

Cellars at 43, 45, 47, 49 and 51 Bugle Street, Southampton

Graffiti report

Summary of findings from surveys on 30th September and 29th November 2022,
and 17th February 2023

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Southampton Archaeology Society and Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Project



Following a survey of the graffiti in the cellar of Normandy House, 45 Bugle Street, on 30th September 2022, we were invited by their owners to visit further cellars in properties on either side of Normandy House. Although less graffiti was present, each cellar produced something of historical interest.

All five are listed buildings, 49 Bugle Street is Grade II* and the other four are Grade II (Historic England). The official list entries mention basements for only 47 and 49 Bugle Street but no details of these two basements are given. According to the listings, the buildings are 18th century or earlier and all were altered in the 18th century. It is indicated that 45 and 51 Bugle Street are the earliest of the five, being built in the 16th century (Historic England). The basements may be older than the buildings above.

43 Bugle Street



This cellar was visited some years ago by Dr Andy Russel from Southampton City Council's Archaeology Unit, who dated it to the 18th century. The Historic England official list entry also gives an 18th century date for the building. The cellar is constructed from reused medieval stone and 18th century and later bricks. Most of the walls are built of stone but two structures at the east end of the cellar are of brick. On the north side is an alcove/aumbry and on the south side is a small brick vault. Graffiti and other marks were found on four blocks of stone.

Block 1

In the north-east corner, on the north side of a barrel slide going up to street level, is a reused block of stone with lettering and other graffiti incised on it. The lettering is upside down showing that it was made on the stone before the stone was inverted and moved to its current location. The graffiti consists of an initial B next to a vertical line with diagonal lines coming from it, and a capital A. Other lines and shapes are also present.

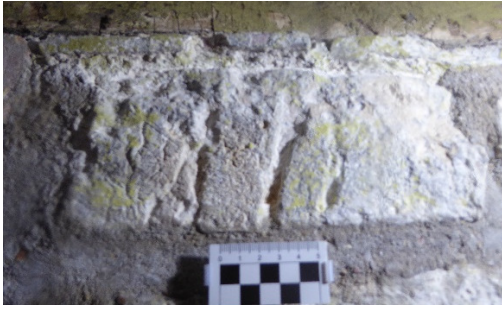


43 Bugle Street

Block 1. This image is inverted to show what appear to be the letters B and A

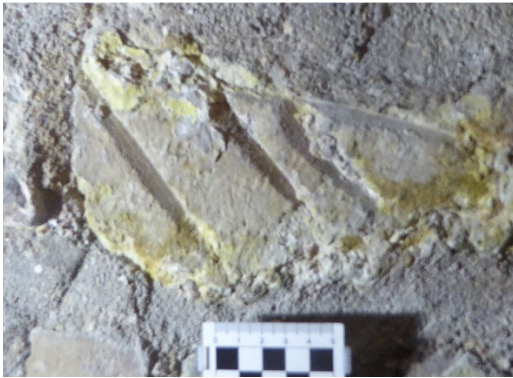
Blocks 2 and 3

Within the masonry of the east wall of the cellar are two reused blocks with deeply incised lines, possibly some form of decorative effect.



43 Bugle Street

Block 2. Deep vertical lines on reused stone.



43 Bugle Street

Block 3. Deeply incised parallel diagonal lines on reused stone.

Block 4

On the south wall, west of the entrance to the vaulted brick structure, is a block with vertical lines incised on it, and a row of diagonal lines along the base. The significance of these marks is unknown.

45 Bugle Street, Normandy House



We were alerted to the presence of graffiti by Jo Bailey, Monuments and Memorials Officer for Southampton City Council, and invited to inspect it by the owner, Ros Cassy.

The cellar is medieval but has undergone many structural alterations and additions. A description of the cellar, written by Matt Garner, appears at the end of this report.

Graffiti is concentrated in discreet areas within the cellar, on blocks of stone and a wooden beam.

We also looked at carpenters' assembly marks which are visible on 2 of the original timbers.

No masons' marks were seen on the stone.

The graffiti

Block 1 At the base of the stairway, on the west wall, are some fine lines which could be a deliberate shape. However, one of the scratches extends across the mortar to the stone beneath, which means it is more likely to be an accidental scratch.



