

St Nicholas Church Nether Winchendon Buckinghamshire



Historic Building and Archaeological Recording and Investigation

oxfordarchaeology



southsouthsouth

December 2010

**Client: Vicar, Churchwardens and
PCC of St Nicholas Church
Nether Winchendon**

Issue No: Draft

OA Job No: 3278

NGR: SP 732 122

Client Name: Vicar Churchwardens and PCC St Nicholas Nether Winchendon
Client Ref No:

Document Title: St Nicholas Church, Nether Winchendon, Buckinghamshire,
Historic Building and Archaeological Recording and Investigation

Document Type: Client Report
Issue Number: Draft

National Grid Reference: SP 732 122
Planning Reference:

OA Job Number: 3278
Site Code: NWSNC 06
Invoice Code: NWSNCBS

Prepared by: Simon Underdown
Position: Project Officer (Buildings Archaeology)
Date: December 2010

Checked by: Julian Munby
Position: Head of Buildings Archaeology
Date: December 2010

Approved by: Julian Munby Signed.....
Position: Head of Buildings Archaeology
Date: December 2010

Document File Location
Graphics File Location
Illustrated by Markus Dylewski

Disclaimer:

This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and prior written authority of Oxford Archaeology being obtained. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than the purposes for which it was commissioned. Any person/party using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees, and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Oxford Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the person/party by whom it was commissioned.

© Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd 2010

Oxford Archaeology

Janus House

Osney Mead

Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 1865 263800

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk

f: (0044) 1865 793496

w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited is a Registered Charity No: 285627

St Nicholas Church, Nether Winchendon, Buckinghamshire

HISTORIC BUILDING AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING AND INVESTIGATION

CONTENTS

Summary	1
1 Introduction	2
1.1 Background	2
1.2 Aims and objectives	2
1.3 Methodology	2
1.4 Acknowledgements	2
2 Historical Background	3
3 Description	3
3.1 Introduction	3
3.2 North Door	4
3.3 Floor deposits and Font base on North side of Nave	4
3.4 Pew panelling on North side of Nave.....	4
3.5 Pulpit	5
3.6 Wall paintings at east and west ends of south side of Nave.....	5
3.7 Tiled floor beneath pulpit.....	6
3.8 South wall of Nave.....	7
3.9 Floor deposits and burial vault on south side of Nave	7
3.10 Painted Window Glass	8
3.11 Reused roof timbers in pew bases and reconstruction of roof	8
4 Decorated Medieval Tiles	10
5 Discussion	12
6 Bibliography and Sources	15
APPENDIX I Listed Building Description.....	16

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Site location map
Figure 2	Plan of Church with features revealed by works
Figure 3	Plan of remnant tile floor at east end of nave
Figure 4	Drawings of roof members and font base profile
Figure 5	Putative reconstruction of medieval roof

LIST OF PLATES

- Plate 1 East jamb of blocked north door with panel 5 to right.
- Plate 2 Earth floor on north side of nave showing probable grave cuts, looking west (1 m scale)
- Plate 3 Font base cut into earth floor with smaller cut to west, looking east (1 m and 0.5m scale).
- Plate 4 Detail of mouldings and bar stops on panel 5.
- Plate 5 Wall painting beneath pulpit backboard (0.5 m scale)
- Plate 6 Wall painting at west end of nave (1 m scale)
- Plate 7 Part of floor of worn medieval tiles leading from south door with west end of burial vault on right (looking north).
- Plate 8 Cross of five medieval tiles set in chancel floor.
- Plate 9 Remnant of tiled floor and tile impressions at east end of south side of nave (looking east, 1m scale).
- Plate 10 Remnant of tiled floor and tile impressions at east end of south side of nave (looking east, 1m and 0.5 m scale).
- Plate 11 Part of tiled floor showing pattern type 1 on right and type 2 on left.
- Plate 12 Loose tiles; type 3 on right, type 2 in centre and type 5 on left (scale in 10 cm divisions).
- Plate 13 Loose tile; type 4 (scale in 10 cm divisions).
- Plate 14 Tiles in recess at west end of south side of Nave (looking west, 0.5m scale).
- Plate 15 South wall of Nave after pews removed with burial vault to north (looking south-east).
- Plate 16 Interior of burial vault looking east.
- Plate 17 Fragments of medieval painted of heads with halos found under south-west window.
- Plate 18 Existing figure of St Peter in south-west window.
- Plate 19 Pew base members before removal showing reused timbers (photo. courtesy of Ward and Co.).
- Plate 20 Reconstruction of roof truss from reused members from pew bases (1 m and 0.5 m scales).
- Plate 21 End of upper arch brace segment showing mortice and rebate at top of spandrel (0.5 m scale).
- Plate 22 Upper arch brace segment with surviving decoration (0.5m scale).
- Plate 23 Decoration on opposite face of upper arch brace segment (0.5m scale).
- Plate 24 Reused rafters (1 m scale).

ST NICHOLAS, NETHER WINCHENDON

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING AND INVESTIGATION

SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology has undertaken a programme of historic building investigation and recording at St Nicolas, Church, Nether Winchendon, Buckinghamshire. This work related to renovation of post medieval pews and other fixtures and fittings within the church.

The works in the church revealed a considerable wealth of hitherto unknown or hidden feature. These help to recreate the appearance of the interior at various stages prior to the construction of the existing post-medieval fixtures and fittings.

Removal of the pew panels revealed the east jamb of the blocked north door. The lower south wall of the Nave exposed by removal of the pews appeared to be of one phase with no blocked or hidden features.

An older hard earth surface was revealed below the pews, the existing font base was situated in a cut through this surface and an adjacent cut on the west may indicate an earlier font position. North-west of the font early grave cuts showed in the surface. In the central part of the south side of the Nave an 18th or 19th century brick burial vault was uncovered and seen to contain six lead coffins and probable remnants of decayed coverings.

The remnant of a tiled floor was found at the east end of the south side of the nave this consisted of reused decorated medieval tiles and plain Flemish or Flemish-style tiles. Another small section of a worn tiled floor was seen at the west end of the Nave. Two decorated tiles found loose under the pews were formerly unknown from Nether Winchendon, one of them is not recorded by Hohler or Haberley.

Sections of pew panelling seen in situ on the north Nave wall seemed to range in date from the 17th century to relatively modern.

Part of a post-medieval wall painting of framed texts was revealed on the south part of the east Nave wall behind the pulpit and was probably part of a scheme including a similar painting seen in 1986 on the north part of the east Nave wall.

The pulpit itself seems to have been moved from a different position as the moulding on the south side of the sounding board appeared to have been cut off to fit it flush to the wall and the side of the pulpit against the south wall seemed to have been a separate panel; possibly formerly being the door.

Some fragments of painted medieval glass were found below the south-west window. These included parts of two faces in halos which may represent an Apostle and an angel. Stylistically they could be of the first quarter of the 15th century and earlier than the existing figure of St Peter.

Probably the most significant finds were reused timbers in the pew bases which clearly came from a medieval roof. Measurement of the timbers making up an arch-braced truss showed they were from the Nave roof. Construction details of the roof were noted, a rafter and ridge piece showed that the roof slope was low like the present roof and not the original roof matching the steep Nave gables. It may have been a 15th century replacement.

Some reused timbers retained early painted decoration which included star and chevron motifs on the arch-bracing. Rebates in the spandrels show they formerly contained decorative panels probably consisting of tracery.



ST NICHOLAS, NETHER WINCHENDON

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING AND INVESTIGATION

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Saint Nicholas' Church lies at the heart of the small unspoilt village of Lower Winchendon about five miles west of Aylesbury in the Vale of Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire. The village, which contains several 17th century cottages and farmhouses, has only about 60 households and the church is the only public building and is used for parish meetings as well as divine service.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by Rory Duncan, architect, on behalf of the Vicar and churchwardens of St Nicholas Nether Winchendon to undertake historic building investigation and recording at St Nicholas' Church during renovation works undertaken between June and August 2006.

1.1.2 The work related to the 'essential repair of badly decayed woodwork in the Nave, including the raised pews bases, wall panelling, box pews and including the gallery stair and the pulpit' (Duncan 2005). This work necessitated partially dismantling and moving the box pews, and moving the bench pews and pulpit. This allowed examination of the structure of the pew bases and investigation of the deposits and features formerly concealed by the pew bases and pulpit.

