

# STAUNTON HAROLD CHURCH

ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH, LEICESTERSHIRE



## Fabric Survey of the North Aisle Roof

December 2014

Document No: TJC2014.60



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## SUMMARY OF PROJECT DETAILS

<b>OASIS ID:</b>	Thejesso I-199117
<b>TJC Project Code:</b>	SHCI4
<b>Project Type(s):</b>	Historic Building Recording
<b>National Grid Reference:</b>	SP 37990 20873 (centered); LE65 1RW
<b>County:</b>	Leicestershire
<b>Parish:</b>	Staunton Harold
<b>Local Authority:</b>	North West Leicestershire
<b>Planning Reference:</b>	n/a
<b>Designation Status(s):</b>	Grade I (EH No. 1074386)
<b>HER Record No(s):</b>	MLE12276
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## NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

*During repairs to the leaded roof above the north aisle at Staunton Harold Church in Leicestershire (located at NGR SP 37990 20873), the unexpected discovery of moulded details on the underside of the rafters resulted in a rapid archaeological survey of the exposed historic fabric. The JESSOP Consultancy was commissioned by the National Trust to undertake this work during November 2014.*

*Staunton Harold Church was built as a family chapel by Sir Robert Shirley between 1653 and 1665. It comprises of a mixture of medieval influenced styles of architecture and is a Grade I listed building (EH No. 1074386). The interior is relatively intact retaining original pews, paneling and an organ from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps the most striking feature of the church is the painted ceilings, which depict the creation story from the book of Genesis, entitled 'from chaos to order'. The painting of the nave ceiling was completed in 1655, with the aisles and chancel painted by 1662.*

*The repairs to the roof of the north aisle involved the replacement of the lead sheeting and selective repairs to the timber structure below. The lead was fixed to timber boards, nailed on to the rafters and contained no features or marks of historic significance, and is interpreted as dating from a comprehensive programme of repairs was undertaken with a grant from the Pilgrim Trust in 1953. The roof structure comprises six principal beams that span between the clerestory wall and external wall of the north aisle, secured in timber wall-plates. Between the principal beams are central ribs, which are joined by tenon joints. Over-sailing the central ribs are transverse rafters that span the full width of the aisle below. Attached to the sides of the rafters are roughly cut wooden struts that support a framework of batons. Flat tongue and grooved boards, are nailed from below on to the timber framework. The underside of these boards were painted in 1662.*

*During the recent repairs it was discovered that the underside of the rafters, central ribs and principal beams were deeply carved with moulded decoration. The condition of the carving was such that it was still crisp and had never been painted, or treated. It would appear that as part of the original design from 1653-55 there was an intention to display the underside of the rafters hence the decorative mouldings, however by 1662 only a few years later, a decision was made to cover them over with boards to extend the painted design from the Nave on to the ceilings of the aisles.*

*This report will be submitted to the National Trust, Leicestershire Historic Environment Record and uploaded to the OASIS Archaeological Database (No. Thejesso1-199117).*

# I INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

During repairs to the leaded roof above the north aisle at Staunton Harold Church in Leicestershire (**Figure I**), the unexpected discovery of moulded details on the underside of the rafters resulted in a decision by the National Trust to undertake a programme of rapid archaeological survey of the exposed historic fabric. The JESSOP Consultancy were commissioned to undertake this work between the 7th and 10th November 2014.

This document presents the results of the archaeological survey. It has been prepared following discussions with the National Trust archaeologist Rachael Hall and buildings surveyor Charles Robinson.

The church is a Grade I listed building (EH No. 1074386).

