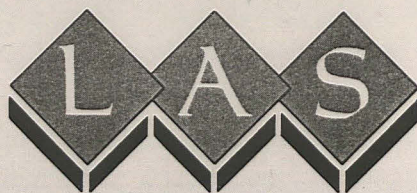


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# LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

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**Scampton St. John the Baptist's Church**

**Archaeological Monitoring**

**during the**

**Removal of the Lady Chapel Floor**

**April 1994**



LINCOLNSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL  
14 SEP 1994  
CITY AND COUNTY  
MUSEUM



**Scampton, St. John the Baptist Church:**  
**Removal of the Lady Chapel Floor**

**Introduction**

The organ at Scampton Church has been replaced by another model donated by a Methodist Church (Pl. 1). The old organ had been positioned in the Lady Chapel, to the north of the Chancel and beside the panelled vestry area; the replacement has been sited in the North Aisle, freeing space for a small chapel intended to commemorate the RAF presence at Scampton Airfield and in the village.

Preparations for this return to use of the Lady Chapel included the lifting of the 0.1m thick wooden block floor (which was damp and rotten) and the excavation of the floor base to a depth of 0.14m. Hardcore, a damp-proof membrane and a concrete floor base are to be laid to support a stone floor.

It was arranged that an archaeologist would be present during the excavation of the floor base, in order to recognise and record any items or features of interest before their removal or destruction.

**Historical Background**

The present church contains no visible evidence of a Saxon building although numerous traces of Norman and later features have been incorporated into the fabric. It is not known what proportion of the earlier buildings survived until the eighteenth century. Considerable reference was made in research for this report to *Scampton: Church of St John The Baptist*, a typescript church history of unknown date or authorship.

The north wall of the Chancel was pierced during the 14th century for an arch into the Lady Chapel. During extensive alterations to the apparently dilapidated church in about 1794 by Archdeacon Illingworth, the former Lady Chapel and North Aisle were demolished and the floor level of the entire church was raised. The building then remained essentially unaltered until 1864 (apart from construction of a replacement porch and repairs to the tower) when plans were prepared for a thorough restoration; that work was eventually started in 1876 and completed seven months later.

The North Aisle was rebuilt in the 1876 restoration, re-using the windows from the previously demolished structure. Small fragments of stone mouldings and ?14th century window glass were recovered from where they had been incorporated into the eighteenth century blocking between the Aisle pillars.

When the Chancel was dismantled, re-used early Lancet window jambs were observed to retain roughly painted plaster decorated with flowers and scroll work. This could not be preserved as the walls were in a poor condition.



The Lady Chapel was rebuilt almost on the foundations of its predecessor, incorporating a vestry and organ chamber. The building works for the vestry foundations and a heating system disturbed a coffin and human bones which were reinterred.

### **The Archaeological Watching Brief**

The author was present during the removal of the floor base by builders on 21st April 1994 (Pl. 2). The wooden blocks within the Lady Chapel had been removed but their impressions remained on a compacted bedding layer of dark brown sandy mortar, 15-20mm thick (Pl. 3). This surface overlay a thick deposit of mortar containing much larger inclusions of limestone and either gypsum or lime. The depth of this layer was not discovered but it was in excess of 0.12m; it continued below the base of the excavation (Pl. 4). The limestone chips seemed to be of a similar size and appeared to be introduced as hardcore rather than representing fragments of masonry dressed on the site or damaged during demolition.

Very few archaeological observations were made in the Lady Chapel. A small curved piece of limestone moulding was found in the thick mixed layer, probably from a small window sill. A concentration of medieval painted wall plaster lumps, mostly yellow but one white, lay close to the steps into the North Aisle. A small number of pieces of broken clay roof tile, some flat pantiles and some curved, were recovered; all were quite recent in date. No glazed floor tiles were present. Two fragments of small glass drinking vessels or bottles and four pieces of uncoloured window glass were found. Two pieces with a distinct patina may be older than the others but all could be medieval. There were no traces of lead *comes* from large windows. A single sherd of a nineteenth century ceramic jar was found.

All these finds are representative of a rebuilding episode, with relatively little material present nearby for incorporation into the hardcore. The total absence of human bone chancel was surprising, but suggested that bones disturbed during the 1876 vestry works had been carefully reinterred, as claimed. Both the layers recorded seemed to be contemporary and probably reflect a necessary raising of the floor level to that of the rest of the church: much older floor deposits may survive on this site buried below 18th and 19th century make-up.

Little structural detail was exposed by the works in the Lady Chapel, but this supported the record of the present building closely reflecting the foundations of its predecessor. A small stone offset was found on the north side of the arch from the North Aisle but insufficient was visible to record in detail (Pl. 3). The stone steps leading into the North Aisle had been placed onto the mixed chalk and mortar layer. Large stone blocks continued from the Aisle archway and below the narrow north doorway. Underneath the window, the foundation



seemed to be of smaller stone pieces, possibly a remnant of the earlier chapel. All the wall remains had a 0.03m layer of sandy mortar below 0.02m of render; both presumably pre-date the block floor and possibly also the 1876 alterations (Pl. 5).

This scheme avoided causing damage to the archaeology associated with Scampton Church and permitted an insight into the building activities of the 1876 restoration.

#### **Acknowledgements**

This watching brief was arranged and conducted with help from Jane Logan (Secretary of the Diocesan Advisory Committee) and the builders.

Geoff Tann  
Lindsey Archaeological Services  
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**Pl. 1 The replacement organ in the North Aisle, with panelled Lady Chapel in background**





**Pl. 2 The Lady Chapel, seen through the north doorway**

**Pl. 3 Wooden block impressions on the mortar floor base**







**Pl. 4** Stone offset below mortar floor base to east of doorway

**Pl. 5** Underlying deposit of mortar and stone rubble, to south of North Aisle arch

