



KDK ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Historic Building Watching brief

St Mary's Church

Northchurch

Hertfordshire



Quality Check

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Summary

Between January and March 2019 a Historic Building Watching brief was carried out at St Mary's Church, Northchurch, Hertfordshire in order to fulfil a planning condition for repair works to the nave and north aisle roofs. The north aisle was constructed in 1882 and the leadwork displayed two methods of joining the lead sheets above the north-south aligned softwood boards; by way of a timber batten and by a hollow roll. The nave roof was of a different construction, having diagonally placed sarking boards beneath very thin lead sheets that were all joined using timber battens. Graffiti discovered on the boards gave the date of this roof as September 1903 and the names of the men working on it for Matthews Builders and Undertakers of Castle Street, Berkhamsted. Modern repairs were evident in the screeding to the valley gutters and the use of blockwork in the north wall of the north aisle. No other features of note were observed.

1 Introduction

1.1 Between January and March 2019 KDK Archaeology Ltd carried out a Historic Building Watching Brief of St Mary's Church, Northchurch, Hertfordshire. The project was commissioned by Atelier Architecture and Design Ltd on behalf of St Mary's PCC, and was carried out according to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by KDK (Martin-Taylor 2018), and approved by Hertfordshire Historic Environment Team (HHET), Archaeological Advisor (AA) to the Local Planning Authority (LPA), Dacorum Borough Council. The relevant planning application reference is 4/02754/17/FUL.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This project has been required under the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as a condition of planning permission for repair works to the roof.

1.3 *The Site*

Location

Northchurch is a village and civil parish within the administrative district of Dacorum, located directly adjacent to the town of Berkhamsted in the Bulbourne Valley, on National Grid Reference SP 97438 08833 (Fig. 1).

Description

St Mary's Church is situated towards the southeast end of Northchurch village, set back 30m from the High Street, which runs through both Northchurch and Berkhamsted (Fig. 2). The church is immediately surrounded by its churchyard, beyond which are residential buildings and local businesses to the south and east, St Mary's Primary School to the northwest and the River Bulbourne approximately 90m to the northeast. St Mary's Church is Grade I listed and the National Heritage List for England entry is as follows (NHLE 1348470):

NORTHCHURCH HIGH STREET SP 90 NE (north side) 3/245 29.7.50 Church of Saint Mary. Saxon south wall and part of west wall. C13 chancel with C15 windows. C13 and C14 transepts. C15 tower at crossing. C19 north aisle and porch. Nave heightened in C15. Finely carved wall monument of 1730. Brass of 1785 to Peter of Hertswold, with engraved head after Bartolozzie. (HE 2018a)

The graveyard also contains the gravestone of Peter the Wild Boy, which is independently Grade II listed (NHLE 1412381).



Proposed Development

The lead in the north aisle and nave roofs has deteriorated and has allowed water ingress for a number of years. The proposal is to replace the current lead with terne coated stainless steel laid with batten rolls at 530 centring to maintain the appearance of lead. The valley gutter will be stainless steel and all the flashings will be lead (Fig. 3).