## AIMS OF THE FIELDWORK

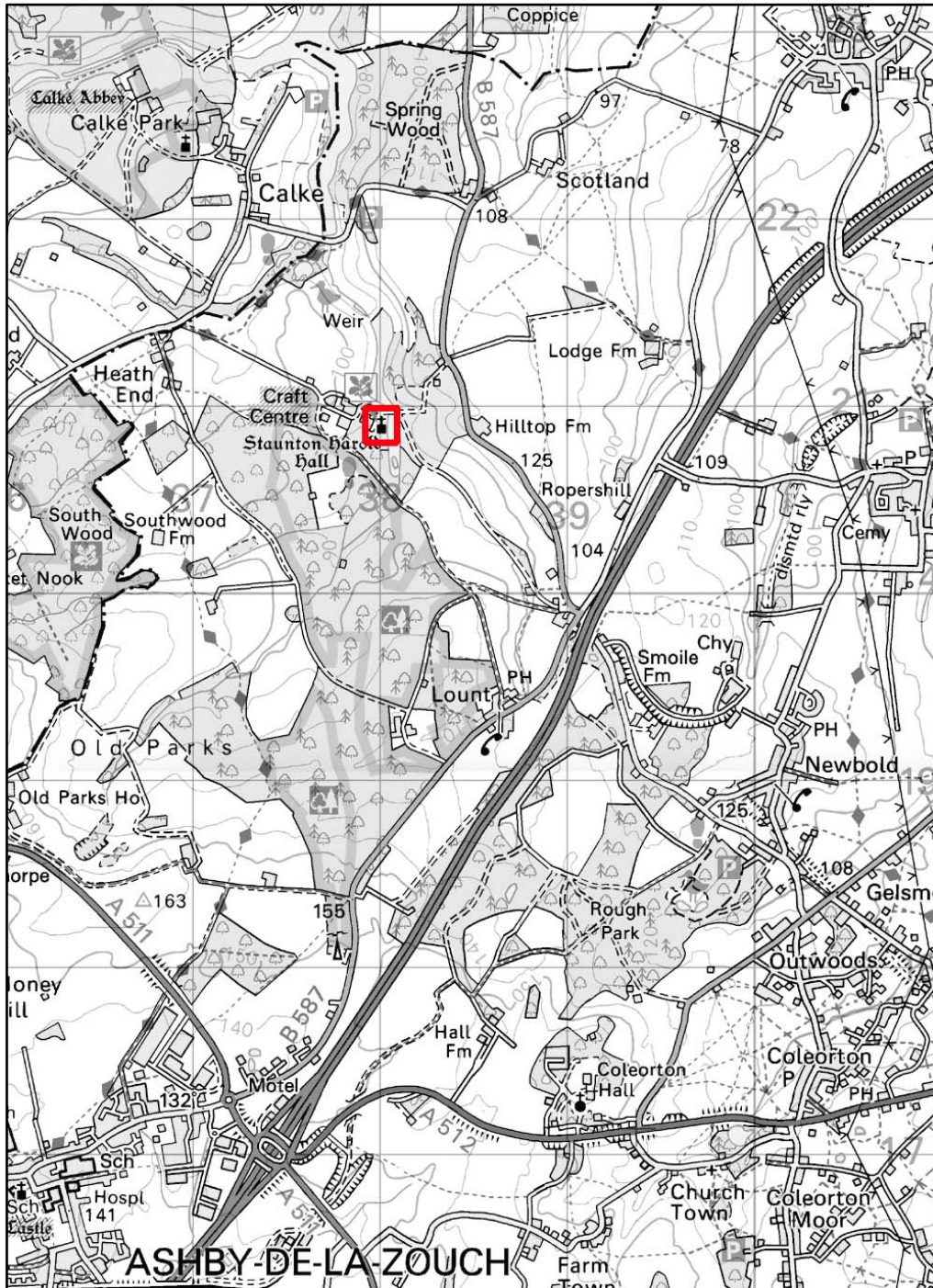
The aim of the project has been to examine the central section of the roof structure above the north aisle of the church, to record the method of construction and any evidence for phases of change and alteration. This survey has been undertaken in accordance with a methodology provided by the National Trust.

## PRINCIPAL DELIVERABLES DERIVING FROM THIS WORK:

- To provide supporting information to the National Trust during the repairs programme;
- An archaeological description of the roof structure;
- An analysis of the phased development of the roof;
- A drawn and digital photographic record of the timbers and key structural features of historic significance.

## DISSEMINATION

Printed and digital copies of this report will be distributed to the National Trust and the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (HER). In addition, once permission has been obtained a digital copy will be uploaded to the OASIS (Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigations) with the reference number: **thejessol-19911**.



**Figure 1:** Location map of Staunton Harold Church (marked with red square)

OS map reproduced under Licence No.BLK4450021. Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright ©.