1.2 Aims and objectives

1.2.1 The general aims of the investigation were:

- Investigate areas of fabric exposed by the renovations
- Relate the discoveries to existing knowledge
- Produce a report and archive.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 The recording programme consisted of three main elements: a drawn survey, a photographic survey and a written survey. The drawn survey consisted of a plan based on a pre-existing survey of the building that was enhanced to detail features revealed during the plus site drawings of certain features.

1.3.2 The photographic survey used 35 mm film (colour slide and black and white prints) and colour digital images and consisted of general shots and specific details. The written survey complemented the other surveys and consisted of descriptive notes in the form of annotations to the drawings to explain and interpret the building.

1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Rory Duncan (architect) and Ward and Co (contractors) for their help and co-operation during the works and Professor Richard Marks of York University for his comments on the painted glass fragments.



2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1 The church and manor belonged to Notley Abbey from the 13th century until the dissolution. The church was earlier described as a chapel of Long Crendon church.
- 2.1.2 The church was held by the crown from the dissolution until it was granted to Christ Church Oxford in 1542. In 1545 the advowson was granted to Sir Richard Long and Christopher Edmonds and has since passed through various hands.
- 2.1.3 St. Nicholas' church is a relatively small and simple church of standard plan, built of limestone rubble, and consisting of a rectangular aisleless Nave and a smaller rectangular east chancel both with tiled ridge roofs, a square battlemented west tower with octagonal stair turret and small gabled south porch.
- 2.1.4 The church dates from at least the 13th century, the chancel arch is of the late 13th century and the chancel and nave were rebuilt in the first half of the 14th century and the porch was probably added at that time. The Tower is a 15th century addition in two stages. The chancel was partially rebuilt in 1891 and the Victorian decorated tiled floor of the chancel probably dates from this time. The nave roof structure visible within the church is dated 1827, this has a very shallow slope and was formerly covered with lead. This had deteriorated and in 1975 a new roof was built over the existing structure at the steeper pitch of the surviving gables of the medieval structure. The chancel roof was re-tiled in 1990.
- 2.1.5 The nave of the church contains a large amount of historic timber fixtures and fittings including 17th century altar rails, pulpit with clerk's stall and tester and bench pews and 18th (or early 19th) century box pews and west gallery. The Nave also contains a Royal arms and large commandment boards.
- 2.1.6 A small amount of 15th century painted glass survives and the central passage of the nave is floored with worn decorated medieval tiles.

3 DESCRIPTION

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The first visit was made after the box pews on the north side of the nave and pulpit on the south had been removed and work was starting on fitting new concrete joists to support the pews. When the pews were removed the supporting framework of joists was found to contain some reused elements; these had been stored beneath the tower and were examined. The south side panels and dividing panels and seats etc., from the pews had been stacked on boards placed over the south pews. The panels against the north and east walls were still in situ and were briefly examined. Loose soil beneath the pews had been removed and some loose artefacts had been recovered from this including decorated medieval floor tiles. The exposed earth floor revealed the cut for the present font base and an adjacent cut probably for an earlier font position. Elements of cuts for burials were visible in the floor. Removal of the pulpit had exposed Part of an earlier tiled floor consisting of reused local decorated medieval floor tiles and later imported plain tiles set in mortar and had also



revealed part of a painted cartouche on the east wall of the south side of the Nave.

- 3.1.2 The next visits were made after the pews on the south side of the Nave had been removed; the pew panels lining the south wall were removed prior to the visit and were not recorded in detail as those on the north side were. The underlying fabric of the south wall had been partially exposed. In the centre of the south side the top of an arched brick burial vault was revealed and below the westernmost window on the south side of the Nave pieces of 15th century painted glass of similar style to some surviving in the window were recovered.

3.2 North Door

- 3.2.1 A large rectangular area of the north nave wall, west of centre, projected slightly on the interior and together with a straight joint seen in the exterior stonework suggested there was a blocked former north door. The pew panel over the east edge of the bulge was removed and in the wall behind a plain stone splayed jamb was visible with projecting masonry blocking to the west (plate 1). Above the level of the panelling the offset between the wall and later blocking had been plastered over. The jamb is almost certainly the east jamb of a former north door and appears similar to the south door inner arch and is almost opposite it.

3.3 Floor deposits and Font base on North side of Nave

- 3.3.1 The surface of the south aisle exposed by removal of the pews was a hard creamy yellow earth surface this may represent a medieval earth floor that predated a tiled floor. The tiled floor that survives in the centre of the Nave may have extended across the whole Nave prior to the box pews being installed or may be composed of tiles taken from an earlier floor. West of the font in particular the earth surface seems to have been cut and recut for burials (plate 2).
- 3.3.2 Removal of the pews also exposed the stone base of the existing font which is located on the north side of the nave adjacent to the central tiled 'passage' and opposite the south door. The base is octagonal, at current ground level it is 0.7m wide and each side is 0.29m long. The base is set in a circular cut through the earlier hard earth floor surface. The cut has a looser fill of a similar deposit to the floor. This cut appears to truncate the east side of a smaller circular cut to the west. The smaller cut appears to be slightly smaller than the existing font base and may represent an earlier font position (plate 3).

3.4 Pew panelling on North side of Nave

- 3.4.1 Sections of panelling of various sizes and dates were *in situ* against the north and east walls on the north side of the nave. Section 1 against the east wall was relatively modern of dark stained oak with flat panels in two rows; the upper row of smaller square panels and the lower of vertical rectangular panels with plain rails and mullions, Section 2 against the east end of the north wall was of the same type and date as 1. Section 3 to the west was of two rows of four equal sized panels this was older and of unstained oak. Part of the lower row was missing. The upper mullions and upper rail were moulded; the central rail had a simple chamfer on its upper edge, its lower edge and the lower mullions were plain.

- 3.4.2 Panelling sections 4 & 5 to the west were both of two rows of six equal sized fielded panels. Much of the lower part of section 5 had fallen apart and was in pieces. Examination by feel of the sides against the wall suggested these are similar sections placed with different faces to the wall. Both were constructed of oak, unstained and of some age. Section 4 had roll mouldings to the upper rail the upper mullions and lower side of the mid rail. The upper side of the mid rail was chamfered with bar stops at each junction and this was also seen on the east face of the east end panel of the south pews. The fifth section had a similar mid rail but the upper mullions had a more complex decorative moulding and the lower ones had simple roll moulding. This face was therefore more decorative than the reverse as shown on section 4, suggesting that both faces may have been intended for show but that seen on section 5 was of higher status. These panels with bar stops are probably of 17th century date.
- 3.4.3 Sections 6 and 7 are both small and each of two plain panels, 6 is of modern dark stained oak and 7 of older unstained oak. Section 8 is modern again and is similar to sections 1 and 2 of two rows of five plain panels, an upper row of square panels and lower row of vertical rectangular panels. West of panel 8 the lower wall was panelled with vertical boards this was in the area behind the box pews where the earlier bench pews had been. The first section of boards consisted of plain reused pine floorboards probably of 19th century date the western section was of stained tongue and grooved boards with 1 beaded edge of late 19th or early 20th century date.
- 3.5 **Pulpit**
- 3.5.1 The 17th century hexagonal timber pulpit and steps at the east end of the south side of the nave had been removed for repair excepting the sounding board and upper part of the backboard which were left *in situ* throughout the work. The board bears the date 1613.
- 3.5.2 The pulpit had been positioned in the south east corner of the nave hard up to the east and south walls. Two factors suggest it was originally placed in a different position and was not against the south wall. These were 1; the moulding on the south side of the sounding board appeared to have been cut off to fit the pulpit flush to the wall and 2; the side of the pulpit against the south wall appeared to have been a separate panel and may have been the door at one time.
- 3.6 **Wall paintings at east and west ends of south side of Nave**
- 3.6.1 Removal of the pulpit revealed a section of a wall painting behind the backboard (plate 5). The section exposed was about 0.3m wide by 0.5m high and appeared to represent the lower right hand corner of an elaborate decorative frame of a tablet imitating a stone memorial or inscription tablet. The framing was outlined in black lines with some highlighting in wider strokes of red ochre colour. There was a bracket with a scroll end to the right at the base supporting the lower frame which had some more decorative scroll type work on the right and above this was the base of the right side of the frame which had some cross hatching in black and red. The painting continued behind the remaining pulpit board at the top and to the left had been covered by later layers of paint.
- 3.6.2 The full painting probably contained religious texts within the decorative frame. This was probably part of a larger scheme as a similar painting on the



east wall of the north side of the Nave was uncovered by and reported on by Dr E. Clive Rouse during repair works in 1986, which he described as follows, 'an elaborately framed text in red and black with black-letter script lettering. The layer of limewash on which it is painted is in a friable condition and the whole is too fragmentary to identify' he estimated its date as fairly early 17th century and it seems probable that the recently uncovered painting is of similar date¹.

