

## St Andrew's Church, Wimpole, Cambridgeshire

## Rob Atkins

December 2005

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## **CCC AFU Report Number 838**

**St Andrew's Church, Wimpole,  
Cambridgeshire**

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### **An Archaeological Watching Brief**

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Site Code: WPL SAC 05  
CHER Event Number: ECB 2080  
Date of works: 27/10/05  
Grid Ref: TL 33650 50998

Editor: Elizabeth Shepherd Popescu BA MIFA  
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## Summary

On the 27th October and 8th November 2005 Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU) conducted an archaeological watching brief at St Andrew's Church, Wimpole Hall (TL 33650 50998) during installation of gas and water services.




















Work within the church involved monitoring a 0.70m<sup>2</sup> trench. A substantial rubble layer more than 1m thick, associated with the demolition rubble from the former medieval church and the creation of the new church in 1749 was found in this trench. Medieval clunch masonry, including a door jam dated between 1275 and 1350 and late medieval floor tiles, were recovered from this layer as well as some 18th-century artefacts.

Outside the north wall of the church was a possible medieval layer(s) which was cut by the construction trench for the 1749 rebuilding episode. Within this trench there were two medieval and two late medieval floor tiles as well as brick rubble from the rebuilding phase. In the remainder of the churchyard was a post-medieval burial layer which contained a few small fragments of disarticulated human remains.

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# Drawing Conventions

Sections		Plans	
Limit of Excavation		Limit of Excavation	
Cut		Deposit - Conjectured	
Cut-Conjectured		Natural Features	
Soil Horizon		Intrusion/Truncation	
Soil Horizon - Conjectured		Sondages/Machine Strip	
Intrusion/Truncation		Illustrated Section	
Top of Natural		Archaeological Deposit	
Top Surface		Excavated Slot	
Break in Section/ Limit of Section Drawing		Modern Deposit	
Cut Number		Cut Number	118
Deposit Number	117		
Ordnence Datum	$\frac{18.45m}{\times}$ ODN		

## **1 Introduction**

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on the 27th October and 8th November 2005 at St Andrew's Church, Wimpole Hall, Cambridgeshire (TL 33650 50998; Fig. 1) relating to the excavation of trenches for the installation of gas and water services.

The watching brief was carried out by the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU) on behalf of Wimpole Parochial Church Council, in accordance with a Brief issued by Quinton Carroll, Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) Archaeological Advisor and a member of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA).

The site archive is currently held by CCC AFU and the paper archive will be deposited with the county stores. On the request of Val Price of Wimpole Parochial Church Council the artefacts recovered from the watching brief have been retained for display within the church.