## 2 SITE LOCATION

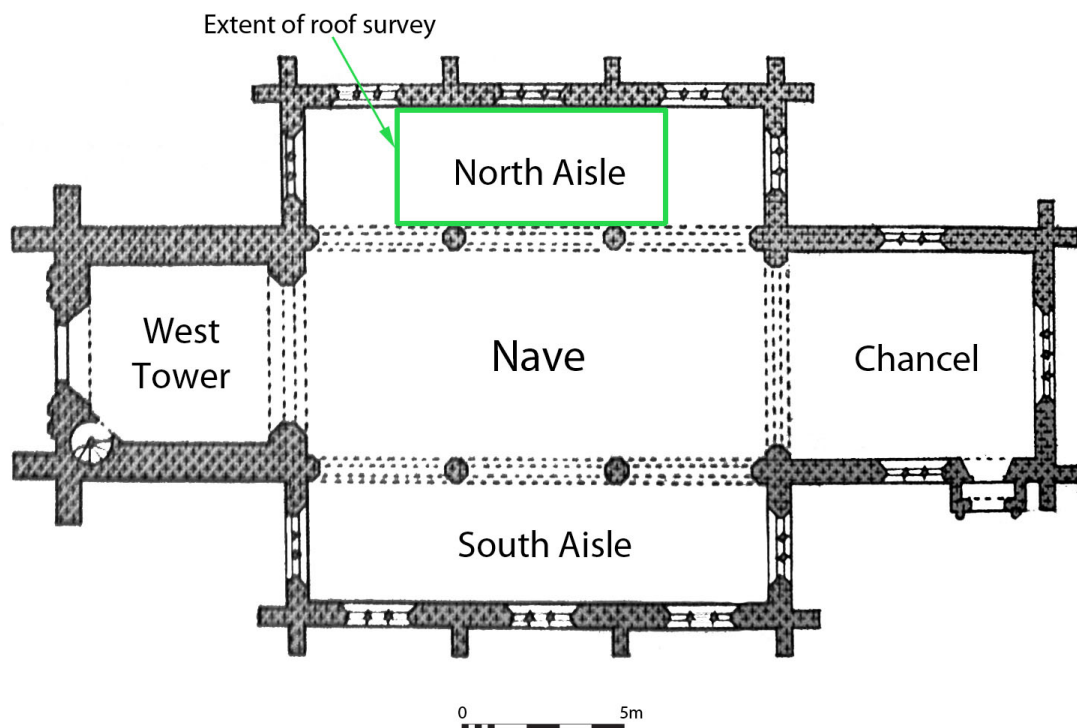
### LOCATION OF SITE AND SETTING

The Site is located on the Staunton Harold Estate in west Leicestershire close to the border with Derbyshire, c.1 km to the southeast of Calke (**Figure 1**). It is sited on a break of slope 50m to the southeast of Staunton Harold Hall.

The Site is centred on NGR SP 37990 20873, and is c.87m above sea level.

### SITE LAYOUT

The layout of the church follows a typical pattern, with a central nave and chancel at the east end, a square tower to the west, and side aisles to the north and south (**Figure 2**).



**Figure 2:** Site plan with key features.  
After Simmons and Colvin 1955 (p174)

### GEOLOGY

The underlying bedrock geology beneath Staunton Harold is the Tarporley Siltstone Formation: siltstone, mudstone and sandstone. No Superficial deposits are recorded (BGS Digital data 2014).



### 3 METHODOLOGY

#### METHODOLOGY

This scheme of archaeological recording has been undertaken in accordance with an outline specification prepared by Rachael Hall of the National Trust. The fieldwork was undertaken with reference to guidelines issued by English Heritage (2006) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA 2014).

This report describes the survey of the roof over the north aisle. The roof timbers were only accessible from above, although the painted ceiling was examined from ground level within the church below. The examination resulted in the production of a rectified photograph of the ceiling of the north aisle (**Appendix I.2**). Prior to the site survey a general inspection was made of the exterior and interior walls and structural elements of the building to enable the development of the church to be understood.

Measured plans and sections were produced of the roof at 1:50, 1:20 and 1:2, with additional details recorded with high-resolution digital photography. Each photograph includes a metric survey scale of an appropriate size and positioned in suitable locations within each frame when the historic fabric was readily accessible.

