

**St Mary's Church  
Houghton-on-the-Hill  
Norfolk**

**Conservation Plan**

**Prepared for  
The Friends of St Mary's  
Houghton-on-the-Hill**

**David S. Watt  
De Montfort University  
Leicester  
15 June 2001**

## **SUMMARY**

### **Statement of significance**

St Mary's Church is of international significance due principally to the extant Romanesque wall paintings within the nave of the church.

St Mary's Church is also of national importance due to its value as an architectural and historical resource spanning over 900 years of history.

Within a regional context, St Mary's Church also has significance as a focal point for visitors, a centre for spiritual expression, and an example of conservation practice.

St Mary's Church is listed as being of special architectural or historic interest (grade I) and stands within an area of important landscape quality as designated by Breckland District Council.

### **Issues of sensitivity and vulnerability**

St Mary's Church possesses multiple significances, each of which is sensitive to inappropriate or uninformed action or change.

There is also the potential for conflict between different significances, where one might be detrimentally affected or influenced by another.

This vulnerability requires careful consideration and an agreed framework within which future management and conservation might be considered and implemented.

### **Management and conservation policies**

There are currently no agreed policies for the management and conservation of St Mary's Church. It is the purpose of this conservation plan, together with any associated management plan, to put forward, with the endorsement of the principal stakeholders, policies aimed at:

- safeguarding the historic, cultural and visual character of the site
- managing visitors and improving the visitor experience without compromising historic integrity
- enhancing the site through informed management and conservation

Implementation of these policies will require the agreement of the principal stakeholders on a range of issues.

### **Date of adoption for conservation plan**

This conservation plan for St Mary's Church, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk was adopted by the principal stakeholders on 15 June 2001.

## CONTENTS

|   | <b>Page</b> |
|---|-------------|
| <b>1.0 Introduction</b>   | <b>4</b>    |
| 1.1 What is a conservation plan?                                      | 4           |
| 1.2 The purpose of a conservation plan                                | 4           |
| 1.3 The need for a conservation plan for St Mary's Church             | 4           |
| 1.4 Acknowledgements  | 5           |
| <br>  |             |
| <b>2.0 Background</b>   | <b>7</b>    |
| 2.1 Introduction  | 7           |
| 2.2 Persons and organisations associated with St Mary's Church        | 8           |
| 2.3 Statutory and non-statutory designations                          | 9           |
| 2.4 Preparation and implementation of conservation plan               | 9           |
| 2.5 Scope and limitations of conservation plan                        | 9           |
| 2.6 Other related documentation                                       | 10          |
| 2.7 Consultation procedures   | 10          |
| 2.8 Adoption of conservation plan                                     | 10          |
| <br>  |             |
| <b>3.0 Historical overview</b>  | <b>11</b>   |
| 3.1 Background history and archaeology                                | 11          |
| 3.2 Additional comment on background history and archaeology          | 11          |
| 3.3 Building phases and methods of construction                       | 13          |
| <br>  |             |
| 3.4 Additional comment on building phases and methods of construction | 13          |
| 3.5 History and development of wall painting                          | 17          |
| <br>  |             |
| <b>4.0 Assessment of significance</b>                                 | <b>20</b>   |
| 4.1 Overall significance  | 20          |
| 4.2 Architectural and historical significance                         | 20          |
| 4.3 Art and historical significance                                   | 20          |
| 4.4 Archaeological significance                                       | 21          |
| 4.5 Community and social significance                                 | 21          |
| 4.6 Tourism and recreational significance                             | 21          |
| 4.7 Spiritual significance  | 22          |
| 4.8 Ecological significance   | 22          |
| 4.9 Educational significance  | 22          |
| <br>  |             |
| <b>5.0 Assessment of sensitivity/vulnerability</b>                    | <b>23</b>   |
| 5.1 Summary of current structural and material condition              | 23          |
| 5.2 Outstanding works   | 25          |
| 5.3 Ownership and management  | 25          |
| 5.4 Function and usage  | 25          |
| 5.5 Site and environment  | 26          |
| 5.6 Resources   | 26          |
| 5.7 External factors  | 27          |
| 5.8 Lack of awareness/understanding                                   | 27          |
| 5.9 Public and community expectations                                 | 27          |
| 5.10 Pedestrian and vehicular access                                  | 27          |
| 5.11 Statutory controls   | 28          |
| 5.12 Areas of conflict  | 30          |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>6.0 Conservation policies</b>   | <b>31</b> |
| 6.1 Defining the future of St Mary's Church                                  | 31        |
| 6.2 Appropriate usage  | 31        |
| 6.3 Conservation philosophy  | 31        |
| 6.4 Repair and conservation  | 32        |
| 6.5 Maintenance and aftercare  | 32        |
| 6.6 Buildings services   | 33        |
| 6.7 Documentation  | 33        |
| <b>7.0 Implementation and review</b>   | <b>34</b> |
| 7.1 Implementation procedures  | 34        |
| 7.2 Review procedure   | 35        |
| <b>Appendices</b>  |           |
| Appendix A Commissioned Briefs, Surveys and Reports                          | 37        |
| Appendix B Summary of Key Developments and Events                            | 39        |
| Appendix C Steering Group  | 41        |
| Appendix D Principal Stakeholders  | 42        |
| Appendix E Additional Comment on Background History and Archaeology          | 43        |
| Appendix F Additional Comment on Building Phases and Methods of Construction | 44        |
| Appendix G 'Romanesque Wall Paintings Discovered in Norfolk'                 | 46        |
| Appendix H Listed Building Descriptions                                      | 48        |
| Appendix I Recommendations   | 49        |
| <b>References</b>  | <b>51</b> |
| <b>Bibliography</b>  | <b>54</b> |

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The growing importance of understanding the significance and vulnerability of heritage assets in advance of development or change has been identified in relation to St Mary's Church. It is the purpose of this section to provide a general introduction to the role and use of conservation plans, and to define the context in which this conservation plan for St Mary's Church has been prepared.

### **1.1 What is a conservation plan?**

A conservation plan may be defined as a document that explains (Heritage Lottery Fund, 1998, 5):

- why an asset is significant or has heritage merit
- how that significance is vulnerable or sensitive to change
- what policies to adopt for retaining that significance in any future use or development

Additionally, a conservation plan may be described as 'a process that seeks to guide the future development of a place through an understanding of its significance. The objective is to evolve policies to guide work that are feasible as well as compatible with the retention, reinforcement, and even revelation of significance. These twin concepts of compatibility and feasibility are the bases on which the policies are built' (Kerr, 1999, 9).

### **1.2 The purpose of a conservation plan**

A conservation plan is considered to provide a single approach to understanding and managing the heritage significance of a site, and to be the first step in (Heritage Lottery Fund, 1998, 5):

- preparing management proposals
- planning any major repair or restoration schemes
- planning any new development
- managing a programme of regular maintenance

It is thus seen as a valuable tool in managing the day-to-day operations and maintenance of a site and also providing a baseline against which to evaluate the impact of any new proposals on the heritage merit of the site.

### **1.3 The need for a conservation plan for St Mary's Church**

In the context of St Mary's Church, it is clear that there are multiple significances or values to be considered:

- archaeology
- art and architectural history
- community
- ecology
- education
- recreation
- spirituality
- tourism

Each of these has to be taken into account when planning future action or change that will affect the building and its site, and an assessment made of priorities that reflect the full range of significances and values.

Importantly, there is (or might become) the potential for conflict between different significances or values, such that one might be detrimentally affected or influenced by another. Potential conflict might, for instance, arise in the future between the needs of:

- conservation (architectural and wall paintings) and educational/public potential
- public accessibility and ecological value
- religious worship and community/social value
- security and recreational value
- site management and natural/aesthetic value

Such relationships and interrelationships, together with an analysis of the costs and benefits associated with a particular action or course of actions, need also to be considered and assessed within the long-term strategic framework for the management and conservation of the building and its site.

It is critically important that a conservation plan be prepared, agreed and adopted for St Mary's Church so that it might be used in the management of day-to-day operations and maintenance of the building and site, and provide a baseline against which to evaluate the impact of new proposals.

Questions to be considered in the context of a conservation plan might include:

- what should the agreed condition of the church be?
- what should the agreed condition of the wall paintings be?
- what are the expectations of those involved with the church and the visiting public?
- how far should future works go towards bringing the church back into a condition comparable with other parish churches?
- how would future developments (e.g. introduction of electric lighting, increased vehicular traffic) affect the use and future conservation of the church, its wall paintings and the setting of the church?

Many of these questions require consideration by individuals or organisations familiar with specific aspects of the buildings and its site. It is therefore the purpose of this conservation plan to identify such issues and put forward an accessible and integrated working document for St Mary's Church that is capable of future revision and development.

It is on the basis of this conservation plan that the future management and conservation of the St Mary's Church can be developed and put into action through the preparation and implementation of associated documentation (e.g. management plan, maintenance and operating manual).

#### **1.4 Acknowledgements**

Preparation of this conservation plan has drawn on many sources of information, including published and unpublished reports and documents, notes of meetings, and verbal communications.

Particular thanks are given to the following persons for providing background information, offering constructive criticism, and commenting on the first draft of this document:

- Jayne Bown, Norfolk Archaeological Unit
- Sharon Cather, Conservation of Wall Painting Department, Courtauld Institute of Art
- Bob Davey, The Friends of St Mary's Church
- Caroline Davison, Department of Planning and Transportation, Norfolk County Council
- Stephen Heywood, Department of Planning and Transportation, Norfolk County Council
- David Park, Conservation of Wall Painting Department, Courtauld Institute of Art

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

The importance and significance of St Mary's Church and its wall paintings are under consideration at a time when the church is becoming the subject of growing interest and pressure. It is the purpose of this section to provide a brief introduction to the church, to identify recent developments and concerns, and to provide a basis upon which this conservation plan might be used.

### 2.1 Introduction

St Mary's Church is the former parish church of Houghton-on-the-Hill, which is located 6.1 km south-east of Swaffham and 6.8 km north-west of Watton (OS reference TF 869 053) in the county of Norfolk. It is in the Rural Deanery of Breckland, the Archdeaconry of Lynn, and the Diocese of Norwich.

St Mary's Church was transferred into the parish of South Pickenham with Houghton-on-the-Hill following a pastoral order in 1997.

The main body of St Mary's Church was built in the late 11th century, with the tower added in the 15th century, and the present chancel dating from the 18th century. By 1760 the village of Houghton-on-the-Hill had almost ceased to exist and the congregation diminished. A survey carried out in 1949 revealed the church to have recently fallen out of use (Cautley, 1949, 211), and in 1953 it was reported to be in a partly ruinous condition (Anon., 1953).

St Mary's Church was consolidated and repaired as part of Norfolk County Council's *Ruined Churches Repair Programme* between April 1993 and January 1998, and has since been brought back into partial use for occasional services and public enjoyment. Initial and on-going investigations of extant wall paintings within the church have determined their date, iconography and condition, and confirmed them to be of international significance.

The works of repair and consolidation undertaken at St Mary's Church have attracted both local and national awards, including the Norfolk Society/CPRE Award (1996), a certificate of commendation in the Ian Howard Design Award of Breckland District Council Award (1998), and the joint RICS Building Conservation Award (1998).

Although St Mary's Church is no longer an active parish church, it has not been declared officially redundant and so remains under faculty jurisdiction. It is in the ownership of the incumbent of the parish and the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council of South Pickenham with Houghton-on-the-Hill.

In consultation with the Diocesan Registrar, it has been agreed that the church should be subject to regular inspection under the Inspection of Churches Measure 1955, as amended by the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991. The first quinquennial inspection report to be prepared for St Mary's Church since its consolidation and repair, and probably the first such report since the introduction of the scheme in 1955, was submitted to the Norwich Diocesan Advisory Committee in May 1999.

Details of published and unpublished information relating to St Mary's Church are included within the bibliography and Appendix A to this document.

A summary of key developments and events is included for reference within Appendix B

## **2.2 Persons and organisations associated with St Mary's Church**

### *2.2.1 Steering Group*

In late 1996, representatives from all interested groups met to discuss the way forward for St Mary's Church. A Steering Group was nominated at this meeting, comprising Bob Davey (Parochial Church Council), Caroline Davison (Norfolk County Council), Andrew Gayton (Breckland District Council), Colin Jeffries (English Heritage) and David Watt (consultant). At the first meeting of the Steering Group, held in December 1996, it was decided that a representative from the English Heritage Painting Conservation Studio should also attend future meetings.

The Steering Group has met to consider and co-ordinate works at St Mary's Church on ten occasions since its formation in 1996 (i.e. 19 December 1996, 27 March 1997, 8 May 1997, 25 June 1997, 22 October 1997, 27 January 1999, 28 April 1999, 29 September 1999, 24 November 1999, and 7 February 2001). A number of representatives from other groups have been invited to attend these meetings, including the Council for the Care of Churches, Courtauld Institute of Art, Norfolk Archaeological Unit, Norfolk Landscape Archaeology, as well as additional officers from English Heritage.

A list of representatives from interested groups is provided in Appendix C.

### *2.2.2 Advisory Panel*

An Advisory Panel, under the chairmanship of Professor Eric Fernie, Director of the Courtauld Institute of Art, and including representatives from English Heritage, the Courtauld Institute of Art, the Council for British Archaeology and various other academic institutions, was established in January 1998 to:

- (a) Advise on an academic framework relating to philosophical and practical conservation issues;
- (b) Assist with establishing academic aims and objectives;
- (c) Endorse specific proposals within the agreed academic framework;
- (d) Ensure interdependence between the various disciplines; and
- (e) Support the project at both national and international levels.

The Advisory Panel has been kept informed of all developments relating to St Mary's Church. No issue has yet arisen, however, that has required the Panel to meet and discuss aspects of the works being proposed.

