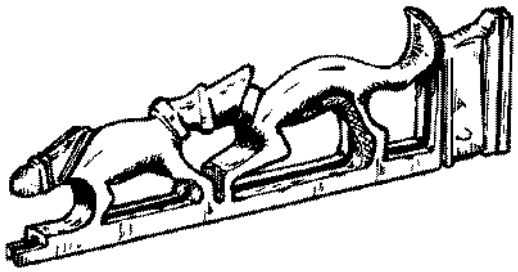
Ampthill & District Archaeological



& Local History Society

Miscellaneous Small Reports from Ampthill.

An investigation beneath the floor of St. Andrews Church May 1975.

An unusual foundation in a cottage in Woburn Road.

Reported in The Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal Vol. 11 1976.

A collection of clay pipes from an allotment.

Reported in Bedfordshire Archaeology Vol. 1991.

An Investigation Beneath the Floor of the Church of St Andrew, Ampthill

KEVAN FADDEN

SUMMARY

Substantial foundations discovered beneath the floor of the church of St Andrew, Ampthill, during building operations in May 1975 confirmed the existence of an earlier, probably Romanesque, structure.

The history of the parish church of St Andrew, Ampthill, has been investigated over many years, most recently by Mr A.G. Underwood, whose booklet, *The Parish Church of St Andrew, Ampthill: a History*, was published in 1964. It is known that in 1140, Nigel d'Albini, of Cainhoe Castle, Clophill, whose family held the manor of Ampthill at the time of the Doomsday Book [1086], made an endowment to provide the stipend of a parish priest. The list of incumbents displayed in the present church begins somewhat later than this with the appointment of a priest, Martin, in 1238.

From these it is clear that an ecclesiastical foundation for Ampthill pre-dates the present church, of which the earliest visible remains are the pillars of the nave, suggested as dating to *c.* 1330. Sir Nikolas Pevsner notes "the four-bay arcades are of tall early fourteenth century piers of the quatrefoil type with four thin shafts in the diagonals. The arch mouldings are typically early fourteenth century too".

The discrepency between the documentation and the architectural evidence until now could only be bridged by surmise and conjecture. However, in May 1975 an opportunity to undertake limited investigations of the problem arose when the previous boarded floors of the nave and aisles were replaced by concrete ones. In the course of this the contractors, J.M. Hill and Sons Ltd., stripped the previous floor and left it open for four days. It was during this period that the investigations of the Ampthill and District Archaeological Society, under the direction of the present author, took place.

The present investigations, however, were limited to an examination of soil which had been previously disturbed and to a removal of the general accumulation of the rubble overburden. This did permit a limited examination of part of the floor area.

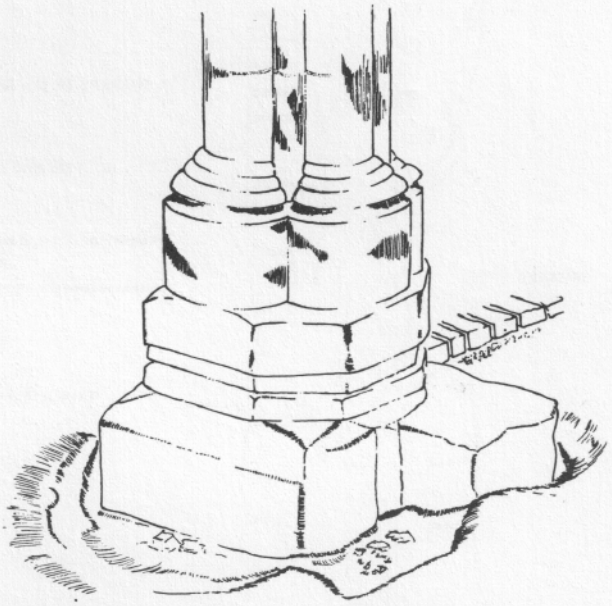


Fig 1 Isometric drawing showing the re-use of Romanesque sandstone pillar as base of thirteenth century pillar in Gothic style in the north aisle of Ampthill parish church.

The area exposed by the builders was found to be deeply covered with an accumulation of rubble and dust from successive floors. It had been considerably disturbed by a heating system installed in 1873. The wooden floor joists had been supported by rows of bricks laid East to West and mortared into position. The foundation trenches for the supports had created further disturbance.