#### SOURCES CONSULTED

The following sources have been consulted during the preparation of this document:

- National Trust Sites and Monuments Record
- Leicestershire Historic Environment Record
- Sheffield University Architectural Library
- English Heritage Archive
- Relevant archaeological reports and published accounts
- Historic mapping, pictures and photographs
- Listed Building Records

#### NOMENCLATURE

The terminology used throughout this document has been derived from existing names and descriptions associated with Staunton Harold Chapel and its surrounding area. Additional descriptions are based upon observations made during the survey.

## 4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Staunton Harold Church was built at the instruction of Sir Robert Shirley (4<sup>th</sup> Baronet) between 1653 and 1665. There was already a chapel within the adjacent Staunton Harold Hall, but Sir Robert was a strong supporter of the Royalist cause and the construction of a new chapel is widely regarded as a snub aimed at the Parliamentary Authorities (Simmons and Colvin 1955, 173). He eventually died in the Tower of London in 1656 for his political views before the building was finished. It was finally completed by the guardians of his nine year old son Seymour in 1665, and the accounts survive in the Warwickshire Record Office (Simmons and Colvin 1955, 173-76). Selective extracts associated with the works to the roofs are listed as follows:

<b>25 March 1662 – 29 Sept. 1662</b>	
<i>Paid Richard Shepheard for finishing the Battlements of the Church</i>	<i>060 00 00</i>
<i>Paid for lead and carriage thereof by him used there</i>	<i>005 19 06</i>
<i>Paid Wilkins the Smith for iron cramps &amp; pins used there</i>	<i>003 02 00</i>
<i>Paid Mellor for making 20 hurdles for scaffolds there</i>	<i>000 08 04</i>
<i>and for felling of scaffold poles and for carriage thereof</i>	<i>000 15 08</i>
<i>Paid for cords and neales &amp; setting them up</i>	<i>002 10 11</i>
<i>Paid Mr Lovett for Clouding the lles in church</i>	<i>026 00 00</i>
<i>Paid him for erecting Kings armes and ten Commandments</i>	<i>036 00 00</i>
<i>Paid him for Clouding the Chancell</i>	<i>025 00 00</i>

The layout of the chapel and the lavish furnishings were intended to contradict Puritan values, clearly looking towards High Church Anglican worship with the adoption of an architectural style that looked towards the gothic style of the medieval church rather than the progressive puritanical outlook of the Commonwealth government.

The painted wooden ceiling above the nave, chancel and aisles represents the most striking feature of the church, which depicts the creation story from the book of Genesis being entitled 'from chaos to order'. The painting of the nave was completed in 1655 by two brothers Samuel and Zachary Kyrke, with the aisles and chancel painted by 1662. Above the nave the

painting represents the creation, above the chancel the praises of god and above the aisles are patterns of clouds that add to the overall impact of the design.

The chapel was given to the National Trust in 1953 by the Late Earl Ferrers, and it forms part of their property portfolio in the Midlands Region. Following the benefaction extensive repairs were undertaken with a grant from the Pilgrim Trust including replacing plaster on the walls and repairs to the roof.

#### PREVIOUS SURVEYS AND REPAIRS

There have been a number of previous surveys and investigations to record and examine parts of the historic fabric and archaeological remains within the church (see below), although there have been no previous survey of the roofs above the aisles.

#### *Archaeological Investigations*

- **1987: National Trust** - Harry Beamish. (SZE3513) Archaeological Survey: Staunton Harold, Leicestershire.
- **1995: Trent and Peak Archaeological Trust.** (SZE6528) Internal Plan of Staunton Harold Chapel at 1:100; (SZE243) Plan of Limestone/Modern Floor Tiles at 1:50. October – December; (SZE8896) Survey of Pews at Staunton Harold Chapel at 1:10.
- **1996: Trent and Peak Archaeological Trust** - G. Guilbert and Kate Fearn. (SZE2707) Trial Excavation of Nave Floor, West of Pew 25. February; (SZE7863) Recording of Woodwork, Masonry and Floor in the Nave. July; (SZE9978) Drawing of South Aisle Masonry Recorded on Removal of Wall Paneling During Restoration at 1:50; (SZE4251) Profiles of South Aisle Wall Panelling at 1:1 & 1:5.