### *2.2.3 Friends of St Mary's Church*

A declaration of trust was formally made in 1998 to create a charity known as The Friends of St Mary's Church (Registered Charity number 1069758). The trust deed allows the Trustees to act for the following charitable purposes:

*...for the restoration preservation repair maintenance improvement beautification and reconstruction of the Church of S. Mary, Houghton-on-the-Hill in the Diocese of*

*Norwich and the County of Norfolk and of the monuments fittings fixtures stained glass furniture ornaments and chattels of the said Church.*

### **2.3 Statutory and non-statutory designations**

Listed grade II\* at the re-survey in 1987, St Mary's Church was up-graded to grade I in June 1997.

The church stands within an area of important landscape quality, as designated by Breckland District Council, which reflects the importance of the rural environment and offers greater control over unsuitable development.

The church does not lie within a designated conservation area, nor are there are tree preservation orders on trees within or adjacent to the churchyard.

### **2.4 Preparation and implementation of conservation plan**

The need for a conservation plan relating both to St Mary's Church and the extant wall paintings within the building came from concerns raised by the Steering Group in relation to current and future levels of intervention and use.

In response to growing public awareness of and interest in the church and its site, and the significance and vulnerability of the wall paintings, it was agreed by the Steering Group that a conservation plan should be prepared for and adopted by the principal stakeholders concerned with the current and future safeguarding of St Mary's Church.

This conservation plan had been prepared by Dr David Watt of De Montfort University, Leicester, in his role as professional adviser to St Mary's Church. Sections relating to the history and development (Section 3.5), significance (Section 4.3), condition and vulnerability (Section 5.1.1), and repair and conservation (part of Section 6.4) of the wall paintings have been provided by Sharon Cather, Conservation of Wall Painting Department, Courtauld Institute of Art, London.

Implementation of the conservation plan is intended to be through the actions of the Steering Group, Advisory Panel, Friends of St Mary's Church, and Parochial Church Council of South Pickenham with Houghton-on-the-Hill.

### **2.5 Scope and limitations of conservation plan**

The scope of this conservation plan is as determined through consultation with the Steering Group, and follows current best practice in the preparation of such documents. In particular, it draws on advice provided in *Conservation Plans for Historic Places* (Heritage Lottery Fund, 1998) and *Conservation Plans in Action* (Clark, 1999).

This conservation plan is limited to documenting the significance of St Mary's Church, which represents the current building, wall paintings, churchyard, and below-ground archaeological remains. It does not include detailed consideration of the wider cultural, social and/or economic significances of the building and its site, the landscape in which it is located, associated flora and fauna, or the broader art, architectural and/or archaeological record.

## **2.6 Other related documentation**

This conservation plan has been prepared as a stand-alone document that will provide a point of reference for future decisions and actions of the principal stakeholders of St Mary's Church.

There is no current management plan or other such documentation relating to St Mary's Church.

## **2.7 Consultation procedures**

A draft of this Conservation Plan will be made available for consultation to members of the Steering Group, Advisory Panel, Friends of St Mary's Church, and other relevant individuals/organisations prior to its adoption.

## **2.8 Adoption of conservation plan**

It is proposed that this conservation plan be adopted by the principal stakeholders of St Mary's Church, as listed in Appendix D.

### 3.0 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The history and development of St Mary's Church are slowly being understood in the light of on-going examination and investigations. It is the purpose of this section to provide a historical overview of the building, together with its site and extant wall paintings, as a basis for understanding its significances and vulnerabilities.

#### 3.1 Background history and archaeology

The following background information concerning St Mary's Church has been taken from a report of an archaeological evaluation excavation undertaken by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU) in February 2000 (Penn, 2000). References in square brackets are to be found in the original NAU Report No. 497.

##### 3.1.1 *Geology and topography*

The deserted village of Houghton-on-the-Hill lies on the north-east margin of Breckland. Desertion was a gradual and prolonged process that extended from the 14th to the 20th century. The small Norman parish church, somewhat reduced in size by the demolition of the south aisle in the 14th century and of the earlier chancel in the 18th century, was abandoned as a maintained place of worship around 1945 [Heywood, 1996]. In the 13th century the manor came to Sir Robert de Neville, who suffered execution in 1270; his widow later founded a chantry here for two priests in 1304, possibly in his memory [Bryant, 1903, 127]. Local tradition says that he was buried in the south aisle of the church [Davey, n.d.]. The fabric of the church includes Roman brick and tile.

The church lies on the edge of the Boulder Clay plateau that dominates central Norfolk, and looks west over a headstream of the River Wissey to Breckland beyond [Geological Survey, 1971]. The site thus lies in a dramatic (for Norfolk) topographical situation at 65 m OD on the edge of the Boulder Clay plateau, which falls away to the north, west and south leaving the church on a spur. The church stands some 30 m above the level of the river (c. 1 km to the west) and is now a virtually solitary building apart from Houghton Farm that lies 350 m to the west towards the foot of the hill. The church and its former associated village, now represented by earthworks to the north, stand on a local east-to-west route. This starts by the stream at Houghton Springs and continues eastwards as a drove-way past the church and on to Houghton Common, formerly common pasture.

##### 3.1.2 *Archaeological and historical background*

Like most Norfolk places, Houghton is first recorded in *Domesday Book*. The place-name Houghton is 'hoh-tun' (i.e. 'tun' on a hill) [Ekwall 1971, 253], suggesting that the first-named settlement here lay on or around the hill on which the church stands.

Houghton-on-the Hill, a small parish lying between North and South Pickenham, may have been cut out of Pickenham, or perhaps from Ashill to the immediate east. Houghton is therefore relatively late in the local formation of parishes, despite being in existence as a named estate in 1086. It was then one of many Norfolk manors held by Reynold, son of Ivo. *Domesday Book* records that Herlwin held land in Houghton off Reynold, with one freeman annexed by Wihenoc (who also annexed land in

adjacent Pickenham) [Brown 1984, 21, 15]. The church may date to this period, with later alterations.

The church is notable for the quantity of Roman material used in its construction. There is ample evidence of Roman activity within this area with a major north-to-south road, the Peddars Way [County Site 1289], passing just west of the church; its junction with an east-to-west Roman road lies 1 km south of the church [Gurney, 1993]. Sites of substantial Roman buildings are known to lie near this east-to-west road, about 3 km to the east. Closer at hand, at the foot of the slope overlooked by the church, lies the site of a Roman villa and other structures [County Site 29034]. These may have been the source of Roman material in the fabric of the church and finds of Roman material close by to the east [County Site 4624] and north [County Site 19449]. Casual observation in the churchyard, on the south side of the church, has recovered evidence of pre-Roman activity in the form of Neolithic flint, two sherds of Iron Age pottery; a sherd of Late Saxon St Neots ware and later pottery [County Site 4265] have also been found. The significance of the Iron Age pottery is unknown, but elevated situations could have been attractive for settlement for a number of reasons.

The village of Houghton had its origins in the Saxon period (although possibly quite late), but finds from closer to the river may indicate an Early Saxon cemetery, possibly with some cremation burials [County Site 19449]. Such a low position would be unusual for a cemetery site, however, especially when prominent situations are close at hand, such as the site upon which the church stands. While some settlement activity near the stream is possible, this is clearly not that later known as 'Houghton'.

The church was not always isolated and remote. There is documentary and archaeological evidence that the former settlement of Houghton, now represented by the farm and church, once lay on the slopes around the church, overlooking the stream, but shrank and disappeared in the late Middle Ages. This settlement is now represented by some low earthworks to the north of the church and a scatter of finds across the slopes [County Site 4630]. Casual surface finds of pottery include three Late Saxon sherds. To the north of the church an earthwork survey recorded a hollow-way with tofts both sides, the hollow-way turning eastwards and continuing into the arable field as a soil mark. Faden's map of Norfolk (1797) shows the route up from the river past the church and on to Houghton Common. This map and early Ordnance Survey sheets (1882, revised 1904) show a house, presumably the parsonage, immediately to the north of the lane running past the church. Houghton Farm survives today in a somewhat reduced form in comparison to the farmstead that existed in the late 19th century.

Vertical air photographs taken by the RAF in 1946 show the soil marks of the hollow-way and other features [County Site 4627]. Oblique air photographs taken in 1977 also show the soil mark of the hollow-way.

In the 18th century the settlement had shrunk so much that Blomefield recorded 'There are now only a farm or two, and a cottage or two in this village' [Blomefield 1807, 131]. The chancel 'was in so ruinous a condition' [Batcock 1991, fiche] that a faculty of 1760 allowed it to be taken down and replaced by the present brick chancel. The parish was consolidated with North Pickenham in the early 18th century [Batcock 1991, 133]. Restorations took place in 1857 and 1895–6, when the church was re-roofed [Batcock 1991, fiche].

### *3.1.3 Archaeological evaluation excavation*

Evaluation excavation undertaken in February 2000, together with amended information released in January 2001 (Penn, 2001), has revealed details of the constructional history of the church, including the foundations of the nave and chancel (which are quite different from each other in character) and some slight remains of the original chancel wall (probably tapering in plan). Trenches next to the nave suggest not only that the nave had been built using a different constructional technique to that employed for the chancel, but that the nave foundation was trench-built in a laid deposit of boulder clay. An internal trench revealed the latest mortar nave floor surface, which has slumped away from the wall and lies some way below the likely level of the original floor.

With regard to the potential for further archaeological work:

- (a) Investigation in the angle of the nave and chancel might demonstrate their relationship, together with their sequence and method of construction;
- (b) Investigation to the east of the present chancel might reveal the shape of the apse, if any wall survives;
- (c) Full excavation of an expanded and deeper Trench D might reveal the extent of the boulder clay used as a foundation for the nave, and allow proper observation and recording of the tomb base; and
- (d) Investigation within the south side of the nave might show floor levels on the opposite side of the nave to Trench E and allow a comparison of the stratigraphic sequence and the relationship to the fabric of the 1090s, 12th century and 14th century blocking, and truncations.

### **3.2 Additional comment on background history and archaeology**

Continuing studies by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU) and others have provided additional information concerning aspects of the history and archaeology of St Mary's Church (Penn, 2001). The resulting notes, which are reproduced in Appendix E, should be seen as an amendment to NAU Report No. 497 dated May 2000. References in square brackets are to be found in the original notes.

It is strongly recommended that further additional information concerning the history and archaeology of the building should be added to this conservation plan as it becomes available. The inclusion of such revisions will allow the document to offer a developed understanding of the building and a record of contemporary significances and values.

### **3.3 Building phases and methods of construction**

The history and development of St Mary's Church are complex, and have only been determined as a result of the investigative and repair works undertaken since the start of the *Ruined Churches Repair Programme* in 1993. Six phases of building works have been identified by Stephen Heywood of Norfolk County Council, including a summary of works undertaken during 1994–96 (Heywood, 1996). References in square brackets are to be found in the original report.

#### **3.3.1 Phase 1: c.1090**

Of the original church, only the nave survives. This is characterised by coursed flint rubble walls with some original external render surviving on the north face. The quoins are an irregular mixture of long-and-short work and re-used Roman brick. The roof line of the nave can be detected on the north side of the west wall and the south side of the east wall. This suggests that the original roof was not parapetted. There is a pair of opposing double-splayed windows situated in the centre. Typically (*cf.* Bayfield, Burgh Parva, Newton by Castle Acre), this represents the only original direct light source to the nave with the possible exception of a third window in the west wall. The voussoirs are formed of broken pieces of Roman brick and are laid non-radially. The semicircular chancel arch itself is largely covered with lathe and plaster, yet the jambs are visible. These are dressed almost entirely in complete Roman bricks and it is fair to surmise that the arch is also composed of Roman brick. There are the remains of a pair of limestone imposts, which were cut back when the neo-classical chancel was built.

The original chancel was described by Blomefield [1805, 131] before its replacement following a faculty of 1760 [Batcock, 1991]. His description of the church deserves to be quoted in full:

*The church is a single building of flint, etc. dedicated to St Mary the Virgin; in length about 27 feet, and about 18 in breadth, and is covered with reed. At the west end stands a four-square tower of flint and brick, and on the top is a little cap of wood covered with lead; in this tower hangs one bell; at the east end of this nave is the chancel separated by a gable or wall, near a yard thick, through which is an arch about 12 feet in height and 6 in breadth, which leads into the chancel; which seems to be much more antique than the body and tower; it is in length about 26 feet and of equal breadth with the body.*

The foundations of the chancel can be seen where they meet the east wall of the nave and there is a rough indication in the turf of the churchyard where it stood. The roof line can also be detected. The chancel was in fact narrower than the nave by a distinct but slight amount, which could have misled Blomefield into believing that the two parts were of the same width if seen only from the interior. An apsidal east end may have led him to believe that the chancel was 'much more antique'. But of more significance is the length of about 26 feet he gives, which makes the chancel only one foot shorter than the nave and disproportionately long (the faculty of 1760 says that it was 28 feet long [Batcock, 1991]). However, as tempting as it may be to think that the former chancel was in fact of Anglo-Saxon date, the evidence at present suggests that they were contemporary. This is because the walls of the former chancel appear to have been bonded into the eastern wall of the nave. Although this is barely perceptible due to assiduous making good, the surviving masonry, which just breaks the surface of the ground, is clearly of one build with the nave east wall. Also a plastered surface survives on the internal face of the chancel wall and the plaster returns uninterrupted on to the nave wall. A second possible explanation for the disproportionate length of the chancel is, of course, that it was extended during the later Middle Ages.

The nave of the church retains large areas of early medieval figurative wall painting. The east wall has the most readily identifiable scheme with a *Gnadenstuhl* Trinity in the centre within a mandorla, roundels with prophets holding scrolls and angels in the chancel arch spandrels. The scheme is clearly lavish and the overall organisation and quality of detail is sophisticated. The drawing style is Romanesque and is probably contemporary with the construction of the church towards the end of the 11th century. The painting is the subject of other specialist reports.

In discussion, the original church can be reconstructed as being of two simple cells, the chancel slightly narrower and lower than the nave and unusually long in relation to the length of the nave. The walls were lower than at present and the roof was steeply pitched. The nave survives almost in entirety with only the central section of the west wall having been lost when the tower arch was inserted. Remarkably, it retains large areas of its original painting.

