

Report on a watching brief: CAT Report 410

Site address: St Giles' Church, Great Maplestead, Essex
Date of fieldwork: 1st November 2006 to 28th February 2007
NGR: TL 80818 34570 (c)
ECC HEM brief?: Yes
Plans attached?: Yes (Figs 1-2)
Museum accession code: BRNTM 2007.120
CAT project code: 06/11b
HEM site code: GMSG 07

Archaeological background

St Giles' Church is constructed of flint and rubble with limestone and clunch dressings and a tiled roof (EHER no 29667). The earliest parts of the church, ie the apse and tower, appear to have been constructed in the 12th century. Most of the middle portions have been rebuilt or altered by the addition of aisles and transepts, which were added to the south in the 14th century and to the north in the 19th century. It is considered to be an important example of a four-celled Norman church, complete with surviving apse; however, it has been suggested that its structural history is rather more complicated. For example, all the Norman elements may not be of one build, and it is not known why the tower is out of alignment. It is possible that St Giles' Church is late Anglo-Saxon in origin (EHER nos 9326-9327); a fragment of Anglo-Saxon interlaced stonework is preserved on the north-east window sill in the south transept.

Rodwell and Rodwell (1977) reported earthworks, possibly man-made, within the churchyard (EHER no 9329); the sanctuary arch contains Roman brick, and Roman burials are reported from under the north aisle and adjoining vicarage (EHER no 9325).

In 1996, archaeological excavation trenches were dug between the properties 'Limewood' and 'Rafters' on Church Street, to the north of St Giles' Church, prior to the construction of the new vicarage. A 3.2m-wide medieval ditch was exposed (*EAH 28*, 220). One of the earthworks within the churchyard is also a ditch. This ditch has not been excavated but it is possible that the two ditches are the same.

Results (Figs 1-2)

The church authorities received faculty consent for various works including the excavation of foundation pads to support posts in the tower and the cutting of beam bearings in the tower walls. To the south of the church, in the churchyard, trenching was carried out for various services. Where possible, these services were cut under existing pathways where the likelihood of burials was low and therefore they were not monitored archaeologically. A short length of foundation trench was also dug in order to convert the store by the south porch into a toilet. Four visits were made to the site.

01/11/06

The first visit was made after the wooden floor and the organ in the tower had been removed. This exposed an area of white flooring bricks (pavers) in the tower, near the entrance. These bricks are 18th/early 19th century in date (Andrews 1993, 98). The white flooring bricks had been cut to form a curved edge as if they had butted up against some fitting or furnishing. To the north-west of the white flooring bricks and on the same level was another patch of flooring bricks. The bricks were the same size and shape as the white ones but redder in colour and clearly not contemporary with them (Plate 1). The red bricks were slightly more fragmented than the white bricks. The rest of the floor was a beaten clay floor made of locally produced clay with chalk nodules. It would appear that the fitting or furnishing that the white bricks were laid up against had been removed. After its removal the red bricks and the beaten clay floor had then perhaps been used to patch this exposed area. Just west of centre in the tower floor was a slab of Purbeck marble which is likely to have been a base for something, perhaps the font. The font is currently positioned in the south nave, near the entrance.



Plate 1: the flooring bricks and Purbeck marble slab, view west.

15/01/07

The second visit was made after the brick and clay floors had been removed and two holes for foundation pads had been made in the floor of the tower (Trenches 1 and 2). An extra hole was also dug in the centre of the tower floor to investigate a void there (Trench 3). Trenches 1 and 2 were both 900mm deep. Both exposed a flint wall foundation running north-south and dividing the nave from the tower. To the west of this foundation, the holes had been dug through a loose mid brown silt with flint fragments. Natural sand was encountered at 850mm below ground-level. Trench 3 was circular and 850mm deep. It was dug through the loose silt with flint fragments only.