## **2 Geology and Topography**

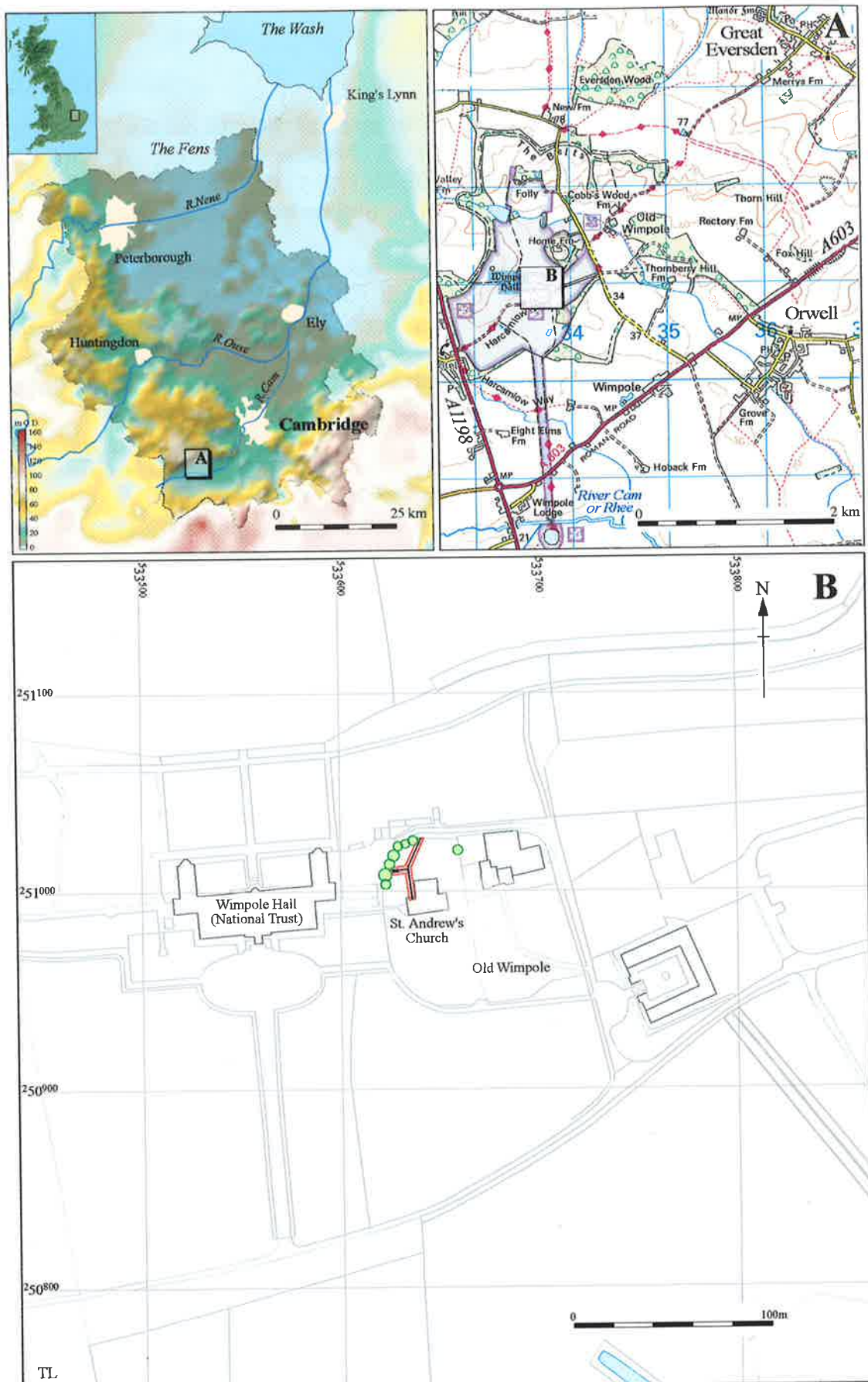
The site overlies West Melbury Marly Chalk Member (British Geological Survey 2001) but the natural geology was not exposed during the watching brief. The site lies on flat land at 44m OD.

## **3 Archaeological and Historical Background**

### **3.1 *Old Wimpole***

The parish of Wimpole was part of the Wetherley Hundred in the Late Saxon period. Wimpole was one of three settlements in the parish and was recorded in the Domesday Book (1086) with twelve people enumerated and by 1563 there were 36 families (Elrington 1973, 264). In 1801 there were 56 families recorded in the parish consisting of a total of 202 people, and by 1831 the population had more than doubled to 583. After this high point the population of Wimpole slowly declined to 155 people in 1961.





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Figure 1: Location of trenches (black) with the development area (red)

### 3.2 *Manor*

The site is within the area of the principal manor in the parish and was held successively by several families before passing in 1436 to Henry Chicheley, Archbishop of Canterbury. Sir Thomas Chicheley began building the present Wimpole Hall in c.1640 with additions made from 1660 onwards. By the later 17th century the Chicheley's removed the remaining village for the creation of a park and gardens. Sir Thomas Chicheley sold Wimpole and Arrington in 1686 to Sir Thomas Cutler, a rich London merchant. The manor passed quickly through three successive families: the Holles, the Harleys and then to the Yorke family (Earls of Hardwicke) in 1739 who held the manor for a further 150 years.

### 3.3 *St Andrew's Church*

The date of the founding of the medieval church of St Andrew is not recorded but there are references to the church from at least the beginning of the 13th century. Part of the 14th-century Chicheley Chapel (c.1390) survives although there are later restorations/replacements in some areas. The medieval elements include the middle window along the north wall of the chapel (Plate 1). The window is of clunch stone and consists of three lights with flowery tracery of the medieval Decorative Period. Repairs were made to the Chapel in 1732 but their extent is unknown.