#### *Ridout Associates*

An inspection of the condition of the underside of the painted ceiling boards within the nave and aisles was undertaken in October 2010 by Ridout Associates (Ridout 2010). It was reported that boards were of a tongue and groove construction, but in places structural movement had occurred resulted in the warping/cupping/twisting of the boards. The report concluded that in areas where water had caused damage from ingress above, this was historic, and no fresh decay of the timbers was noted. Ridout recommended that a photographic record be kept of the ceiling.

## 5 HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY

### INTRODUCTION

This section of the report presents the results of the archaeological recording of the exposed sections of the roof above the north aisle (**Appendices 1.5, 1.6**). To accompany the written description and drawn survey (**Figures 3-5**), colour photographs of the various structural elements are included as **Appendix 1**.

The roof boards had not been removed at the east, or west ends of the north aisle at the time of the archaeological recording (see **Figure 3**), thus this survey must be regarded as a partial record. It is however, assumed that the structural elements are repetitive along the roof.

### DESCRIPTION OF FABRIC

#### LAYOUT OF NORTH AISLE AND ROOF

The north aisle of the church was built as part of the primary phase of construction c. 1653-55. It is comprised of a rectangular space (**Appendix 1.1**), with a three arched arcade to the south opening on to the nave (**Figure 2**). The ceiling (**Appendix 1.2**) comprises tongue and groove boards that are nailed in position at the center. Two boards span the width of the aisle (**Appendix 1.4**), with approximate measurements of 14-20cm (width) x 1.2-1.3m (length) and 0.5-0.1cm in thickness. The boards are decorated with a cloud design in oil paint, which was applied from below once the boards had been nailed in place. Around the edge of the painted ceiling is a board with a simple moulding forming a crude cornice (**Appendix 1.3**). Its purpose may have been to support the outer edge of the boards and conceal any gaps along the edge.

The external roof level above the north aisle comprises a rectangular area, measuring 3.6m x 13.05m. There is a raised parapet c.1m in height and 0.3m wide, with crenelated battlements and turrets with pinnacles (**Appendices 1.5, 1.6**). The parapet has been added to the main clerestory wall of the church as a secondary stage of work, which concurs with the documentary accounts from 1662 that detail a payment to Richard Shepheard for '*finishing the battlements of the Church*'.

#### THE STRUCTURE OF THE ROOF

The roof was covered with thick sheets of lead (4-5cm) that were fixed to timber boards (**Appendices 1.5, 1.6**). The lead was rolled in position, although unusually, the joints were not wrapped around an internal wooden pole.



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The lead contained no features or incised marks or historic significance, and is interpreted as dating to a comprehensive programme of repairs undertaken with a grant from the Pilgrim Trust in 1953. The boards appeared to be made from oak (**Appendix I.7**) and were c.0.2m wide and nailed in position with hand made nails (**Appendix I.20**) and orientated north-south.

The roof structure comprises six principal oak beams that span between the clerestory wall and external wall of the north aisle. They measure c.3.8m in length (**Appendix I.13**), with a scantling of 0.27m x 0.3m (**Figure 5**) and are separated from one another at 1.9m centers. The underside of these beams is carved with chamfered and cyma reversa and quarter round moulding details that still retain crisp edges (**Appendix I.15**), and have never been painted or treated. The ends of these beams were not visible as they were built within the masonry walling of the church, however, on the upper face along the north wall consecutive numerical assembly marks were recorded (**Appendix I.8**). These were in the form of deeply incised Roman numerals. Only the two central beams were exposed during the survey, being numbered III and IIII. From these marks it can be inferred that there are a total of six principal beams along the length of the roof (see **Figure 3**), with I located at the north and IV to the south.

Secured with tenons on either side of the principal beams are timber wall plates (**Figure 4**). Those along the north wall (**Appendix I.10**) measure 0.08m x 0.28m and are carved on the inner face (**Appendix I.9**) with torus and triangular reeded mouldings. On the upper face at either end of the sections of wall plate are incised Roman Numerals (**Appendix I.8**), which indicate the numerical sequence runs from north to south. The wall plate along the south clerestory wall (**Appendices I.16-18**) measures 0.05m x 0.31m and is partially recessed into the masonry (**Appendix I.16**). The exposed face of the clerestory wall plate still retains a horizontal red pencil marking out line (**Appendices I.16, I.17**) that denotes the base of the tenons into which the rafters are housed. The inner face of the clerestory wall plate mirrors the carved design on the north wall plate (**Figure 5**).

