



ST MARY'S CHURCH, ALFRICK, WORCESTERSHIRE

Watching brief and Historic Building Survey

for S T Walker & Duckham on behalf of Alfrick PCC

Worcestershire HER ref.: WSM43222

3 March 2011

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The project was managed for Headland Archaeology by Andy Boucher. The fieldwork was undertaken by Tegan Daly.

The report was written by Tegan Daly, Dale Rouse & Lise Brekmoe.



St Mary's Church
Alfrick
Worcestershire



0 100km



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Scale 1:1250 @ A4



0 50m

Illus 1
Location of site

ST MARY'S CHURCH, ALFRICK, WORCESTERSHIRE

Watching brief and Historic Building Survey

Headland Archaeology (UK) Limited carried out an archaeological watching brief and a Level 3 historic building survey in respect of a faculty application to repair the medieval porch at St. Mary Magdalene's Church in the village of Alfrick, Worcestershire. No archaeological deposits were observed during the course of the watching brief. The historic building survey of the south porch has provided further information for the historic record for this Grade II listed building. The survey has highlighted the re-use of timbers in the eastern wall plate and repairs to the structure on at least two different occasions; the earliest repair consisting of the insertion of an iron strapping between the northernmost tie beam and eastern wall plate and most recently, the insertion of planks between rafters and insertion of a modern iron bolt on the struts. This report forms a record of the building prior to any alterations in line with the requirements of Worcestershire County Archaeology Service.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology (UK) was commissioned by S T Walker & Duckham on behalf of their client Alfrick PCC to undertake a program of historic building recording and an archaeological watching brief in respect of a faculty application to repair the medieval porch at St Mary Magdalene's Church in the village of Alfrick, Worcestershire. The proposed works involved supporting the oak frame on jacks while the stone plinth was removed, new foundations being dug and a new plinth constructed. The church is a Grade II* listed building (reference WSM004645) and is a site of intrinsic archaeological interest.

Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service produced a brief for the works that required a level 3 historic building recording of the porch plus a watching brief on the removal of the existing plinth and excavation of the foundations. The objective of this report is to outline the record made of the parts of the standing porch structure, its historic context and the deposits encountered during excavations for the new foundations under the porch.