Sifting through the rubble produced some plain yellow, green and black glazed tiles of fourteenth century type and some small pieces of stone roof tile together with many other items of less significance, detailed below.

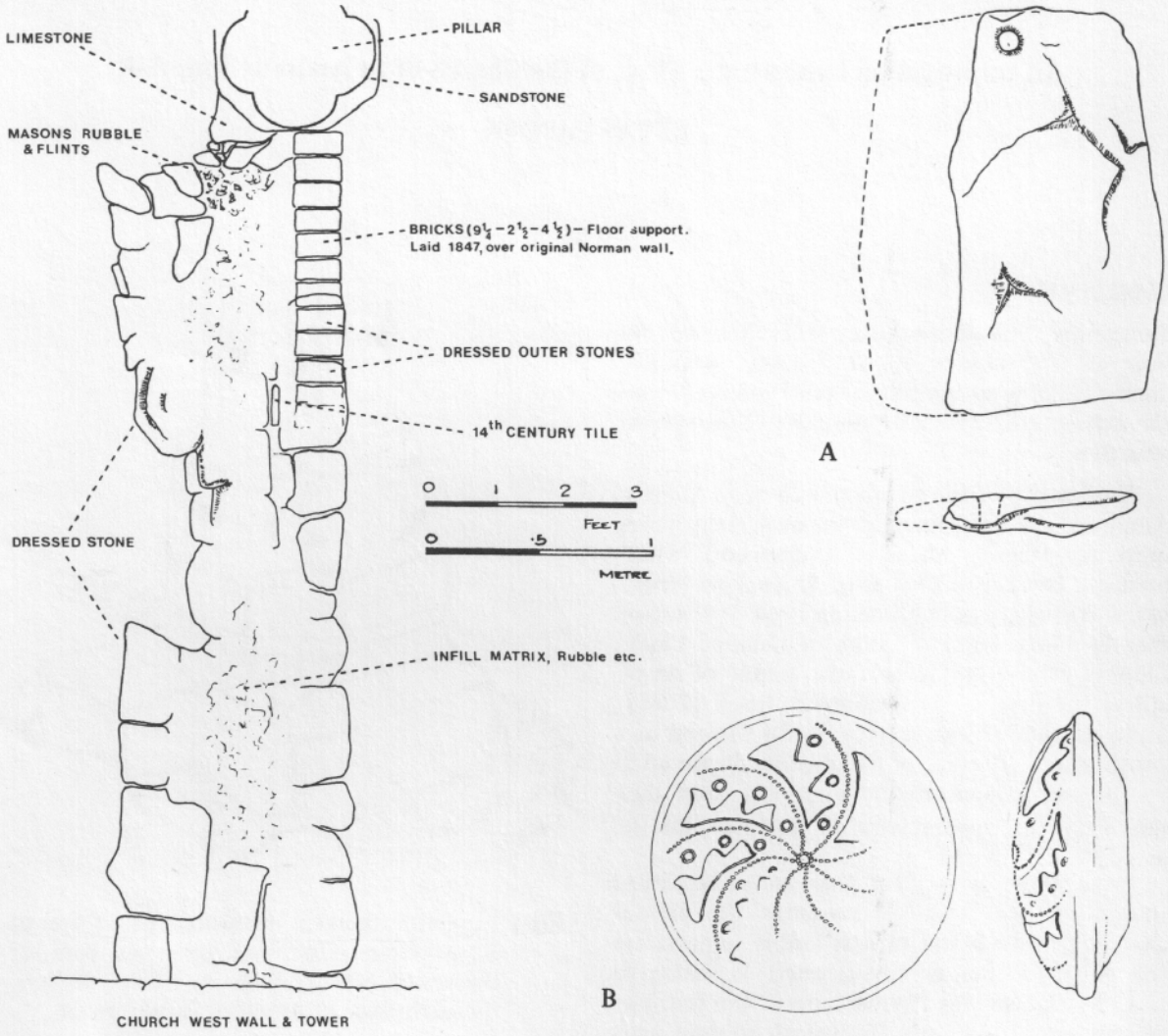


Fig 2 Plan of area exposed in north aisle of Ampthill parish church, showing sandstone foundation; with drawings of finds:
A Pegged limestone roof tile.
B Bone button with copper face.
(Scales: A, ½; B, $^3/_2$)

The floor support bricks in the West and of the nave were seen to have been laid directly onto sandstone which seemed solid. The sandstone was cleaned revealing the foundations of a wall which ran from under the West wall of the church to the first pillar of the North aisle. Clearance of rubble in a similar position relative to the South aisle exposed a sandstone wall extensively robbed but sufficient to establish its location and size.