- 3.6.3 Rouse also saw a patch of red colour high up on the south side of the chancel arch but could not reach it to examine it in detail. He also saw fragmentary remains of texts on different layers of limewash on the north nave wall and concluded that 'the remnants are confused and really impossible to recover; one can only say that the wall had once exhibited an extensive range of framed Post-Reformation texts. Neither of these areas of painting is currently visible.
- 3.6.4 Rouse also commented on a painting which was visible on the west wall of the nave south of the tower arch above the stairs to the gallery. This was mostly in red with some evidence of detail in white, Rouse considered it medieval in date possibly representing part of an Angel's wing. There is a small section of a wall painting visible in this area currently, measuring about 0.7m high by 0.2m wide (plate 6). This is in wide red strokes and appears to represent elaborate decorative strapwork or knotwork and does not appear to resemble a wing so may be a different section of that described by Dr Rouse or another painting altogether. It is different in style to the painting behind the pulpit and may be of earlier date.

3.7 Tiled floor beneath pulpit

- 3.7.1 The central passage in the nave and the passage leading from this to the south door are tiled with what appear to be largely decorated medieval tiles of local Penn type. However these floors were covered to protect them during the works and only tiles at the edges were visible. These tiles were much worn and in places covered in layers of floor wax and the designs could not be recognised except in one instance (plate 7).
- 3.7.2 A cross of 5 medieval Penn types was set into the Victorian tiles in the chancel. These were worn but two could be identified as type 1 as described below (section 4) (plate 8).
- 3.7.3 Removal of the pulpit revealed an unknown remnant of a tiled floor set in plaster against the east wall of the south side of the nave (plate 9). Immediately south of the present central tiled passage and reading desk was an area of cream coloured lime plaster approximately 0.6 m (n-s) x 1.0m (e-w) with the impressions of about 60, 0.1 m x 0.1m tiles, adjoining this to the south was an area of *in situ* tiles set in plaster (plate 10). The patch of tiles was approximately 1m (n-s) x 0.7 m (e-w), between the tiles and the south nave wall was an area of loose soil with no tiles or plaster remnants 0.8 m wide.
- 3.7.4 On the west the plaster and tiles had been excavated away in the past probably for installation of the supporting frame for the box pews. The floor level had been reduced by about 0.2m from the level of the tiles. The material still beneath the tiled and plaster surface appeared to be loose soil and occasional

¹ Typescript report in church files dated 1st December 1986. Dr Rouse MBE., FSA., MA., D.Litt. was a leading authority on wall paintings.

rubble make-up with no discernable earlier floors but this was not excavated or examined in great detail as it is desired to preserve the tiles and plaster *in situ*.

- 3.7.5 The tiled area contained small decorated square medieval tiles of 0.1m square of typical local manufacture possibly from Penn in Buckinghamshire and larger tiles c 0.2m square with plain black or reddish glaze. The tiles were not set in a pattern and the small ones were not following their original 4 or 8 tile decorative schemes also the floor incorporated many broken fragments of tile. It would appear therefore that the tiles were reused in this context. The tiled area seemed to be a different phase to the plaster with tile impressions which was a more consistent area of the smaller tiles. The latter was of a lighter firmer plaster in better condition and slightly higher and may have been later in date.
- 3.7.6 There were three distinct patterns of decorative tiles in the surviving floor, a fourth type was recovered loose from the area during the removal of the pulpit etc, and a fifth type was recovered from the deposits beneath the north pews during their removal. The tiles are described and discussed in greater detail in section 4 (plates 11-13).
- 3.7.7 A further small area of tiled floor was seen in a recess below a bench in the base of the west wall on the south side of the nave. This consisted of an area of about 5 x 4 small Penn type tiles that were very dirty and worn with an area of rubble stone flooring north of them. One tile was recognisable as a type 3 as described below (section 4) (plate 14).

3.8 South wall of Nave

- 3.8.1 The underlying fabric of the lower part of most of the south wall of the Nave was revealed by removal of the pews this consisted of rubble limestone built to courses and all appeared to be of one phase with no hidden or blocked features (plate 15).

3.9 Floor deposits and burial vault on south side of Nave

- 3.9.1 Removal of the pews exposed the underlying deposits on the south side of the Nave. At the east end west of the remnant of tiled floor was 3-4 m long area of loose soil deposits and debris. West of this was a shallow segmental brick vault 4 m long east to west and 2m wide north to south stretching from the tiled floor at the centre of the Nave to 0.5 m north of the south wall (see plate 15). The vault projected slightly above the surrounding deposits and had slightly lower north-south brick masonry courses at the east and west ends which were the tops of the end walls. On the south a short brick wall ran from the vault to the south Nave wall and this was probably a dwarf wall for supporting part of the pew base framing.
- 3.9.2 At the west end of the vault there was a small gap between the end of the vault arch and the end wall into which it was possible to insert a small digital camera. Photographs of the interior (plate 16) revealed the brickwork of the vault arch was whitewashed but the east end wall and low side walls were of bare brickwork. The south wall brickwork had an offset above which the wall appeared to be rendered.
- 3.9.3 The north-east corner appeared to have been blocked off by secondary brickwork. Abutting this was a low plinth of brickwork with a lead coffin



resting on it, south of this was a stack of two lead coffins, the lower one quite heavily collapsed, and south of this a single lead coffin.

- 3.9.4 At the west end there appeared to be only two more coffins one on the north side of the vault and one in the centre. The coffins were all aligned east-west. Some of the coffins could be seen to be tapered with the head end at the west. Some of them could be seen to have lead tops but all had decayed material on their tops and there was some similar material on the floor and this may represent the remnants of casings of timber and /or other material.

3.10 Painted Window Glass

- 3.10.1 The existing south-west window in the Nave has three lower lights and six small upper lights. The eastern upper light contains an image of St Peter (plate 17), the central lower light has a small panel made up of various architectural fragments apart from these two areas the window contains no other medieval painted glass

- 3.10.2 Several pieces of painted glass were found in the area below the window after the pews were removed. These included two fragments of faces in halos, one with a beard which may have represented an apostle and a younger unbearded face that may well have represented an angel (plate 18). Three other fragments are pieces of designs that are not easily recognisable although they may be architectural fragments like those pieces of tracery.

- 3.10.3 Richard Marks of the University of York kindly viewed photographs of the fragments and made some useful initial observations. He felt that the fragments are 15th century in date and the head fragments may be slightly earlier than the *in situ* St Peter and that their size indicates they are also from the upper lights of a window. However if from this window they are probably not of the same set as the St Peter figure due 'to the different halo designs, looser treatment of hair and softer facial features' and the hair and facial features could indicate a date in the first quarter of the 15th century.

- 3.10.4 Professor Marks also noted that if the unbearded figure was an angel then it would probably not be from the St Peter set as that would almost certainly have contained five more apostles in the other upper panels.

3.11 Reused roof timbers in pew bases and reconstruction of roof

- 3.11.1 When the Nave pews were dismantled by the contractors the framework of joists supporting the base platforms were found to contain a substantial number of reused historic timbers (plate 19). These timbers were removed by the contractors so were not examined *in situ*.

- 3.11.2 Many of the timbers were clearly re-used medieval roof components. As both the chancel and the nave roof have been replaced in the 19th century these timbers could come from either of the earlier roofs. However the nave roof is dated 1827 and the chancel roof was replaced in the 1890s therefore it seems more likely that the date of reuse would coincide with the nave roof removal rather than that of the chancel.