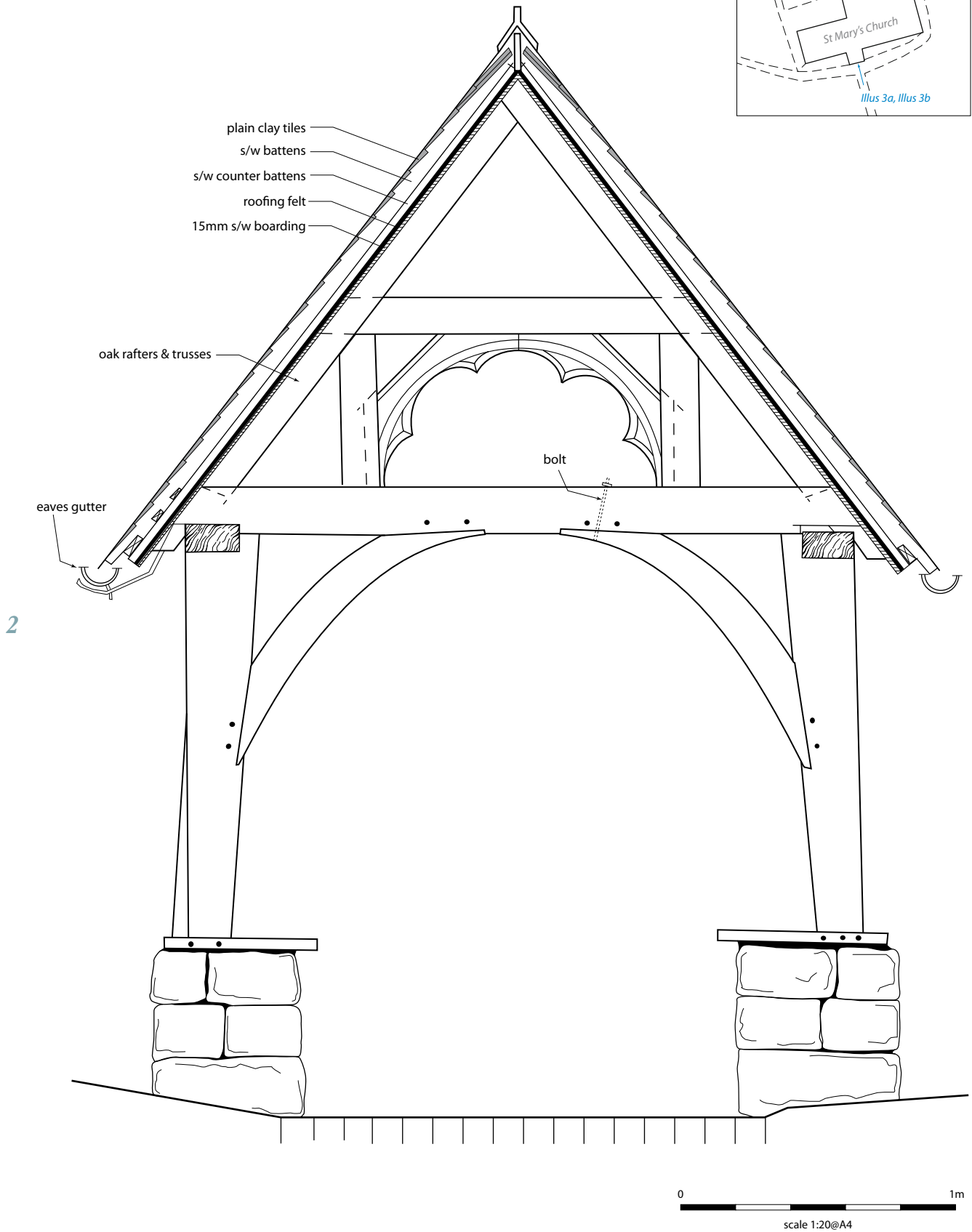
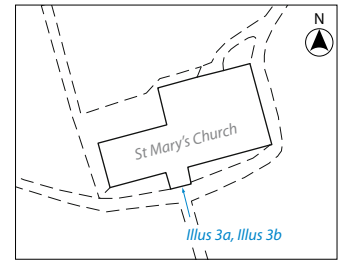
1.1 Location

The site lies within the village of Alfrick, Worcestershire (NGR SO 7484 5297), approximately 7 miles from Worcester on the road between Worcester and Bromyard. The village is bounded by the river Teme to the north.



Illus 2

General view of church and porch looking N

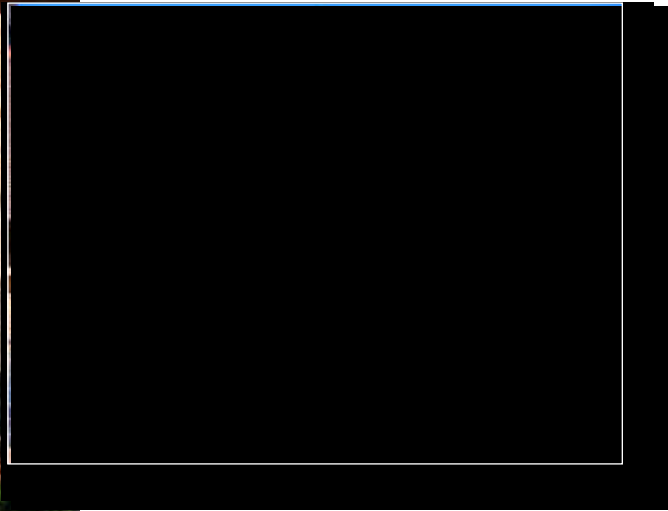


Illus 3
South facing front elevation of porch



Illus 3a

Front elevation of porch looking N



Close up of front elevation of porch showing gable looking N

1.2 Background and history

The building is a Grade II* listed parish church with late 12th century nave and most likely a chancel which has since been replaced by the present chancel, dating to the 13th century. The vestry and north transept were added in 1885 by the famous Victorian architect Aston Webb. The church also has a timber bellcote at the west end of the nave. The church is built of coursed red sandstone rubble with a tiled roof. The south porch dates to the 1400s and is timber-framed with a tiled roof and has 19th century perpendicular carved infill decoration. Originally a chapel, the building became a church alongside the chapel at Lulsley in 1912 with the formation of separate parishes (Page *et al.* 1924).

2. HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING

The aim of the survey was to provide a descriptive account and interpretation of the porch, including discussion of its local, regional and national significance. The historic building recording work was undertaken using drawings provided by specialists from S T Walker and Duckham.

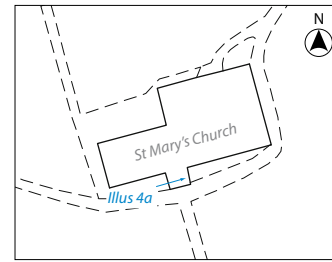
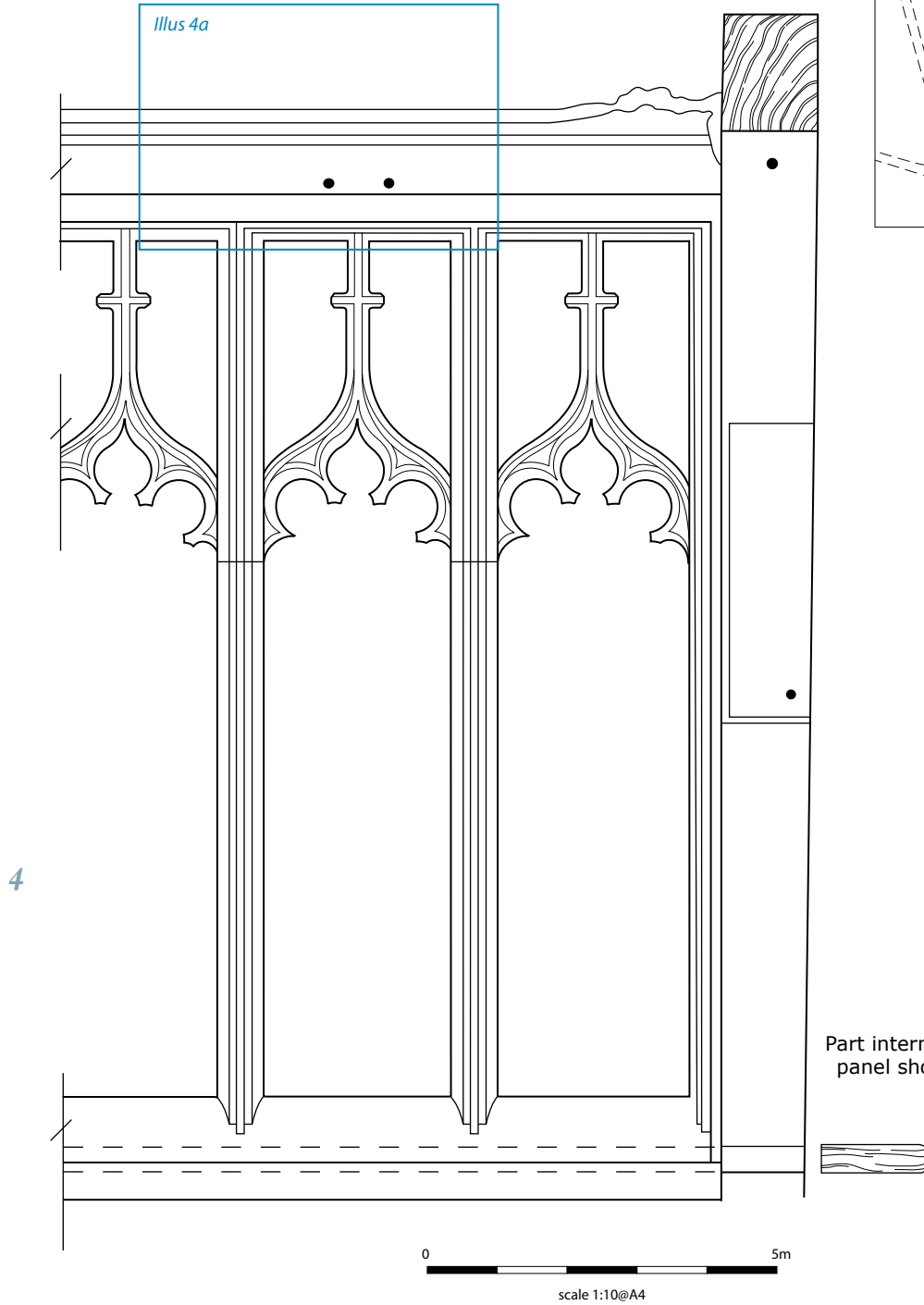
Using the standards set out by English Heritage (2006) and the *IfA* (2008), a Level 3 historic Building survey was undertaken during a 1 day site visit, resulting in a written description, annotation of measured drawings and photographs. Photographs were annotated on existing plans.