Many would argue that the church is of Anglo-Saxon date. The long-and-short quoins and the double-splayed windows are regarded as being sure indications. However, there are more examples of post-Conquest double-splayed windows (a technique particular to early East Anglian flint buildings [Taylor, 1978, 841–43, Fig. 673]) than of

possible earlier examples. Similarly long-and-short quoins are commonly found in post-Conquest buildings (*cf.* Bawsey St James; St Martin-at-Palace, Norwich; Debenham, Suffolk). Therefore it is much more likely that the building belongs to the period of rebuilding in stone that was carried out by the new Norman lords.

### 3.3.2 Phase 2: c.1150

A south aisle was added at about this time. The only evidence for this above ground is a blocked two-bay arcade in the south nave wall. The operation involved simply knocking through a pair of semicircular headed arches supported in the middle on a simple rectangular pier. So sure was their faith that the arches were left undressed without any system of voussoirs to transfer the load. The plaster on the soffits of the arches is clearly visible in the masonry.

At about the same time as the addition of the south aisle and perhaps necessitated by the addition, a doorway was inserted in the north wall. One jamb survives *in situ* and is clearly late Romanesque in style. It has a tiny shaft, no bigger than a roll moulding, supporting a miniature cushion capital. At mid-height it has a sculpted shaft ring with the remains of a simple interlace pattern. During repairs to the tower, a voussoir was found blocking a putlog hole. The voussoir almost certainly belonged to this doorway and is decorated with chevron ornament. It is now in the possession of the church warden.

The date of 1150 for this phase is based on the style of the doorway. The arcade has no particular dateable feature apart from semicircular arches. However, it is clearly an alteration to the original fabric and a *terminus ante quem* is provided by the 14th-century doorway incorporated in the blocking of the western bay.

### 3.3.3 Phase 3: 14th century

Various alterations took place during this century and there is no reason to believe that they took place contemporaneously:

3a: The south aisle is demolished and the arcade blocked incorporating a doorway with two-centred head, hollow-chamfered impost and a hood mould.

3b: A large window with Decorated tracery is inserted at the east end of the north nave wall. Only the stubs of the original tracery remain *in situ*, but fragments belonging to the window remain inside the church.

3c: The nave walls are heightened by about 1.6 m. (5ft 3ins). This would probably have involved the erection of a new roof, which has since been replaced. The heightening is markedly narrower than the original wall creating an off-set on the outside surfaces of the nave walls. The fabric has putlog holes formed of bricks and there are brick quoins.

3d: The heightening was accompanied by the erection of a tall parapet at the west end of the nave of which the sections to the north and south of the later tower remain. They are constructed almost entirely of brick and the corbelling, which supports their projection, begins below the level of the top of the 11th-century wall. They have the appearance of a typical 16th- or 17th-century gable-end parapet that has been heightened. However, the later tower butts up against the parapet and this

evidence indicates that the parapets pre-date the tower. The parapet sections were heightened after the construction of the tower, yet the brickwork of the corbelled-out sections are undisturbed, which suggests that these dressings were carefully rebuilt during the post-medieval period.

3e: A stoop was accommodated adjacent to the north door. Only the back of this survives. It is probably during this period that altar niches were crudely constructed in the east wall of the nave on either side of the chancel arch. A piscina was situated beside the south side altar until its recent theft.

#### 3.3.4 Phase 4: 15th century

The tower is constructed. The fabric is of flint incorporating some brick. There are stone quoins to the tower proper, whilst the window dressings are of brick. It is unbuttressed and is roofless at present [the tower was re-roofed in 1997]. It has a stair turret on the south side. The simple Y-traceried bell openings have 4-centred arches and hood moulds suggesting a late 15th- or early 16th-century date. During the repairs to the tower a voussoir belonging to the Romanesque north doorway was found blocking a putlog hole. This suggests that the doorway became redundant or was radically altered at the same time as the construction of the tower. The construction of the tower arch involved the destruction of the centre section of the west wall of the nave and there are clear roughly vertical off-sets that indicate the extent of replaced masonry.

On the south side of the nave the window embrasure is surmounted by a four-centred arch in brick probably of 15th-century date. This suggests that Perpendicular tracery existed in the opening. The present external reveals are of 19th-century keyed brickwork that must have been built after Ladbroke's engraving of c.1830, which shows a small arched window with two mullions, leaded glazing and no tracery.

#### 3.3.5 Phase 5: 18th century

Towards the middle of the century a new roof was constructed over the nave. It consisted of three principal trusses with lap-jointed collars and three roughly hewn tie beams not corresponding to the principal trusses. The butt-purlins were wedge-tenoned and the entire structure was of soft wood. One of these trusses survives *in situ*. Blomefield mentions that the roof covering was reed thatch and Ladbroke shows the church thatched in 1830. The western parapets were heightened to accommodate the thatch and parapets to the eastern gable were built or rebuilt at that time.

In 1760 a faculty was obtained to demolish the ruinous chancel and replace it with a small one. This is the chancel that survives. It has a single east window which, according to Ladbroke, had simple tracery of three cusped lights. There are plaster cornices and the chancel arch was lined with lathe and plaster.

#### 3.3.6 Phase 6: Mid to late 19th century

The west window is clearly either a Victorian creation or replacement. Similarly, the arch of the west doorway is of 19th-century date. The thatch was replaced with the existing flat pantiles towards the end of the century. The chancel roof was rebuilt and

slated at that time. The south nave window reveals were remodelled towards the middle of the century and it appears that a timber casement window of a domestic type may have been installed.

### 3.3.7 *The repairs: 1994–96*

The building was completely shrouded in ivy before work began. The first step was to cut the ivy stems and let the plants die without attempting to remove them. When the building became more accessible, an inspection of the surviving roof timbers took place and it was decided to repair the roof rather than remove it as initially proposed. The principal repairs were the roofs of the nave and chancel, the north doorway and the rebuilding of the lost top section of the east nave gable. Other repairs included the grouting of cracks, the rebuilding of lost quoins (in tile) and some very selective re-pointing [Watt, 1994].

It was thought that more of the nave roof could have been retained but, in the end, only one of the 18th-century trusses was sturdy enough to remain. The other two trusses are faithful reproductions. The flat pantiles are torched on to reed and the parapets are flashed with lead. Wide eaves dispense with the need for gutters. The chancel roof had been re-roofed and slated probably towards the end of the 19th century at the same time as the nave roof covering. At that time the earlier roof had been left *in situ* because it supported the plaster cornices. The late 19th-century roof was replaced and re-slated again leaving the original chancel roof *in situ* as before. When funds allow, the parish will no doubt reinstate the missing cornices.

The north doorway had suffered a serious collapse almost through the full thickness of the nave wall. This is possibly due to the robbing of its internal dressings, but it needs to be remembered that the doorway was probably blocked during the 15th century when a voussoir from the doorway was used to block a putlog hole in the tower. It is therefore likely that the dressings were taken at that time and that the damage was the result of recent vandalism. Indeed, there was a pile of fallen flints around the door when the church was first investigated. The broken wall surface has been rough-racked and the cantilevered surviving facing above the doorway is supported by a pair of brick piers.

In order to protect the church from the weather and to give it some security against vandalism in such a remote location, it was decided to fill the three large windows with honeycomb brickwork. This has the effect of allowing a certain amount of natural light and more importantly ensuring good ventilation.

## 3.4 **Additional comment on building phases and methods of construction**

Continuing studies by Stephen Heywood and others have provided additional information concerning aspects of the phasing and construction of St Mary's Church (Heywood, 2000a, b). The resulting notes, which are reproduced in Appendix F, should be seen as addenda to the original report on the building dated 12 August 1996. References in square brackets are to be found in the original notes.

It is strongly recommended that further additional information concerning the phasing and construction of the building should be added to this conservation plan as it becomes available. The inclusion of such revisions will allow the document to offer a

developed understanding of the building and a record of contemporary significances and values.

### 3.5 History and development of wall paintings

The wall paintings dating from the first building phase (c.1090) are of international significance. They survive on all four nave walls, corresponding broadly to the survival of the original internal building fabric. There are also exposed remains of later medieval painting associated with the 15th-century building phase, and of a post-Reformation text (both on the nave east wall). It is highly likely that there are further remains of painting from each of these phases, and also perhaps of others, that remain covered.

#### 3.5.1 *Painting phase 1: c.1090*

There are extensive remains of the original scheme of painting on the east and north walls of the nave, and less complete remains on the west and south walls. These exposed areas (apart from the painting on the north window, which was recorded in the 1970s) were uncovered in April 1996. A preliminary art-historical assessment was made by Park and Heywood (Park and Heywood, 1997; Appendix G). On stylistic grounds, the scheme can be most plausibly dated to the late 11th century. On the basis of its painting technology and distribution, the scheme is demonstrably coeval with the original fabric, independently dated by Heywood (1996) to c.1090.

The most extensive remains are on the east wall, in three principal registers. The upper registers flank a central *Trinity*, and show *Heaven* (on the north) and probably *Hell* (on the south). Below these is a border with busts of apostles in roundels with Christ in the centre. The lowest register has the *Resurrection of the Dead* on the north side, and slight remains of the same subject on the south. The only significant architectural alteration that has affected the survival of the original painting is the insertion of two crude recesses in the lowest register. Survival of the horizontal upper border at gable-level suggests that the ceiling of the original church terminated at that level.

The focus of the east wall scheme is a *Trinity* of the Throne of Mercy or *Gnadenstuhl* type, which became the most common way of representing this subject from the 12th century onward. Remarkably, the Houghton *Trinity* is the earliest known example anywhere, pre-dating the next known examples (in France) by about thirty years.

There are sufficient remains of painting elsewhere to demonstrate that this original scheme covered the entire interior of the nave, and presumably also the chancel. Enough survives on the north wall to show that a Genesis cycle was depicted in a series of scenes distributed in two registers, with a dado below. At the east end of the upper register is the *Creation of Eve*, and it is likely that further examination and study will result in the identification of other subjects.

Further study is particularly needed of the less legible remains on the west and south walls. Rickerby recorded remains of Romanesque painting on both walls, and pointed out that much is probably still covered (Rickerby, 1996). The side walls and west wall have suffered greater damage than the east wall through subsequent alterations, including the insertion of windows, doors and a south aisle, and the addition of the west tower. Nevertheless, enough remains of the original scheme for it to be interpreted in detail and to convey a vivid impression of the interior in its earliest phase.

### *3.5.2 Painting phase 2?: c.1150*

No exposed remains of wall painting have so far been associated with this building phase. However, insertion of the two-bay arcade in the south wall would presumably have necessitated redecoration at least of that wall. The entire scheme of c.1090 is keyed for the application of a render, but without careful investigation – including uncovering and recording of undisturbed areas still concealed by later layers – it is not possible to determine when this render was applied.

### *3.5.3 Painting phase 3?: 14th century*

Again, there are no exposed remains of painting that have been associated with any of the various alterations carried out in the 14th century. However, the extent of the alterations – particularly the raising of the north and south walls, and the insertion of a large Decorated window in the north wall – make it highly unlikely that the Romanesque scheme would have remained exposed. Normally, however, a church interior would not be left undecorated as a result of such alterations; the minimum decoration would be painting in masonry pattern (imitation of blocks of ashlar masonry). Although no 14th-century painting has been identified so far, it is possible that some remains concealed by later layers.

### *3.5.4 Painting phase 4: 15th century*

During the uncovering of the Romanesque scheme, a small area of later medieval decorative painting was left on the north side of the east wall. On stylistic grounds, it can be dated to the 15th century (Park, 1999). Since it is painted on a limewash ground (Kakoulli and Cather, 2000), it is not possible to determine whether it is coeval with the re-rendering of the wall that obliterated the original scheme.

### *3.5.5 Painting phase 5: 18th century*

On the north side of the nave east wall is a small area of post-Reformation painted text, probably dateable to the 18th century, which was left when the Romanesque scheme was uncovered in 1996. More areas are likely to remain concealed by later surface finishes.

### *3.5.6 Painting phase 6: 1996–2000*

Painting was recorded on the splays of the nave north window in the 1970s (Jeffries, 1996) and further slight remains were inspected in autumn 1995 during the repairs to the fabric (Hirst, 1996). From 6–10 April 1996, the currently exposed painting – apart from that in the north window – was uncovered by Hirst Conservation (Carrington, 1996).

The international significance of the paintings was quickly recognised (Park, 1996). Given their importance and the vulnerable condition of the exposed paintings, a programme of assessment, recording and diagnostic investigations was designed. These were intended to inform decision-making with regard to future conservation by providing information on the nature and extent of the surviving paintings of all phases, their condition, the original painting materials and the prevailing environmental risks. These investigations and recording were completed in January 2001. They included: condition assessment and graphic recording (Rickerby, 1996; Rickerby, 1997a); photogrammetric recording of the nave walls by the English Heritage Survey Team in July 1997; environmental assessment including a liquid moisture survey (Courtauld Institute, 1999) and environmental monitoring (Cather, 1999); technical examination (Kakoulli and Cather, 2000); and assessment of deterioration due to salts and micro-organisms (Rickerby and Shekede, 2001). Environmental monitoring is continuing in order to assess changes in the microclimate that affects the wall paintings as a result of present and proposed alterations to the drainage system, ventilation, and other aspects of the building.

Limited emergency stabilisation was undertaken in October 1996 (Rickerby 1997a). Following completion of all the diagnostic investigations, proposals for conservation were made by Rickerby and Shekede (2001).

The results and implications of the various studies – as well as the present condition of the wall paintings, and proposals for preventive and remedial treatments – are discussed under ‘Assessment of sensitivity/vulnerability’ (Section 5) and ‘Conservation policies’ (Section 6).

## **4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

St Mary's Church possesses or has developed multiple significances or values. It is the purpose of this section to identify and record these significances as a basis for determining and adopting policies that will attempt to retain them in any future development or use of the church and its site.