07/02/07

The third visit was made after the ground-level of the tower had been reduced by 250mm and four beam bearing holes had been made in the interior wall of the tower. Nothing of interest was revealed, only the same loose silt with flint fragments that had been observed in the foundation pad holes previously. The four holes made in the wall (Holes 1-4) were 2.4m above the reduced ground-level. Holes 1 and 2 were on either side of the west window. Holes 3-4 were near the entrance to the tower; Hole 3 being on the northern wall and Hole 4 on the southern wall. The holes were roughly rectangular and all measured approximately 300-350mm by 400-450mm. The holes penetrated the interior wall by approximately 250mm and exposed the flint rubble and lime mortar wall fabric. In Hole 1, there was also a Roman tile in the wall fabric. In Holes 1, 2 and 3, put-log holes were visible. These had been made to support scaffolding during the construction of the tower. The upper part of the eastern half of the tower has been rebuilt in brick, as can be seen from the exterior. All these holes, however, were made into the original (12th-century) fabric. In Hole 3, some brick walling was seen in the west-facing section of the hole. The dimensions of the individual bricks were 51mm x 120mm (length not known). These are Tudor-style bricks dating probably to between the 15th and 17th century (Andrews 1993, 100).

28/02/07

The fourth visit was made after the tower floor had been reduced by a further 100mm-120mm. This further reduction was due to an alteration in the design of the planned tower supports. The north-south aligned flint wall foundation observed in Trench 1 and Trench 2 was fully exposed. The ground reduction had also exposed a continuation of this flint wall foundation extending the whole way around the interior of the tower. This foundation appeared to be the foundation for the current tower wall and not an earlier foundation, as it was made of the same mortar and flint as the wall and exactly followed its course. The foundation protruded between 450mm and 600mm from the wall face. The top of this foundation was 250mm below the floor-level of the nave. The fact that the north-south flint wall foundation dividing the nave and tower was seen to be a continuation of the tower wall foundation is interesting as it shows that the tower and nave were one build. During this

visit, the foundation trench for the new toilet was monitored. The trench was 600mm wide and 500mm deep. A medium brown silty sand layer with fragments of peg-tile was observed. A concentration of disarticulated human bone, including a piece of lower jaw, a piece of skull, some ribs and vertebrae, was exposed at 440mm below ground-level. The fact that the bones were shallow and were jumbled up with peg-tile indicates that the burial had been disturbed. The bones were put back into the trench and covered over.

Contractors had to remove part of the eastern wall of the south porch in order to create a doorway into the new toilet. This involved removing the stone plaque commemorating those who died in the First World War. On removal of this wall plaque, a window was exposed behind it with ashlar surround and glass panes. Presumably this window is contemporary with the south porch and is thus 14th century. The window had to be removed temporarily but is to be put back into the new toilet wall. The plaque has been mounted on the west wall of the south transept.

References

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------|--|
| Andrews, D D | 1993 | <i>Cressing Temple: a Templar and Hospitaller manor in Essex</i> , Essex County Council |
| <i>EAH 28</i> | 1997 | 'Great Maplestead, land between Limewood and Rafters, Church Street 1996', by H Brooks of Howard Brooks Archaeological Services, in <i>Essex Archaeology and History</i> , 28 , 220 |
| Rodwell, W, & Rodwell, K | 1977 | <i>Historic churches: a wasting asset</i> , CBA, Research Report, 19 |

Report author: Kate Orr

Report date: March 2007

© Colchester Archaeological Trust 2007

Distribution list:

Rev Janet Donaldson of St Giles' Church

Vanessa Clarke, ECC HEM team

Essex Historic Environment Record, Essex County Council



Colchester Archaeological Trust

12 Lexden Road,
Colchester,
Essex CO3 3NF

tel.: (01206) 541051

(01206) 500124

email: archaeologists@catuk.org

Checked by: Philip Crummy

Date: 23.03.07

adams c:/reports07/great maplestead/report410.doc

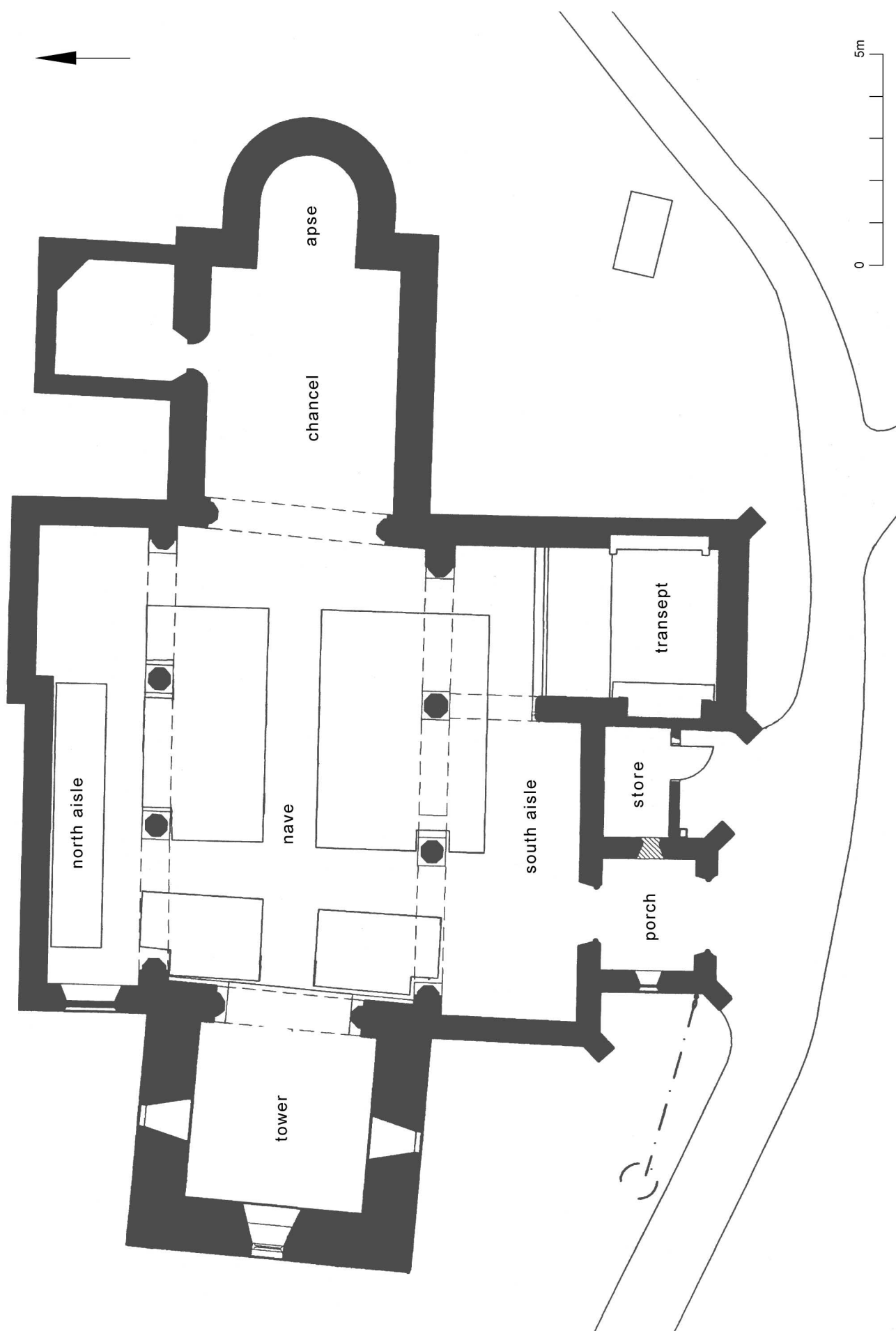


Fig 1 Floor plan of St Giles' Church prior to internal re-ordering (source: David Whymark Building Design and Conservation).