As the porch predates any maps of the area, it was not considered relevant to undertake a map regression analysis.

2.1 Results

The porch is north-south aligned and measures 2.5 by 2 metres. It dates to the 15th century and is a later addition to the 12th century nave and 13th century chancel. It is timber framed with a tiled roof of a modern date and has 19th century perpendicular carved infill decorations. Its construction coincides with the insertion of two perpendicular 2-light windows in the south wall flanking the porch (Page *et al.* 1924).

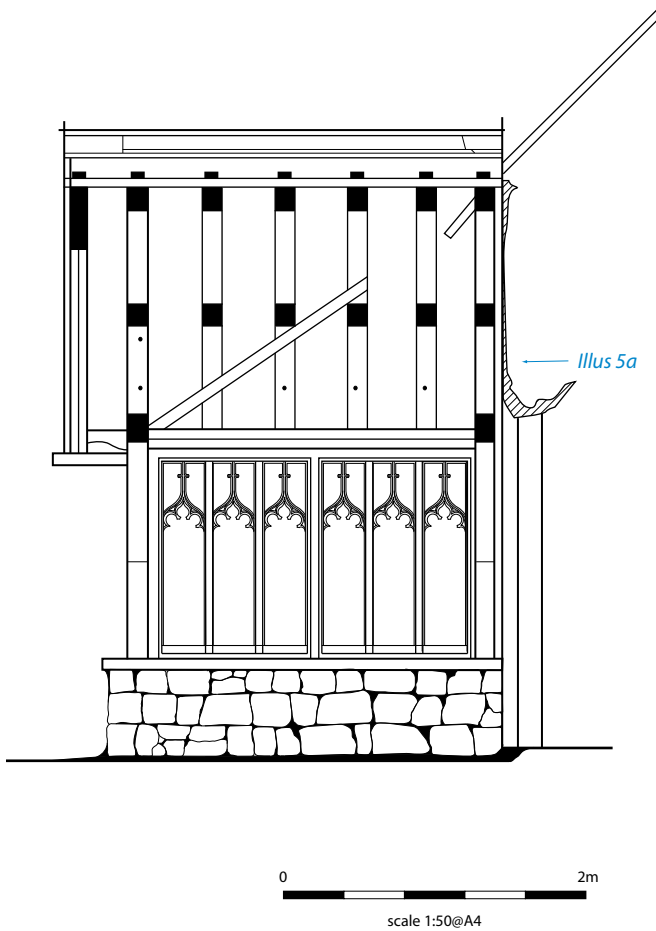
The carved oak tracery mirrors the style of these two perpendicular 2-light windows in the south wall. The



Illus 4
Part internal elevation of oak tracery wall panel showing re-used timber in E wall plate

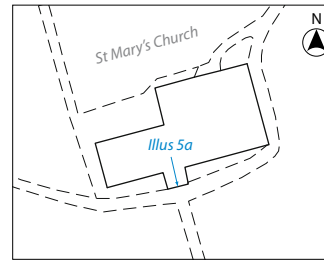


Illus 4a
Close up of re-used timber in east wall plate looking E



Illus 5

Section through porch



Illus 5a

Repairs to northernmost tie beam and E wall plate using iron strapping looking E

5

window right of the porch is a 19th century copy and of similar date to the tracery, possibly associated with the restoration of the church in 1885.