### **4.1 Overall significance**

St Mary's Church is significant for various reasons, some obvious (such as the building fabric and wall paintings), some less obvious (such as the archaeological record), and some that are almost intangible (such as an individual's response to the church).

In terms of overall significance, St Mary's Church is of international importance and value, which is reflected in its grade of listing and the care with which action and change are planned and implemented.

The contributions that St Mary's Church makes to our appreciation and understanding of architectural and constructional practices, artistic techniques and forms of expression, and society within the Breckland region of Norfolk are potentially great. Each facet of this overall significance has to be identified and considered to ensure that the individual and collective value of St Mary's Church is not reduced or destroyed.

### **4.2 Architectural and historical significance**

The grade I listing for St Mary's Church affirms the significance and international importance of the building and its wall paintings (Appendix H).

Grade I listed buildings are considered to be of 'exceptional interest' (Planning Policy Guidance 15, para. 6.6), and represent about 2% of all listed buildings (Department of the Environment/Department of National Heritage, 1994).

### **4.3 Art and historical significance**

The Romanesque wall paintings are of outstanding national importance as the earliest surviving extensive scheme of medieval wall painting in Britain. They are internationally significant since they include the earliest example of the Throne of Mercy type of Trinity, which became the standard way of representing this subject from the 12th century onward.

Only one *in-situ* medieval wall painting in Britain pre-dates the Houghton paintings: the fragmentary painting of angels at Nether Wallop (Hampshire), dateable to c.1000. There are other highly important post-Conquest schemes of slightly later date, the so-called 'Lewes Group' in Sussex of c.1100. The Houghton scheme differs from these in its scale, subject-matter, location (distant from the concentration of early Romanesque painting in the south of England), and also in its technology. It is therefore an extremely important contribution to our understanding of the development of painting in England in the first half-century after the Conquest, a period from which there is also little surviving manuscript painting.

The occurrence of the earliest representation of the Throne of Mercy or *Gnadenstuhl* type of Trinity is remarkable. It pre-dates the earliest surviving examples in French

manuscripts by some 30 years, and raises fundamental issues concerning artistic developments in both England and France in the early Romanesque period.

#### **4.4 Archaeological significance**

The latent archaeology record of St Mary's Church offers scope and potential for future investigation and evaluation. Such work has already provided valuable information on the construction and phased development of the building, and given a cultural and historical framework within which the history and use of St Mary's Church might be viewed.

The significance of the archaeological record and the potential it offers for furthering our understanding of St Mary's Church must be considered in future decisions concerning the building and its site.

#### **4.5 Community and social significance**

St Mary's Church has become a focal point for visitors to the area, which has both direct and indirect effects on the local community and associated facilities. It is reported, for example, that the local shop and public house within North Pickenham have both received trade from passing visitors.

The long-term significances of St Mary's Church for the local community, and any social implications arising from increased interest in the church and its site, should be the subject of consideration by the Parish Council of South Pickenham, Breckland District Council, and Norfolk County Council.

Growing awareness of St Mary's Church and the role established for it within the local community will develop and change as more becomes known about the church and its site. In particular, although possibly of less importance to those who visit the church for recreation or pleasure, it is the wall paintings that will dominate the ways in which St Mary's Church will be managed, conserved and maintained.

#### **4.6 Tourism and recreational significance**

The secluded location of St Mary's Church, together with stories concerning its history and use, have acted as a draw to persons seeking peace, seclusion and a sense of history.

Promotion of St Mary's Church within the local area is typically by word-of-mouth. This attracts individuals and groups for a variety of activities, including picnics, club visits and general relaxation, and those using local footpaths and bridleways.

The church is also promoted in a limited manner for a wider audience, including coverage within the Breckland District Council holiday and accommodation guide, and occasional television and radio programmes. The District Council considers St Mary's Church to be a positive tourism asset for the region and is keen to promote it for visitors (Sayle, 2000). It is also aware of the sensitivity of the site and limitations as a visitor attraction.

It is estimated that over 4,000 persons visited St Mary's Church during 1999 (Davey, 2000b), and this number is expected to rise over the next twelve-month period.

The manner in which St Mary's Church is used by such persons varies according to their interests, time and the weather. Some are content to wander around the churchyard, whilst others are keen to climb the tower for a view across the Breckland landscape. Many are delighted to talk with Mr Bob Davey as he works in the churchyard.

Facilities for visitors to St Mary's Church are extremely limited, although there is car parking on the track to the north of the churchyard and limited interpretative material inside the church.

#### **4.7 Spiritual significance**

The significance of St Mary's Church as a spiritual refuge from the pressures of modern living is very real to many visitors and should thus be considered and protected in future policies of management and conservation.

St Mary's Church is regularly used by individuals and groups for private prayer and prayer meetings, and by others seeking peace and rest. These activities take place almost daily.

There are also formal services (i.e. advertised services with stewards) now being held at St Mary's Church. There were six services during 1999, and two burials of ashes within the churchyard. The first marriage service is being planned for 2001.

The growth of interest in St Mary's Church and the resulting wishes of individuals to be involved with the church will need to be carefully considered in the future policies of management and conservation.

#### **4.8 Ecological significance**

Given the isolated rural location of St Mary's Church and the manner in which it is used and presented, it is possible that there are ecological significances that should be considered along side those relating to the building and its site.

It would therefore be appropriate for an ecological survey and assessment to be undertaken to assess the significance of the site.

#### **4.9 Educational significance**

St Mary's Church has potential as an educational asset for various groups, ranging from local school parties to academic researchers. This significance has so far been exploited on an *ad hoc* basis, although greater scope exists for drawing it to the attention of specific groups and organisations.

It is important that this significance be carefully managed to avoid inappropriate compromise or loss of the special qualities of the building and its site.

## 5.0 ASSESSMENT OF SENSITIVITY AND VULNERABILITY

### 5.1 Summary of current structural and material condition

Based upon the summary of condition noted in the quinquennial inspection report of May 1999, the general condition of St Mary's Church is judged to be satisfactory, given the nature and extent of the initial works (i.e. basic consolidation and repair), subsequent works (e.g. new roof and floors to tower), and current investigations relating to the extant wall paintings and environmental conditions (Watt, 1999).

Recommendations for prioritised future works included within the quinquennial inspection report remain largely outstanding (Appendix I).

It is important at this time to be aware that much of the repair and consolidation work undertaken by Norfolk County Council as part of its *Ruined Churches Repair Programme* during 1993–96 was aimed at stabilising the building and making it safely accessible to the public. Acknowledgement of the importance of the wall paintings in 1996 led to further works being undertaken with the aim of stabilising the internal environment for the benefit of the paintings and their supporting substrates. The focus for these and future works will primarily be the care and conservation of the wall paintings rather than the building.

Whilst it is widely acknowledged that the wall paintings are of international significance and thus worthy of special consideration in future decisions affecting St Mary's Church, it is also true that the building and its site possess particular significances themselves. One cannot sensibly be considered without the other. This interrelationship, both in terms of future conservation needs and management decisions, will have to be carefully considered to ensure that potential conflicts of interest and/or action do not detrimentally affect or influence the church, its wall paintings or any of the wider significances established above.

#### 5.1.1 Condition and vulnerability of the wall paintings

The wall paintings remain in an unstable condition and require treatment as a matter of priority. The nature and extent of the potential works, and the decisions required to determine what is to be undertaken, were set out by Rickerby and Shekede on the basis of the completed diagnostic investigations (Rickerby and Shekede, 2001). The scope of the treatment interventions will depend on the extent to which the later overlying layers of painting and plaster are to be preserved and the potentially concealed areas of the Romanesque scheme are to be uncovered. These decisions have ethical, financial and scheduling implications.

The vulnerability of the wall paintings has been determined by targeted investigations of (a) the environmental factors (Courtauld Institute, 1999; Cather, 1999), (b) active deteriorogens (Rickerby and Shekede, 2001), and (c) original materials (Kakoulli and Cather, 2000). In order of long-term risk, the paintings are vulnerable to moisture, building use, building works, light and bats.

#### Moisture

Moisture is the most serious cause of damage since its effects are not localised, but affect all the surfaces. The paintings are particularly at risk of deterioration from condensation and cycles of significant change in relative humidity. Environmental

assessment has demonstrated that both are occurring as a result of air exchange, sources of liquid moisture (including rising damp) and sources of cold (probably including the floor). The church is currently not heated, but if heating were introduced it would also cause cycles of change in relative humidity.

Some remedial measures have already been taken – guttering was provided to avoid accumulation of dispersed water around the building (2001) and thereby reduce the level of rising damp. At the same time, the eaves were closed to reduce excessive air exchange. The efficacy of these measures is currently being monitored.

*Further measures to avoid moisture damage should address sources of cold – for example, insulation of new floors and double glazing of new windows. These would also have the advantage of providing a better comfort level.*

### Building use

The paintings are vulnerable to two principal causes of damage from building use: direct mechanical damage, and indirect damage through alteration of the environmental conditions (for example, from large numbers of visitors) and through provision of building services. Since the paintings extend virtually to floor level in areas of the nave, they are particularly sensitive to damage from both furniture and visitors. Given the variety and intensity of uses of the building, as well as the large and increasing number of tourists, this is a high risk.

It would therefore be advisable to implement a programme of regular monitoring of the condition of the wall paintings.

The same pressures of use and tourism are likely to result in requests for the provision of building services, particularly lighting. Again, given the distribution of the paintings, any installation of such services would require considerable care.

### Building works

Various further works to the building are intended, particularly on the interior. These would pose a potential risk even after the paintings have been stabilised. *Therefore, any schedule of building works should include a risk assessment for the wall paintings carried out by a professional wall painting conservator, clearly indicating protective and surveillance measures required during building works, and inspection following completion of the works.*

### Light

Vermilion, which occurs in its brilliant red unaltered form in the Romanesque paintings, is subject to blackening from ultraviolet light and heat. Direct sunlight has a high component of ultraviolet light and can also heat the painted surfaces, leading as well to a reduction in relative humidity. It would therefore be prudent to provide ultraviolet filtering if the two large nave windows are unblocked and glazed, and also to assess the heating effects on the painting on the east wall with a view to taking remedial measures as necessary. Likewise, if artificial lighting is provided, ultraviolet and, as necessary, heat screening would be required.

### Bats

Fortunately, the church is not at present used by bats. Bats have been shown to cause significant and permanent damage to wall paintings, furniture and fittings (Paine, 1993). Norfolk has a particularly high bat population, and a large proportion of churches in the

county are adversely affected. *It is therefore important to ensure that bats are effectively excluded from the church.* Guidelines for issues relating to bats and churches are available from English Heritage (English Heritage and English Nature, 1997).

## **5.2 Outstanding works**

At the time of writing (December 2000), a faculty has been granted for the installation of rainwater goods to the nave and chancel, associated drainage with outfall to soakaways, blocking of the nave eaves, and repairs to failed roofing mortar. This work is likely to commence in early 2001. Bonding of the new cast-iron rainwater goods and bell frame to the existing lightning protection system should be considered in the near future.

It has also been proposed by the Friends of St Mary's Church that the next phase of works to the church should allow for the re-flooring of the chancel, together with repairs to the chancel steps, ceiling and plaster repairs, and reinstatement of the east window (Davey, 2000a)

With regard to the wall paintings, supporting plasterwork and internal environmental conditions within the church, the continuing work of the Courtauld Institute of Art and others will, in time, provide specific recommendations that will have to be considered in the context of the church and its present and future usage.

## **5.3 Ownership and management**

Ownership of the freehold of St Mary's Church is deemed to be with the incumbent of the parish (i.e. South Pickenham with Houghton-on-the-Hill).

Responsibility for the upkeep of the church fabric lies with the Parochial Church Council of South Pickenham with Houghton-on-the-Hill.

Control and management of activities within St Mary's Church are undertaken by the Friends of St Mary's Church, with Mr Bob Davey responsible for day-to-day affairs. Aside from a basic checklist of maintenance activities included within the Health and Safety File associated with works undertaken in 1997–98 (PFB Construction Management Services, 1998), there is no currently-agreed framework for planned preventive maintenance associated with the church and its site. A maintenance and operating manual should be prepared and implemented as a matter of urgency.

On-going management and conservation of the church and its site are currently under review by the Steering Group.

## **5.4 Function and usage**

The current function and usage of St Mary's Church is typically for occasional services and public enjoyment.

The number of persons visiting the church (estimated at over 4,000 during 1999) and the likely upward trend in visitor numbers raises serious questions about potentially detrimental effects on the building and its site, and particularly to the wall paintings and associated environmental conditions.

The sensitivity of St Mary's Church and the particular vulnerability of the extant wall paintings to a range of direct and indirect hazards require careful consideration and a clear framework for future management and conservation.

## 5.5 Site and environment

The isolated rural location of St Mary's Church makes it particularly sensitive to a range of actions and changes within both the site and the wider environment.

St Mary's Church stands within an area of important landscape quality as designated by Breckland District Council. This local landscape designation reflects the importance of the rural environment and offers greater control over unsuitable development. The designation of 'important landscape quality' appears within the Breckland District Local Plan (adopted September 1999) and is in line with the broader Norfolk County Council Structure Plan.

## 5.6 Resources

The resources available for the management and conservation of St Mary's Church may be considered under separate headings.

### 5.6.1 Financial resources

Much of the work so far undertaken at St Mary's Church, both in relation to the building and the wall paintings, has been funded by grants from English Heritage, Norfolk County Council, Breckland District Council, Entrust, and the Council for the Care of Churches.

Additional funding has also been obtained by the Friends of St Mary's Church from various trusts and foundations.

As the principal national sources of grant aid become ever more difficult to secure and as the nature of future works at St Mary's Church reduces the likelihood of such financial support, it will become increasingly important to attract capital and revenue funding from alternative sources. A framework for future management and conservation and, where necessary, a realistic business plan, will be critical to securing future funds.

### 5.6.2 Human resources

A great deal of time and effort has been expended on St Mary's Church by various individuals and organisations. In particular, Norfolk County Council has managed and part-funded much of the repair and consolidation under its *Ruined Churches Repair Programme*, and continues to provide administrative and technical support through the Steering Group.

