

St Andrew's church, Tichborne

Historical graffiti survey report



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St Andrew's church, Tichborne

Brief history and description

The church is set on a hill, overlooking the village of Tichborne. It retains its mid-11th century plan with a surviving Saxo-Norman chancel which has characteristic stone pilaster strips and small double-splayed windows. The nave and aisles are late 12th century, and the south doorway 14th century. The stairway to the rood loft survives, with a 15th century door. The rebuilt tower, of mixed red and blue brick, has a plaque on the south wall dated 1703 recording the churchwardens John Rowland and John Newell. The brick porch is also 18th century, perhaps contemporary with the tower (see on). The main body of the church is constructed of rubble flint and stone.

The north aisle was built as a chantry chapel in 1338 by Sir Roger de Tichborne and contains monuments to various members of the family. Very unusually, it remains a Catholic chapel within an Anglican church, and is separated from the nave with cast-iron railings. It contains a wooden Elizabethan altar table.

There is a Norman font in the nave, Jacobean box pews in the nave and south aisle, and a Jacobean chair in the chancel.

Graffiti survey methodology

Group members first scanned the building to locate the graffiti, using a raking light source in the interior, and ambient daylight on the exterior. The team then recorded 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 HMGP 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 recorded.

NB The tower was locked on the day of our visit, so the tower interior is not included in this survey.

Graffiti summary and discussion

Most of the graffiti found is around the entrances, on the south porch and south doorway, and around the north doorway into the tower. This is a common phenomenon in English church graffiti and could be due to several factors. Parishioners or visitors may have wished to leave their mark as they entered, perhaps in the form of a cross, as a sign of personal devotion. They may have wished to leave their initials to simply show “I was here”, although as church porches were used for parish business in the medieval and post-reformation periods, names with dates may have recorded a particular business transaction or deal carried out in this space. It is also thought that people may have left initials with dates within a rough frame as a memorial to a loved one, when they could not afford a more expensive monument within the church.

People also scratched their initials into the box pews, often on the bookshelf ledges, perhaps to pass time during a lengthy sermon.

Common finds in English churches are ritual protection or apotropaic marks, made to protect the building and its occupants from evil spirits and the Devil. Such marks are rare within the building fabric at St Andrew's, although there are some intersecting circles carved into one of the box pews, and an elaborate pattern of circles carved into the seat of the Jacobean chair in the chancel.

Surprisingly, despite the presence of the Catholic chapel, there do not appear to be any marks associated with the worship of the Virgin Mary, such as pairs of intersecting Vs, standing for Virgo Virginum, or inverted Vs forming a letter M, for Maria. These so-called "Marian marks" are found in most English churches, so their absence here is notable. Perhaps such graffiti was made surreptitiously at times when Catholic practices were forbidden, but in this church there was no need for such subterfuge because Catholic rites were permitted.

The church exterior

The tower

The tower is built of blue and red brick (Fig 1), and a plaque on the south face records the names of the church wardens: John Rowland and John Newell, and the rebuild date of 1703 (Fig 2). Above this plaque is a sundial.



1 The tower, south face, showing churchwardens' plaque and sundial above



2 Tower. Plaque to churchwardens dated 1703

There are some crosses and sets of initials around the tower's north doorway, some have twentieth century dates, eg RB 6/6/81 (Fig 3) and the incomplete inscription EMS 1 /9 is similar in style so may be contemporary.



3 Tower, north doorway. RB 6/6/81

On the west jamb are carved initials which, from their form, are probably earlier. They include AN, which might also be a possible monogram, with conjoined letters A and W. Another A is carved at an angle on the brick above, as are the initials AR (Fig 4).



1 Tower, north doorway. Monogram and initials

On the wall on the west side of the doorway are the initials TN, with dots at the terminals (Fig 5). From our findings of unfinished graffiti in other locations, it seems that people made the dots first as guides for the letter form.