- 3.11.3 The current nave roof, with the date 1827, has a shallow slope internally and consists of common rafters with a ridge piece and single purlins all supported

by king post and tie beam trusses with double-ogee braces to wall posts on the 15th century battlemented corbels.

- 3.11.4 Recognisable timbers found in the pew bases included examples of all the different pieces required to make up an arched braced truss, save for the wall posts, of the right size to fit the width of the nave (plate 20, figure 5). The arch brace consisted of two lower curved members and two upper shallower curved members with straight upper faces and with a Y junction at their outer ends where they were connected to the lower brace with a pegged tenon (plate 21) and simply abutted to a short straight member which continued the straight top of the spandrels across to a wall post. The lower curved braces had a large pegged tenon at their lower outer ends which would have mated with mortices in the wall posts (see plate 20 and figure 5). All members of the arch bracing were hollow chamfered. The Y pieces also had plain chamfering on the upper surface of the curved section and although the hollow chamfering was continuous on the lower and upper parts of the arch brace the hollow chamfering did not continue on the lower brace which seemed narrower than the upper piece and this problem with the reconstruction as the tenons at the ends of the Y pieces would seem to extend beyond the upper edge of the lower brace. Possibly the chamfer was continued on a spandrel panel (see below) which was pegged to the same tenon or the design was resolved in some other manner.
- 3.11.5 The upper members seem to have been connected to a tie beam by free tenons; part of a beam with mortices matching those in the Y members of the brace was found. The short Y pieces of the brace had two mortices for free tenons whilst the short upper spandrel pieces had a single mortice for a free tenon and a short triangular tenon at the outer end where it would have engaged with a mortise in the wall post.
- 3.11.6 The soffits of the timbers forming the top surface of the large arch spandrels were rebated with a slot (see plates 21-23). This was probably intended to house the tops of tracery or other openwork decorative panels that would have filled the spandrels or, perhaps less likely, solid boarding that could have been painted and perhaps decorated with figures or texts.
- 3.11.7 One of the upper arch brace Y pieces retained an original decorative painted scheme. The main colour was a dark blue pigment, the chamfers in the spandrel had a red pigment applied and the narrow soffit of the arch had chevrons alternating in white and a dark tone that may have been black or very dark blue. The hollow chamfers of the arch were coloured blue and one side were decorated with red painted five pointed wavy rayed stars and on the other side had the ghosts of applied six-pointed stars that had been nailed by a single nail to the timber. Where these stars had formerly covered the paint surface the blue pigment was brighter and nearer to its original tone (plates 22 and 23).
- 3.11.8 A timber with regularly spaced mortises and one angled face may be part of a halved ridge piece reused as a joist in the pew supports (figure 4). This ridge is from a roof of similar low angle (about 16°) to the present roof. The upper surface of the timber and the mortises are set at this angle to the side faces. The mortises are approximately 0.23 m long by 0.35 m high and 0.09 m deep and are set 0.25 m apart. There is a squared rebate on the lower corner of the outer face which seems unusual for a ridge piece unless it is for later and it is hard to think of a reason for this. There are also two 0.1 m wide angled rebates or



trench joints towards one end of the timber which probably represent a phase of reuse.

- 3.11.9 Two reused rafters were found; these were about 3.6 m in length. They were hollow chamfered on both lower side faces with a central gap in the chamfering which was probably where the rafters rested on a single purlin to either slope (figures 4 and 5, plate 24). One retained some of its decorative scheme and exhibited similar red and dark blue colours as the arch brace segment, the dark colour being used in the chamfer. At the lower end of the rafter there was an angled rebated slot in the side faces just beyond the end of the chamfer. The rafters had tenons set at the same angle to the shoulders of the joints as the mortices and top slope of the ridge piece were set to the sides of that member. When the reconstruction drawing (figure 5) was made it could be seen that with the ridge and rafters set at that angle the rafters were of the right length to reach the wall plates and the slot in the rafter sides would be vertical above a moulded fascia to the wall plate (similar to what appears to be a medieval example in the chancel) and may have been for boards to close off the gaps between the rafter ends. If the reconstruction is correct the roof represented here was at a lower angle than the surviving masonry gables therefore the upper parts of the roof at least, if not the main trusses, were a secondary insertion.
- 3.11.10 As mentioned the purlins in the reconstruction are assumed from the evidence of the rafters and the short braces from tie beams to purlins are therefore assumed also as necessary to support the purlins. There is no direct evidence for the king post as shown in the reconstruction but it is most likely that these were in place to support the ridge as in the current Nave roof which is in other regards of the same type as that which it replaced.
- 3.11.11 There were also a couple of timbers with roll mouldings, one of these was of some length and had several half lap or housed joints on one face, this may have been a wall plate from a roof structure or possibly from a former screen or rood loft. The other was a short length with no joints.
- 3.11.12 A small square section decorated timber was also recovered, this was simply chisel carved with a lozenge design and zigzag patterns from a punch or wheel. The carving was on three sides the fourth was plain with some peg holes. This may have been from a 17th or 18th century piece of vernacular furniture or an unknown church fitting.

4 DECORATED MEDIEVAL TILES

- 4.1.1 There were four designs of small square decorated medieval tiles measuring 10cm x 10 cm, these had red fabric yellow inlaid glazed decoration and chamfered edges (types 1-4). There was one type of decorated tile measuring 12cm x 12 cm which also had red fabric and yellow inlaid decoration but had straight sides (type 5).
- 4.1.2 The small medieval tiles are probably of the local Penn type which had their peak of production c1350-1400 these were plain and unkeyed on the reverse.
- 4.1.3 Also in the floor revealed under the pulpit were larger plain square and triangular tiles which had red fabric and either black or clear glaze, these are typical of Flemish or Flemish-style tiles commonly imported from the late 14th to the early 16th century (pers. comm. John Cotter).

- 4.1.4 Of type 1 a four tile pattern there were six examples in the old floor and two examples in a cross of 5 medieval tiles set in the Victorian chancel floor and one of the tiles in the nave passage floor was seen to be of this type when wiped clean.
- 4.1.5 Haberley records type 1 on page 223 fig CLXXXII as an Oseney [Abbey] tile in the Ashmolean and also in Brightwell Baldwin Church. He also illustrates the same design on page 71 as a New College tile. He records a very similar tile on page 212 Fig CLXIX as from Lower Winchendon and nowhere else. This is almost identical to type 1 but has a trefoil in the corner instead of the shield shape with two rings, possibly this also occurs at Nether Winchendon or Habereley has misrepresented type 1. Hohler has type 1 as D5 on page 42 and records it from Nether Winchendon and from Brightwell Baldwin (Oxon) and Oseney Abbey with a query.
- 4.1.6 Of type 2 there were 9 examples reused in the old floor, 2 relaid in the chancel, 3 loose from the south nave and 1 from the north nave. This is illustrated by Haberley on page 224 (fig CLXXXIII) and recorded as from Lower Winchendon. Hohler illustrates this design as D2 on page 42 and describes it on page 125 'A crude fleur-de-lis and a triangle with a dot in it, on either side of a triangle formed of parts of circles and enclosing a trefoil' he also records it only from Nether Winchendon. This design is a repeat pattern, four tiles create a mandorla design or eight tiles in pairs could create a large circle with space for a four tile pattern in the centre and single design tiles in the corners.
- 4.1.7 Type 3 a repeat four tile pattern occurred twice in the old floor and there were fragments from both sides of the nave. Haberley (p202 fig CLVI) and Hohler (P42 fig D3) both record a design very similar to this as from Nether Winchendon and Brightwell Baldwin. However another design illustrated by Habereley (p145 fig LXXXIII) from New College and Brightwell Baldwin seems in some ways closer to the examples seen at Nether Winchendon i.e. in this design there are quatrefoils between two quadrants which touch the quadrants and a fleur-de-lis in the corner whereas in the former design the corner has three petals rather than a fleur-de-lis and the decorations between the quadrants are like trefoils on stems which only connect with one of the quadrants.
- 4.1.8 Type 4 was the only single pattern example found; this was loose from the south side of the nave. This was also the only pattern not recorded in Hohler or Haberley. The design consisted of a diagonally set cruciform figure with lobed arms and a heart shaped leaf motif connected by a short stalk within each arm. There was a dot in each corner and a small cross in the centre. This pattern may exist elsewhere but it was beyond the scope of this project to exhaustively search the literature.
- 4.1.9 Type 5 is a 4 tile pattern scheme and was represented by one loose example from the north side of the nave. This type is published in Haberley p 161 fig. CV and was recorded from Notley Abbey and Chilton and Long Crendon Churches all these three sites are in Buckinghamshire within close proximity of each other and are within 4km west of Nether Winchendon. Habereley notes that the churches were probably paved with tiles taken from Notley after its dissolution. This type was published by Hohler as P170 on page 41 and is described as 'Three concentric quadrants separated by bands of dots in rings and lozenges; in the outer angle a dot in a ring between two halved trefoils' he records it in the locations mentioned plus Wyardisbury, Bucks. Hurley Priory,



Berks. St Bartholomew the Great, Smithfield, London and St Mary's, Horsham, Sussex.