Kip's drawing of 1707 shows a moderately sized church, but with the exception of Chicheley Chapel, this church was demolished in 1748 and rebuilt on a smaller scale in 1749. The new structure was substantially a brick structure but also contained freestone and clunch ashlar, built to the design of Henry Flitcroft (Elrington 1973, 271).

Dendrochronology (tree ring dating) from the supports at the ends of the central tie beams of Chicheley Chapel in 1998 by the Ancient Monuments Laboratory produced a date of 1738-1769. This shows that these were not part of the 1732 repairs and suggests that they were part of the Flitcroft rebuild of the church in 1749 (Bridge 1998; ECB1368). The church was further repaired in the 1880s and after World War II.

In the early 18th century, the church was infrequently used. In 1728 two Sunday services and four annual communion services were held by 20 communicants and by 1825 there were only three annual communion services. This policy was later reversed and in 1851 the average congregation varied from 160 in the morning to 230 in the afternoon. Communion was being held monthly in 1873, and in 1897 all the 284 seats were filled. The church remains the only Anglican burial ground for the parish and contains burial markers over most of the churchyard, largely 18th to 20th century in date.

The church is presently on two levels with the 1749 rebuild c.0.60m higher than the Chicheley Chapel with a flight of steps joining the two. The floor of the church is stone. In recent times the Victorian heating system was removed causing the building to become damp. Over the last few years fundraising has been carried out to install a new heating system. The church, although it stands in the Hall grounds, is not part of the National Trust holding but is maintained by the Wimpole Parochial Church Council.

## 4 Methodology

The objective of this watching brief was that all intrusive archaeological work was to be monitored within the church and the churchyard and any archaeological features or remains recorded (Carroll 2005). The brief stipulated that no human remains of any kind be removed from the church or churchyard without further reference to the Diocese.

Machine excavation within the churchyard was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a tracked mini-excavator using both a 1.40m wide toothless ditching bucket and a 0.30m wide bucket. The location for the new gas cylinder was within the far north-western part of the site, near to trees to shield it from sight. This gas cylinder was located in an area where there was a slight earthen mound caused by gardeners having deposited rubbish in modern times. The 1.40m wide ditching bucket was used to create a flat surface with concrete later poured in to create a hard standing for the gas cylinder.

The machine also excavated a 0.30m wide trench, 0.75m deep, connecting the existing water supply at the northern churchyard wall, the new gas cylinder location and the church (Fig. 1). Spoil was checked for artefacts and these were hand-collected, except in the case of the disarticulated human remains and 20th-century artefacts which were left in the spoil heaps to be backfilled after the gas and water pipes were laid.

Within the north wall of the 1749 church, a 0.70m<sup>2</sup> trench was hand dug by the heating contractors to connect the water pipe excavated in the outside pipe trench. The excavation of the 0.70m<sup>2</sup> trench was archaeologically monitored and any interesting artefacts kept. Several radiators were installed in the church but these and their connecting pipes were placed above ground level.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using CCC AFU's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and digital, colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.



Figure 2: Site plan and section drawing

## 5 Results

### 5.1 *Base for gas cylinder*

The base for the gas cylinder was within a c. 3.50m by 1.40m area. The north-eastern part of the trench was dug between 0.10m and 0.50m into the recent mound material. This recent deposit included modern brick and slate pieces (not kept; see above).

### 5.2 *Churchyard pipe trench*

The 0.30m wide pipe trench ran for nearly 25m across the churchyard to a depth of 0.75m. The natural subsoil was not uncovered within the trench. A possible medieval layer (10; Fig.2) was uncovered near the church running for about 3m and more than 0.3m deep. This layer was cut by the construction trench (5) for the 1749 church. Within the construction trench was a light grey brown silty sandy clay with a few brick and tile pieces. The 1749 wall foundations continued down to more than 0.75m below the modern ground level and consisted of a mixture of limestone and clunch stone courses as well as a single reused medieval floor tile course, all set in lime mortar.