The involvement of the English Heritage Building Conservation and Research Team (formerly the English Heritage Painting Conservation Studio) and the Courtauld Institute of Art in relation to the wall paintings has been similarly invaluable. The continuing advisory role of the Building Conservation and Research Team (Adrian Heritage) and the combined advisory and practical roles of the Conservation of Wall Painting Department (Sharon Cather) are considered essential to the project.

Much of the success of St Mary's Church, both as a technical project and as an attraction to the public, has also come from the actions of Mr Bob Davey and the Friends of St Mary's Church. The continuing support of such persons is key to the public success of this project and must be managed accordingly.

A framework for future management and conservation should identify key roles and targets for individuals and organisations to ensure best use of time and effort.

### **5.7 External factors**

There are various factors that might have a bearing on current and future attainments at St Mary's Church. Whilst some are acknowledged as being largely beyond the control of those involved with the church (e.g. political will, national financial support), others might be seen to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of the project (e.g. local financial support, support in kind).

The sensitivity of St Mary's Church to such factors needs to be carefully monitored over time, whilst changes that might adversely affect the church and its wall paintings have to be identified and acted upon before damage can occur.

The roles of the Steering Group and the Friends of St Mary's Church are considered to be critical in ensuring the long-term achievements of this project.

### **5.8 Lack of awareness/understanding**

Whilst vandalism and graffiti have thankfully not featured in the recent history of St Mary's Church, there is always a risk that such an isolated building might become the subject of such actions in the future. Growing awareness for and acknowledgement of the building and its wall paintings has raised its profile, but has also drawn attention to its vulnerabilities.

A lack of awareness and understanding amongst certain sections of the community can only be countered by careful management of activities and promotion of events.

It is considered essential that a clear set of aims and objectives be established for St Mary's Church, so that current and future actions might be planned and implemented within an agreed framework of management and conservation. This is largely the responsibility of the Friends of St Mary's Church.

### **5.9 Public and community expectations**

Coupled with a lack of awareness and understanding (see 5.8 above), it is important that the proposed outcomes of all future works be agreed and documented in advance of future action so that individual and/or community expectations are realistic and attainable.

### **5.10 Pedestrian and vehicular access**

Access to and egress from St Mary's Church currently make use of the track from the road between North Pickenham and South Pickenham, immediately to the north of the drive to Houghton Farm. This track has been made good by Mr Bob Davey over the past few years and is suitable for pedestrian and vehicular traffic throughout the year.

A public right of way (Breckland District Council Bridleway No. 3) runs along this track and offers pedestrian access (along with those riding or leading horses or on bicycle) to the church and churchyard, and on to Houghton Common to the east.

Control of this right of way is with the landowner (South Pickenham Estate Company Limited), whose responsibility is to maintain this right as a bridleway. There would therefore appear to be no legal access to and egress from the church, other than for users of the bridleway, although it is believed that a right of way was established to the church (but no further) in 1861 (Davey, 2000c). It is therefore important that the access/egress route be established for all purposes, whether by agreement with the local landowner or through proof of use.

For those visiting St Mary's Church, there is parking space for a maximum of 80 cars to both sides of the track adjacent to the church (Davey, 1999). The use of a bridleway for vehicular parking should again be addressed and formal agreement reached with the local landowner.

Access from the track into the churchyard is either via a short flight of steps opposite the tower or through a gateway opposite the chancel. The paths from these access/egress points is via paths across the sloping grassed churchyard.

## **5.11 Statutory controls**

### *5.11.1 Buildings of special architectural or historic interest*

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990 (s. 7) states that no person is permitted to carry out 'works for the demolition of a listed building or for its alteration or extension in any manner which would affect its character' unless listed building consent has been first obtained.

Under s. 60 of the 1990 Act, listed ecclesiastical buildings that are retained in use for ecclesiastical purposes are exempt from certain controls. Such 'ecclesiastical exemption' includes the need for listed building consent (and conservation area consent) for works of partial demolition, alteration and extension. Planning permission may, however, be required for material external alterations and extensions, and listed building consent would normally be required for the total demolition of a church.

The Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Order 1994 provides exemption for certain denominations that have developed their own systems for the control of works to their churches. In the case of the Church of England, faculty jurisdiction provides the relevant permission for material alterations including works or alterations to a church, churchyard or church furnishings and for the total or partial demolition of a church.

In the case of St Mary's Church, it is assumed that the church remains in use for ecclesiastical purposes and works are thus considered under faculty jurisdiction by the Chancellor of the Diocese.

### *5.11.2 Health and safety*

There is a general legal obligation imposed on those responsible for St Mary's Church to provide reasonable standards of public health and safety (Marley, 2000).

Under the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1994, and with reference to an inspection of St Mary's Church carried out by Breckland District Council in April 1999, 'suitable and

sufficient assessment of risk to the health and safety of employees and/or non employees' must be made to take account of the current condition of the church (e.g. advising visitors of the 'potential tripping hazard created by the uneven floor and matting') and access to the tower (e.g. prevention of unauthorised access and advising authorised visitors of the potential hazards) (Peacham, 1999).

Whilst the church and churchyard are considered to be reasonably safe for responsible visitors and participants, no risk assessment has yet been prepared. Persons entering the church should therefore be advised of potential hazards (e.g. overall condition, site access/egress, lack of flooring, covered floor slabs, chancel steps, loose rush matting, unstable seating, lack of light, nature and condition of the spiral stairway, ladder access to the roof, low tower parapet) and access denied/terminated for unsuitable persons.

### *5.11.3 Disabled access/egress*

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 is concerned with accessibility and the enjoyment of services and facilities within and around buildings by persons with disabilities (i.e. impairment affecting the ability of a person to carry out normal day-to-day activities) (Penton, 1999).

Since December 1996, a service provider (i.e. the Church) shall not discriminate against disabled persons by (a) refusing service, (b) providing a worse standard of service to disabled persons than it does for able-bodied persons, and (c) offering service on worse terms.

Since October 1999, service providers are obliged to take reasonable steps to (a) change practices, policies or procedures that make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled persons to use a service, (b) overcome physical features that make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled persons to use the service by providing the service by a reasonable alternative method, and (c) provide auxiliary aids or services that would make it easier for or enable disabled persons to use a service.

From 1 January 2004, service providers will have to take reasonable steps to remove, alter or provide reasonable means of avoiding physical features that make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled persons to use their services.

Within the framework established by the Disability Discrimination Act, disabled persons will be able to question arrangements and facilities within and around buildings that are made available by service providers. In the case of St Mary's Church, individuals may challenge discriminatory arrangements and facilities, and bring legal action against those with responsibility for the church.

Although St Mary's Church is not in full beneficial use, it is nevertheless visited by many people as visitors or participants in occasional services. The church is, however, only unlocked when Mr Bob Davey is on site or by known keyholders.

There is reasonable access into the churchyard from the track, but only by those able to use the steps or gateway. A simple handrail to the side of the steps, which can become slippery in wet weather, would provide assistance for old and young alike. Access for disabled and wheelchair users is considered problematic, and would be reliant to a varying degree on the assistance of others.

Access to the church and around the churchyard is dependent on persons being able to travel over reasonably level ground that is grassed.

There is no raised threshold into the church and the entrance is sufficiently wide, so access is considered possible for all seeking entry. Movement around the nave and chancel is currently hindered by the lack of flooring, covered floor slabs, chancel steps, loose rush matting, unstable seating, and a lack of light.

It is not envisaged or recommended that elderly or disabled persons should attempt to use the spiral stairway up to the prayer room, belfry or tower roof. The present fixed-ladder access from the belfry to the roof should be restricted to those with a legitimate purpose (e.g. clearing the roof covering, gutter, sump, outlet and chute or inspecting the fabric and building services) or under supervision. No children should be allowed on to the roof at any time.

Whilst Breckland District Council has no duty to inspect St Mary's Church, it is able to provide advice and assistance via local access groups operating in the area (i.e. Dereham, Thetford and another proposed in Swaffham) (Fitt, 2000). Small grants (up to a maximum of £500) are also available from the District Council for improving access/egress arrangements for disabled persons. Such a grant might be applied for to improve current access arrangements leading into the churchyard.

### **5.12 Areas of conflict**

There is (or might become) the potential for conflict between different significances or values relating to St Mary's Church, such that one might be detrimentally affected or influenced by another.

Potential conflict might, for instance, arise in the future between the needs of:

- conservation (architectural and wall paintings) and educational/public potential
- public accessibility and ecological value
- religious worship and community/social value
- security and recreational value
- site management and natural/aesthetic value

It is therefore essential that all future actions or changes be considered by members of the Steering Group and other relevant external individuals/organisations to provide an interdisciplinary assessment of the potential for conflict.

## **6.0 CONSERVATION POLICIES**

### **6.1 Defining the future of St Mary's Church**

The future of St Mary's Church, and in particular that of its wall paintings, must be ensured through the positive action of the various individuals and organisations involved in the project. The multiple significances of the building and its site need to be fully acknowledged and documented so that a holistic approach may be taken in the future management and conservation of the resource.

There is, however, no agreed policy for how St Mary's Church might be managed, presented and maintained in the present and future. Options that might be considered include:

- bringing the church back into some form of agreed beneficial (religious or secular) use
- retaining the church in an agreed condition through appropriate repair and maintenance
- managing and presenting the church as a controlled 'ruin'

Whilst the present condition of the church is acceptable for its current limited use, certain aspects of earlier repair and consolidation works were specific to the aims of the *Ruined Churches Repair Programme* and may now be considered inappropriate for current levels of activity and usage. Agreement on the intended future use of St Mary's Church and what will be required to meet such wishes need to be established before further works are planned or implemented.

It is similarly important that a clear policy for future repair and maintenance be established, so that the environmental, material and structural needs of the building can be met. What should the agreed condition of the church be? What are the expectations of those involved with the church and the visiting public? How far should future works go towards bring the church back into a condition comparable with other parish churches? These questions need to be considered and addressed by the principal stakeholders of St Mary's Church.

### **6.2 Appropriate usage**

The use(s) to which St Mary's Church is put, now and in the future, must be clearly established in relation to an agreed framework for future management and conservation. At the present time, the church is used for occasional services and public enjoyment. The nature and extent of such usage does not seem to be having an adverse effect on the building or its wall paintings. It is, however, probable that this level of usage will increase in the future and demand will grow for greater access and improved facilities.

How St Mary's Church is to be used and at what level such usage becomes detrimental to the building (i.e. built fabric, wall paintings, site) need to be established and monitored. It is recommended that the Friends of St Mary's Church, in conjunction with the Steering Group, establish such parameters as part of a framework for future management and conservation.

### **6.3 Conservation philosophy**

The philosophy or approach to be followed in the future management and conservation of St Mary's Church, and the levels of interpretation and presentation associated with its wider accessibility to the public, must follow recognised standards and established best practices.

Whilst St Mary's Church has undoubtedly become a heritage attraction, and is marketed as such by Breckland District Council and others, it must be recognised that the significance of the church lies largely in its qualities of peace and tranquillity. It is therefore important that any future action or change be considered in terms of whether they add to or detract from these particular values. The needs and wishes of tourists and occasional visitors should not be seen as key determinants in the future of St Mary's Church, but rather that they respond to the particular qualities of the church through informed interpretation and presentation of the building and its site.

#### **6.4 Repair and conservation**

All future works of repair and conservation must follow recognised standards and established best practices. This should include reference to relevant international charters and guidance documents (e.g. Council of Europe, 2000), English Heritage principles of conservation repair (e.g. English Heritage, 1993; Brereton, 1995) and policy statements (e.g. English Heritage, 2000), Planning Policy Guidance 16 (Department of the Environment, 1990), Planning Policy Guidance 15 (Department of the Environment/Department of National Heritage, 1994), and British Standard 7913 (British Standards Institution, 1998).

Conservation of the wall paintings must follow recognised best practice, including a preference for preventive and passive interventions over remedial treatments; recognition of the interrelation between the wall paintings, their support and their environment; documentation of all interventions; and on-going monitoring and assessment. Further, the effects of interventions, particularly preventive and passive interventions, must be predicted and methods of monitoring the resulting effects designed and implemented.

All future works of repair and conservation should be prioritised in accordance with the needs of St Mary's Church, with particular emphasis placed on the short-, medium- and long-term needs of the wall paintings and associated substrates.

#### **6.5 Maintenance and aftercare**

The role of the Steering Group and, in particular, Mr Bob Davey in the future maintenance and aftercare of St Mary's Church needs to be formally agreed within an overall framework for future management and conservation.

Whilst the tremendous efforts of Mr Bob Davey are widely recognised and applauded, it is important that mechanisms are in place to ensure that his work can be continued should he be away for any period of time (e.g. holiday, illness). Alternative access arrangements into the church should, in particular, be known and recorded with a list of keyholders made available to the Steering Group, local contacts and the police.

A programme of planned inspection and preventive maintenance of the building and site, including the wall paintings and associated substrates, must be established within

an agreed maintenance and operating manual. This will ensure that all necessary tasks are managed and implemented within a predetermined framework that addresses all relevant administrative, financial and legislative issues.

## **6.6 Building services**

The introduction of building services (e.g. electricity) to St Mary's Church would have an enormous effect on how the church might be used in the future. The advantages of such an installation (e.g. lighting, power) must, however, be set against potential disadvantages (e.g. increased fire risk, effect of light on wall paintings). Both capital and revenue costs must also be considered and budgeted for in future financial plans.

The introduction of building services must also be set within a strategic policy for St Mary's Church so that all concerns might be expressed and considered. This is particularly relevant in the case of below-ground services for the latent archaeological record of the building and its site.

## **6.7 Documentation**

A copy of all commissioned briefs, surveys and reports relating to St Mary's Church – including paper-based, photographic and digital media – should be collected, collated and held in a secure place to provide an inventoried or archived resource for current and future reference.