5 DISCUSSION

- 5.1.1 The renovation works in the church revealed a considerable wealth of hitherto unknown or hidden features and elements that help to recreate the appearance of the interior at various stages prior to the construction of the existing post-medieval fixtures and fittings.

North door and south wall

- 5.1.2 The blocked north door was suspected but removal of the pew panels revealed the east jamb of the door confirming its existence and position. Churches usually had opposing Nave doors for processional reasons, the main entrance was on the side facing the village and as the church was usually to the north this was the south door. It was not unusual for the less used door, usually the north one, to be blocked later when the processional use had ceased, to prevent draughts (Cook p.188).

- 5.1.3 There were also supposed to have been superstitions connecting the north side of a church with the devil and this may possibly have been a contributing factor to the blocking of north doors.

- 5.1.4 The lower south wall of the Nave exposed by removal of the pews appeared to be of one phase with no blocked or hidden features.

Earth floor and tiled floors

- 5.1.5 Older hard earth surfaces that were probably floors when the current Nave was built were revealed below the pews, the existing font base was situated in a cut through this surface and an adjacent cut on the west may indicate show an earlier font position. North-west of the font the surface exhibited undulations and changes of deposit that probably indicate early grave cuts.

- 5.1.6 The remnant of a tiled floor was found at the east end of the south side of the nave this consisted of reused decorated tiles of Penn type c1350-1400 and plain Flemish or Flemish-style tiles commonly imported from the late 14th to the early 16th century. Three decorated medieval tiles designs were *in situ* in the floor and these or very similar designs have previously been recorded from Nether Winchendon, probably existing in the worn tiled floor in the central passage of the nave and to the south door which was largely covered over during the works. Another small section of worn tiled floor was seen at the west end of the Nave.

- 5.1.7 Two tiles found loose under the pews were unknown from Nether Winchendon; one of them is not recorded by Hohler or Haberley. This piece of floor clearly represents reuse of these tiles. One of the tiles types has been recorded at Oseney Abbey which was the first Oxford cathedral after the dissolution for a few years and then passed to Christ Church Oxford when the see was transferred there; Nether Winchendon belonged to Christ Church from 1542-1545.

- 5.1.8 The surviving tiled floors probably date at the earliest from the 15th century or from after the dissolution if any of the tiles are reused from former religious houses.

Painted glass

- 5.1.9 Some fragments of painted medieval glass were found below the south-west window which has a surviving medieval glass upper panel depicting St Peter. The retrieved fragments included parts of two faces in halos which may represent an Apostle and an angel. Stylistically they may be of the first quarter of the 15th century and earlier than the existing St Peter. Their size indicates they are also from the upper panels of a window but if from the south-west window may be from an earlier set than that containing the existing St Peter.

Reused Medieval roof timbers

- 5.1.10 Probably the most significant finds were reused timbers in the pew bases which clearly came from a medieval roof. Measurement of the timbers indicated they were from the Nave roof which was probably removed in 1827 which is the date on the current Nave roof if that date represents construction of the roof and not a later repair.
- 5.1.11 The timbers found allow a reconstruction of the Nave trusses. The trusses were arch-braced with wall posts and a tie beam. The upper parts of the arch were fixed to the tie beam by means of free tenons. The large spandrels had rebates at the top for infill panels; probably consisting of decorative gothic tracery.
- 5.1.12 A very interesting aspect is the surviving paint decoration on one of the upper arch members which consists of red and blue paintwork on the sides with white and dark chevrons on the soffit. A parallel for the chevron decoration occurs in the surviving Nave roof at the much grander 15th century church at Blythburgh in Suffolk. The chevrons there are on the undersides of the ridge and purlins as well as the arch bracing and ties and give some idea of how the roof decoration at Nether Winchedon might have looked (Clifton-Taylor, pl.109). The roof at Blythburgh is also low pitched as that of Nether Winchedon appears to have been. The Nave dates from around the middle of the 15th century (Pevsner, p.91) and the roof decoration must date from then or soon after.
- 5.1.13 The hollow chamfer of the arch had painted five-pointed wavy-rayed stars or estoiles² on one side and applied (nailed on) six pointed figures (possibly estoiles) on the other (shown only by their outline). Stars and estoiles have various symbolic meanings in christian art and heraldry; it may not be possible however to ascribe any particular significance to these motifs in this context.
- 5.1.14 It is not known which side faced east and which faced west as there may have been some symbolic significance to which way the slightly the different motifs faced.
- 5.1.15 Some reused common rafters also had surviving red and blue pigments and together with a probable section of a ridge piece indicate a low pitched ceiling not much steeper than the present one. Nothing that appeared to be a principal rafter was seen and the reconstruction shows a coupled rafter roof on king post trusses arched brace trusses. No definite king post was found but it seems likely they would have been present to support the ridge piece of a roof like this.

² In heraldry an estoile is a star with wavy rays but it is six-pointed not five-pointed as a rule.



- 5.1.16 The probable low angle of the roof indicates the upper part, at least, is later than the steeper masonry gables that are probably 14th century in date and may perhaps be 15th century in date. The decoration found on some pieces is, as mentioned, similar to elements at Blythburgh dating from the mid or later 15th century. The trusses may have survived from the earlier roof but as the existing battlemented corbels are thought to be of the 15th century³ it could be that the whole roof design was changed then and it was a single contemporary construction.

Pew panelling and bases

- 5.1.17 Sections of pew panelling seen in situ on the north Nave wall seemed to range in date from examples with bar stops on the rail chamfering, which might indicate a 17th century date, to relatively modern panels.
- 5.1.18 The discovery of the medieval roof timbers in the pew bases indicates the bases were constructed, or repaired, after the roof was replaced which was probably around 1827; the date on the current Nave roof. The box pews, as mentioned, contain earlier panels so there were either some box pews in existence before that date or they contain elements imported from elsewhere.

Pulpit and wall painting

- 5.1.19 The early 17th century pulpit was moved from the south-east corner of the Nave and this exposed part of wall painting on the east wall of the Nave which represented the lower right corner of an elaborate decorative frame of a tablet imitating a stone memorial or inscription tablet that would have contained some text or scripture. This was probably part of a scheme including a similar painting recorded in 1986 on the north part of the east Nave wall by Dr Rouse but not now visible. Upper parts of the painting remain hidden behind the top part of the pulpit backboard which was left *in situ*.
- 5.1.20 The pulpit itself seems to have moved from a different position as the moulding on the south side of the sounding board appeared to have been cut off to fit the pulpit flush to the wall and the side of the pulpit against the south wall appeared to have been a separate panel and may have been the door at one time. Also the wall behind the pulpit was clearly exposed when it was painted but that may predate the existence of the pulpit which is dated 1613.

Late burial vault

- 5.1.21 The earth floor and underlying deposits in the central part of the south side of the Nave had been truncated by the construction of a brick burial vault with a segmental brick arched top. This was probably of late 18th or 19th century date. A digital camera held through a small gap in the west end of the vault revealed at least six lead coffins inside. Some were partially collapsed and all appeared to have the decayed remains of timber or other coverings laying on them.