45 Bugle Street

Block 1. Mark,
probably accidental

Block 2 The block on the north wall, opposite the base of the stairs, has marks incised on it. The top left-hand corner is damaged, then emerging from this area, on the top line, is what could be the letter A, its cross bar angled, which would date it to the post-medieval period. Next to this are two curved shapes which resemble fishhooks. The one on the right is more deeply incised. It is possible that these are lower case letter Ls, so this might also represent the end of a word or name ending "all". Or they might be fishhooks.



45 Bugle Street

Block 2

Beneath these are 2 curved parallel lines and an upward pointing arrow with a horizontal line beneath. On the far-right hand side of the block are what seem to be the initials IC. From an analysis of the names found in Tudor documents from Southampton, listed on the Tudor Revels website, <http://www.tudorrevels.co.uk/> the most frequent initials are IC. The most common name for men at this time was John. J is represented as a capital I. There are some fine vertical lines beneath which could be accidental, or traces of letters, or perhaps tally marks.

Block 3 In the south-west corner of the part of the cellar extending to the south is a block of limestone with a smooth surface covered in scratched graffiti. Some marks overlie other marks, so it is hard to unpick the individual shapes and to work out the relationship between them.



45 Bugle Street
Block 3
Whole block



45 Bugle Street
Block 3. Top left corner.
Possible merchant mark



Merchant mark on roof beam
in Medieval Merchant's
House, Southampton

On the top left is what could be a merchant mark – a vertical line with semi-circular shapes coming from it. A similar mark was found on one of the beams in the upstairs chamber of the Medieval Merchant's House in French St, Southampton. http://www.chrissellen.taureans.co.uk/index_files/SAS/SAS_files/Medieval_Merchants_House_graffiti_survey_summary.pdf

Other shapes could be crosses or initials. There is a circular shape containing a cross at the base of the stone, and geometric shapes, possibly initials.



45 Bugle Street
Block 3. Base. Circular and
other shapes

In the top right-hand corner is a rectangular shape with diagonal lines across.



45 Bugle Street

Block 3. Top right corner. Rectangle with diagonal lines

Block 4 This block of stone with graffiti on it is in the south-east corner of the main body of the cellar. It is obscured by shelving which we did not remove, so full interpretation of the marks is difficult. However, the V shaped mark makes more sense as an A, with an extension of the horizontal bar ending with a crossed shape, so perhaps the stone is reused and has been set upside down within the wall. This was common practice and examples of reused inverted stones can be seen in many buildings, for example in Southampton's Wool House (Dancing Man pub) next to a window in the south wall a stone incised with a French inscription is preserved, but upside down.



45 Bugle Street

Block 4. Top image shows block behind shelving.

Lower image is inverted to show possible A with cross next to it.



There is a finely carved cross next to the V/A shape. Crosses are commonly found as graffiti, usually around the entrances to churches, and probably left by worshippers as signs of personal devotion. Whether this cross has similar religious connotations is open to speculation. The larger shape on the other side of the block is obscured by the shelf so is difficult to interpret.

Beam 5 Some scratched shapes can be seen on a wooden beam which is covered in black paint and has electric cabling running to a light bulb fixed on it. The shapes can be seen beneath the cabling. One is a circular shape with a cross inside. Another could be the letter R, possibly someone's initial. The beam is probably post medieval in date. The graffiti predates the electrical works.



45 Bugle Street

Beam 5. Circles and possible R

Beams 6 and 7 appear to be original medieval timbers and have carpenters' assembly marks on them. These marks were made before the timber frame was finally constructed on site. The timbers were originally assembled offsite, and the frame pegged together temporarily. Joints were marked and numbered with a race knife, to show the location of joining timbers, and the order in which they came. The numbering system was based on Roman numerals and Beam 6 has three straight lines on it. A more elaborate group of marks is seen on Beam 7, suggesting a higher number in a sequence, or perhaps it includes marks indicating which level of the building this timber belonged to.