Centrally positioned between the principal beams are central ribs, which are pegged and tenoned together (**Appendix I.13**). These timbers are c.1.63m in length with a scantling of 0.22m x 0.19m. The undersides of these beams are carved on the edges (**Appendix I.14**) with a double cyma reversa moulding (**Figure 5**).



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Over-sailing the central ribs (**Appendix I.12**) are transverse rafters that span the full width of the aisle below (**Figure 4**). These timbers measure c.3.75m with a scantling of 0.12m x 0.11m. Each rafter is pegged from above into the central rib (**Appendix I.12**). At the south end the rafter is tenoned through the wall plate and into the masonry of the clerestory wall (**Appendix I.16**). At the north end the timbers are housed in similar through tenons cut in the north wall plate (**Appendix I.9**), but secured from above with wooden pegs (**Appendix I.10**). They are carved on the underside with cyma reversa mouldings (**Figure 5**), which terminate in a lamb's tongue stop detail on either side of the central rib and against the wall plates (**Appendix I.17**). On the upper face of each rafter at the joint with the north wall plate are incised Roman numerals. These form a continuous sequence of assembly marks comprising of crude incisions (**Appendix I.10**). It is assumed they continue along the length of the roof, although only marks **VIII** to **XVI** were exposed during the survey (see **Figure 3**). They run from north to south, matching the other assembly marks along the north edge of the roof.

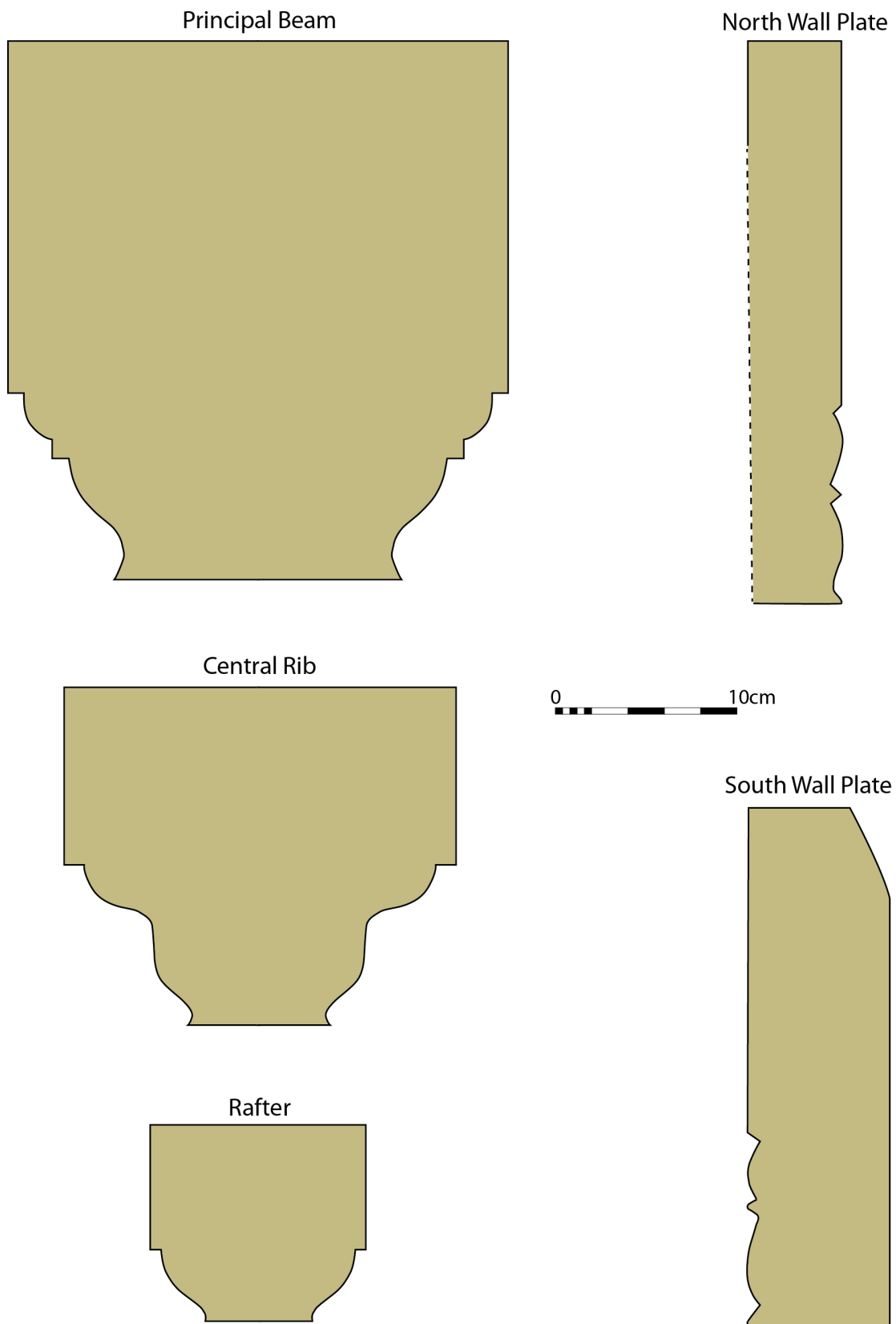
Attached to the sides of the rafters are roughly cut wooden struts (**Appendix I.19**) that support a framework of batons, on to which the ceiling boards are nailed from below (see **Figure 4**).