The porch stands on a stone base with the ends of the walls consisting of sandstone corner stones sculpted into rectangular blocks. The rest of the wall consists of sub-angular blue lias stones with clay lime mortar. The interior surface of the porch is made up of 19th to early 20th century quarry tiles, retained within stone thresholds to the south and to the north.

The porch is constructed from a basic box frame truss with decorated details. The curved, half pointed struts have chamfered edges, showing some signs of modern repairs including a 20th century iron bolt fixing arc brace to tie beam. Tapering upright posts support the main tie beams. The carved wooden bargeboard differs in style from the porch and is likely to be later in date.

A large iron strapping is visible on the north tie beam near the east wall plate, most likely from a secondary repair in order to stop movement of the tie beam (Illus 6). Additional planks have been inserted between the front

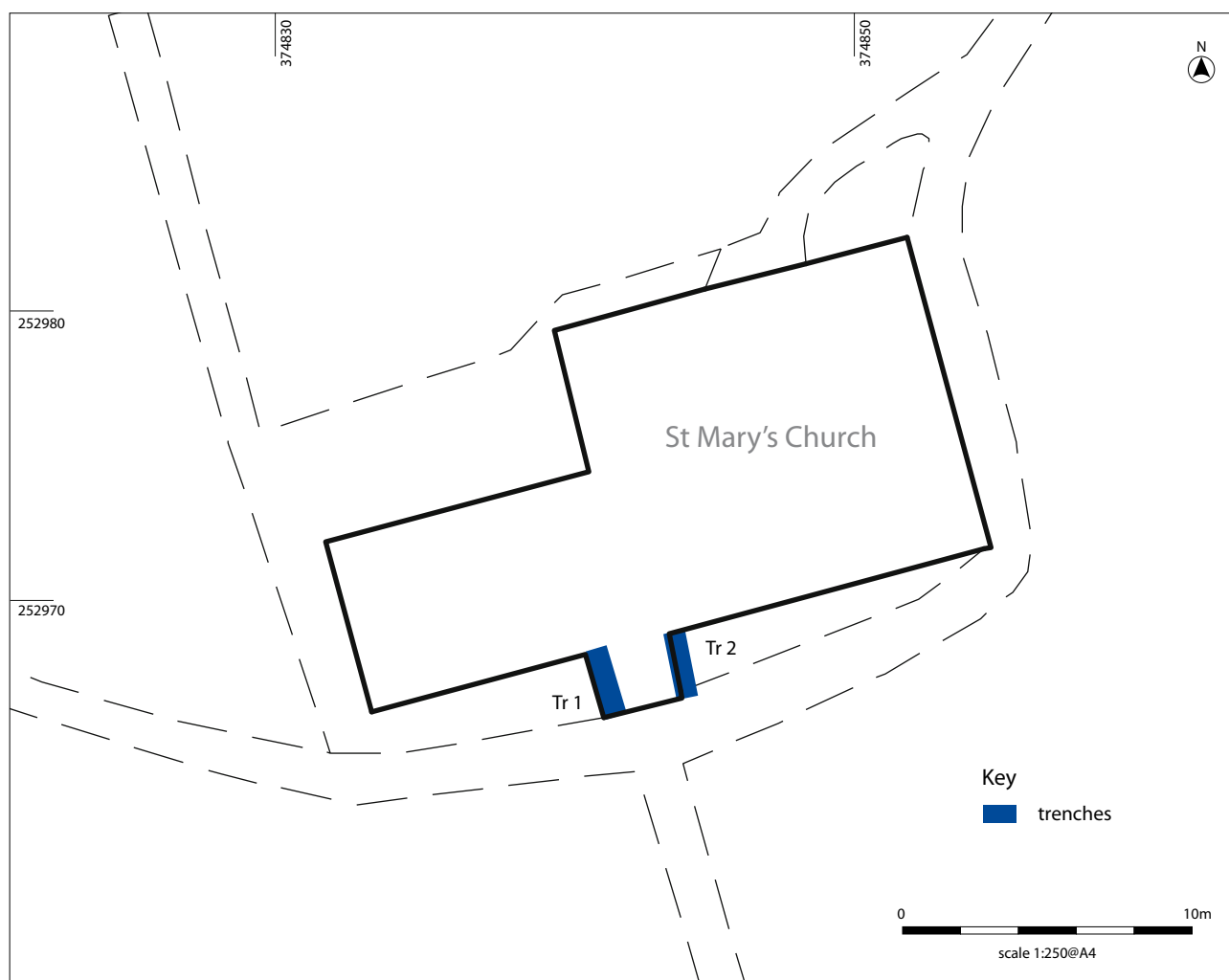
decorative eaves and first rafters and between the 5th and 6th rafters, possibly put in place to offer additional support to the roof.