In the majority of the trench was a thick homogenous post-medieval burial deposit (11), presumably representing intercutting 19th- and 20th-century burials. 'Layer' (11) was more than 0.50m thick and consisted of a light to mid grey brown silty sand with a little clay as well as a few small chalk pieces and the occasional human bone fragment (not kept; see above). Presumably the articulated burials were below the level of the trench. Near the church this post-medieval burial 'layer' was overlain by modern layers (6 and 7; Fig. 2), which were themselves sealed by a 0.25m thick topsoil layer (1). This layer was cut by modern service pipes (2 and 3).

### 5.3 *Trench within church*

The 0.7m<sup>2</sup> trench excavated within the church was excavated to a depth of c.1.25m below the ground level. Within the trench was a single layer (9) which continued below the level of the trench and consisted of a mixture of mid brown silty clay with some lime mortar pieces (60%+ of the fill) and stone rubble. The stone consisted largely of small clunch pieces (eight of the larger pieces with worked faces were kept) as well as the occasional limestone piece. There was also a fragment of vessel glass (near the base of the excavated layer) and a clay pipe fragment.

## 6 Discussion and Conclusions

The watching brief found no definite evidence of surviving features from the medieval church but the watching brief recovered many artefacts from archaeological contexts related to the 1748-9 demolition and subsequent rebuilding. This evidence provides a glimpse of what some of the former medieval church would have looked like.

The 0.7m<sup>2</sup> trench within the present church has shown that the 1749 rebuilding was built on top of a large thick layer of rubble (9) largely from the former medieval church. This use of the rubble explains why the 1749 rebuilding is c.0.60m higher than the 14th-century Chicheley Chapel. It is possible that medieval features survive below this deposit.

The artefacts in this deposit generally consisted of a substantial amount of worked clunch and some medieval floor tiles. Stylistically, the clunch was post-1275 but probably before 1350 (Plate 4). The documentary evidence shows that a church existed here from at least the early 13th century. This stone work was therefore from later medieval rebuilding or expansion of the church. The original medieval church was probably built wholly or substantially of clunch. The surviving Chicheley Chapel, also of clunch (c.1390), was an even later addition to the church (Plate 1). Medieval churches in neighbouring parishes are also built of clunch from local quarry pits. Some of the clunch had limewash attached showing that the medieval church interior was at least partly white in appearance. There was no evidence for the presence of wall paintings.

The clunch, which makes up a small proportion of building material in the 1749 rebuilding of the church, is therefore probably reuse of large pieces from the former medieval church, supplementing the imported limestone and locally made brick.

Deposit 9 may have come from a single area of the former medieval church as within this layer were the remains of three monochrome late medieval floor tiles (Plate 3) from a two coloured reused geometric pavement (as opposed to the four pieces of different floor tiles found the trench outside the church).

From the 1749 construction trench (5) in the trench outside the church came red ceramic roof tile, implying at least part of the former medieval church was probably roofed in this material. The four floor tile fragments included two fragments of high medieval and two late medieval floor tiles, showing that other parts of the medieval church were floored in ceramic tile from at least the 14th century.

A large part of the northern graveyard area consisted of a large burial deposit presumably from the numerous 18th- and 19th-century burials



('layer' 11). The creation of this deposit had the effect of removing the former remains of the medieval church wall shown on the 1707 Kip painting. These modern burials did not continue as far as the north wall of the church and the watching brief has shown that an area within 4m of the present church contains pre-modern archaeological deposit(s) (10).

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Wimpole Parochial Church Council who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. Thanks are especially due to Val Price who organised the project on behalf of Wimpole PCC. The project was managed by Judith Roberts. Artefacts were reported on by Carole Fletcher, Mark Samuel and Paul Spoerry and Carlos Silva produced the drawings. The report was edited by Liz Popescu.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Quinton Carroll, who also kindly supplied HER data.