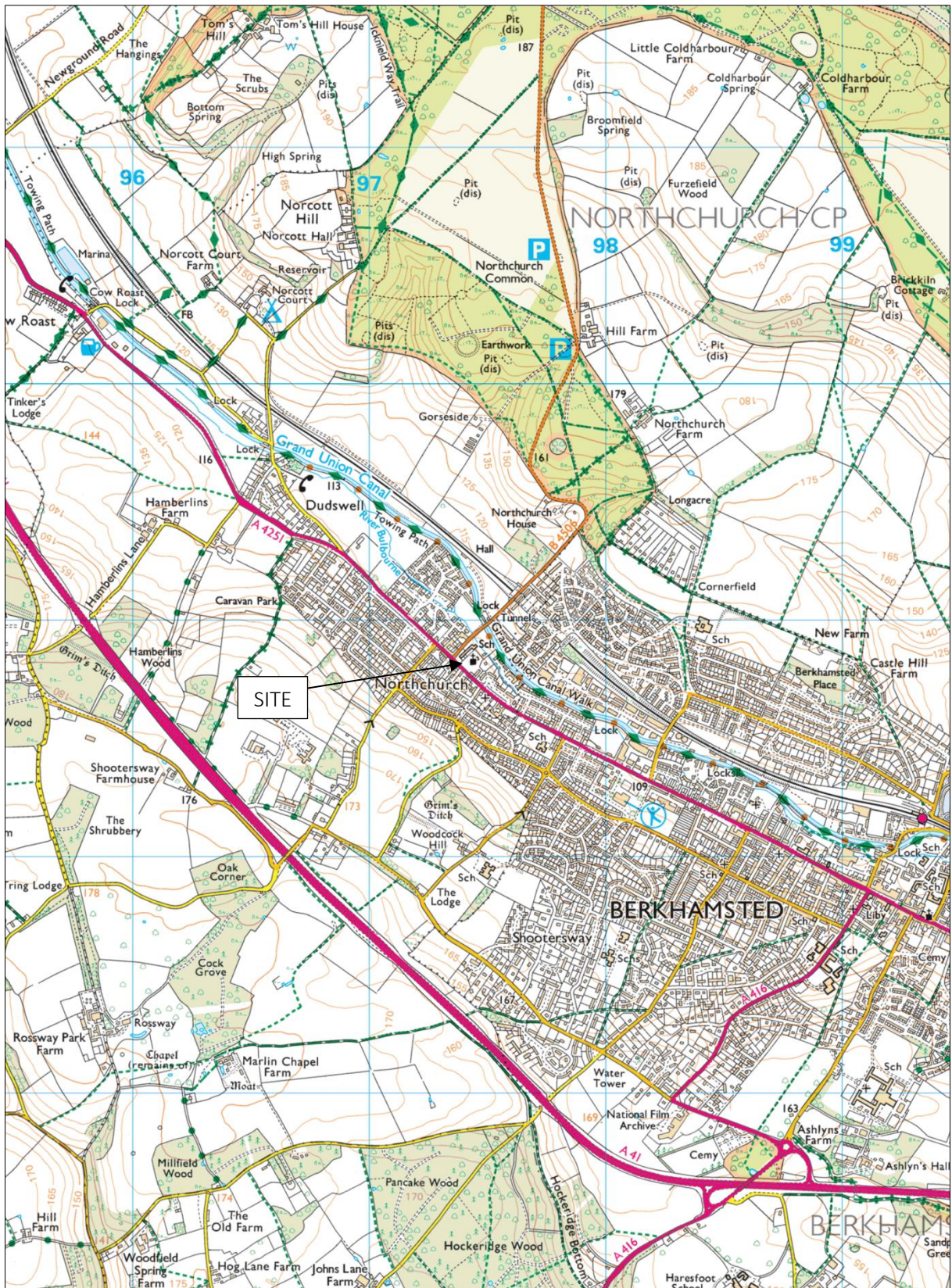


Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

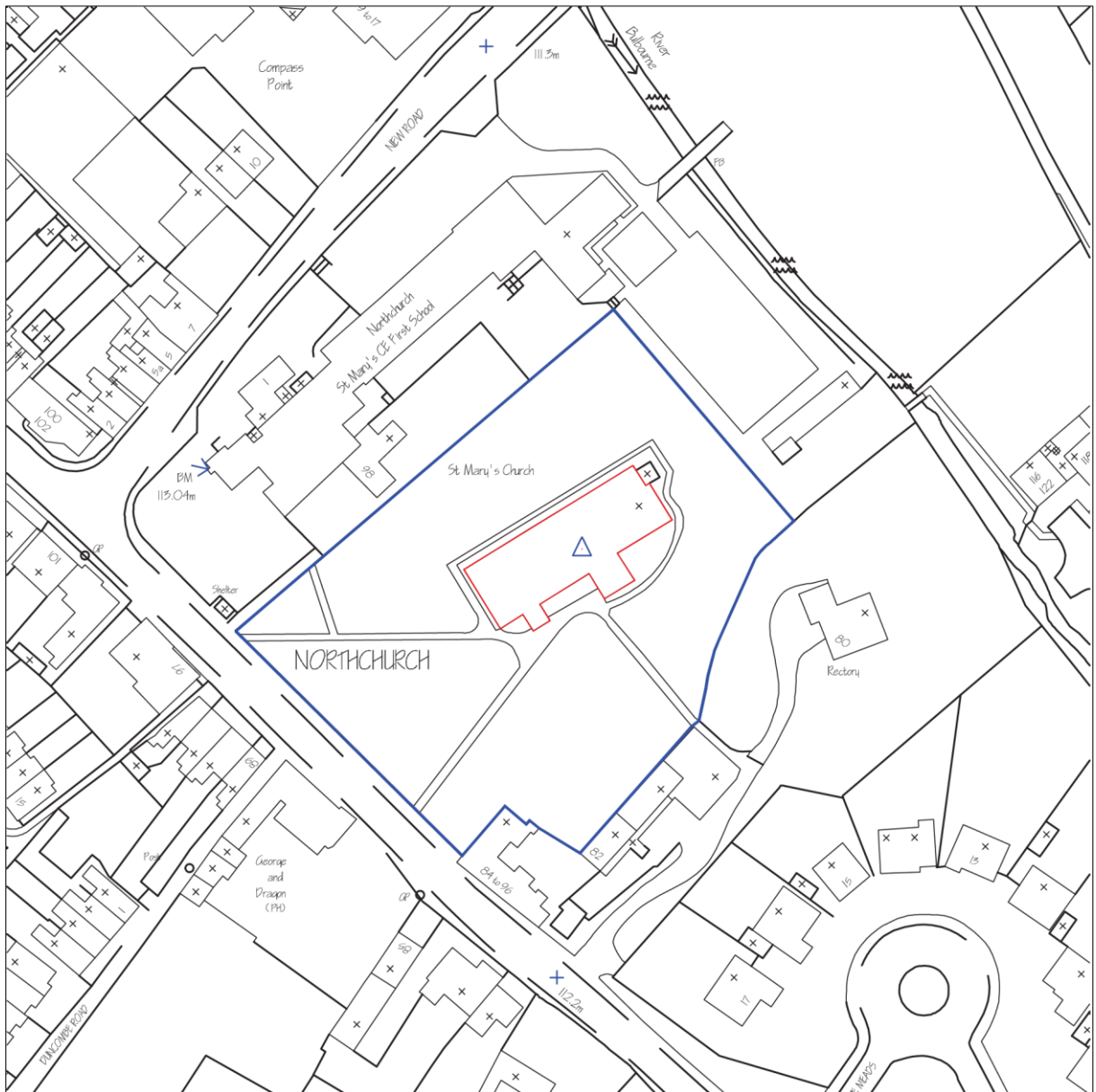


Figure 2: Site location (scale 1:1250)