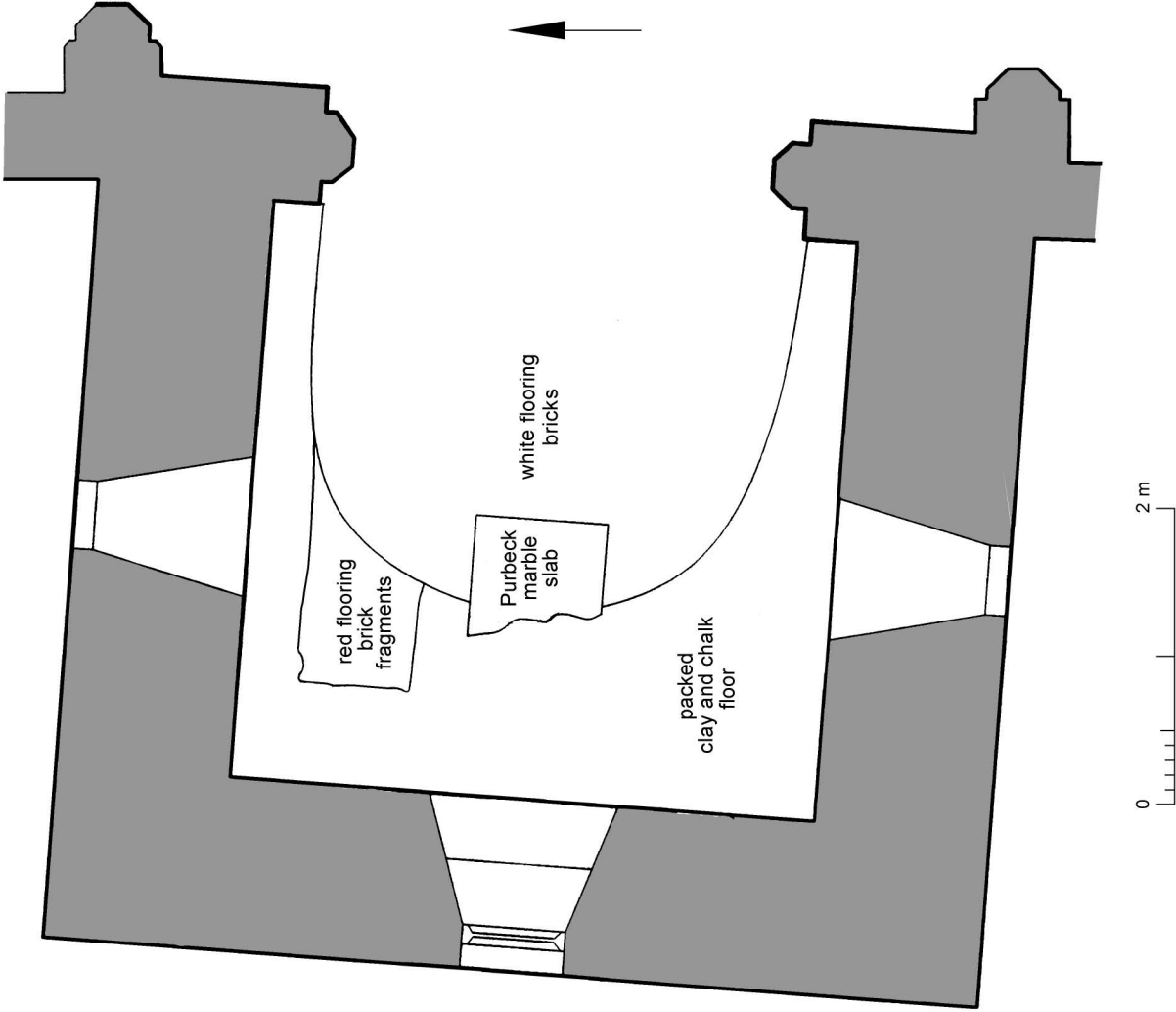


Fig 2 Plan of tower after removal of wooden floor (source: David Whymark Building Design and Conservation).