45 Bugle Street

Beam 6. Carpenters' assembly marks



45 Bugle Street. Beam 7. Carpenters' assembly marks

Discussion The graffiti is limited to specific blocks of stone, and there is no graffiti on the immediate surrounding stones. Reasons for this can only be guessed at. Perhaps these blocks were chosen as they were in the most accessible places. It is well known that graffiti attracts graffiti, so once one inscription had been made, others followed. It might have been easier to leave marks on these stones because they had the smoothest surfaces. It is possible the stones are reused and not in their original locations. It seems likely that one block, Block 4, has been inverted. Who made the marks and why will never be known, but the cellar was used for storage for many centuries and these marks represent traces of the people who worked down here.

The cellar description by Matt Garner

The cellar is set back from the street frontage and is accessed by a modern wooden staircase. Parts of the cellar were obscured by shelving and storage boxes, and much of the walls in the north-west area are painted. The cellar is an uneven shape in plan – it is roughly rectangular with a projection to the west in the north-west corner and a projection east in the north-east corner. The north-west area now houses the staircase, and the north-east area has a raised (concrete?) floor. The south-east corner of the cellar is occupied by an angled, stone and (Tudor?) brick structure that is presumably a fireplace. It is now blocked. An opening in the west wall may have been an original light-well (window) but is now blocked to the west of the opening, and the whole structure is completely below the current building.

The main walls of the cellar are built of stone, varying from rubble to ashlar blocks. The walls in the north-east area are mainly of stone rubble whereas the rest of the walls are mainly built of stone blocks. The unpainted stones are limestone. The cellar appears to be medieval although the house above it is a listed 16th century building with later alterations. The cellar shows several phases of alterations and repairs including modern structures. The official list entry does not mention a basement. It is likely that a cellar originally extended all the way to the Bugle Street frontage, at the east end of the building, to provide access to the street. The suggested east end of an original cellar is no longer accessible due to the stone walls on the east side of the current cellar.

47 Bugle Street



An archaeological investigation by Southampton Archaeology Unit of the wall foundations within this cellar, as site SOU 1280, took place in 2003 prior to potential building works.

The west wall of the cellar is built of limestone rubble, the other walls are of brick, with some reused stone visible in the north wall. The timber framework has undergone much alteration and includes reused timbers. At the foot of the stairs leading down to the cellar there is evidence of a fire, with severe charring on the timbers.

Carpenters' marks were found on two of the floor joists, and there is some possible graffiti made in soot on a beam on the north side of the stairs.

Carpenters' marks

Mark 1 is in the form of a V and is probably a carpenter's assembly mark. Originally, the timber framework would have been assembled elsewhere and the timber joints marked for ease of construction on site. There would have been a corresponding mark on the timber that joined it, but this timber is no longer in place. This mark is on the east face of the north-south floor joist, near the front of the cellar.



47 Bugle Street

Mark 1

V-shaped carpenter's assembly mark

Mark 2 consists of 2 V shapes, one inverted over the other. The significance of this mark is not known, but it is carefully carved and possibly made to aid construction. It is in the centre of the underside of the north–south floor joist, near the rear of the cellar.