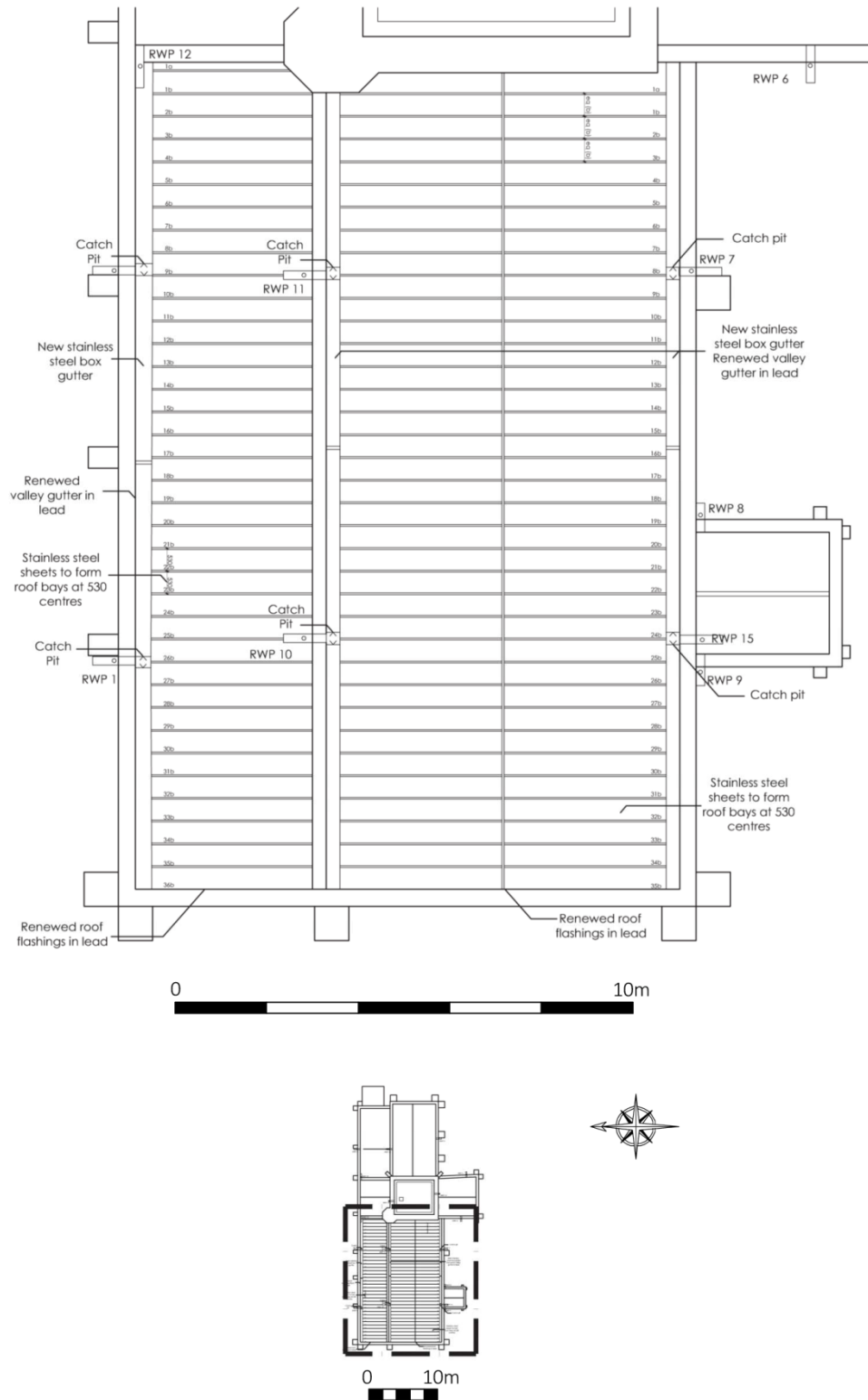


Figure 3: Roof repair plan (top scale 1:150; bottom scale 1:1000)

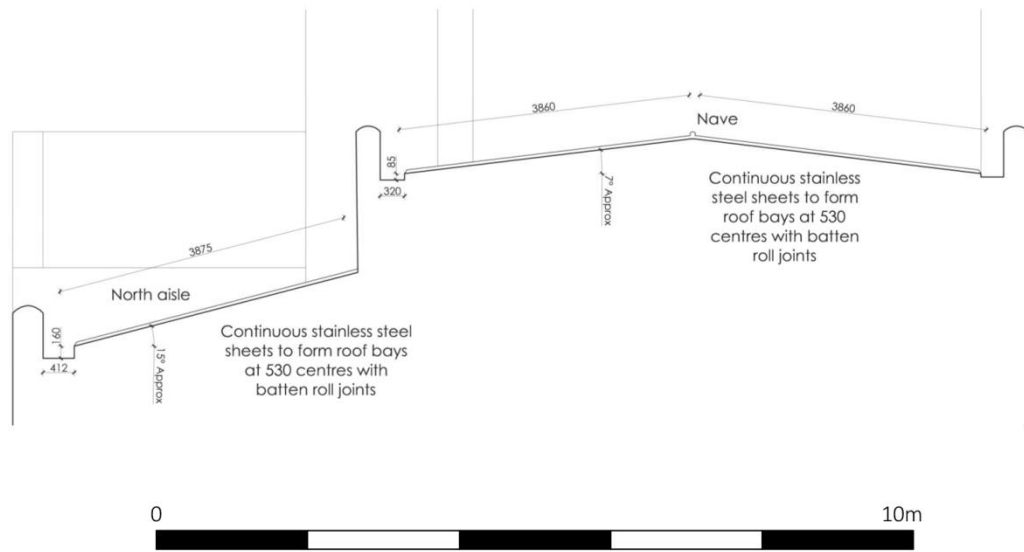


Figure 4: Roof section (scale 1:100)