## 7.0 IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

### 7.1 Implementation procedures

The purpose of this conservation plan is to provide a single approach to understanding and managing the heritage significance of St Mary's Church. The means by which it is implemented will determine how successful these tasks are fulfilled.

Implementation should be by means of a strategic framework that advances key priorities whilst at the same time safeguarding the particular sensitivities or vulnerabilities of the building and its site.

It is recommended that this strategic framework be agreed by the Steering Group and principal stakeholders, and presented in the form of a management plan for St Mary's Church. This document should address the following issues:

- (a) What is the overall aim(s) of the project (e.g. expectation, use, condition, presentation, interpretation)?
- (b) What are the short-, medium- and long-term objectives of the project?
- (c) What are the key objectives for the building and its site?
- (d) What are the key objectives for the wall paintings and their substrates?
- (e) What further surveys and/or investigations are necessary to help achieve the stated objectives?
- (f) Who will administer, implement and fund future repair and conservation of St Mary's Church?
- (g) Who will administer, implement and fund future conservation of the wall paintings within St Mary's Church?
- (h) Who will administer, implement and fund future planned preventive maintenance of St Mary's Church?
- (i) Who will administer inventoried or archived documentation relating to St Mary's Church?
- (j) What is the intended future use of St Mary's Church?
- (k) How should St Mary's Church be managed in the future?
- (l) What are the roles and responsibilities of principal stakeholders?
- (m) What is the remit of the Steering Group and should this be amended?
- (n) What is the remit of the Advisory Panel and should this be amended?

Given the seeming wide-ranging remit of the Steering Group, it is particularly important that its responsibilities be agreed and documented within a recognised strategic framework. Membership of the Steering Group (see Appendix C) should be reviewed to provide a core of relevant persons able to advise and respond to specific aspects of the project. Administration and co-ordination of the Steering Group should continue to be provided by Norfolk County Council (Caroline Davison) to ensure continuity.

It is also recommended that all future works to St Mary's Church be subject to a Heritage Impact Assessment to identify possible adverse effects on the heritage merit of the site.

It is suggested that a simple form of Heritage Impact Assessment be adopted to assess any adverse effects of future works affecting the building, wall paintings and/or site. This may be based on the following table:

| <b>1<br/>Proposed<br/>work(s)</b> | <b>2<br/>Relevant<br/>conservation<br/>policy</b> | <b>3<br/>Significance<br/>of element<br/>affected by<br/>proposed<br/>work(s)</b> | <b>4<br/>Proposed<br/>outcome(s)</b> | <b>5<br/>Impact<br/>assessment</b>             |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| Indicate proposed work(s)         | Refer to policies in conservation plan            | Refer to significance in conservation plan  | State effect(s) of action            | Assess impact in relation to conservation plan |

Where necessary, impact assessments should be considered at an inter-disciplinary level (i.e. by members of the Steering Group) to ensure that alternative action(s) does not prejudice or harm other significances. Impact assessments may involve the evaluation of alternative approaches, the need for further detailed investigations, the involvement of additional professional advisers to address specific issues, the increased application of archaeological techniques prior to and during agreed works, and/or mitigation strategies.

The procedures noted above will have potentially significant cost and time implications that might affect all proposed works. It is therefore recommended that the Steering Group agree certain minor works that might sensibly be undertaken without the need for a formal Heritage Impact Assessment.

Such agreed works might, for instance, include grass cutting and tree pruning (but not tree planting due to the potentially damaging effects of tree roots on below-ground archaeological remains), regular building maintenance (e.g. checking and clearing gutters, re-fixing slipped tiles or slates) (but not re-pointing open/defective masonry joints), and the holding of occasional meeting and services within the church (but limiting the number of attendees to avoid potential damage to wall surfaces).

The outcome of formal Heritage Impact Assessments for all significant (i.e. not previously agreed by the Steering Group) works affecting St Mary's Church (i.e. the building, wall paintings and/or site) will have to be agreed by the Steering Group in advance of applications for necessary permissions and consents. The results of such assessments should also be made available to English Heritage, the Norwich Diocesan Advisory Committee and other organisations (such as funding bodies) as part of or preceding discussions concerning, or applications for, formal approval or financial support.

A record of all Heritage Impact Assessments should be kept with other relevant documentation relating to St Mary's Church. This should be held and maintained by the Friends of St Mary's Church.

## **7.2 Review procedure**

As more becomes known about the history and development of St Mary's Church, and in particular the wall paintings that have played such an important part in recent conservation treatments, so too will our understanding grow and mature. In addition, the developing attraction of St Mary's Church in both local and national contexts means that uses and expectations will also change over time.

Conservation is thus a dynamic process with changing priorities. The purpose of this conservation plan, which is to provide a single approach to understanding and managing the heritage significance of St Mary's Church, must respond to such changes. It is therefore recommended that the conservation plan be reviewed by the Steering Group and principal stakeholders within the next five years.

## APPENDIX A: COMMISSIONED BRIEFS, SURVEYS AND REPORTS

- CARRINGTON, D. (1996). *Preliminary Survey of the Interior Wall Paintings at St Mary the Virgin, Houghton-on-the-Hill*. Unpublished report for Norfolk County Council (April). Laughton: Hirst Conservation.
- CATHER, S. (1999). *Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Environmental Monitoring*. Unpublished report for Norfolk County Council (September). London: Conservation of Wall Painting Department, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London.
- CATHER, S. (2001). *St Mary's Church, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Additions and Comments on Draft Conservation Plan*. Unpublished report for The Friends of St Mary's (10 June). London: Conservation of Wall Painting Department, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London.
- COURTAULD INSTITUTE OF ART (1999). *Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Liquid Moisture Survey*. Unpublished report for Norfolk County Council (January). London: Conservation of Wall Painting Department, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London.
- DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY (2000). Topographic survey of churchyard by De Montfort University CAD Centre, July 2000.
- ENGLISH HERITAGE (1996). Internal photogrammetric survey by English Heritage Survey Team, July 1996.
- ENGLISH HERITAGE (1996). Photographic survey of wall paintings and panoramic imagery of the interior and exterior of the building and churchyard by English Heritage Survey Team, July 1996.
- HOWARD, H. (1997). *St Mary the Virgin, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Proposed Scientific Examination of the Romanesque Wall Paintings*. Unpublished report for English Heritage (June). London: Conservation of Wall Painting Department, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London.
- KAKOULLI, I. and CATHER, S. (2000). *Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Technical Examination of the Wall Paintings*. Unpublished report (July). London: Conservation of Wall Painting Department, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London.
- NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT (1997). *St Mary the Virgin, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Project Design*. Unpublished draft report (June). Norwich: Norfolk Archaeological Unit.
- PENN, K. (2000). *Report on an Archaeological Evaluation at St Mary's Church, Houghton-on-the-Hill, North Pickenham, Norfolk*. Norfolk Archaeological Unit Report No. 497 (May). Norwich: Norfolk Archaeological Unit.
- PENN, K. (2001). *Amendment to Report No. 497*. Unpublished note (January). Norwich: Norfolk Archaeological Unit.
- PFB CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT SERVICES (1997). *St Mary's Church, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk (Consolidation and Repair): Pre-Contract Health and Safety Plan*. Norwich: PFB Construction Management Services Limited.
- PFB CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT SERVICES (1998). *St Mary's Church, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk (Consolidation and Repair): Health and Safety File*. Norwich: PFB Construction Management Services Limited.
- PFB CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT SERVICES (2000). *St Mary's Church, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk (New Rain and Surface Water Disposal and Other Minor Works): Pre-Contract Health and Safety Plan*. Norwich: PFB Construction Management Services Limited.
- RICKERBY, S. (1996). *St Mary the Virgin, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: A Preliminary Assessment of the Wall Paintings*. Unpublished report for English Heritage (May). London: Stephen Rickerby.

- RICKERBY, S. (1997a). *St Mary the Virgin, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: First Phase of Emergency Conservation Treatment and Further Investigation*. Unpublished report for English Heritage (January). London: Stephen Rickerby.
- RICKERBY, S. (1997b). *St Mary the Virgin, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Preliminary Proposals and Estimates for Conservation Programme*. Unpublished report for English Heritage (May). London: Stephen Rickerby.
- RICKERBY, S. and SHEKEDE, L. (2001). *Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Deterioration Assessment*. Unpublished report for The Friends of St Mary's (January). London: Stephen Rickerby and Lisa Shekede.
- SENTINEL (1998). *St Mary's Church, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Lightning Protection System and Log Book/Maintenance Manual*. Gedling: Sentinel Lightning Protection and Earthing Limited.
- WATT, D. (1994). *Specification for the Consolidation of the Remains of St Mary's Church, Houghton-on-the-Hill*, February, Norwich: Department of Planning and Transportation, Norfolk County Council.
- WATT, D.S. (1997). *St Mary's Church, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Specification for Consolidation and Repair*, August, Leicester: De Montfort University.
- WATT, D.S. (1999). *St Mary's Church, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Quinquennial Inspection Report*, May, Leicester: De Montfort University.
- WATT, D.S. (2000). *St Mary's Church, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Specification for Rainwater Disposal and Other Associated Works*, August, Leicester: De Montfort University.

## APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND EVENTS

The following summary of key developments and events relating to St Mary's Church has been prepared with reference to similar summaries included within reports of the Conservation of Wall Painting Department, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London.

- c.1090 Original nave and chancel constructed (Heywood, 1996); paintings executed (Park and Heywood, 1997)
- c.1150 South aisle added; doorway inserted in north wall (Heywood, 1996)
- C14 South aisle demolished; window inserted at east end of north wall; nave walls heightened; probable date of altar niches in east wall of nave (Heywood, 1996)
- pre-C15 Obliteration and/or re-painting of Romanesque wall painting scheme
- C15 Tower constructed; window inserted at east end of south wall; later medieval paintings executed; Romanesque scheme keyed for plaster application
- post-Reformation Medieval wall paintings obliterated and texts painted
- C18 New nave roof with thatch covering; chancel demolished and replaced (Heywood, 1996)
- 1937 Church abandoned by congregation due to poor condition of roof and walls
- 1949 Report of church having recently fallen out of use
- May 1953 Report of poor condition of church
- 1970s Church listed as of special architectural or historic interest
- 1993 Repair and consolidation (phase one) by Norfolk County Council under Ruined Churches Repair Programme, including cutting of ivy growth and emergency works to nave and chancel roofs and niches to east wall of nave
- May 1995 to June 1996 Repair and consolidation (phase two) by Norfolk County Council under Ruined Churches Repair Programme, including removal of vegetation, limited structural repairs, grouting of wall voids, re-roofing of nave and chancel, re-pointing of open/defective joints, insertion of honeycomb brickwork blocking to windows, and rebuilding of nave north doorway
- Autumn 1995 Initial inspection of remains of wall paintings then visible by Hirst Conservation (Hirst, 1996)
- April 1996 Uncovering of Romanesque scheme by Hirst Conservation (Carrington, 1996); various meetings to discuss importance and conservation requirements of wall paintings
- May 1996 Assessment and recording of wall paintings (Rickerby, 1996)
- July 1996 Internal photogrammetric survey and internal/external photographic survey by English Heritage
- August 1996 Report on history of church by Norfolk County Council (Heywood, 1996)
- October 1996 Emergency stabilisation and survey (Rickerby, 1997a, 1997b)
- October 1996 to October 1997 Environmental monitoring by English Heritage
- December 1996 Steering Group formed by Norfolk County Council
- February 1997 Additional repair and consolidation, including installation of

- reinforced polythene sheeting over honeycomb blocking to windows and within tower arch
- March/April 1997 Report on wall paintings published in *Minerva* (Park and Heywood, 1997)
- June 1997 Church re-listed (Grade I) as of special architectural or historic interest
- November 1997 Liquid moisture survey by Courtauld Institute (Courtauld, 1999)
- November 1997 to January 1998 Additional repair and consolidation, including installation of new roof, floors and meshed window louvres to tower, door to west tower entrance, lightning protection system, and limited repairs to tower stairway roof
- January 1998 Advisory Panel formed by Norfolk County Council
- 1998 RICS joint Building Conservation Award
- March 1998 Commencement of environmental monitoring by Courtauld Institute (Cather, 1999)
- May 2000 Report on archaeological evaluation by Norfolk Archaeological Unit (Penn, 2000)
- July 2000 Report on technical examination of wall painting by Courtauld Institute (Kakoulli and Cather, 2000)
- July 2000 Topographic survey of churchyard by De Montfort University CAD Centre
- January 2001 Report on deterioration of wall paintings (Rickerby and Shekede, 2001)
- January to March 2001 Installation of rainwater goods, underground drainage system to soakaways, blocking of open nave eaves, and minor mortar repairs
- June 2001 Additions and comments on draft conservation plan (Cather, 2001)

## **APPENDIX C: STEERING GROUP**

### Council for the Care of Churches

Mr Andrew Argyrakis

Conservation Officer

Council for the Care of Churches, Church House, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3NZ.

Tel: 020-7898 1885. Fax: 020-7898 1881. E-mail: [andrew.argyrakis@ccc.c-of-e.org.uk](mailto:andrew.argyrakis@ccc.c-of-e.org.uk)

### English Heritage

Mr Adrian Heritage

English Heritage Senior Architectural Conservator (Wall Paintings)

Building Conservation and Research Team, Room 214, English Heritage, 23 Savile Row, London, W1X 1AB.

Tel: 020-7973 3212. Fax: 020-7973 3001. E-mail: [Adrian.Heritage@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:Adrian.Heritage@english-heritage.org.uk)

Mr Colin Jeffries

Historic Buildings Architect

East of England Region, 62–74 Burleigh Street, Cambridge, CB1 1DJ.

Tel: 01223-582700. Fax: 01223-582701. E-mail: [colin.jeffries@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:colin.jeffries@english-heritage.org.uk)

### Friends of St Mary's

Mr Bob Davey

16 Hill View, North Pickenham, PE37 8LA.

Tel: 01760-440470.