Checks between the pillars to the North of the nave did not reveal foundations, it would have been necessary to dig into undisturbed soil to have established robber trenches. The area between the South pillars had not been made available to us by the builders.

The removal of the church pews exposed a cut away portion in the North aisle wall which matched the tomb slab of Nicholas Hervey, Knight, who died 1532. In line with the end of the slot a slight step of Totternhoe clunch marked the position of an altar tomb wall. This coincides with the location suggested in the church history. Nicholas Hervey was a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber to King Henry VIII and an attendant

to Catherine of Aragon when she was under house arrest in Ampthill Castle.

In the West corner of the North aisle a number of grave stones had been re-used to make a hard standing for a stove. These were lifted and three names recognised, as listed below.

The base of one pillar was cleaned up to show the re-use of sandstone for its foundation. (fig 2).

The sandstone wall foundation was as shown in the drawing (figure 1). It comprised of very substantial blocks dressed on both sides with an infill of sandstone rubble.

The pillars were built partially into the line of the original wall but mainly within the nave. The foundation and presumably the wall must have been cut away to allow the pillars to be built and then the wall knocked down. The flints and masons' rubble were packed between the pillar and the foundation wall.

The bases of the pillars are all different heights but are of the same basic shape and were almost certainly built at the same time. They are standing on sandstone blocks which have been partly shaped to conform with the pillars, presumably down to the original floor level. The dressing on the lower parts of the sandstone does not conform to any pattern and therefore appears to have been re-used.

The size of the sandstone wall foundation and its position relative to the North aisle, built in 1330, suggest it is of Romanesque origin.

The pillars were built on re-used sandstone blocks.

The Norman church would have been of similar proportions to the existing nave and in the same position.

At sometime before the clerestory was added in the fifteenth century, the roof would have been covered with stone tiles.

In the fourteenth century the floor would have been at least partially covered with green, yellow and black glazed tiles.

OBJECTS FOUND UNDER FLOOR

Offcuts of dressed Totternhoe stone
Green glazed tiles 177mm by 177mm by 27mm.
Pegged limestone roof tile, see fig 2.
Red tile 206mm by 203mm by 25mm.
Red tile 219mm by 219mm by 41mm.
Red brick 230mm by 117mm by 38mm.
Broken oven fired brick, brown fabric ? by 102mm by 66mm.
Brown glazed pot sherd fifteenth century.
White glazed sherd, blue pattern nineteenth century.
Bone button with copper face, see fig 3.
Fragment of stained glass.
Forged iron nails 100mm long.
Iron nails 20mm long.
Iron gate hinge.
Georgian pew door hinge.
Oyster shell.
Lump of coal.
Clay pipe stems and part of a bowl.
Piece of slate.
Brass trouser button stamped OUR OWN MAKE.
Peach stone.
Chestnut shells.
Hazlenut shells.
Glass bead.