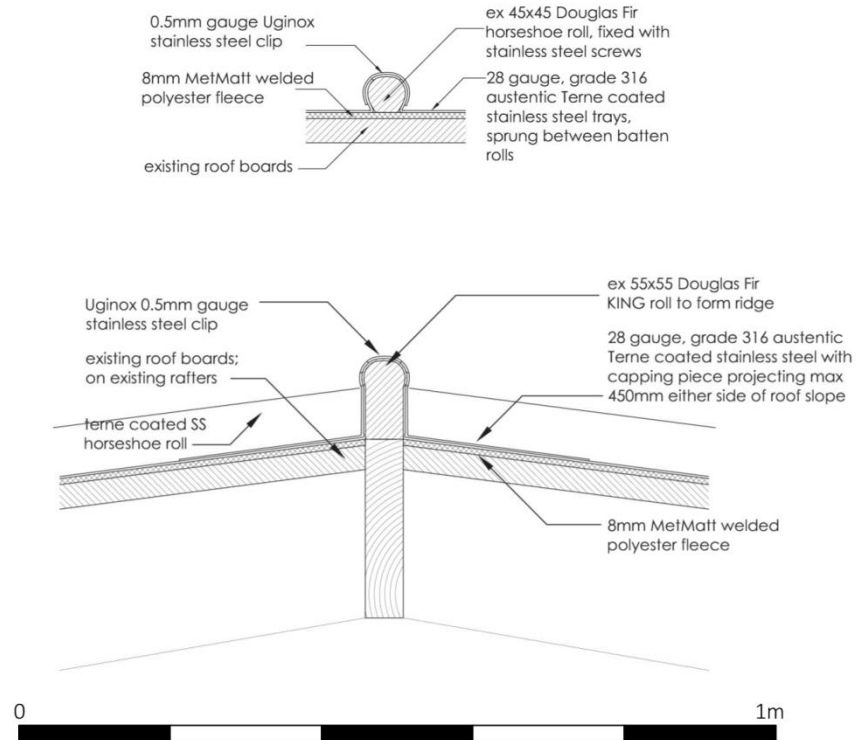


Figure 5: Batten/horseshoe roll joint detail (top); ridge/king roll detail (bottom) (scale 1:10)



2 Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the Written Scheme of Investigation, the aims of the project were:

- To ensure the archaeological recording of previously unexposed historic building fabric
- To ensure the archaeological recording of all aspects of the development programme likely to have an impact on the historic fabric of the building before and during the works
- To provide an adequately detailed project report that will place the findings of the investigations in their local and regional context, with reference to the relevant regional research agendas.

2.2 Standards

The work conformed to the following requirements:

- The relevant sections of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance Notes* (CIfA 2014)
- The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2014)
- Current English Heritage guidelines (HE 2015, EH 2008)
- The Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003)

2.3 Methods

The work was carried out according to the Written Scheme of Investigation, which required:

- A watching brief on all alterations to the building that impacted on the historic fabric or exposed previously hidden structural and/or architectural material

2.4 Constraints

No constraints were encountered.



3 Historical Background

St Mary's Church is likely to have been a minster church which was the focus of the later parish of Berkhamsted. Indeed, Northchurch was known as Berkhampsted St Mary in the early Norman period (St Mary's Northchurch n.d.) and became known as *Northcherche* in the 14th century (VCH 1908). By the 13th century, the settlement of Berkhamsted had extended along the Roman Akeman Street towards Berkhamsted Castle and effectively became a separate settlement, which took the old name of Berkhamsted (St Mary's Northchurch n.d.).

The church dates to before the Norman Conquest and is exceptional in Hertfordshire as the south and west walls of the nave still contain a large amount of fabric from the Anglo-Saxon period (HE 2018a). The early church is thought to have had an aisleless nave potentially with a west chamber, as indicated by the thicker walls at the west end of the nave (RCHME 1910). The chancel was replaced in the 13th century by the central tower with flanking transepts and a new chancel to the east. The tower and transepts were partially replaced or rebuilt in the 15th century (*ibid*). A north aisle, south porch, vestry and organ chamber were added in 1882, after the church received a grant for £40 towards the enlargement and repairs (Incorporated Church Building Society (ICBS) Identifier; ICBS08647).

The graveyard is noted for containing the gravestone of Peter the Wild Boy, a feral child found in the forest of Hertswold, Germany in 1725 by the hunting party of George I of England, who was visiting his native Hanover. Peter was brought back to England on the order of Caroline, Princess of Wales, and became a scientific curiosity of the age. He was supposed to be approximately twelve years old when found and all attempts to curb his 'wild' behaviour or teach him to speak proved to be failures. He was later entrusted to the care of Mrs Titchbourn, a member of the royal staff, who was granted a handsome pension for her trouble. Peter later passed to the care of James Fenn, a yeoman farmer in Northchurch parish, and afterwards his brother Thomas Fenn of Broadway Farm, also in the same Parish. Peter lived here for the rest of his 'inoffensive' life and died on the 22nd February 1785, at the supposed age of 72 (The Scots Magazine 1785:588-589).

Another aspect of note is a medieval stone sarcophagus on display and affixed to the wall of the south transept. Local legend attests that this was the coffin of a crusader, but is more likely to have been the coffin of a wealthy parishioner. It was discovered beneath the floor of the nave during 19th century alterations to the church (St Mary's Northchurch n.d.).

The church is in the patronage of the Duchy of Cornwall and possesses a Royal Navy ensign, the original of which was presented to St Mary's in 1905 by the Duke of Cornwall (the future George V). The current flag was given to the church by Prince Charles, the current Duke of Cornwall, in 1971. The windows are also of interest. Seven of them were designed by Charles Eamer Kempe and Walter Earnest Tower, prominent figures in the British Arts and Crafts Movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. One of the windows in the south transept was designed by Hugh Easton, who was responsible for the Battle of Britain window in Westminster Abbey (St Mary's Northchurch n.d.).

Archival material indicates various repairs to the roofs. The coping on the north side of the nave roof needed repairs in 1954 and repairs were also needed to rainwater goods in 1954 (DSA 2/1/454/8. In 1960 the chancel and transept roofs were re-tiled (*ibid*). Between 1963 and 1968 the clay tiled roofs were re-tiled, the gutters were re-done and the roof timbers treated for infestation (HALS ASA 30/145). The lead gutters were replaced between 1968 and 1973, and some unspecified repairs were undertaken on the roof (*ibid*). Amongst the most extensive repairs appear to have been the replacement of the stolen lead to the north aisle roof in 1980 (HALS DSA 2/1/1938).