The eastern wall plate is a re-used timber with a molded projection and redundant tenon joints. It is likely that the timber originates from another building which has been cut and split to fit the porch.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

3.1 Method

The proposed works involved supporting the oak frame on jacks while the stone plinth was removed, new foundations dug and a new plinth constructed. Two trenches were excavated in total. These trenches were located under the porch walls at the south facing entrance to the church and were excavated by hand under direct archaeological supervision.



Illus 6
Location of trenches 1 and 2

3.2 Recording

All recording followed *IfA* Standards and Guidance. All trench positions, areas of observations, excavation areas and survey grids were tied into features shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 mapping.

A plan of excavations and features encountered were maintained at a scale of 1:50 and tied to the National Grid. Photographs were taken using a digital camera, colour slide and black and white print film.

Samples and artefacts

No contexts worth sampling were uncovered during the course of the watching brief and no stratified small finds were observed.

3.3 Results

Two trenches were excavated under the porch walls at

the south facing entrance to the church. Trench 1 on the west side of the church entrance measured 2.55 metres by 0.6 metres orientated on a north-south axis and dug to a depth of 0.8 metres from the topsoil and 0.54 metres from the central tiled floor. The stone threshold, measuring 0.3 x 0.35 metres was left in place in the south-east corner of the trench.

Topsoil [001] had already been removed at the time of the porch's original construction, but on the section face this could clearly be seen to extend to a maximum depth of 0.22 metres and was a friable light-grey loamy sand with profuse root action. A bright red-orange compact clay [002] lay underneath the topsoil/porch stone wall. This context seemed to be a sterile geological interface extending for 0.34 metres in depth at the south end of the trench to 0.53 metres at the north. The sterile geological deposit [003] underneath was very similar to [002], however, of a slightly darker hue (mid red-orange). This also had a variable depth of 0.16 metres to 0.28 metres. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered during excavation.



Illus 7
Trench 1 looking N

Trench 2 had the same dimensions and contexts as in Trench 1. This trench had been disturbed by an electrical cable which was still present running from the inner porch roof into the ground at 0.6 metres from the central tiled area at the edge of the excavated area. A roughly U-shaped cut [004] for the cable could be seen in the west facing section, cutting through deposits [001] and [002] to a depth of 0.5 metres. This cut was filled by a grey loamy sand [005] which is most likely backfill of the topsoil.

Both trenches were subsequently further extended 0.5 metres at their outer edge. The lack of any archaeological evidence within the already excavated areas, and the fact that existing graves were located on the north, east and west of the church and not the south, suggested that the areas still to be excavated would most likely also be archaeologically sterile.

4. CONCLUSION

The historic building survey of the south porch has provided further information for the historic record for this Grade II* listed building. The survey has highlighted the re-use of timbers in the eastern wall plate and repairs to the structure on at least two different occasions; the earliest repair consisting of the insertion of an iron strapping between the northernmost tie beam and eastern wall plate and more recently, the insertion of planks between rafters and insertion of a modern iron bolt on the struts. No archaeological deposits were observed during the course of the watching brief.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Page, W & Willis-Bund, JW, (ed.), 1924, 'A History of the County of Worcester', Volume 4, *Victoria County History for Worcestershire*, 354–361.