Dr David Watt

Professional Adviser

Centre for Conservation Studies, Leicester School of Architecture, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH.

Tel: 0116-250 6024. Fax: 0116-250 6352. E-mail: [dswatt@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:dswatt@dmu.ac.uk)

### Norfolk County Council

Ms Caroline Davison

Conservation Officer

Department of Planning and Transportation, Norfolk County Council, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2SG.

Tel: 01603-222706. Fax: 01603-224413. E-mail: [caroline.davison.pt@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:caroline.davison.pt@norfolk.gov.uk)

## **APPENDIX D: PRINCIPAL STAKEHOLDERS**

### Council for the Care of Churches updated 19/12/05

Mr Andrew Argyrakis

Conservation Officer

Council for the Care of Churches, Church House, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3NZ.

Tel: 020-7898 1885. Fax: 020-7898 1881. E-mail: [andrew.argyrakis@ccc.c-of-e.org.uk](mailto:andrew.argyrakis@ccc.c-of-e.org.uk)

### English Heritage

Robert Gowing

Senior Architectural Conservator (wall paintings)

Building Conservation and Research Team

328-9 SR

23 Savile Row, London W1S 2ET

tel: ++ 44 (0)20 7973 3276

[Robert.Gowing@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:Robert.Gowing@english-heritage.org.uk)

Mr Colin Jeffries

Historic Buildings Architect

East of England Region,

Brooklands

24, Brooklands Avenue

Cambridge, CB2 2BU

Tel: 01223-582700. Fax: 01223-582701. E-mail: [colin.jeffries@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:colin.jeffries@english-heritage.org.uk)

### Friends of St Mary's

Mr Bob Davey

16 Hill View, North Pickenham, PE37 8LA.

Tel: 01760-440470.

Dr David Watt

Professional Adviser

Chartered Building Surveyor & Historic Buildings Consultant

Associate Director (Eastern)

Hutton + Rostron Environmental Investigations Limited

Loveden House

Gelston

Lincolnshire

NG32 2AQ

Tel: +44 (0)1400-251169

Mobile: 07766-163226

Fax: +44 (0)1400-251744

E-mail: [ds\\_watt@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:ds_watt@tiscali.co.uk)

### Norfolk County Council

Ms Caroline Davison

Conservation Officer

Department of Planning and Transportation, Norfolk County Council, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2SG.

Tel: 01603-222706. Fax: 01603-224413. E-mail: [caroline.davison.pt@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:caroline.davison.pt@norfolk.gov.uk)

## APPENDIX E: ADDITIONAL COMMENT ON BACKGROUND HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

### Item 1

Unpublished note: *Amendment to Report No. 497* by Kenneth Penn, Norfolk Archaeological Unit, Norwich, January 2001.

A misunderstanding by the writer of the development of the chancel has led to an error in the history of the building sequence at the east end, and an error in the interpretation of the evidence seen in Trenches A and B.

The writer assumed, falsely, that the 14th century changes to the 1090s chancel involved not only an extension to the east to create a square end, with new windows, but also a wholesale rebuilding of the north and south walls (whose exact plan was therefore lost). However, the existing chancel walls were not altered, except at the east end, where they were [presumably] extended. Indeed, there is no evidence of the existence of more than the extant stubs of walls outside the 18th century chancel, and there is now recent evidence that the plaster of the 1090s chancel arch continued round to the north stub wall.

In his short summary of the development of the church, Heywood noted that the 1090s chancel was not entirely removed until 1760, from the evidence of the standing fabric and from Blomefield's observations [V 1807, 131] that the chancel removed in 1760 was in effect the original but [probably] lengthened and given new windows.

The report implied that the 1090s chancel was entirely removed in the 14th century alterations. This clearly was not the case and should be made clear at relevant places in the text and tables.

In particular, this affects the detailed interpretation of Trenches A and B and Contexts (21) (36) and (93), which relate to the original 1090s chancel wall and not to a 14th century rebuild.

## **APPENDIX F: ADDITIONAL COMMENT ON BUILDING PHASES AND METHODS OF CONSTRUCTION**

### Item 1

Unpublished note: *Church of St Mary, Houghton-on-the-Hill: Romanesque Double Splayed Windows* by Stephen Heywood, Norfolk County Council, Norwich, August 2000.

In view of the discussion around the subject of the original nave windows at Houghton, it is thought that a statement concerning them may be of use.

The double-splayed window is a fairly rare feature in English medieval architecture and many regard it as a sure indication of Anglo-Saxon date despite the fact that many instances of its use can be shown to date from as late as the middle years of the 12th century. It occurs most commonly in Norfolk [Taylor, 1978]. This may be a reflection of the strong links that existed with northern Europe and the Holy Roman Empire, where the double-splayed window is the standard form in the 12th century. There are two forms: circular and rectangular with arched heads. The former is normally constructed around basketwork permanent centring threaded through holes in a centreboard around the edge of the actual circular opening. Fragmentary remains of the basketwork and the boards are occasionally visible, most notably at South Lopham for the centreboard and Roughton or Hales for the basketwork. The rectangular type, as at Houghton, was also constructed with a centreboard, but using more familiar temporary timber centring. The board, as opposed to frame, is a large piece of timber, with the opening cut out of it, incorporated in the wall during its construction. In both types of window, the centreboard is much larger than the opening itself and cannot be regarded as a frame in the normal sense. There is no suggestion in the surviving examples that glazing was intended.

The external splay of the north window at Houghton is blocked and against the blocking are the remains of the centreboard with a part of the arched head intact. It is an interesting survival and it can be clearly seen that the board is incorporated in the masonry. It is important that all people concerned with the repair and maintenance of the building and its paintings are aware of this detail and at some stage the advice of a conservator should be sought, which would take into account the very closely adjacent surviving painted plaster and the possibility of surviving pigment on the centreboard.

The south window was probably opened up during the late 19th century, at which time the centreboard, if it survived at all, was removed or cut back and an oak frame with glazing groove inserted. In order to make matters easier, the arched head of the opening was filled with a piece of stone to make the opening rectangular and therefore more straightforward for the construction of a frame. In the recent past (1998/99), the Victorian frame was found to be rotten and it was replaced by the present softwood frame that was inserted in order to take the staple fixings for mesh. Fresh mortar was applied around the edges of the frame. The remains of the Victorian frame have been retained by the churchwarden.

### Item 2

Unpublished note: *Church of St Mary, Houghton-on-the-Hill: Chancel Arch* by Stephen Heywood, Norfolk County Council, Norwich, August 2000.

A recent visit (7 August 2000) to Houghton-on-the-Hill revealed that a small piece of plaster had fallen from the north-western corner of the chancel arch at its springing point. This has revealed red paint on the broken surface of the former stone impost. It has been supposed that the impost was cut back when the new chancel was built during the 18th century which, depending on the date, might throw this assumption into question. The apparent application of the paint on to the already cut-back impost needs to be investigated.

This small piece of fallen plaster has also revealed the soffit of the original arch, which was re-plastered and adjusted as a perfect semicircle when the new chancel was built. This involved plastering on to lathe fixed away from the original surface. It is possible to discern that the plaster of the original soffit is probably intact and that the arch is horseshoe shaped, adding to the interest of the building. The horseshoe arch is not unknown in English early medieval architecture – a good example is Odda's Chapel at Deerhurst (Gloucs.) of the 1060s.

## APPENDIX H: 'ROMANESQUE WALL PAINTINGS DISCOVERED IN NORFOLK'

Published paper: 'Romanesque Wall Paintings Discovered in Norfolk', *Minerva*, Vol 8, No 2, pp. 8–9 by David Park and Stephen Heywood, 1997.

The most important discovery of Romanesque wall painting in England for twenty years has been made in the remote parish church of Houghton-on-the-Hill in Norfolk. Partially uncovered in April last year, the paintings are now the subject of a long-term programme of research and conservation, and have only recently received any publicity. But they have already caused ripples of excitement in art-historical circles, due to their exceptionally early date and extremely rare subject-matter.

No county has more medieval churches than Norfolk, but of these about 100 are ruined. In 1992 Norfolk County Council and English Heritage began a five-year project to repair some twenty of the most important, and Houghton was among those selected. Despite its designation as a ruin the church is not officially redundant, but a 1993 photograph gives some idea of its condition then: densely shrouded in ivy, with its roof partly collapsed and its windows unglazed. During the structural repairs it was realised that extensive remains of wall painting survived, and a short phase of uncovering from beneath later layers was undertaken last spring.

The results of this uncovering far exceeded expectations. Most of the surviving painting is concentrated on the east wall of the nave, above and around the chancel arch. To the west of the arch is the Resurrection of the Dead, with an angel blowing the Last Trump, and tiny naked figures clambering out of their tombs. The narrow border above contains saints in roundels, each holding a scroll, while above is the most exciting survival of all: a monumental representation of the Trinity. Although much damaged, God can be seen enthroned in a triple mandorla, with Christ on the cross before him, and the dove of the Holy Ghost Spirit rising above Christ's outstretched arm. More uncovering remains to be carried out elsewhere in the nave, but a scene of Christ and another figure is visible on the north side, while intriguing remains on the west wall include the head of an evil figure represented in profile.

Much of the significance of these paintings derives from their very early date. Only one Anglo-Saxon wall painting is known to survive in a parish church: the fragmentary painting of fluttering angels, dating from c.1000, at Nether Wallop in Hampshire. The earliest major schemes of surviving medieval painting date from the first half-century after the Norman Conquest, and of these the most celebrated are the 'Lewes Group' paintings at Hardham, Clayton and elsewhere in Sussex, all apparently executed by the same travelling workshop, and dating from c.1100. The style of the Houghton paintings is very close to these in some ways – in its basic 'bacon and egg' palette of red, yellow and white, and in the characteristic jutting jaws of the rising souls in the Resurrection scene. But the most diagnostic stylistic feature, which suggests a particularly early date, is the quatrefoil on God's knee in the Trinity. An Anglo-Saxon motif, this occurs in a number of manuscripts of the first half and middle of the 11th century, but the only known occurrence in painting after the turn of the century is in a Canterbury manuscript now in Florence, which, despite its date of c.1120, is still in a thoroughly Anglo-Saxon style. Based on the internal evidence, therefore, a dating of c.1090 seems most plausible for the Norfolk paintings.

A detailed study of the church itself independently arrived at the same dating of c.1090, and no doubt the fabric and paintings are coeval, as indeed would be expected.

Unfortunately, only the nave of the original church survives, since the chancel was rebuilt in the 18th century, but there is sufficient evidence to show that the building consisted of two simple cells, the chancel slightly narrower than the nave. Much Roman brick is reused in the nave and chancel arch, while the quoins include some long-and-short work, and the two original windows in the north and south walls are double-splayed. Such features would, not long ago, have been regarded as evidence of an Anglo-Saxon date, but are in fact typical of early Romanesque buildings as well; indeed, double-splayed windows are a characteristic feature of the early flint buildings of East Anglia. In recent decades, many churches previously regarded as Anglo-Saxon have been reassigned to the 'great rebuilding' of the period following the Conquest – including the Lewes Group church of Clayton, with its famously primitive chancel arch – and Houghton too undoubtedly fits most comfortably in this context.

Early Romanesque wall painting is rare throughout most of Europe, but it is particularly the representation of the Trinity that gives the Houghton paintings their international significance. It is, of course, most unusual that this subject, rather than Christ in Majesty, is shown in combination with the Resurrection of the Dead, but this association of the Trinity and Last Judgement again appears to be a survival from the Anglo-Saxon period. Thus in the Grimbald Gospels of c.1020 the Trinity is depicted above choirs of saints and angels holding the souls of the dead. In this miniature, however, the Trinity is depicted as three seated figures, whereas the Houghton representation – showing God enthroned with the crucified Christ – is altogether more advanced. It is, in fact, the Throne of Grace or *Gnadenstuhl* type, which became the standard way of representing the Trinity throughout Europe from the 12th century onward. Elsewhere, the earliest known examples of this type appear to be in two French manuscripts, one dating from the first quarter of the 12th century, and the other from c.1125. The occurrence of a *Gnadenstuhl* Trinity at Houghton – which must always have been a remote and relatively insignificant church – therefore casts an entirely new light on iconographic developments in the early Romanesque period. It reminds us of just how tenuous our grasp of such developments really is: thousands of wall paintings of this period must have existed, of which less than one per cent survives.

Much remains to be done to ensure the preservation of the Houghton paintings, and a steering group has recently been established to oversee this process. Further uncovering will need to take account of slight but nevertheless significant remains of later medieval and post-Reformation painting in the church. Scientific examination of the original materials should be very revealing, since it is clear that one or two less common pigments were used in addition to the basic palette – including a blue-green which indicates the likelihood of a mixed media technique of fresco with secco additions. Environmental investigations and monitoring over a substantial period will be vital, while the full art-historical significance of the paintings will only emerge after further research. Within the next few years, however, the paintings should form part of an entirely revitalised parish church.

It is strongly recommended that additional information concerning the wall paintings should be added to this conservation plan as it becomes available. The inclusion of such revisions will allow the document to offer a developed understanding of the building and a record of contemporary significances and values.

## APPENDIX H: LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

St Mary's Church was originally listed grade B on 23rd June 1960, grade II\* at the re-survey in 1987 and up-graded to grade I on 25th June 1997. The respective list descriptions are as follows:

**NORTH PICKENHAM.** Church of St Mary, Houghton-on-the-Hill. Grade B. Reference 21/1.

Parish church. Nave C11. Chancel rebuilt on small scale in C18. Two double-splayed windows in nave. Altar recesses on N and C of chancel arch.