TOMBSTONES

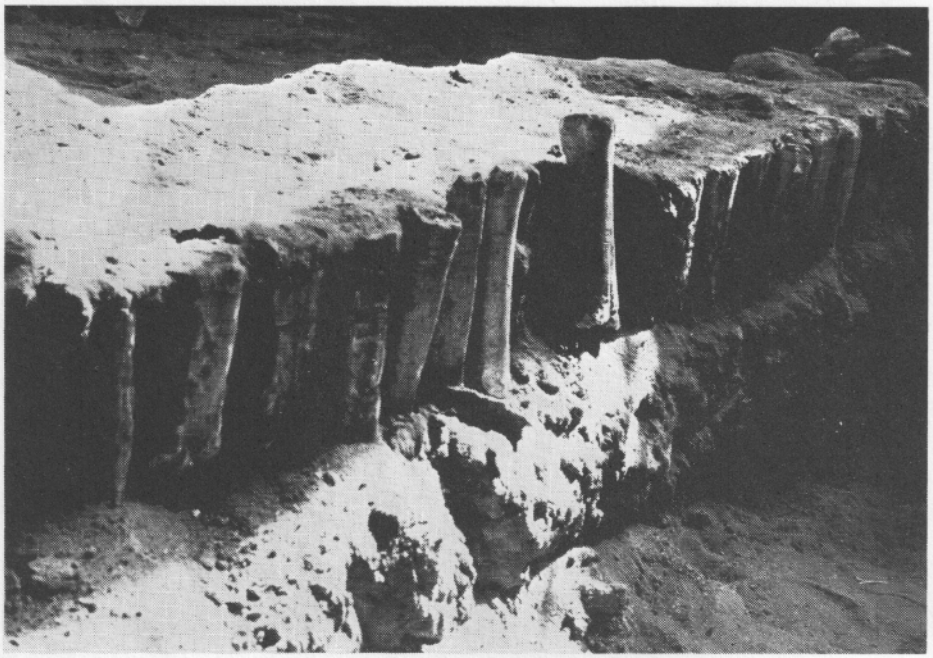
1 Anne Noke, widow of William Noke of London, died 13 September 1644, aged 46.
2 Thomas Redhead, died 13 November 1759. An innkeeper of Ampthill.
3 Richard Leach, died in April 1751. An aledraper of Ampthill.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Rector, the Rev L. Sturman, and the Parochial Church Council of the parish church of St Andrew, Ampthill, for allowing the Ampthill and District Archaeological and Local History Society to investigate the church floor. Our thanks are also due to Messrs J.M. Hill and Son Ltd. for their co-operation with the work schedule. The drawings to this note are by Mr J. Mileson.

An Unusual Foundation at Ampthill

KEVAN FADDEN



Pl 1 The foundation of ox-bones at No 45 Woburn Road, Ampthill

In March 1974 the Ampthill and District Archaeological and Local History Society were asked to investigate some bones found beneath the floor of a cottage in Woburn Road, Ampthill.

The cottage, No 45 Woburn Road, Ampthill, was built in 1812 and had been allowed to deteriorate to an extent that major repairs were necessary. The floor was dug out and filled with concrete. It was during this operation the bones were found. Consultations with the builders, Messrs. Upton Bros of Maulden resulted in a change in work schedule to allow time for minor excavations.

It became clear that the bones, ox tibiae, had been driven into the ground beside the foundation wall of an earlier building. The foundations were on a slightly different alignment to the current house and extended through into the garden. The bones had been placed along the full length. (Pl 1; fig 1).

The pottery with the foundations was of seventeenth century type with several examples of Jacobean Comb ware. Many domestic items were found including a bone apple corer, fig 2 and non ferrous pins of a type used in the pillow lace industry which thrived in the area.

The foundations comprised two walls 84mm apart. One lined with bones was the base of a cottage or house wall, the other parallel to it was complete with a finishing layer of bricks at the top.

No definite use for the bones has been found to date but it could have been an attempt to control

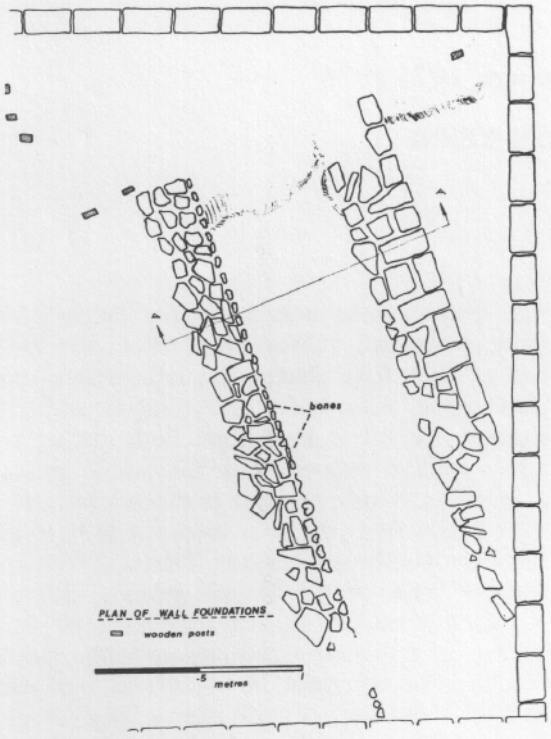


Fig 1 Plan of Wall Foundations at No 45 Woburn Road, Ampthill.