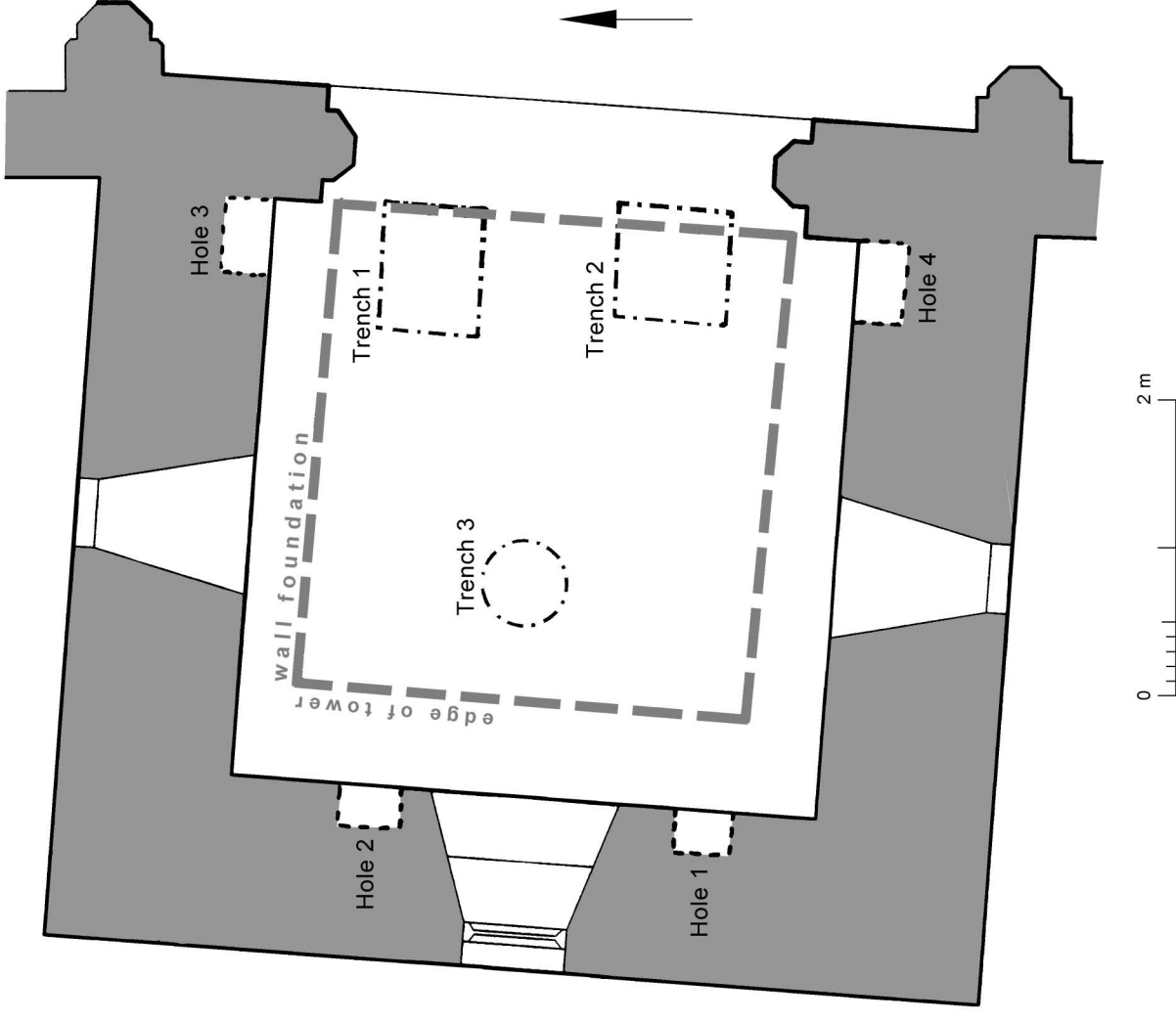


Fig 2a Plan of tower after removal of brick floor and clay floor, showing excavations (source: David Whymark Building Design and Conservation).

Essex Historic Environment Record/ *Essex Archaeology and History*

Summary sheet

Site address: St Giles' Church, Great Maplestead, Essex	
Parish: Great Maplestead	District: Braintree
NGR: TL 80818 34570 (c)	Site code: GMSG 07
Type of work: Watching brief	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: November 2006 to February 2007	Size of area investigated: Church tower and a short stretch of foundation next to south porch
Location of finds/curating museum: Braintree Museum (BRNTM 2007.120)	Funding source: Parochial Church Council
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER nos: EHER 9325-9327, 9329, 29667
Final report: CAT Report 410 and summary in <i>EAH</i>	
Periods represented: medieval, post-medieval	
<p>Summary of fieldwork results: <i>The church authorities received faculty consent for various works including the excavation of foundation pads to support posts in the tower and the cutting of beam bearings in the tower walls. To the south of the church, in the churchyard, trenching was carried out for various services. Where possible, these services were cut under existing pathways where the likelihood of burials was low, and therefore they were not monitored archaeologically. A short length of foundation trench was also dug in order to convert the store by the south porch into a toilet. Ground reduction in the tower exposed the flint foundations to the tower but no earlier foundations. The holes made in the tower wall exposed the medieval flint and mortar fabric and putlog holes made for scaffolding. The foundation trench for the toilet was 500mm deep and exposed a concentration of disarticulated human remains at 440mm below ground- level. Removal of part of the eastern wall of the south porch exposed a medieval window.</i></p>	
Previous summaries/reports: None	
Author of summary: Kate Orr	Date of summary: March 2007