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**Appendix 1: Context summary**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Type</b>
1	Layer	Modern cobbled surface and topsoil
2	Fill/Cut	Water pipe trench
3	Fill/Cut	Electricity pipe trench
4	Fill of 5	Construction trench of 1749 church
5	Cut	Construction trench of 1749 church
6	Layer	Post-medieval/modern
7	Layer	Post medieval/modern
8	Wall	1749 church wall
9	Layer	Rubble within church
10	Layer	Medieval
11	Layer	Post medieval burial layer



## Appendix 2: Finds Summary

### *Pottery and tiles by Dr Paul Spoerry and Carole Fletcher*

#### *Pottery*

Two Staffordshire slipware type vessel fragments (5g) c.18th century were recovered from the topsoil.

#### *Floor tile (Plates 2-3)*

Parts of seven floor tiles (3.64kg) were recovered from two contexts (4) and (9). The tiles date from at least the c.14th (two tiles) and five tiles from the late medieval period (from c.1400-1550).

Four tile fragments were recovered from context 4, two from the high medieval period and two late medieval (Plate 2). These comprised:

- 1) Significant part of a decorated stamp designed tile (11.5cm+ long x 8cm+ wide) and 2.4cm thick. Edges very slightly chamfered. A mid orange grey fabric, full of voids due to leaching or burning spherical calcareous inclusions. Probably not a local fabric. The tile is heraldic with a king's head and tripartite crown. Filled generally with a non-specific white slip and then a clear glaze over the top to give a yellow finish. 13th century to 14th century (probably the latter).
- 2) Fragment of tile (8cm+ long x 6.3cm+ wide) and 1.8cm thick. Moderately chamfered. Mid orange/grey fabric which was poorly mixed and slightly calcareous. Origin unknown. Lost surface. Probably before 1400.
- 3) Most of a triangular tile (19.5cm x 14.4cm x 13.4cm) and 2.5cm thick. Edges slightly chamfered. It is a white clay fabric made locally in the Cambridgeshire/Fenland area. Mosaic tile with a single colour. There is a red slip with a green glaze over the top to give a dark green appearance. Late medieval, c.15th century- perhaps into the 16th century.
- 4) Part of a rectangular tile (8cm+ long x 7cm wide) and 2.4cm thick. Edges slightly chamfered. Same fabric as 3) but more orange. Dark green glaze (no red slip) as darker fabric colouration meant that a red slip was not needed to give the dark green appearance. Late medieval.

Context 9 contained one complete and two fragments of identical square tiles 15.5cm<sup>2</sup> and 1.8cm thick which had been from the same pavement (Plate 3). Edges upright. All the tiles had been later reused with mortar adhering to top of the glaze. The fabric was an oxidised soft silty clay reminiscent of local bricks made in the Bourn/Caxton area and these floor tiles would seem to have been locally made in South Cambridgeshire.

One of the tiles had a clear glaze which gave an orange finish and the other two had a clear glaze given a green finish (copper added to glaze). These are standard type monochrome late medieval floor tiles used in a combination of shapes and two colours to make geometric patterns on the floor. Dating is post-1400 but before 1550.

#### *Roof tile*

Two red ceramic roof tile pieces weighing 0.229kg were recovered consisting of one piece (0.098kg) from layer (9) and one found unstratified.