³ Listed building description (see appendix 1).



6 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES

PUBLISHED SOURCES

- Clifton-Taylor, A. (1986) *English Parish Churches as Works of Art*, Batsford, London
- Cook, G.H. (1954) *The English Medieval Parish Church*, Dent, London.
- Haberley, Lloyd (1937) *Medieval English Pavingtiles*, Oxford.
- Hohler, Christopher (1942) 'Medieval pavingtiles in Buckinghamshire', *Records of Bucks.*, **14**, parts 1 and 2, pp. 1-49 and 99-131.
- Page, W. (ed.) (1927) *A History of the County of Buckingham: Volume 4* pp. 118-122 (Victoria County History) (accessed via website – see other sources below).
- Pevsner, N. (1961) *The Buildings of England: Suffolk*, Penguin, Harmondsworth
- RCHME, (1912) *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Buckinghamshire, Vol. 1 – South*.

UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

- Duncan, R (2005) *Outline Specification & Schedule of Works for Repairs to Saint Nicholas' Church, Nether Winchendon, Buckinghamshire*
- Rouse, Dr. E. Clive (1986) *St. Nicholas Church, Nether Winchendon, Bucks. Remains of Wall paintings* (short typescript report held in church records)

OTHER SOURCES

<http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/>

<http://www.netherwinchendon.co.uk/> (accessed 13_12_2010)

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=62547> (accessed: 13_12_2010)

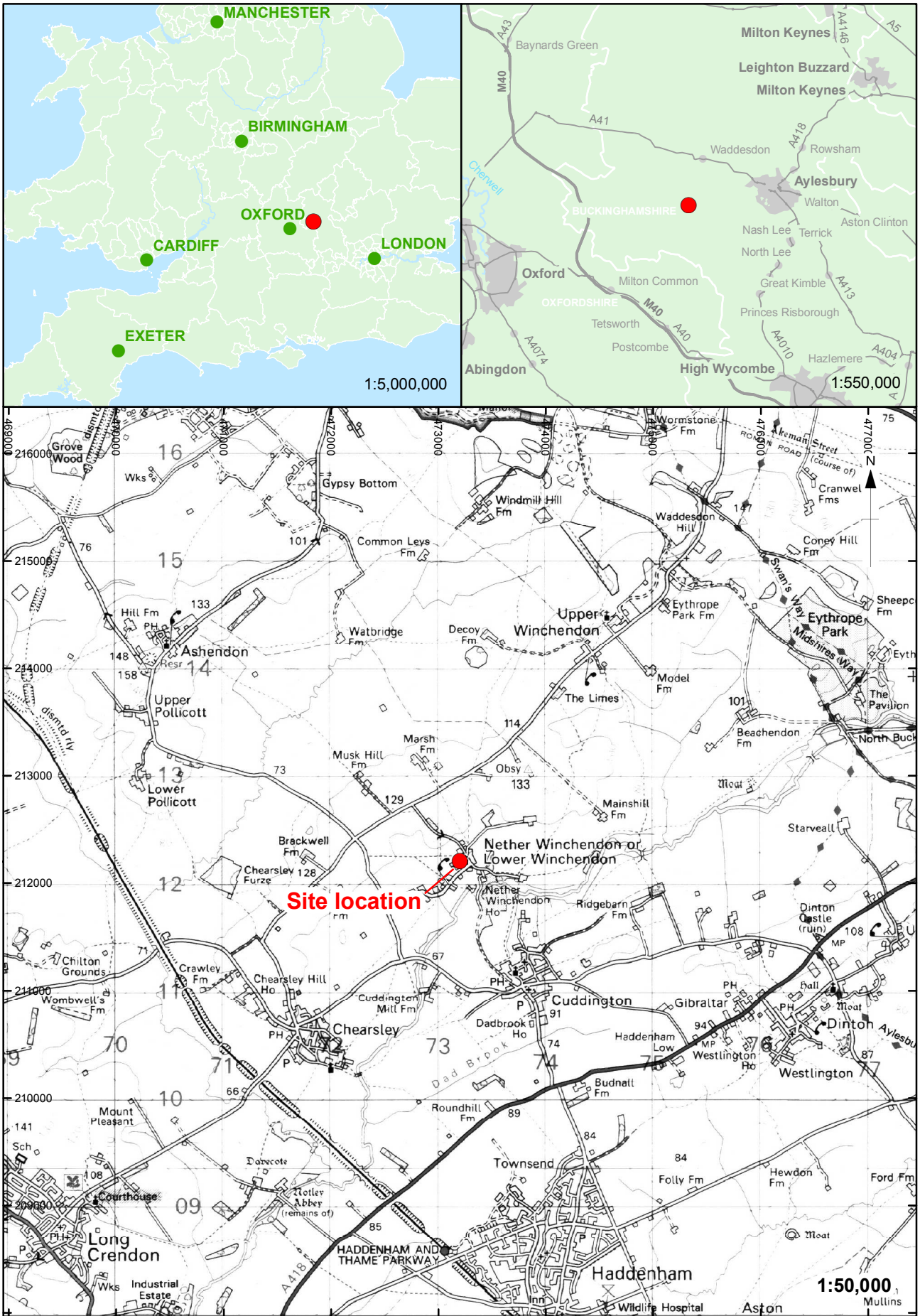


APPENDIX I LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTION

IoE number:	43285
Location:	PARISH CHURCH OF ST NICHOLAS, LOWER WINCHENDON (north side) LOWER WINCHENDON, AYLESBURY VALE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
Date listed:	21 December 1967
Date of last amendment:	21 December 1967
Grade	I

SP 71 SW LOWER WINCHENDON LOWER WINCHENDON north side 2/344 Parish Church of St. Nicholas 21.12.67 GV I Parish Church. C13, mostly rebuilt C14. C15 west tower. Limestone rubble with stone dressings. Old tile roof to chancel and porch, lead to nave. 2 bay chancel, 4 bay aisleless nave, south porch and west tower. Chancel has diagonal buttresses. East window of 3-lights of cusped intersecting tracery. 2 north windows C14, each 2 trefoil lights with 3 quatrefoils. 2 south windows C15 of 2 cinquefoil lights under 4-centred head. Central south door. Nave has on north side 2 windows of cinquefoil lights under 4-centred heads, 2-light to east bay 3-light to west bay. East angle buttress and buttresses flanking west bay. South side of nave has 3 buttresses. East window of 3 cinquefoil lights in four-centred head, west window of 3 cinquefoil lights and tracery under flat head. Gabled porch in bay 3 from east, entrance arch with continuous moulded jambs of 2 orders. Single light trefoil side windows. West tower of 2 stages with half-octagonal south east angle stair turret and embattled parapet. West doorway with continuous moulded jambs, the arch with flowers. 2-light cinquefoil with quatrefoil window over. 2-light belfry windows in Tudor heads. All gables stone coped. Nave has plain parapet. Interior. Chancel arch C13 of 2 chamfered orders with semi-octagonal responds, moulded caps and bases. Tower arch of 2 hollow chamfered orders, semi-octagonal responds. Semi-octagonal cap to inner order. Chancel roof has moulded C15 wall plate. Nave roof dated 'T & G 1827'. Chamfered short kingposts, acorn pendants below. Shaped double ogee tie beam braces. Battlemented C15 corbels. C18 communion rails with turned vase balusters and square newels. Nave has mainly C18 box pews, but squire's pew incorporates C16 traceried panels. C16 pews at west with cut profile ends, restored. Pulpit c1630 hexagonal with canopy and arcaded panels. C18 west gallery with panel front on 2 octagonal posts. Font C15 octagonal bowl on moulded base. Piscina in chancel C15 with ogee head. Sill of chancel south east window carried down to form sedilia; fragmentary stoup in porch. Stained Glass: Chancel: East window C15 three leaves. North West Window leopards head, foliage and Stafford Shield, C15. Nave: South West Window. C15 figure of St. Peter, shield with arms. Chancel south windows have C16 Flemish glass and armorial panels. Nave bay 3 has C18 Creed, Commandments and Lords Prayer on timber in architectural frame with cornice, reeded pilasters and pediment over centre panels. Hanoverian Arms in west Gallery. Brasses. In chancel, 3 of C15 with figures. Monuments. In Chancel to Tyringham family, Thomas Tyringham 1629 in architrave frame, broken pediment and cartouche. Others C17 and C18. RCHM I. 246. MON.1.