Evidence for a third and more recent (c.1953?) phase of repair was noted to the west of principal beam 4 (see **Figure 3**). In this location one of the rafters has a broken end, another is sawn back, and a thin timber has been added to provide support for the timber boards above.

## DISCUSSION

The form of the roof above the north aisle is a relatively typical construction for the side aisles of churches within the UK. Oak appears to have been the predominant choice of wood. The crisp nature of the carving and red pencil line along the clerestory wall plate, all indicate that the timberwork was in a partially finished state, and the original intention may have been to paint, or treat the timber in some way. The use of sequential assembly marks on the upper face of the timbers indicate that the whole roof was prefabricated on the ground, and then reassembled and secured in position during the construction of the church. The secondary addition of the thin batons for the ceiling boards below, curtailed the requirement to finish the exposed timberwork, which has been left preserved within the ceiling void.





**Figure 5:** Moulding profiles for roof beams.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

### SUMMARY

The discovery that the underside of the rafters, central ribs and principal beams within the south aisle at Staunton Harold Church were deeply carved with moulded decoration can be regarded as an important addition to our knowledge of the development of the church. Whilst detailed documentary accounts survive for the later phase of construction, they do not describe the appearance of the aisle ceilings. It can now be demonstrated that the original decorative scheme for the aisles (1653-55) was to display the underside of the rafters hence the carved mouldings, however, by 1662 only a few years later, a decision was made to cover them over with boards to extend the painted design on to the ceilings of the aisles. This may only represent a short period of time, and it is unusual to be able to date structural alterations from this period with such precision.

The preservation of the main structural timbers appears to be sound, but it has been noted that a number of the painted boards are fragile and care should be taken to not dislodge or move them.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made as a result of this programme of archaeological recording:

1. It is recommended that any future opening up of the historic fabric at Staunton Harold Church is undertaken in conjunction with an intermittent archaeological watching brief;
2. That photographic montages are prepared for the nave, chancel and north aisle to accompany the image that has been produced during this survey;
3. That the results of this survey are published as a note in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*.

## 7 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### AUTHORSHIP

This report has been prepared by Oliver Jessop MIfA, with support from Ian Atkins MIfA (illustrations). Editing has been provided by Karen E Walker MIfA, FSA.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Rachael Hall and Charles Robinson of the National Trust are thanked for commissioning this work and for their help and advice during the project. The team from Norman Underwood arranged safe access, and they are thanked for opening up sections of the roof for the archaeological survey.

The staff at the Sheffield University Architectural Library were helpful in identifying historical material relating to the church.

Nick Cox Architects are also acknowledged for providing background information and survey drawings for the repair programme.