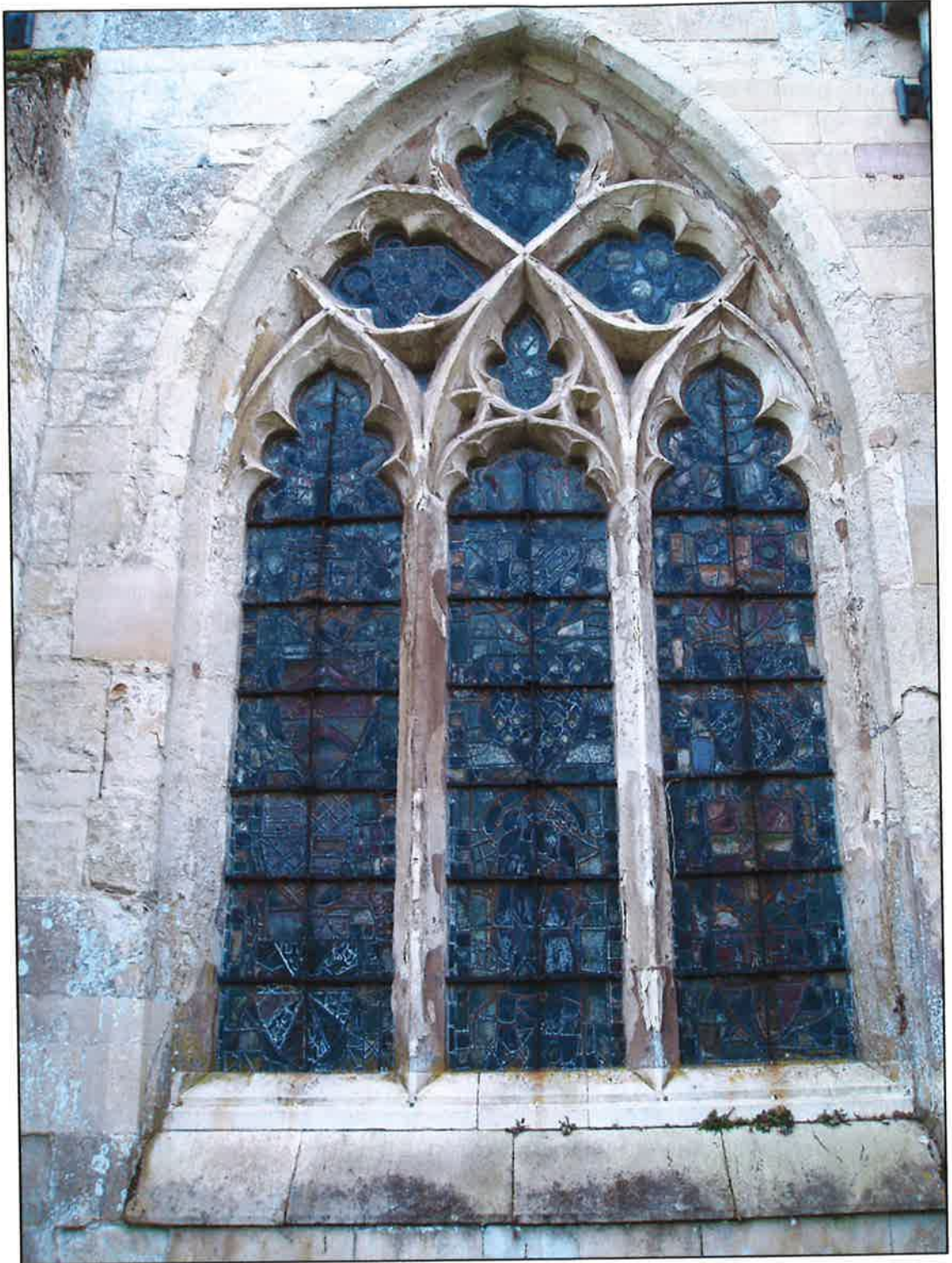
#### ***Stone identification by Dr Mark Samuel***

Nine pieces of worked stone were retained from layer 9 within the church (Plate 4). Eight of the pieces were clunch, several with limewash still attached. Wave moulds were recorded on two pieces (post-AD 1275 but probably no later than 1350). One of these pieces was probably a door jamb and this also had some graffiti inscribed on one face although this was a illegible doodle. All the other clunch pieces probably dated from the same period including part of a probable cluster pier. A single piece of ?Barlston limestone was also recovered and is likely to have been a fragment of stone used in the 1749 rebuilding.

#### ***Other materials by Rob Atkins***

Brick was found only from context 4, the fill of the construction trench for the 1749 rebuilding of the church. The red brick was well made and survived only as fragmentary pieces. They are identical to brick within the south wall of the church (22cm x10cmx5.5cm).

A single piece of green 18th-century vessel glass (0.038kg) was recovered from layer 9, as well as the stem of a clay tobacco pipe.



*Plate 1: Medieval church window, Chicheley Chapel*





*Plate 2: Medieval and late medieval floor tiles from 1749 construction trench*



*Plate 3: Late medieval floor tiles from rubble layer (9) within church*



*Plate 4: Building stone from rubble layer (9) within church*



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