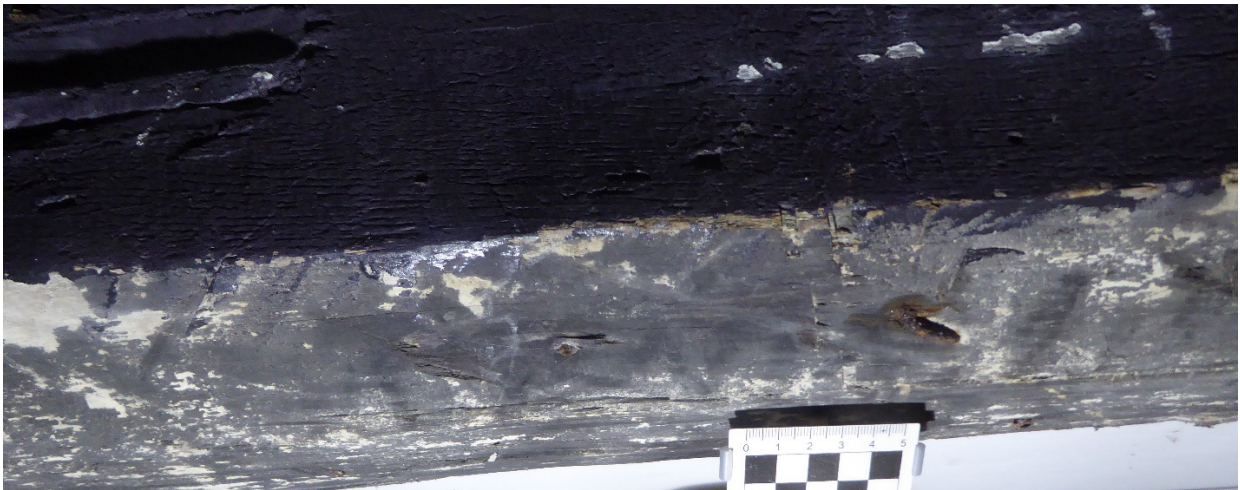
47 Bugle Street

Mark 2

Shape made by 2 intersecting Vs

Graffiti

There is what appears to be lettering formed from soot, running along the side of the beam near the base of the staircase in the area of the cellar which was burnt. The forms of the letters are indistinct and indecipherable.



47 Bugle Street

Graffiti

Lettering written in soot, in burnt area of cellar

49 Bugle Street



There are extensive cellars beneath this property, mainly of painted brick but with some stone walls. No graffiti was found on the walls, but the main central timber beam, running east to west across the cellar under the front of the house, has some interesting marks cut into it. These may be Baltic timber marks. In the 18th and 19th century most timber needed for construction in Britain was imported from the vast forests of eastern Europe, and floated down to Baltic ports via river, then shipped to the UK. The timbers were marked at various stages in the process, to identify their source, the exporter, the port of shipment, the quality of the timber and quantity within a batch. These markings have been examined and described by Louis Vandenabeele et al.

Timber mark 1

At the west end of the beam are carved what appear to be two numbers, either sixes or nines, their circular component made by compasses or dividers, with a central hole evident. They are deeply cut and filled with later limewash or paint. Next to the numbers is a shape which could represent the letter N. This may represent a port mark, the Russian and German ports of shipping were often represented by a mark consisting of letters and numbers.



49 Bugle Street

Timber mark 1

Possible 99 N or N 66

Timber mark 2

In the central area of the beam some lines are incised. These marks are possibly batch marks and may also identify the quantity of timber present. There are three diagonal lines with one line across next to four vertical lines. This could represent the number 34.



49 Bugle Street

Timber mark 2

Baltic timber batch marks

Timber mark 3

At the east end of beam is a W shape made of two interlocking Vs. There are various possibilities for the meaning of this mark. It could be an initial W, representing someone's initial, perhaps used at the timber yard. If a Baltic timber marking it could have been made to identify the exporter. Or it could be a type of apotropaic or ritual protection mark, often found in buildings from the 17th century onwards, made to ward off evil spirits. The shape is derived from a symbol of devotion for the Virgin Mary, the two Vs standing for *Virgo Virginum*, Virgin of the Virgins. After the Reformation, the symbol gradually lost its religious significance, becoming more of a good luck charm.



49 Bugle Street

Timber mark 3

W shape

51 Bugle Street



The cellars here have been brick-lined and painted throughout, so no traces of any earlier graffiti survive. The sturdy timber framework is still exposed, and on the north side of the doorframe into the front cellar area are some carpenters' assembly marks, in the form of three horizontal lines (probably Roman numeral for 3, when vertical). Originally, the timber framework would have been assembled elsewhere and the timber joints marked for ease of construction on site. This mark would have had a corresponding mark on the timber which joined it.



51 Bugle Street.

Door frame, north side.

Carpenter's assembly marks

References

Garner, MF, 2003, *Investigations at 47 Bugle Street, Southampton (SOU 1280)*, Southampton City Council Archaeology Unit Report **619**.

Historic England, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

Vandenabeele, L, Bertels, I, & Wouters, I, 2016, 'Baltic shipping marks on nineteenth-century timber: their deciphering and a proposal for an innovative characterization of old timber'. *Construction History*, 31(2), 157–75.

Acknowledgements

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