## SOURCES AND REFERENCES CONSULTED

### PRIMARY SOURCES CONSULTED: MAPPING

- Ordnance Survey Mastermap, 2014
- British Geological Map of Britain (digital data), 2014

### SECONDARY SOURCES: PUBLISHED WORKS AND GREY LITERATURE

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Simmons, J. and Colvin, H. 1955. 'Staunton Harold Chapel', *Archaeological Journal*, cxii, pp.173-6

## INTERNET RESOURCES

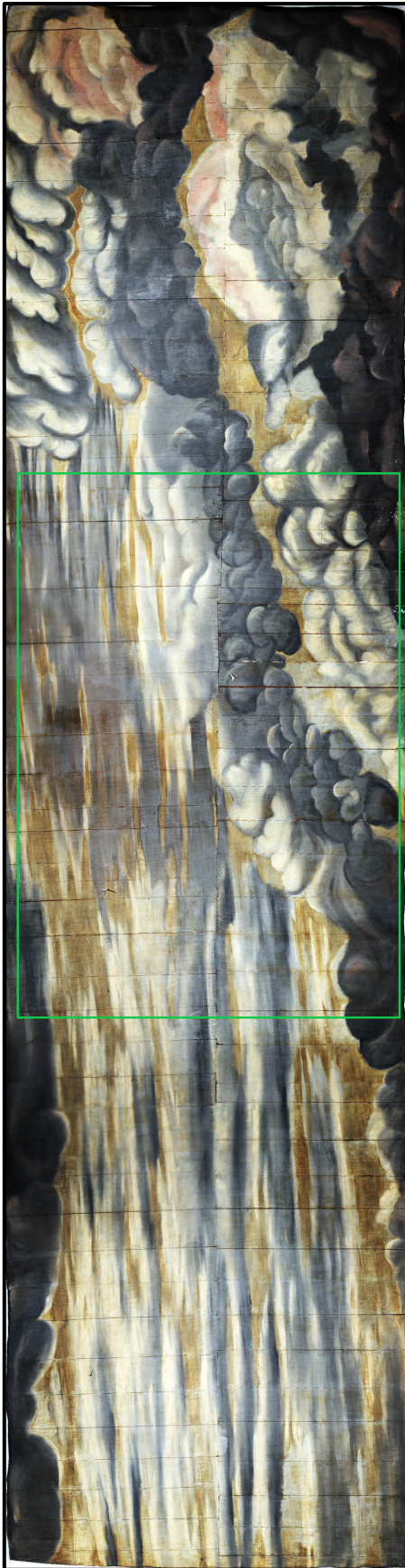
- British Geological Survey: [www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk)
- Heritage Gateway: [www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk)

## **Appendix I:**

### Record Photographs



**Appendix I.I:** View looking west along north aisle; note painted ceiling.



**Appendix 1.2:** Photographic montage of the north aisle painted ceiling from below; note the area of the roof surveyed above is outlined in green.





**Appendix I.3:** Detail of northeast corner of ceiling along north aisle; note timbers used to form a cornice below boards.



**Appendix I.4:** Detail of painted boards on ceiling of north aisle; note irregular size of boards.





Appendix I.5: General view looking west along north aisle roof (2m scale).



Appendix I.6: General view looking east along north aisle roof (2m scale).





**Appendix I.7:** General view of upper face of roofing boards after lead sheeting removed (1m scale).



**Appendix I.8:** North wall-plates that are tenoned on either side of principal rafter 4; note assembly marks (10cm scale).



**Appendix I.9:** Detail of moulding on inner face of north wall-plate (10cm scale).





**Appendix I.10:** Detail of assembly marks on upper face of rafters secured into north wall-plate (10cm scale).



**Appendix I.11:** Detail of rafter secured with a peg in north wall-plate; note assembly mark 'X' (10cm scale).



**Appendix I.12:** Detail of upper face of rafters that over sail the central rib; note each is secured with a peg (1m scale).



**Appendix I.13:** Detail of upper face of principal rafter 4; note central ribs are tenoned and securing with pegs (10cm scale).





**Appendix I.14:** Detail of central moulded rib with over sailing rafters.



**Appendix I.15:** Detail of joint between principal beam 4 and north wall-plate (10cm scale).



**Appendix I.16:** Detail of clerestory wall-plate; note how the ends of the rafters are recessed into the masonry.



**Appendix I.17:** Detail of clerestory wall-plate; note crisp and unpainted mouldings on underside of the rafters.





**Appendix I.18:** Detail of clerestory wall-plate above North Aisle; note original setting-out red pencil line.



**Appendix I.19:** Detail of secondary struts used to hang boards for painted ceiling below (10cm scale).





Appendix I.20: Detail of hand-made iron nails (10cm scale).