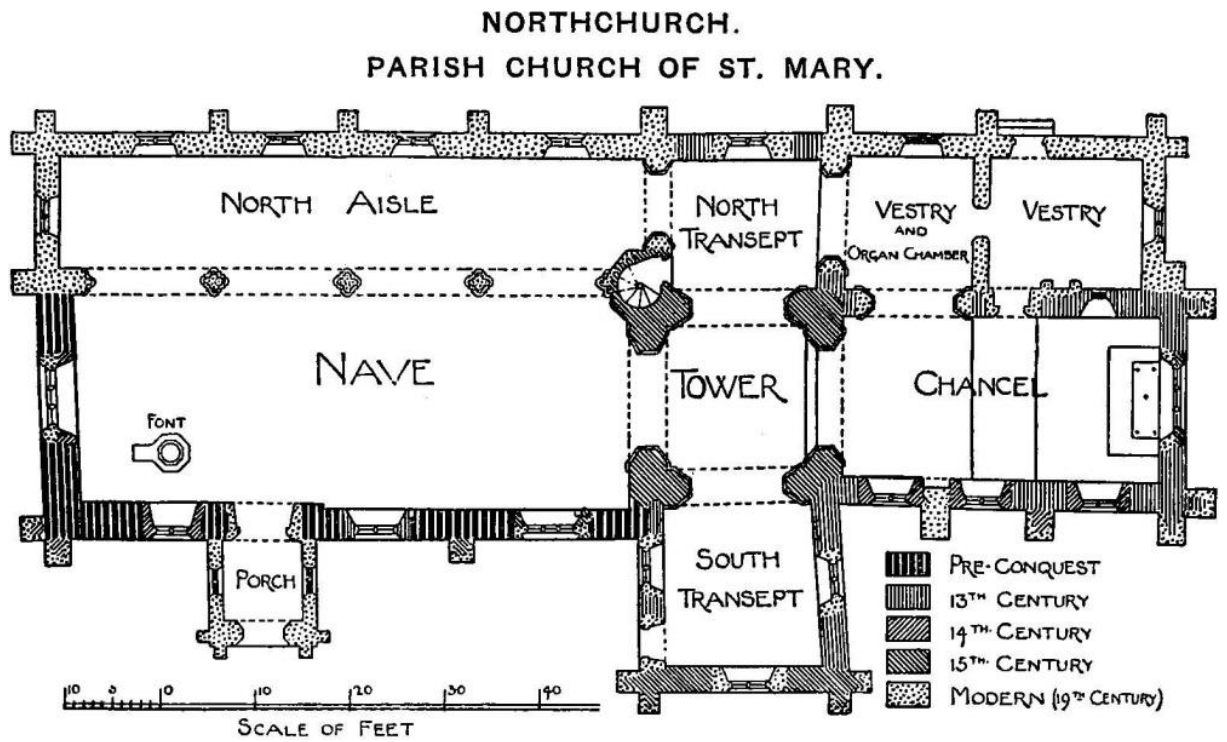


Figure 6: Plan of the church in 1910 (RCHME)



4 Description

4.1 General

Four site visits were undertaken to record the roof before works began (Plates 1-6) and during the repair works (Plates 7-14).

4.2 Nave Roof

The lead sheeting was found to be very thin and the outline of the timber boards below were clearly identifiable beneath the lead because of this (Plate 5). The lead sheets, which overlapped their neighbour in the same way as tiles do to the right of the batten (Plate 5), were to be replaced differently. The lead sheets were to be brought up to the batten on either side and a horseshoe roll applied (ie a strip of lead applied over the batten and the two sheets on either side (Fig. 5).

Not all of the lead sheets had been applied in the same way. There were instances where an earlier method of fixing the edges, known as a hollow roll, had been applied (Plate 6). The edges of the lead sheets were simply rolled tightly, which provides a smaller strip than the timber rolling. The locations of the hollow rolls are shown on Figure 7. Interestingly none were found on the nave roof.

The valley gutters had been screeded and it was intended to build them up to the height of the tallest section to make a deeper sump (Plate 7).

The timbers on the nave roof were 27cm (10½inches) wide and set on the diagonal (Plate 7). The timbers at the western end above the organ were rotten and had to be completely replaced. A number of repairs to the leadwork varying in size between 7x7cm and 110x38cm were noted. There are more per square metre on the nave roof than the north aisle, although there did not seem a great discrepancy in age between them. Most of the ends of lead overlying the timber battens had been repaired (Plate 5), and a number of patches were noted along the joints of the lead sheets. Random isolated patches of various sizes and shapes were also noted on both roofs (Plates 8-9).

A poorly drawn treble clef, staves and a musical scale were exposed on one of the boards towards the western end, but not photographed.

A long, handmade nail with a flat working end was pulled from the roof during one of the visits. The roof timbers and leadwork, as well as the nail, suggest that the nave roof is late 19th century/early 20th century. The date was refined by two graffiti dated 1903 on the north side of the nave roof. The first (Plate 10), which could not be entirely deciphered, states:

This was relaid and leaded in 1903 by J Matthews by Mr M Cooper Mr W.F. Sear And Mr G. Warren and Mr L. Geary Plasterer Mr Arnie ?.

Matthews H. and J. were builders and undertakers and were based in Castle Street Berkhamsted.

The second (Plate 11) is clearly dated September 9th 1903 and mention a L. Cap. Ballam. Most of the text is indecipherable but there is mention of a marriage and having a little daughter.



The names Ginger Warren, Fred Sear and L Geary are seen again on the opposite side of the roof towards the western end of the building (Plate 12).

