

SCRATCH DIALS AT ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, MARTIN.

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IN a former number of the *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club*,¹ the number of scratch dials or mass clocks on the walls of All Saints' Church at Martin is given as four. In fact there are eight. This is the greatest number so far recorded for any church in Hampshire, nor do I remember ever having come across so many in the scanty literature on the subject. The exceptional number on Martin Church may, therefore, justify a fuller description of them. Some are possibly, even probably copy dials, carved by some mischievous schoolboy of earlier generations; one has been demonstrably transposed and mutilated, and all are much weathered and defaced by the encroachment of lichen.

The dials are tabulated below from west to east:—

- I. On the centre buttress on the south face of the tower.

Height, 5ft. 2in.

Style-hole in centre of horizontal line.

Radii, four, 2½in. long. All very indistinct, the clearest corresponding to the hours of 10.0 a.m. and 1.0 p.m.

- II. In the same place.

Height, 4ft. 10in.

Style-hole: a simple hole, bored in the stone.

Radii, five, 3in. long, of which those at 9.0 a.m., at noon, and 2.0 p.m. appear more distinct than the others. The lines are, however, ragged and irregular.

The buttress on which this pair of dials is cut is one of the surviving original buttresses, ascribed to between 1200 and 1225. Two explanations may be offered for the presence of two dials in close juxtaposition: either one may have been for use in the summer, the other in winter. This is suggested by the fact that the more deeply incised radii on either dial correspond to different hours. Or, one may be a copy, more probably the second.

- III. On the easternmost buttress on the south face of the tower.

Height, 4ft. 11in.

A simple style-hole, ½in. in diameter.

Radii, six, 3in. in length, of which four are distinctly carved, and two mere scratches, apparently added later. At the end of four radii are small holes, undoubtedly intended and used for the insertion of pegs.

- IV. In the same place.

Height, 3ft. 10in.

Simple style-hole, ½in. in diameter.

Radii, apparently eight, each with a peg-hole at its terminus. The clearest are at noon, and about 1.30 and 2.0 p.m.

This buttress is attributed to the first half of the 15th century, when the tower was raised a stage. This pair of dials, in close juxtaposition, is susceptible of the same alternative explanations as the first pair.

1. *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club*, XV, Pt. 3, p. 272.

- V. On the north-west face of the diagonal buttress at the south-west angle of the south transept.

Height, 4ft.

Style-hole missing.

Radii, five, .5in. long.

The stone on which this dial is cut has been manifestly transposed from elsewhere. As re-set, the dial points to the north-west and is in total shade. The stone may have originated from a demolished buttress of the tower, or from that part of the south wall of the nave which was pulled down when the south transept was added. The transept was built early in the fourteenth century: this dial, therefore, must be anterior to that date.

- VI. On the south-west face of the same buttress and on another face of the same stone as No. V.

Height, 4ft. 10in.

Style-hole, $\frac{1}{2}$ in. in diameter.

Radii, twelve, 3in. in length, the most deeply incised being at 9.0 a.m. and 2.30 p.m.

An example of the wheel type of scratch dial in imitation of a clock-face, but, of course, no shadow was cast on the upper half of the dial.

- VII. In the same place, but below.

Height, 3ft. 11in.

Style-hole, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. in diameter, is the largest on this church.

Radii, very indistinct, about 3in. long. Five appear more clear than the rest, but there may have been twelve in imitation of No. VI immediately above it. Its large and apparently much-worn style hole suggests that the dial was in constant use and negatives the supposition that it may have been a copy of the previous dial.

- VIII. On the diagonal buttress at the south-east angle of the south transept.

Height, 3ft. 9in.

Large style-hole, 1in. in diameter.

Radii, three 4in. long, of which two correspond to the hours of 6.0 a.m. and 7.0 a.m.

This buttress is assigned to the first half of the fourteenth century. Its position immediately to the left of the old priest's door, now blocked up, shews it to have been for the use of the parson, a surmise which is confirmed by the fact that it is the only dial of the eight to indicate the hour of Prime, apparently both for summer and winter services.

Owing to the orientation of the church being 22 degrees north of east, the extreme limit, that is, of the sun's declination at the summer solstice, the noon line is on all dials to the right of the perpendicular (where it should be if the orientation were correct), except on the dials at Nos. VI and VII, which face due south. But though the noon line is invariably marked, scratch dials did not denote time, but were devices to indicate the hours of service. The ordinary parochial usage in the Middle Ages provided for three services on Sundays: Matins in the early morning, Mass following Tierce after 9.0 a.m. and Vespers at about 3.0 p.m. or earlier according to the season. Consequently on all dials the Mass line at about 9.0 a.m. (summer) and 10.0 a.m. (winter) and Vespers at about 1.30 p.m. (winter) and 2.0 or 2.30 p.m. (summer) should be, and in fact mostly are, more clearly incised, having probably been cleaned and scarified at periodic intervals.

The dials were sited for the convenience of the different users of the church: the first four on the tower buttresses were for the congregation from West Martin approaching by Church Lane. Two on the south transept were for worshippers from East Martin entering by way of the wicket gate from the south. No VIII, as has been mentioned, served the convenience of the parson.

The chronology of scratch dials is, as far as I am aware, in an elementary stage. The dial at No. V, though from its position it must be prior to about 1350 and is probably a century earlier, need not necessarily be the oldest. The length of its radii, however, suggest an early date. Dials with peg-holes at the end of the radii were a development of the plain dial, and the wheel-type a further elaboration. All that can be safely said is that from the size of the diameter of the style-holes, those at Nos. VII, VIII and III appear to have been in most constant use.