inspired by that of the British pavilion at the British Empire Exhibition in Wembley, which was also designed by Maxwell Ayrton. The picture shows the view from the pulpit looking architecturally west (geographically north).



The chancel and organ screen

The 4-sided arch motif is used throughout the building, notably as the shape of the windows and for the organ screens, which also incorporate the Christian cross and St Andrew's cross. Much of the chancel furniture also reflects the signature arch.



The entrance vestibule

The large vestibule includes cloakrooms and toilets. The cloakrooms are little used in the age of central heating, and the toilets are very dated, incapable of meeting accessibility standards and inadequate for today's needs. The main entrance doors seen in the photograph are of solid wooden construction and present a rather forbidding appearance from outside as seen in the next section.



Statement of Significance

St Andrew's United Reformed Church, Cheam

The chapel

The small chapel shares many design features with the church. It has a separate entrance from outside, accessed by a path across the lawn from the corner of Northey Avenue and The Avenue.



Chapel entrance

In 2012 the outer wooden door to the chapel was replaced with a glass door as part of a successful project to make the chapel available to the local community for private prayer and reflection during the week.

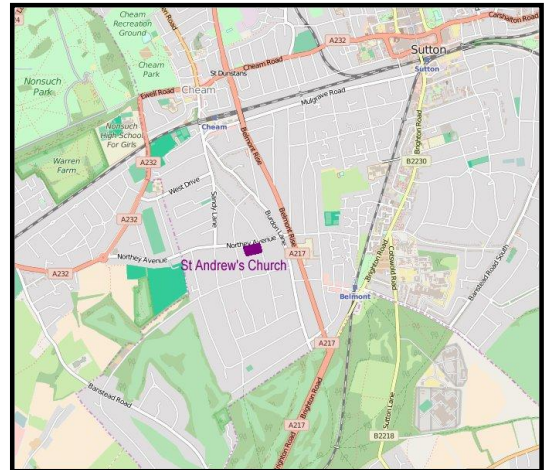


Exterior Features

Location

The church is located in South Cheam close to the boundary between Greater London and Surrey. The surrounding area is largely residential, with some of the larger houses in use as care homes for the elderly. Cheam Village is about 10 minutes walk to the north.

Map © OpenStreetMap contributors: see www.openstreetmap.org/copyright.



The exterior of the church

The exterior of the building is fully described in the listing details. The 4-sided arch windows are clearly seen on both sides of the building, and the shape is used again for the main entrance doors. The church is a large building by comparison with the surrounding houses, and occupies a substantial frontage on Northey Avenue, a bus route and significant secondary through route.



The main entrance

The main entrance doors are of solid wooden design which gives little indication that the church is open or that a service or event is taking place. As they open directly into the entrance vestibule it is not practical to leave them open, especially in cold weather.



Social history

Persons and events

The building dates from 1933 and was built on open land so therefore has no associations with events before that date. While some members of the congregation achieved eminence in their careers, we are not aware of any who changed the course of history. Nor are we aware of any events having taken place in the church which were of lasting significance beyond the congregation. There are no burials on the site and the only fixed memorial within the church is to the Revd Edwin Miles, the first minister of the church.

Community definition

The church serves the local community as a venue for events and meetings as well as its primary function as a worship space. As a former congregation of the Presbyterian Church of England the church drew its members very substantially from the Scottish diaspora residing not only in Cheam but in suburbs and villages many miles distant. To some extent this is still true, although the Scots character of the church has declined somewhat.

Many local groups also use the church premises, including Jelly Beans Pre-school which is owned and operated by the church. Although most of these are confined to the unlisted halls, the church itself is used extensively by Sutton Music Service, the umbrella organisation for local youth orchestras and bands. Several other groups, notably the Cheam Association for Decorative and Fine Arts, use the church for their regular meetings, and it is the frequent venue for orchestral and choral concerts.

St Andrew's Scouts and Guides meet in the church halls and regularly hold parade services in the church. The 9th Cheam Scout Group celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2016.

Community memory

The story of Cheam dates back millennia before the founding of St Andrew's Church, by which time Cheam had become, as it remains today, an outer suburb of the London conurbation. St Andrew's takes an active part in the wider Christian community of Cheam and Sutton, but as the place of worship of a minority denomination it cannot be said to encompass, or indeed influence, much of the community memory.

Sources

A history of St Andrew's was published in 1968 and an updated edition in 1990. Some of the information recorded here derives from that source. Other material has been gleaned from the memories of current members of the congregation.