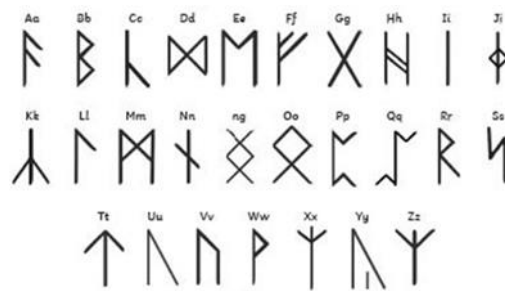


5 Tower, north doorway, west side. TN dotted initials

Also to the west of the doorway are what appear to be runes incised into a brick (Fig 6). Comparing these with the runic alphabets found on-line (Fig 7), they seem to represent the letters DOG, and were probably made relatively recently.



2 Tower, north doorway, west side. Runic inscription.



7 Runic alphabet

There are 2 crosses incised into the corner of a brick on the east side of the doorway (Fig 8).



8 Tower, north doorway, east side. Crosses

The south porch and south doorway



9 The south porch

The brick porch (Fig 9) is dated in the church guide and in Pevsner to the 18th century. The initials IR with the date 1703 occur on a block of stone inserted into the nave wall over the south door arch (Fig 10). It is, therefore, tempting to speculate that these are John Rowland's initials (I and J were interchangeable at this time) and that the porch is contemporary with the tower, built when John Rowland was churchwarden. The construction of the porch did not warrant a special commemorative plaque however, only this rough inscription.



10 South doorway. IR 1703

There are initials carved into the jambs on each side of the porch doorway, including TD and HC on the east side (Fig 11) and JMC on the west.



11 South porch doorway, east side. Various initials

Around the south doorway into the church are incised many initials and some faint crosses (Fig 12).



12 South doorway. Cross

One set of initials, HC, on the west side, is dated 1681 (Fig 13).



13 South doorway. West side impost. HC 1681

The initials IW occur twice on the west side, they appear similar in style so were probably made by the same person (Fig 14).



14 South doorway, west side. IW incised twice

The initials TT also appear on the west side of the doorway, their terminals ending in dots (Fig 15).



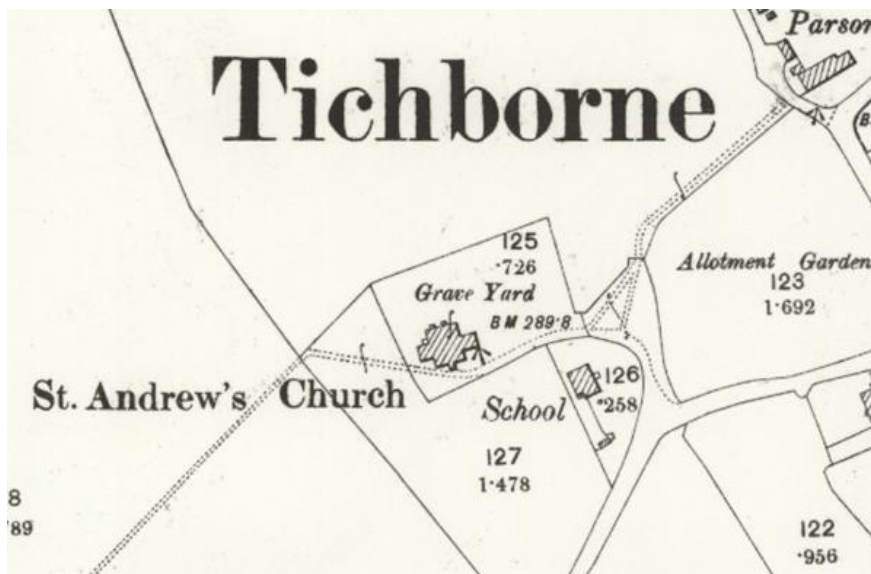
15 South doorway, west side. TT dotted initials

The nave and chancel exterior

There is an Ordnance Survey benchmark on the south-east corner of the chancel (Fig 16). A benchmark is shown in this location on the Ordnance Survey 25-inch map of England and Wales, 1896, as 298.8 (Fig 17).