4.3 North Aisle Roof

The timbers on the north aisle roof were 10cm wide and aligned E-W along the entire north aisle (Plate 13). No graffiti or other points of interest were noted. However, when the lead had been removed, a section of brickwork between the top of the timber boards and the string course on the north nave wall was exposed (Plate 14). It was also noted that the west and south walls had blockwork beneath the render (Plate 15).



Plate 1: St Mary's church from the southwest



Plate 2: Nave and north aisle roofs from the east



Plate 3: Nave roof before works commenced



Plate 4: North aisle roof from the northeast before works commenced

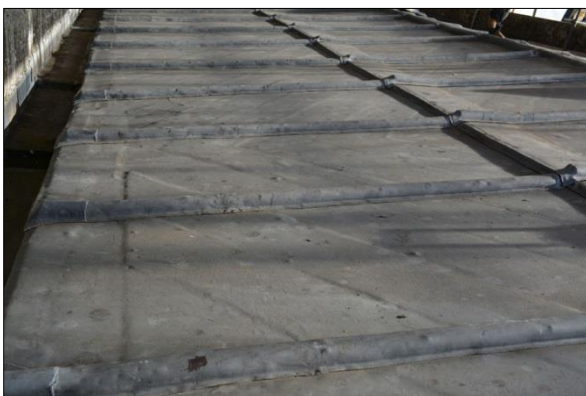


Plate 5: Detail of nave roof sheeting and roll



Plate 6: Hollow roll to the left of a timber roll joint



Plate 7: Nave roof timbers and valley gutter detail



Plate 8: Example of a historic roof repair



Plate 9: Patch repair at the eastern end of the nave roof

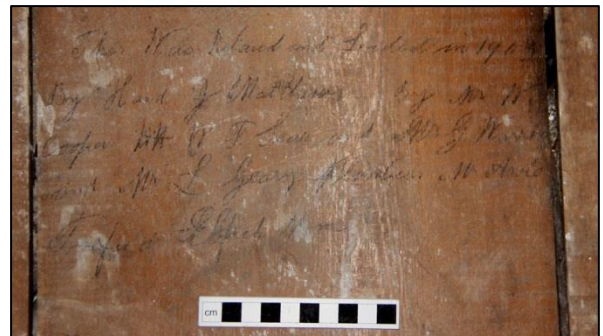


Plate 10: Graffito 1 by J Matthews, 1903



Plate 11: Graffito 2 of 9th September 1903



Plate 12: Graffito 3 dated 1903
(courtesy of Mark Weston)



Plate 13: North aisle roof timbers looking west



Plate 14: Brickwork in the nave wall over the north aisle roof



Plate 15: Blockwork in the south and west walls of the north aisle

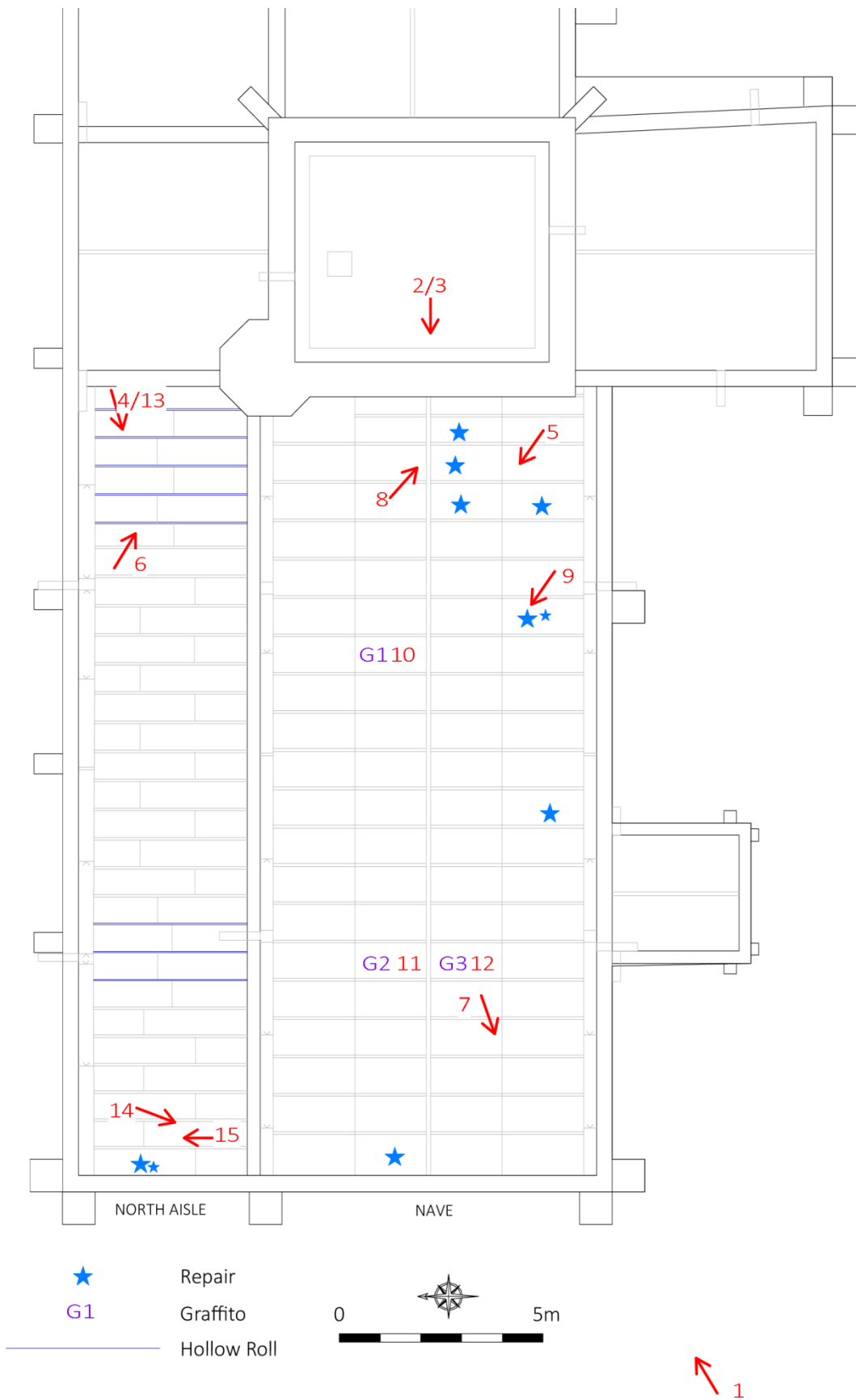


Figure 7: Archaeology and photo plan (scale 1:150)