6. APPENDICES

6.1 Appendix 1 – Site registers

Trench Register

Trench no.	Orientation	Description	Length	Topsoil depth
1	North-South oriented	Trench under porch west wall	2.6m N-S	0.1–0.2m deep
2	North-South oriented	Trench under porch east wall	2.6m N-S	0.3–0.3m deep

Context Register

Context no.	Trench	Description
001	1 & 2	Topsoil, light grey loamy sand of loose compaction with profound root action
002	1& 2	Bright red to orange compact clay, interface between natural and topsoil
003	1 & 2	Mid red to orange compact clay – sterile geological deposit/natural
004	2	Cut for electric cable
005	2	Fill of [004] loosely compacted grey loamy sand
006	2	C19–C20 quarry tiles

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Photographic Register

Photo no.	Colour Slide	Black & White	Digital	Direction Facing	Description
1	446/34	449/35	002	N	South facing porch front (stone wall already removed)
2	33	34	003	N	South facing porch front after removal of stone porch
3	35	33	001	–	ID shot
4	32	32	004	N	South facing porch front with scale
5	31	31	005–006	N	South facing end of mortise and tenon joint on front of east joint. Showing wall plate and visible iron nails
6	30	30	007	–	South facing end of mortise and tenon joint on front of east joint. Showing wall plate and visible iron nails
7	29	29	008–009	N	Modern bolt on underside of east arc brace. Also shows wooden pegs on south face of tile beam
8	28	28	011–012 & 023	W	Iron nail on west arc beam, (on inner East face)
9	27	27	31	N	Wooden bolt on corner posts on inside of wall plates, not recorded on architects drawing
10	26	26	n/a	N	Wooden bolt on corner posts on inside of wall plates, not recorded on architects drawing
11	25	25	47	N	General working shot
12	24	24	32	E	West facing porch side after removal of stone walls and tracery

Photo no.	Colour Slide	Black & White	Digital	Direction Facing	Description
13	23	23	33	W	East facing porch side after removal of stone walls and tracery
14	22	22	34,35	N	Porch front
15	21	21	36,37,38	N	Porch front, close up of frontage
16	20	20	102	N	Porch front, close up of frontage
17	19	19	39-41	N	General shot of church and porch
18	18	18	42	N	General shot of church and porch
19	17	17	57-59	E	East wall plate, west (inner) facing side, notches for wooden fasteners/bolts
20	16	16	60, 61	E	East wall plate, west (inner) facing side at 1st-3rd rafter, wood chips?
21	15	15	62-64	E	East wall plate, west (inner) facing side at 1st-3rd rafter, wood working marks?
22	14	14	65-70	Vertical, N	Roof, at apex between frontage, decorative naves and first rafters. Bilateral.
23	13	13	71-76	Vertical N	5th collar purlin from front (south) of 6 in total. New wood?
24	12	12	77, 103, 104, 114, 117, 118	Vertical N	General roof shot, A-frame
25	11	11	86-90	N	North (posterior) tie beam and hinge, NE corner
26	10	10	86-90	N	North (posterior) tie beam and hinge, NE corner
27	9	9	91-92	E	East wall plate, west facing surface at 3rd - 4th rafter. Notches for wooden bolts.
28	8	8	94-97	N	Trench 2
29	7	7	98	E	Trench 2 stratigraphy
30	6	6	99-101	W	Trench 2 stratigraphy
31	5	5	106-108	N	Trench 1
32	4	4	110-111	E	Trench 1 stratigraphy
33	3	3	112, 113	N	Corner post, posterior NW corner
34	2	2	119	N	Trench 1 and 2 after excavation
35	-	-	43-46	-	Stones that had been removed from wall
-	-	-	48-56	-	Grass to be replaced after repair works



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