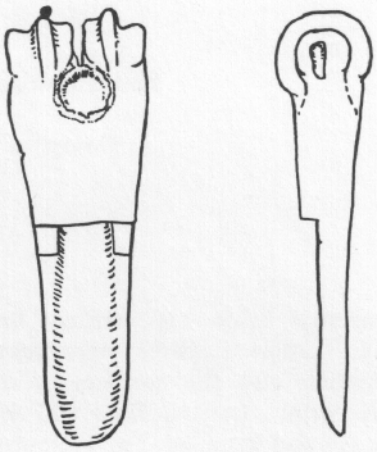


Fig 2 Bone apple-corer found in foundation of ox-bones at Ampthill. (Scale $^{2}/_{3}$).

rising damp. It has also been suggested that it was a bed for grape vines. This theory is supported by the position of the foundations which suggest a kerb wall for a garden bed next to a building.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks are due to the builders, Messrs Upton Bros of Maulden. The drawings are by Mr J. Mileson; the photograph by Mr A. Cowl.

The Bedfordshire Archaeological Council is indebted to the Department of the Environment and to the Bedfordshire County Council respectively for grants towards the costs of the publication of these notes.

Collection of Clay Pipes from Ampthill TL 0390 3970

KEVAN FADDEN

SUMMARY

Members of the Ampthill allotments Association informed the Ampthill Archaeological and Local History Society that they had found a concentration of white clay pipe fragments while tending their gardens.

BACKGROUND

The pipe fragments were all fabricated from a fine clay fired to a pure white, hard consistency. They were found in the top soil of land which had been in use as allotments for approximately thirty years. Tradition among the allotment holders suggested they were targets from a shooting range, as the field was rough pasture used as common ground prior to 1960. The land was almost certainly part of the Ampthill brickworks which closed down in 1866. The area of collection was approximately a quarter of an hectare.

SUGGESTED DATES AND OBSERVATIONS

The basic bowl shapes suggest dates from the early 17th. through to the mid 18th. century. Plain and spurred bowls are represented. Decoration is limited to rouletting round the bowl rim in four cases and R B in relief moulded on the spur of seven others. One stem, which appears to come from a heavily moulded pipe, has letters incuse on the side which appears to read DAVENTRY although the D and the A are not quite complete.

The seven pipes with R B moulded on the spur are the same design and make a group with a general typology date of 1730-60. It may be a coincidence but a pipe maker by the name of R Brown served his apprenticeship in Daventry in 1723 and marked his pipes R B. This could suggest a connection between the seven pipes and the stem, but we must recognise that there is a distance of some 30 miles between the two towns of Daventry in Northamptonshire and Ampthill in Bedfordshire. The stem also came from a completely different style of pipe than the bowls marked R B, they would not have been heavily moulded.

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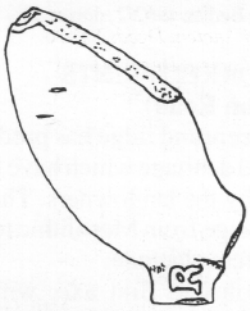


Fig 1. Detail of R as found on seven pipe spurs. 1:2

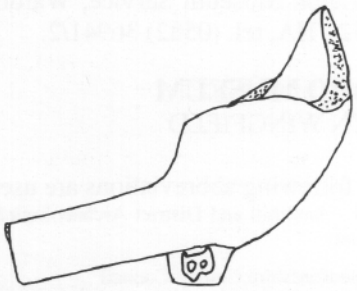


Fig 2. Detail of B on other side of pipe spurs in Fig 1. 1:2

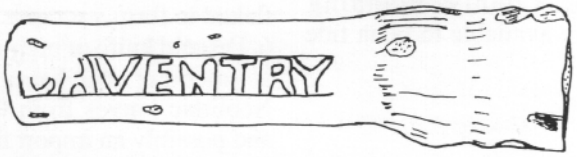


Fig 3. Moulded stem with Daventry incuse on the side.