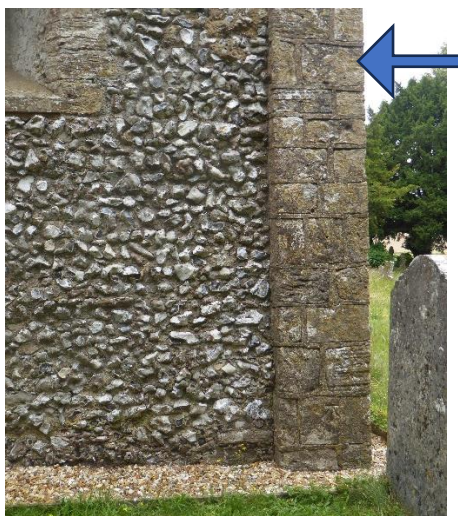
16 Chancel. Ordnance Survey benchmark



17 1896 25" OS map showing benchmark



18 South wall. Pilaster strip with block containing hole.



19 Southeast corner. Block containing hole, arrowed.

Two blocks of stone with deep incised central holes were noted on the pilaster strip on the south wall of the nave (Fig 18) and on the southeast corner (Fig 19). It is a possibility these are re-used blocks of stone which had mass dials carved them, and the hole left by the gnomon is the only trace left. However, there is no mention of any mass dials at this church in AR Green's article in the HFC Proceedings, which includes a comprehensive list of all the mass dials he had located in 1943. The purpose of these holes is unknown.

There are many reused blocks of stone inserted into the flint rubble wall of the north chapel. Some of these have possible masons' marks and some have their original marking out lines visible (Fig 20).



20 North chapel wall, reused red stone with marking out line

The church interior

Most of the graffiti inside the church is on the box pews and the furniture, and there are masons' marking out lines visible on some of the stonework.

The north chapel

Roughly incised arrow shapes occur at roughly the same height on each side of the north doorway in the north chapel (Fig 21).



21 North chapel. Arrow shape on east side of doorway



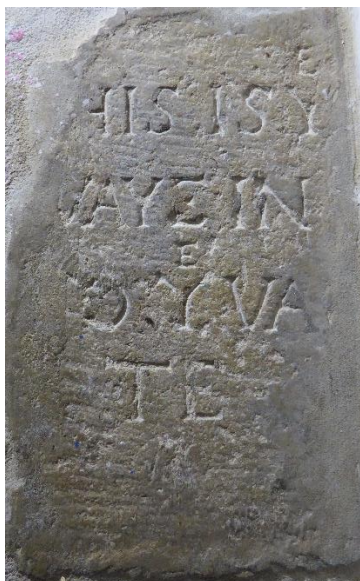
22 North chapel. Arrow shape and marking out lines on west side of doorway

There are also some straight lines incised into the blocks of stone on the west side (Fig 22). These are probably marking out lines made by masons to aid construction. On the top of the small corbel on the east wall of the north chapel are some neatly incised lines (Fig 23), again probably marking out lines.



23 North chapel, east wall. Corbel with marking out lines

In the floor of the north chapel is a stone marking the entrance to a vault, probably that of Sir Henry Tichborne (Fig 24).



24 North chapel floor, vault entrance

Furniture and fittings

The box pew next to the south entrance (Fig 25) has initials carved into the edges of the bookshelf (Fig 26).



25 Box pew by south entrance



26 Box pew by south entrance. Bookshelf edge with initials

It also has some concentric circles, possibly apotropaic markings, carved into the north outer side (Fig 27).



27 Box pew by south entrance, north side. Concentric circles

On the back of the pew next to the rood stairs is a painted date, 1790 (Fig 28). This might record the date of installation, but at the very least shows the *terminus post quem*, or date after which the pews had been made.



28 Back of box pew next to rood stairs. Painted date 1790

A number of scratched initials and some names in faded ink, were found in the pews in the main body of the nave. These include a column of pairs of initials, all ending in R (a family group?), with a merel shape at the base (Fig 29).



29 Nave, box pew. Column of initials



30 Jacobean chair

The Jacobean chair, currently located in the chancel, (Fig 30) has an elaborate pattern of intersecting compass-drawn circles carved into its seat (Fig 31).



31 Jacobean chair. Intersecting circles on seat.

Whilst decorative, such circles can also have an apotropaic function, and are often found in domestic buildings around openings such as doors and windows, to prevent the ingress of evil spirits.



32 North chapel. Elizabethan altar table.

The Elizabethan altar table (Fig 32) in the north chapel, has a small N incised into its top surface. (Fig 33).



33 Elizabethan altar table. top surface. Incised N

Survey archive

126 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 the report has been posted on the Hampshire Field Club website www.hantsfieldclub.org.uk.

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.

References

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