**NORTH PICKENHAM.** Church of St Mary, Houghton-on-the-Hill. Grade II\*. Reference 5/40.

Former parish church, now disused. Nave 11th century, west tower probably 14th century, chancel replaced with small altar chamber, post-medieval. Flint, partly rendered, with brick and limestone dressings. Pantiled nave roof; hipped slate roof over chancel. Details of building almost entirely obscured by ivy growth. Square, unbuttressed west tower with restored west door in Perpendicular style with square head and spandrel panels. Two-light west window with cusped Y-tracery. North and south nave walls each contain small high-level semi-circular-headed double-splayed windows; north window has traces of painted decoration in reveal. North-east window with remains of tracery, probably 14th century. 14th century tower arch with triple plain chamfer and polygonal piers. Blocked north and south doors. Angle piscina with petalled bowl at south-east corner of nave. Simple nave roof with three tie beams and two tiers of butt-purlins, post medieval. Plain semi-circular chancel arch flanked by irregular arched niches.

**NORTH PICKENHAM.** Church of St Mary, Houghton-on-the-Hill. Grade I. Reference 1907/5/40.

Former parish church, now disused. Nave C11, west tower probably C14, chancel replaced with small altar chamber, post-medieval. Flint, partly rendered, with brick and limestone dressings. Pantiled nave roof; hipped slate roof over chancel. Square, unbuttressed west tower with restored west door in Perpendicular style with square head and spandrel panels. INTERIOR: includes wall paintings of c1090–C17 of exceptional interest. It also includes 2-light west window with cusped Y-tracery. North and south nave walls each contain small high-level semi-circular-headed double-splayed windows; north window has traces of painted decoration in reveal. North-east window with remains of tracery, probably C14. C14 tower arch with triple plain chamfer and polygonal piers. Blocked north and south doors. Angle piscina with petalled bowl at south-east corner of nave. Re-erected simple nave roof with 3 tie beams and 2 tiers of butt-purlins, post medieval. Plain semi-circular chancel arch flanked by irregular arched niches.

## APPENDIX I: RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations, which were included within the quinquennial inspection report dated May 1999, refer to the six levels of priority given in *A Guide to Church Inspection and Repair* (Council for the Care of Churches, 1995):

1. Urgent works requiring immediate attention
2. Works recommended to be carried out during the next twelve months
3. Works recommended to be carried out during the quinquennial period
4. Works needing consideration beyond the quinquennial period
5. Works required to improve energy efficiency of the structure and services
6. Works required to improve disabled access

| Item  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>General</b>  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| a. Seek policy agreement for future repair and maintenance of church                                      |   | * |   |   |   |   |
| b. Agree duties and responsibilities of Mr Bob Davey  |   | * |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Site and environment</b>   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| a. Remove corroded barbed-wire fencing from boundaries  |   | * |   |   |   |   |
| b. Seek agreement from Steering Group regarding rainwater disposal  |   | * |   |   |   |   |
| c. Provide agreed rainwater disposal and/or drainage system   |   | * |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>External - roof coverings</b>  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| a. Make good failed mortar to nave eaves  |   | * |   |   |   |   |
| b. Improve protection to tower roof hatch cover   |   | * |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>External - parapets and upstand walls</b>  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| a. Make good open joint and loose mortar  |   | * |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>External - walling</b>   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| a. Make good open/defective joints to base of walls to tower, nave and chancel                            |   | * |   |   |   |   |
| b. Check and make good open/defective joints to brick gable copings                                       |   |   | * |   |   |   |
| c. Monitor cracking to repaired cracks to nave north wall, tower stair turret south wall, tower west wall |   | * |   |   |   |   |
| d. Monitor cracking to apex of west tower doorway   |   | * |   |   |   |   |
| e. Make good open joint to brick threshold to west tower doorway  |   |   | * |   |   |   |
| f. Wax treat west and south nave door leafs   |   | * |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>External - windows</b>   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| a. Monitor cracking to sill of north nave window (incl. internal)   |   | * |   |   |   |   |
| b. Inspect and treat timber lintel to south nave window   |   |   | * |   |   |   |
| c. Inspect and make good damage to netting over windows   |   |   | * |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

|  |  |   |   |  |  |  |
|--|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| <b>Internal - towers and spires</b>                              |  |   |   |  |  |  |
| a. Sweep clean wall surfaces to stairway and tower chambers      |  | * |   |  |  |  |
| b. Remove accumulated debris from window sills                   |  | * |   |  |  |  |
| c. Make good loose mortar to side of west light in lower chamber |  |   | * |  |  |  |
| d. Monitor cracking to south wall at ground level                |  | * |   |  |  |  |

|  |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| <b>Internal - roof structures, ceilings, ceilings</b>  |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
| a. Monitor condition of retained chancel roof timbers  |  | * |   |  |  |  |   |
| b. Remove accumulated debris from chancel wall heads   |  | * |   |  |  |  |   |
|  |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
| <b>Internal - access stairways</b>   |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
| a. Monitor brick vault to head of tower stairway   |  | * |   |  |  |  |   |
| b. Remove projecting fixings from soffit to tower stairway   |  |   | * |  |  |  |   |
|  |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
| <b>Internal - ground floor structure, timber platforms</b>   |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
| a. Lift and dry sections of damp rush matting to nave floor  |  | * |   |  |  |  |   |
|  |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
| <b>Internal - internal finishes</b>  |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
| a. Prevent contact with or damage to nave wall surfaces  |  | * |   |  |  |  |   |
| b. Liaise with Courtauld Institute of Art regarding extant wall paintings, supporting plasterwork and environmental conditions |  | * |   |  |  |  |   |
|  |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
| <b>Building services and related precautions - lightning protection</b>  |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
| a. Arrange for regular inspection and testing of installation  |  | * |   |  |  |  |   |
|  |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
| <b>Building services and related precautions - fire precautions</b>  |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
| a. Supply and maintain fire extinguisher   |  | * |   |  |  |  |   |
| b. Obtain appropriate risk assessment  |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
|  |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
| <b>Building services and related precautions - security precautions</b>  |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
| a. Improve security to south nave door   |  | * |   |  |  |  |   |
|  |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
| <b>Disabled provision and access</b>   |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
| a. Improve steps from track into churchyard  |  |   |   |  |  |  | * |
| b. Consider provision of handrail to steps from track into churchyard  |  |   |   |  |  |  | * |
|  |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
| <b>Health and safety</b>   |  |   |   |  |  |  |   |
| a. Obtain appropriate risk assessment  |  | * |   |  |  |  |   |
| b. Advise visitors, users and contractors of existing hazards  |  | * |   |  |  |  |   |

## REFERENCES

- ANON. (1953). *Eastern Daily Press*, 9 May.
- BRERETON, C. (1995). *The Repair of Historic Buildings: Advice on Principles and Methods*, 2nd ed., London: English Heritage.
- BRITISH STANDARDS INSTITUTION (1998). *Guide to the Principles of the Conservation of Historic Buildings*, London: BSI.
- CARRINGTON, D. (1996). *Preliminary Survey of the Interior Wall Paintings at St Mary the Virgin, Houghton-on-the-Hill*. Unpublished report for Norfolk County Council (April). Laughton: Hirst Conservation.
- CATHER, S. (1999). *Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Environmental Monitoring*. Unpublished report for Norfolk County Council (September). London: Conservation of Wall Painting Department, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London.
- CATHER, S. (2001). *St Mary's Church, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Additions and Comments on Draft Conservation Plan*. Unpublished report for The Friends of St Mary's (10 June). London: Conservation of Wall Painting Department, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London.
- CAUTLEY, H.M. (1949, reprinted 1979). *Norfolk Churches*, Ipswich: Boydell Press.
- CLARK, K. (Ed.) (1999). *Conservation Plans in Action: Proceedings of the Oxford Conference*, London: English Heritage.
- COUNCIL FOR THE CARE OF CHURCHES (1995). *A Guide to Church Inspection and Repair*. 2nd ed. London: Church House Publishing.
- COUNCIL OF EUROPE (Directorate of Culture and Cultural Heritage) (2000). *Guidelines for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage, Guidelines for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, Guidelines for the Protection of the Moveable Heritage, and Guidance on the Development of Legislation and Administration Systems in the Field of Cultural Heritage*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing.
- COURTAULD INSTITUTE OF ART (1999). *Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Liquid Moisture Survey*. Unpublished report for Norfolk County Council (January). London: Conservation of Wall Painting Department, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London.
- DAVEY, R. (1999). Personal verbal communication, 20 April.
- DAVEY, R. (2000a). Personal written communication, 10 May.
- DAVEY, R. (2000b). Personal written communication, 1 November.
- DAVEY, R. (2000c). Personal verbal communication, 2 December.
- DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT (1990). *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning*, PPG 16, London: HMSO.
- DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT/DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL HERITAGE (1994). *Planning Policy Guidance: Planning and the Historic Environment*, PPG 15, September 1994, London: HMSO.
- ENGLISH HERITAGE (1993). *Principles of Repair*, London: English Heritage.
- ENGLISH HERITAGE and ENGLISH NATURE (1997). *Bats in Churches: Guidelines for the Identification, Assessment, and Management of Bat-related Damage to Church Contents (Furnishings, Fittings, and Works of Art)*, compiled by S. Paine, London: English Heritage.
- ENGLISH HERITAGE (2000). *Power of Place: The Future of the Historic Environment*, London: English Heritage.
- FITT, D. (2000). Personal verbal communication, Breckland District Council (Access Officer), 10 November.

- HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND (1998). *Conservation Plans for Historic Places*, March, London: Heritage Lottery Fund.
- HEYWOOD, S. (1996). *Church of St Mary, Houghton-on-the-Hill, North Pickenham, Norfolk*. Unpublished report (August). Norwich: Department of Planning and Transportation, Norfolk County Council.
- HEYWOOD, S. (2000a). *Church of St Mary, Houghton-on-the-Hill: Romanesque Double Splayed Windows*. Unpublished note (August). Norwich: Norfolk County Council.
- HEYWOOD, S. (2000b). *Church of St Mary, Houghton-on-the-Hill: Chancel Arch*. Unpublished note (August). Norwich: Norfolk County Council.
- HIRST, E. (1996). Personal written communication, 12 April.
- JEFFRIES, C. (1996). Personal verbal communication, 19 April.
- KAKOULLI, I. and CATHER, S. (2000). *Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Technical Examination of the Wall Paintings*. Unpublished report (July). London: Conservation of Wall Painting Department, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London.
- KERR, J. (1999). 'Opening Address: the Conservation Plan'. In: Clark, K. (Ed.). *Conservation Plans in Action: Proceedings of the Oxford Conference*, London: English Heritage, pp. 9–19.
- MARLEY, K. (2000). Personal verbal communication, Breckland District Council (Environmental Health Manager), 9 November.
- PAINE, S. (1993). 'The Effects of Bat Excreta on Wall Paintings', *The Conservator*, Vol 17, pp. 3–10.
- PARK, D. (1996). Personal written communication, 21 April.
- PARK, D. (1999). Personal verbal communication, 11 September.
- PARK, D. and HEYWOOD, S. (1997). 'Romanesque Wall Paintings Discovered in Norfolk', *Minerva*, Vol 8, No 2, pp. 8–9.
- PEACHEM, J. (1999). Personal written communication to Mr Bob Davey, Breckland District Council (Environment Health), 22 April.
- PENN, K. (2000). *Report on an Archaeological Evaluation at St Mary's Church, Houghton-on-the-Hill, North Pickenham, Norfolk*. Norfolk Archaeological Unit Report No. 497 (May). Norwich: Norfolk Archaeological Unit.
- PENN, K. (2001). *Amendment to Report No. 497*. Unpublished note (January). Norwich: Norfolk Archaeological Unit.
- PENTON, J. (1999). *Widening the Eye of the Needle: Access to Church Buildings for People with Disabilities*. London: Church House Publishing.
- PFB CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT SERVICES (1998). *St Mary's Church, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk (Consolidation and Repair): Health and Safety File*. Norwich: PFB Construction Management Services Limited.
- RICKERBY, S. (1996). *St Mary the Virgin, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: A Preliminary Assessment of the Wall Paintings*. Unpublished report for English Heritage (May). London: Stephen Rickerby.
- RICKERBY, S. (1997a). *St Mary the Virgin, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: First Phase of Emergency Conservation Treatment and Further Investigation*. Unpublished report for English Heritage (January). London: Stephen Rickerby.
- RICKERBY, S. (1997b). *St Mary the Virgin, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Preliminary Proposals and Estimates for Conservation Programme*. Unpublished report for English Heritage (May). London: Stephen Rickerby.
- RICKERBY, S. and SHEKEDE, L. (2001). *Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Deterioration Assessment*. Unpublished report for The Friends of St Mary's (January). London: Stephen Rickerby and Lisa Shekede.

- SAYLE, P. (2000). Personal verbal communication, Breckland District Council (Tourism Officer), 9 November.
- WATT, D.S. (1999). *St Mary's Church, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk: Quinquennial Inspection Report*, May, Leicester: De Montfort University.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BATCOCK, N. (1991). *The Ruined and Disused Churches of Norfolk*, East Anglian Archaeology, Report No. 51, Microfiche 5:A14–B9, Gressenhall: Norfolk Archaeological Unit.
- BLOMEFIELD, F. (1805). *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*. 2nd ed. Volume VI of 11 volumes. London: William Miller.
- DAVISON, C.L. (1991). *Historic Buildings in Norfolk: Ruined Churches*. Unpublished draft consultation document. Norwich: Department of Planning and Property, Norfolk County Council.
- HEYWOOD, S. (1996). *Church of St Mary, Houghton-on-the-Hill, North Pickenham, Norfolk*. Unpublished report (August). Norwich: Department of Planning and Transportation, Norfolk County Council.
- NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL (1997). *Information Sheet: 11th Century Wall Paintings, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk*. Norwich: Department of Planning and Transportation, Norfolk County Council.
- WATT, D.S. (1996). 'Consolidation and Repair of Standing Ruins: Medieval Churches in Norfolk – Parts I and II', *Structural Survey*, Vol 14, No 3, pp. 10–16 and Vol 14, No 4, pp. 48–55.
- WATTS, E. (2000). *St Mary the Virgin, Houghton-on-the-Hill, Norfolk*. AAP 365 Archaeology and Architecture of the Medieval Church. Unpublished dissertation (January). Sites and Monuments Record 4625. Gressenhall: Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.