\\Server1\invoice codes i thru q\N_codes*NWSNCBS*St Nicholas Church*LO*17.12.10



Reproduced by permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office (c) Crown Copyright. 1996 All rights reserved. License No. AL 100005569

Figure 1: Site location

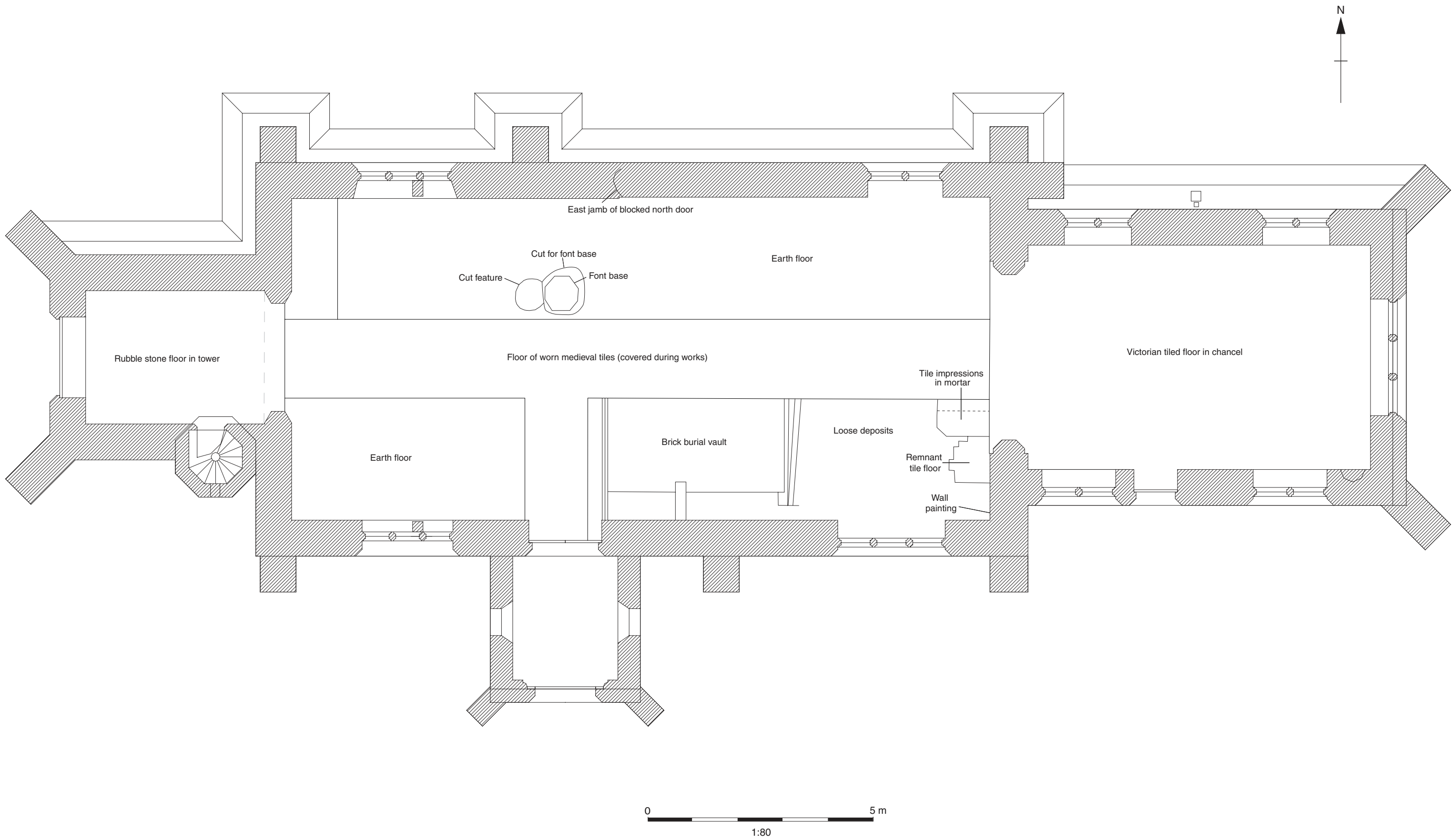


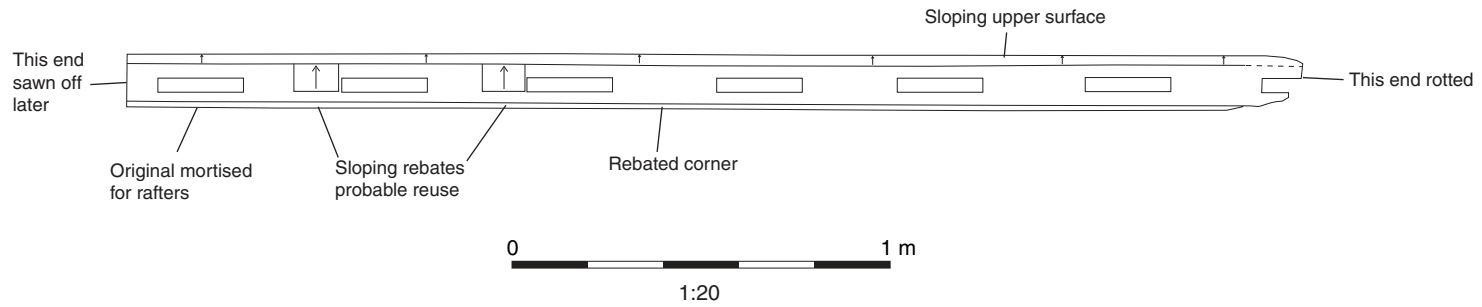
Figure 2: Plan of church with main features revealed during works



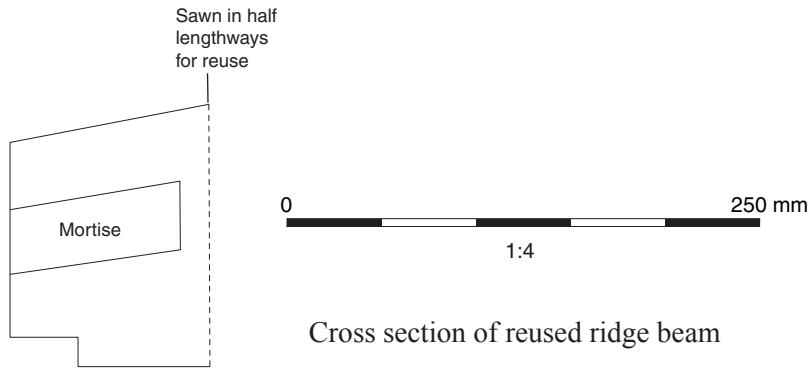
Key
1-3 Decorated medieval tiles with type numbers used in report
W Tiles too worn to be recognisable
P Plain glazed tiles
B Black glazed tiles



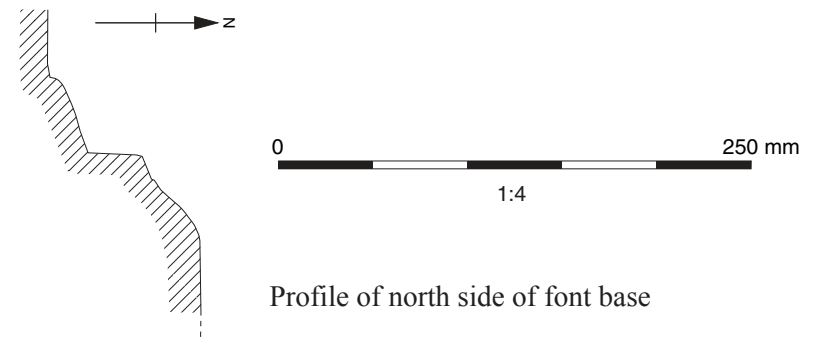
Figure 3: Plan of remnant tile floor at east end of nave