5 Conclusions

The nave roof was clearly re-laid and re-leaded in 1903 by a local builder, R.J. Matthews, and his colleagues Ginger Warren, Fred Sear, M Cooper and L Geary. Other individuals named on the roof include L. Cap Ballam, who cannot be more closely identified, although a Mervin Ballam is noted in the 1929 Kelly Directory as being a manager with the waterworks Company and living on the High Street in Berkhamsted. Edward Harris Ballam is recorded as living at 13 Upper King Street Berkhamsted in 1898 (Kelly's Essex Directory) and the banns were read for William George Ballam and Alice Mead three times in October 1901. Of the three the most likely candidate is Edward Harris Ballam who was also the sergeant instructor of volunteers (ibid).

The north aisle was constructed in 1882 although the use of narrow boards, as opposed to the wide boards set on the diagonal as on the nave roof, makes it appear younger than the nave roof. The use of hollow rolls as well as timber rolls for joining the lead sheets would suggest fairly large scale repair work, possibly executed in the 1980s re-leading programme, but the uniformity of the timber boards beneath show no sign of having been replaced. Be that as it may, repair patches were observed along some of the joins, at the feet of some of the rolls and on the westernmost lead sheet. The nave roof had needed more repairs to the main body of the sheets, no doubt because it was so thin.

The screeding to the valley gutters and blockwork along the north wall of the north aisle are clearly later 20th century repairs as are, no doubt, some of the repairs to the lead work.



6 Acknowledgements

KDK Archaeology is grateful to Atelier Architects for commissioning this report on behalf of Rector and Church Wardens of St Mary's. Thanks are also due to the staff at Hertfordshire Archive and Local Studies (HALS) for their assistance in the historical research and Alison Tinniswood of Hertfordshire Historic Environment Team for monitoring the project.

David Simmons, Mark Weston and Samuel Weston of JTC Roofing Contractors are to be thanked for their help on site

The fieldwork was carried out by Karin Kaye MA MCIfA. Additional historical research was undertaken by Ellen Shlasko PhD. The report was written by Karin Kaye, and edited by Ellen Shlasko.



7 Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

- Written Scheme of Investigation
- Report
- Historical & Survey notes
- Architect's survey drawings
- List of photographs
- CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Hertfordshire Archive and Local Studies.



8 References

Standards & Specifications

- ALGAO 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 14.
- ClfA 2014 *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* Reading: Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
- ClfA 2014 *Code of Conduct* Reading: Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
- ClfA 2014 *Standards & Guidance Documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings)*. Reading: Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
- HE 2015 *The Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: the MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide*. London: Historic England
- HE 2016 *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice*. London: Historic England
- Martin-Taylor, C. 2018 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Historic Building Watching Brief St Mary's Church Northchurch, Hertfordshire* KDK Archaeology 365/NSM/1
- SMA 1995 *Towards an Accessible Archaeological Archive - the Transfer of Archaeological Archives to Museums: Guidelines for Use in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales*. London: Society for Museum Archaeologists
- Walker K 1990 *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-Term Storage*. London: United Kingdom Institute for Conservation, Archaeology Section

Books and Historical Sources

- Incorporated Church Building Society
<http://images.lambethpalacelibrary.org.uk/luna/servlet/detail/LPLIBLPL~34~34~134055~119188:Signed-R-J--Withers,-Architect?sort=identifier%2Cdate%2Ctitle%2Crights&qvq=q:northchurch;sort:identifier%2Cdate%2Ctitle%2Crights;lc:LPLIBLPL~34~34&mi=0&trs=1>
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- National Heritage List for England: *Gravestone of Peter the Wild Boy*.
<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1412381> [accessed 19th February 2018]
- RCHME 1910 *Northchurch*, in 'An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Hertfordshire' (London), pp. 156-158. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/herts/pp156-158> [accessed 19th February 2018].
- St Mary's Northchurch (no date) *Our History*.
<http://www.stmarysnorthchurch.org.uk/ourhistory.htm> [accessed 19th February 2018]
- The Scots Magazine 1785 *Authentic Account of Peter the Wild Boy: Extract from the parish-register of North-Church in the county of Hertford* pp. 588-589 in 'The Scots Magazine' vol. 47. Edinburgh: Sands, Brymer, Murray and Cochran.



<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101065087437;view=1up;seq=606;size=150> [accessed 20th February 2018]

VCH 1908 Parishes: *Northchurch or Berkhamstead St Mary*, in 'A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 2', ed. William Page (London), pp. 245-250. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/herts/vol2/pp245-250> [accessed 19 February 2018].

