

Vaults at 93-94 High Street, Southampton



Graffiti Survey summary

A team from Southampton Archaeology Society visited the vaults on 13th November 2018. The team consisted of S&D Stewart, J&B Webb, M Dowell, K Wardley, M Garner and Z Parker.

The vaults are located at the lower end of Southampton High Street. Erected during the 14th century for wine storage by local merchants No. 94 is a ribbed stone structure with rubble infill. No. 93 is of a later date of brick construction. The vaults continued to be used for storage and were used as air raid shelters during the Second World War. They are numbered after the houses which stood above, but these were destroyed by bombing raids during that conflict

93 High Street

The only example of graffiti found in Vault 93 was a pair of incised initials GP on a brick in the west wall of the vault.

94 High Street

Possible apotropaic marks, consisting of a cross, compass-drawn circles and a letter M were found between the windows at the east end of Vault 94. These have previously been described as a merchant's mark.

Other ritual protective marks around openings were a compass-drawn circle by the east doorway. Around the door at the west end, on the north jamb, was found a hexfoil, or daisy-wheel, an arrow and some lines forming a grid pattern, possibly also apotropaic.

However, the majority of graffiti discovered in this vault was located on the supporting roof ribs.

This was mainly initials and dates, many from the 18th century. This was a time when many soldiers were in the town, prior to embarkation to foreign wars, so the graffiti may have been made by soldiers temporarily billeted in the vault.

Joan & Brian Webb



93 High Street vault



94 High Street vault



Apotropaic marks with "M" over cross shape, previously described as merchant mark.



Compasses-drawn circle by east end.



Compasses-drawn semi-circles.



Curved lines.



Cross.



"GP" incised in brick in 93 High Street vault.



"IA 1799"



"IG 1745"



"IG 1747"



Long triangular mark on roof rib.



"WB" and other marks.