

St Andrew's church, Hurstbourne Priors

Historical graffiti survey report



Dates of survey: 31st May 2024

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Post code: RG28 7RN Grid Ref: SU838466 Church Heritage Record No: 641150

Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Project

<http://www.hantsfieldclub.org.uk/medieval-graffiti/index.html>

St Andrew's church, Hurstbourne Priors: a brief description



Fig 1. The re-set Norman west doorway

The church is Grade II* listed. It is on the site of a Saxon church, recorded as being consecrated in 820 AD. The present building dates from the 12th century, and the fine west doorway dates from this time, c1130, and was originally from the nave north wall (Fig 1). The north chapel was added in the 16th century, the south transept in the 18th century, and the nave rebuilt and west tower added in 1870. The chancel has been heavily restored but retains the original chancel arch, now leading into the north chapel, and the 13th century priest's doorway with continuous roll moulding (Fig 7).



Fig 2. Oxenbridge monument from the north chapel

Dominating the interior is the fine Elizabethan monument between the chancel and the north chapel which commemorates Sir Robert Oxenbridge and his wife (Fig 2). They are portrayed as two recumbent effigies, with their kneeling children on both sides of the monument.

Graffiti survey methodology

The survey group consisted of volunteers from the Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Project. They first scanned the building to locate the graffiti, using a raking light source in the interior, and ambient daylight on the exterior. The team photographed each mark or sets of marks with a digital camera. Sometimes multiple images were taken using different angles of light source. The location and type of graffiti were recorded on record sheets. Images were later transferred to a computer where further enhanced identifications were made, and this detail was collated with the original field data. As well as graffiti, construction and other “unofficial” marks were also recorded.

Graffiti summary and discussion

The church interior

Due to the extensive restoration of the building, no early graffiti was found in the interior of the church. The only graffiti found was on the wooden casing of the church organ (Fig 3). The organ was installed in 1906, so the graffiti dates to the twentieth century and was probably made by the young men tasked with pumping the organ bellows before the installation of electricity. The pencil markings “Full” (Fig 4) and “E” (for empty) are evidence of this. The graffiti also includes a roughly drawn figure, and the initials JC and W.R.T.

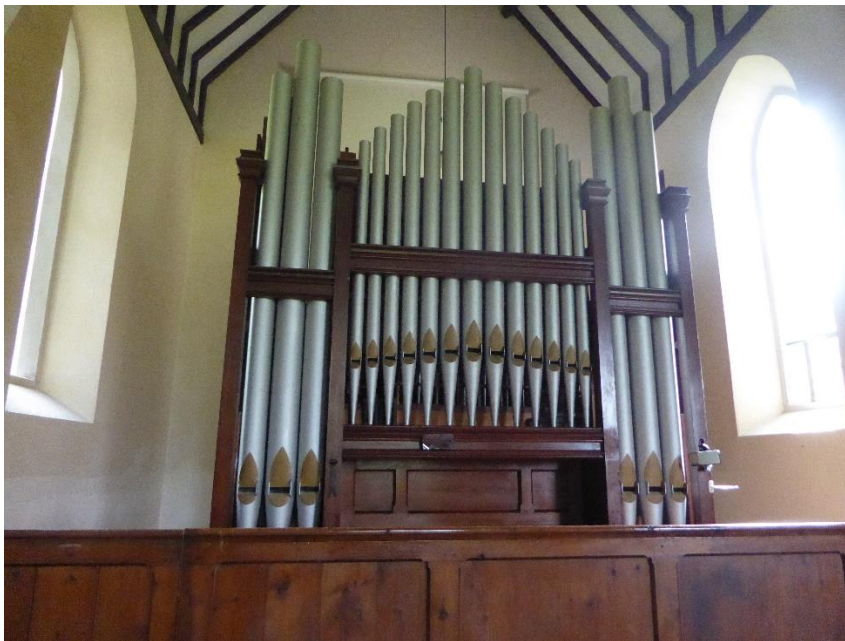


Fig 3. Church organ, installed 1906



Fig 4 Organ casing. Pencil marking "FULL"

The church exterior

Earlier graffiti was found on the church exterior, mostly around the north and south doorways of the chancel.



Fig 5. North chancel doorway. Dated initials

On the east side of the north chancel doorway are the initials IEA, dated 1860 (Fig 5), and some fainter marks including a possible cross. There are some undated initials in the same area: R, DC, AH and RP. (Fig 6)



Fig 6. North chancel doorway. Initials



Fig 7. Chancel. South or priest's door

On the west side of the blocked south or priest's door (Fig 7), is a fine scratch dial or mass dial, which was recorded by AR Green in 1943 in his summary of Hampshire mass dials. These dials consist of a hole into which a stick or gnomon was inserted, and the resulting shadow cast by the sun onto one of the radiating lines beneath would show the time. It is thought these dials were for the use of the priest to show him when services were due.

However, unremarked by Green, there are possibly two more of these dials below this one. Although they are much less distinct there is one, situated two blocks beneath, which has a central hole within a circle, and on the block below this one is a possible hole, now filled with cement, with lines radiating out beneath (Fig 8). It is common to find more than one of these dials, often grouped in the same area, saved as reused blocks. In this case, it is also possible that these cruder versions are later graffiti, made by people attempting to copy the original, more elaborate dial. The lower dials are also much smaller, which again gives weight to them being copycat shapes rather than proper dials.



Fig 8. Chancel, south doorway, west side. Mass or scratch dial with traces of 2 possible dials beneath



Fig 9. Chancel, south doorway, east side. Possible traces of mass or scratch dial

There is another possible dial or copycat shape on the east side of the same door (Fig 9). This is similar to the lowest mark on the west side, consisting of lines radiating down from an area of modern cement which could be a hole infill.

There are also crosses incised into the east and west jambs of the doorway. These would have been made by worshippers entering the church, as symbols of prayer and devotion (Fig 10).



Fig 10. Chancel, south doorway, west jamb. Incised cross



There are also more elaborate shapes. On the east jamb is a shape based on a Calvary cross with a flag-shaped device above (Fig 11).

Fig 11. Chancel, south doorway, east jamb. Calvary cross shape

References

Green, AR (1943) "**Incised dials, scratch dials or mass clocks on the walls of Hampshire churches**", Proc. Hampshire Field Club, Vol XV, part 3.

Bullen, Michael, Crook, John, Hubbock, Rodney, and Pevsner, Nikolaus (2010) **The Buildings of England. Hampshire: Winchester and the North.**

Survey archive

58 photographs were taken during the survey. All images and record sheets are held by the Hampshire Field Club Medieval Graffiti Project archive and are available on request. A copy of this report has been lodged with the Hampshire Historic Environment Record and with the church, and reports have been posted on the HFC website.

Disclaimer

This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part hereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project or assessment without the permission of the Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Project or the church.

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