HALS Archival material

1954 Faculty papers: fabric repairs DSA 2/1/95/20

1966 Faculty papers: roof repairs, deinfestation and decoration; heating; rewiring DSA 2/1/454/8

1968, 1973 and 1983 Records of the ArchDeanery of St Albans ASA 30/145

1980 Faculty papers: replacement of stolen lead DSA 2/1/1938



Appendix 1: List of Photographs

SITE NO/CODE: 364/NSM			Site Name: St Mary's Church, Northchurch, Hertfordshire	
Shot	Digital	Plate No	View	Subject
1	0144		N	Nave roof; patch repair.
2	0145	9	NW	Nave roof; patch repair
3	0146	8	E	Eastern end of the nave roof
4	0147		SW	Detail of western end of the nave roof
5	0148		SE	Detail of lead sheeting on nave roof
6	0149	5	W	Nave roof; detail showing thickness of the lead sheeting
7	0150		SW	Nave roof; detail of exposed timbers during removal
8	0151		NW	Nave roof; detail of exposed timbers during removal
9	0152		W	Nave roof; detail of exposed timbers during removal
10	0153	7		Nave roof; detail of sarking boards and valley gutter
11	0154		S	North aisle roof; westernmost sheet
12	0155	4	W	North aisle roof prior to works commencing
13	0156		W	North aisle roof prior to works commencing
14	0157	6	S	North aisle roof; hollow roll and joint over timber batten
15	0158		SE	North aisle roof prior to works commencing
16	0159			North aisle roof prior to works commencing
17	0160			Underside of nave roof where the lead sheeting had been removed
18	0161			Graffito 3
19	0933	10		Graffito 1
20	0934	11		Graffito 2
21	0935			Graffito 2
22	9026		W	Nave roof from the tower
23	9027	2	W	Nave roof from the tower
24	9028		NW	North aisle roof from the tower
25	9029	3	W	Nave roof from the tower
26	9030		W	Leading detail
27	9031		W	North aisle roof
28	9032	1	NE	St Mary's church
29	1051	14	S	North aisle roof: brickwork in south wall
30	1052	15	N	North aisle roof: blockwork in north wall
31	1053		E	North aisle roof: exposed timbers
32	1054		SE	North aisle roof: exposed timbers
33	1055		SE	North aisle roof: detail of exposed timbers at eastern end
34	1056	13	SW	North aisle roof: exposed timbers
35	WA01	12		Graffito 3



Appendix 1: OASIS and Site Data

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name & Address	St Mary's Church, Northchurch, Herts	Project Site Code	365/NSM
OASIS reference	kdkarcha1-309397	Event/Accession no	N/A
OS reference	SP 9744 0883	Study area size	N/A
Project Type	Historic Building Watching Brief	Height (mAOD)	N/A
Short Description	Between January and March 2019 a Historic Building Watching brief was carried out at St Mary's Church, Northchurch, Hertfordshire in order fulfil a planning condition for repair works to the nave and north aisle roofs. The north aisle was constructed in 1882 and the leadwork displayed two methods of joining the lead sheets above the north-south aligned softwood boards; by way of a timber batten and by a hollow roll. The nave roof was of a different construction, having diagonally placed sarking boards beneath very thin lead sheets that were all joined using timber battens. Graffiti discovered on the boards gave the date of this roof as September 1903 and the names of the men working on it for Matthews Builders and Undertakers of Castle Street, Berkhamsted. Modern repairs were evident in the screeding to the valley gutters and the use of blockwork in the north wall of the north aisle. No other features of note were observed.		
Previous work	N/A	Site status	Grade II Listed (NHLE 1348470)
Planning proposal	Replacing the lead with terne coated stainless steel	Current land use	Place of Worship
Local Planning Authority	Dacorum Borough Council	Planning application ref.	4/02754/17/FUL
Monument type	Church	Monument period	Post-medieval
Significant finds	N/A	Future work	N/A
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation	KDK Archaeology Ltd		
Project Brief originator	N/A	Project Design originator	KDK Archaeology Ltd
Project Manager	Karin Kaye	Director/Supervisor	Karin Kaye
Sponsor/funding body	St Mary's PCC		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date	28.01.2019	End date	03.03.2019
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical	HALS	None	
Paper		WSI, Report, fieldwork sheets	
Digital		WSI, Report, photos, architects drawings,	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title	Historic Building Watching Brief, St Mary's Church, Northchurch, Hertfordshire		
Serial title & volume	KDK Archaeology Report 365/NSM/2		
Author(s)	Karin Kaye MA MCIfA		
Page nos	23	Date	9 th April 2019



Appendix 2: Hertfordshire HER Summary Sheet

Site name and address: St Mary's Church, Northchurch,		
County: Hertfordshire	District: Dacorum	
Village/Town: Berkhamsted	Parish: Berkhamsted	
Planning application reference: 4/02754/17/FUL		
Client's name, address, & tel. no: Rector & Churchwarden of St Mary's Church		
Nature of application: Re-roofing		
Present land use: Place of Worship		
Size of application area: N/A	Size of area investigated: N/A	
NGR (to 8 figures): SP 9744 0883	Site code: 365/NSM	
Site director:	Organization: KDK Archaeology Ltd	
Type of work: Historic Building Watching brief		
Date of work:	Start: 28.01.2019	Finish: 03.03.2019
Curating museum: HALS		
Related HER Nos: HER 4447	Periods represented: Post-medieval	
Relevant previous summaries/reports:		
<p>Summary of fieldwork results:</p> <p>Between January and March 2019 a Historic Building Watching brief was carried out at St Mary's Church, Northchurch, Hertfordshire in order fulfil a planning condition for repair works to the nave and north aisle roofs. The north aisle was constructed in 1882 and the leadwork displayed two methods of joining the lead sheets above the north-south aligned softwood boards; by way of a timber batten and by a hollow roll. The nave roof was of a different construction, having diagonally placed sarking boards beneath very thin lead sheets that were all joined using timber battens. Graffiti discovered on the boards gave the date of this roof as September 1903 and the names of the men working on it for Matthews Builders and Undertakers of Castle Street, Berkhamsted. Modern repairs were evident in the screeding to the valley gutters and the use of blockwork in the north wall of the north aisle. No other features of note were observed.</p>		
Author: Karin Kaye	Date: 9 th April 2019	