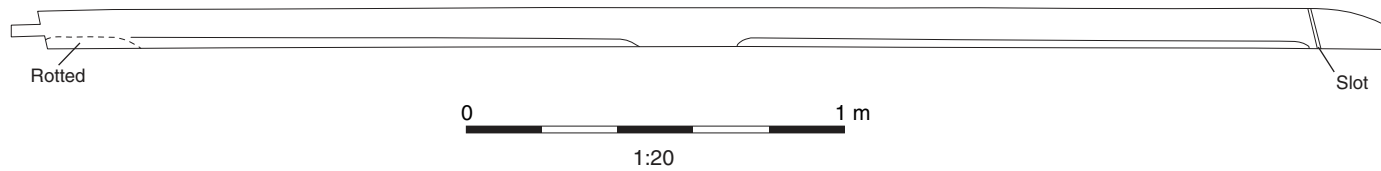
Side elevation of reused ridge beam



Cross section of reused ridge beam

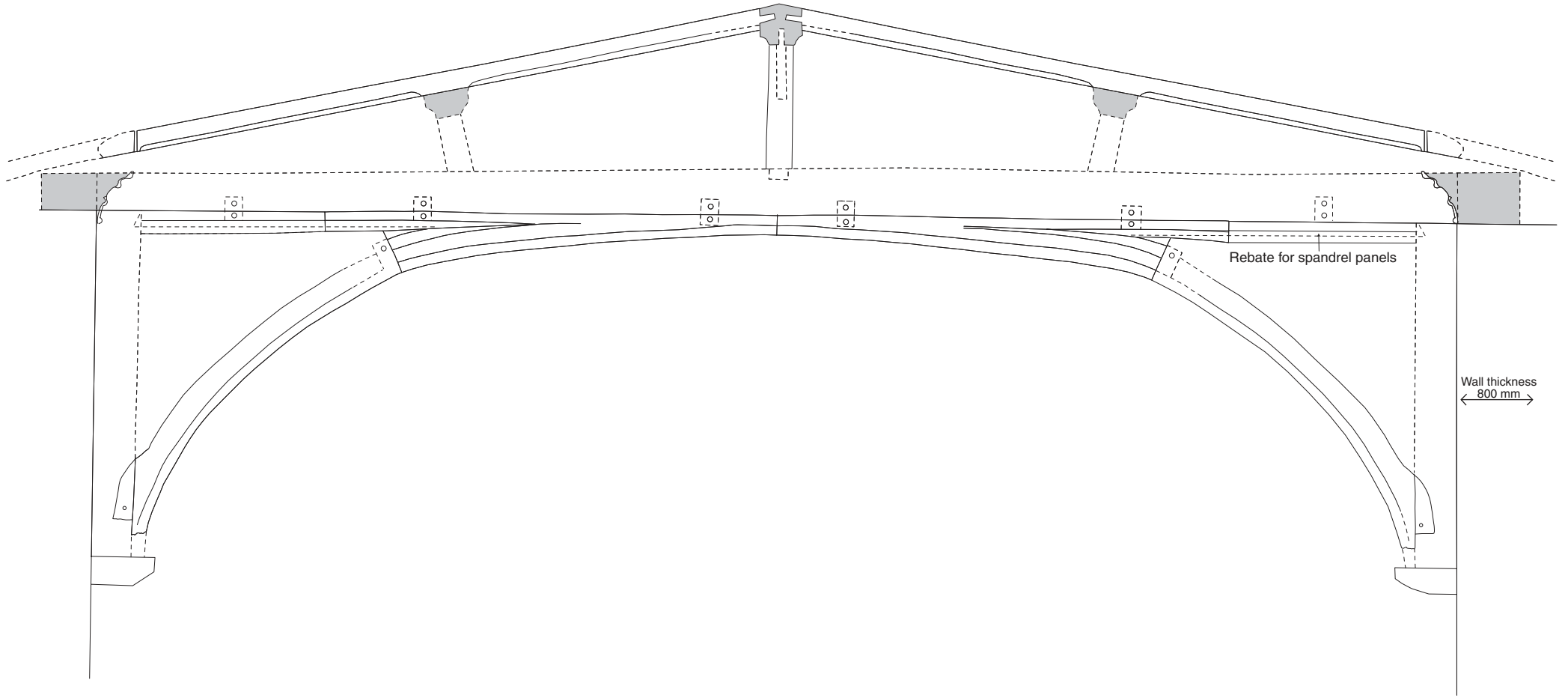


Profile of north side of font base



Side elevation of reused rafter. Halved lengthwise for reuse.

Figure 4: Details of roof members and font base profile



0 1 m
1:30

Wall thickness
800 mm

Figure 5: Putative reconstruction of roof truss from timbers reused in later pew bases



Plate 1: East jamb of blocked north door with panel 5 to right



Plate 2: Earth floor on north side of nave showing probable grave cuts, looking west (1m scale)



Plate 3: Font base cut into earth floor with smaller cut to west, looking east (1m and 0.5m scale)



Plate 4: Detail of mouldings and bar stops on panel 5



Plate 5: Wall painting beneath pulpit backboard (0.5m scale)



Plate 6: Wall painting at west end of nave (1m scale)



Plate 7: Part of floor of worn medieval tiles leading from south door with west end of burial vault on right (looking north)



Plate 8: Cross of five medieval tiles set in chancel floor (0.5m scale)



Plate 9: Remnant of tiled floor and tile impressions at east end of south side of nave (looking east, 1m scale)



Plate 10: Remnant of tiled floor at east end of south side of nave (looking east, 1m and 0.5m scale)



Plate 11: Part of tiled floor showing pattern type 1 on right and type 2 on left



Plate 12: Loose tiles; type 3 on right, type 2 in centre and type 5 on left (scale in 10cm divisions)



Plate 13: Loose tile; type 4 (scale in 10cm divisions)



Plate 14: Tiles in recess at west end of south side of Nave (looking west, 0.5m scale)



Plate 15: South wall of Nave after pews removed with burial vault to north (looking south-east)



Plate 16: Interior of burial vault looking east



Plate 19: Pew base members before removal showing reused timbers (photo courtesy of Ward and Co.)



Plate 20: Reconstruction of roof truss from reused members from pew bases (1m and 0.5m scales)



Plate 21: End of upper arch brace segment showing tenon and rebate at top of spandrel (0.5m scale)



Plate 22: Upper arch brace segment with surviving decoration (0.5m scale)



Plate 23: Decoration on opposite face of upper arch brace segment (0.5m scale)

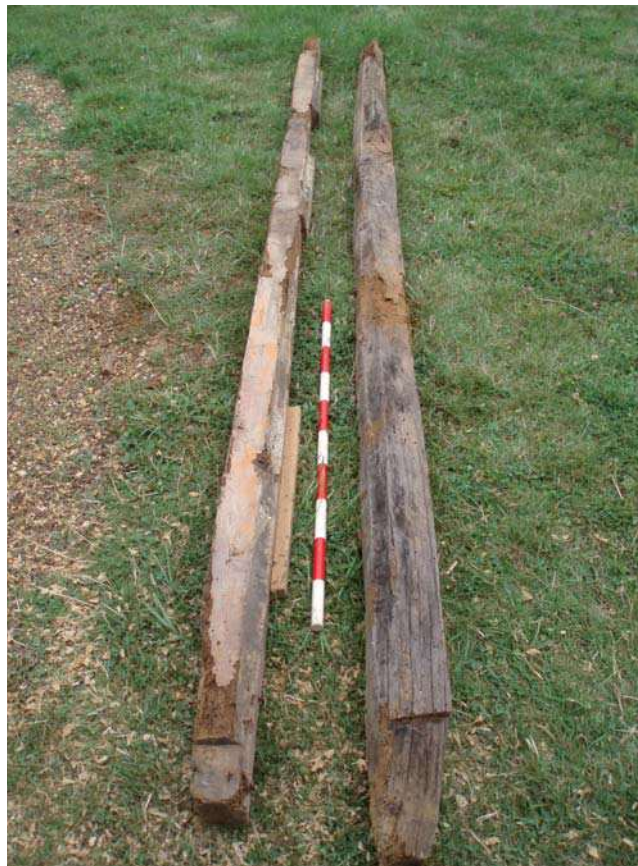


Plate 24: Reused rafters (1m scale)