

Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Project

Graffiti survey summary for Gods House Tower, Southampton

Gods House Tower stands at the south-east corner of Southampton's medieval town defences, and is a Grade II listed monument. The original gatehouse was built in the late 13th century, and extended in the early 15th century with the addition of a two-storey gallery and a three-storey tower. This was one of the earliest coastal defences specifically built to carry cannon, and for two centuries was the home of the Town Gunner, his guns and gun powder. The building was the town gaol in the late 18th century, and finally became the Museum of Archaeology in 1961. This closed in September 2011, in advance of the opening of the new SeaCity Museum. It is now managed by the arts organisation aspace, and is due to reopen as an arts and heritage centre in 2018.



Visits were made on 21st November 2017 to the interior of the building, and on 5th December 2017 to the roof and exterior walls.

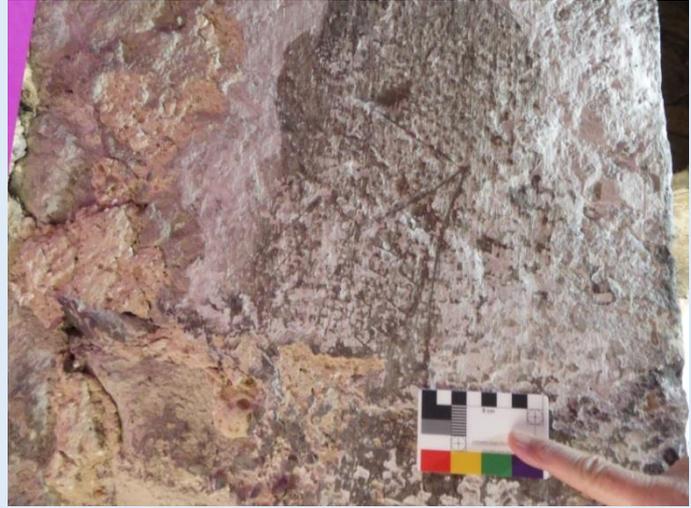
Surveyors from Southampton Archaeology Society (SAS) were: Matt Garner, Sarah Hanna, Gill and Roger James, Sue and Derek Stewart, Julian Porter, Karen Wardley, Joan and Brian Webb.

Due to the loss of the original interior stone surfaces, and the removal of any surface plastering or lime-washing, disappointingly little historical graffiti was found inside the building.

Two possible pieces of medieval graffiti were found. One is part of a possible shield on a reused piece of Portland marble in the alcove at the bottom of the stairs, near the entrance (*Image 1*). The other is a weathered ship graffiti on the south-east window embrasure in the tower, with some of the masts, sails and rigging still visible (*Image 2*).



(Image 1)



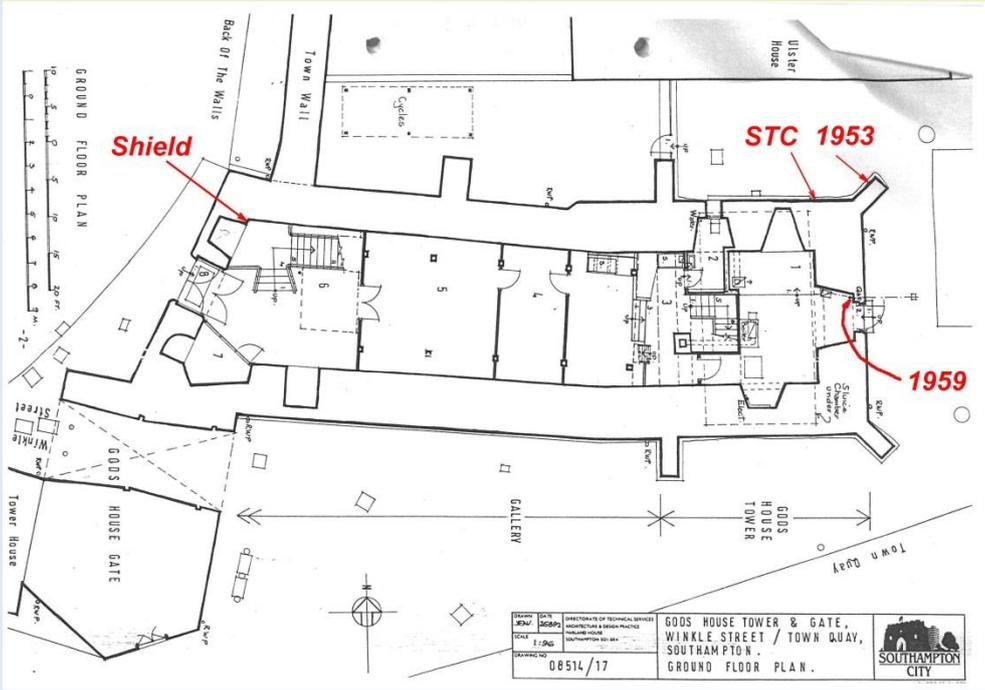
(Image 2)

Most of the other graffiti consisted of modern initials, probably left by visitors to the museum, on the walls and on the wooden newel post in the stairway to the roof, and pencil lines and calculations left by modern workmen on the tower walls. The date 1778 was found on the first floor landing, but the form of its carving suggests it could have been made more recently. Modern masons left the date 1959 over the back door (*Image 3*). The date 1953 and initials STC were found on the exterior north wall.



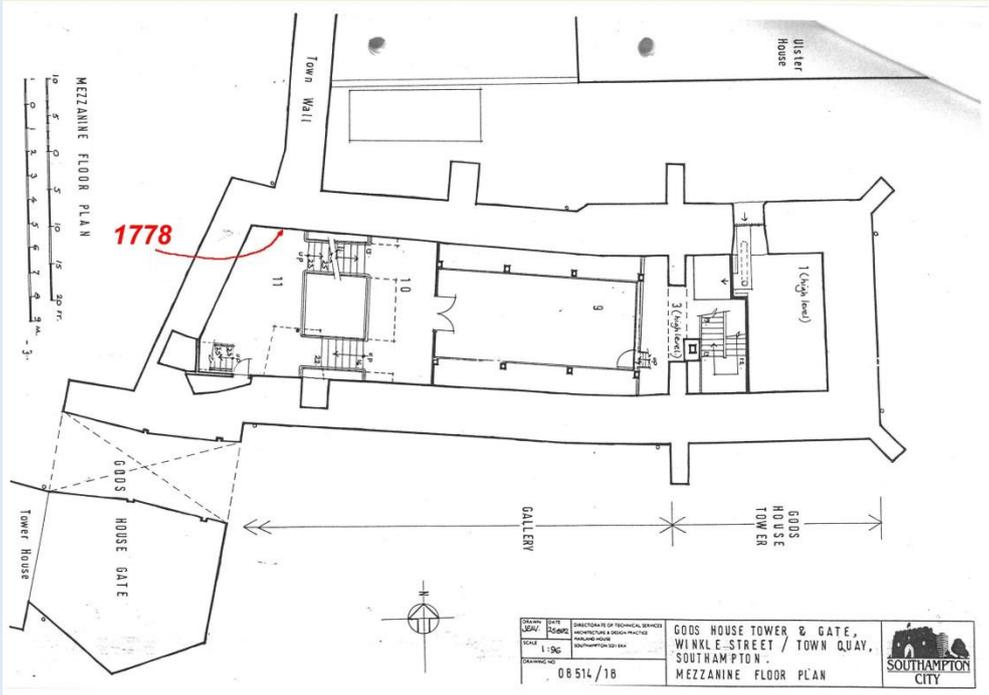
(Image 3)

Plans of God's House Tower showing locations of graffiti mentioned.



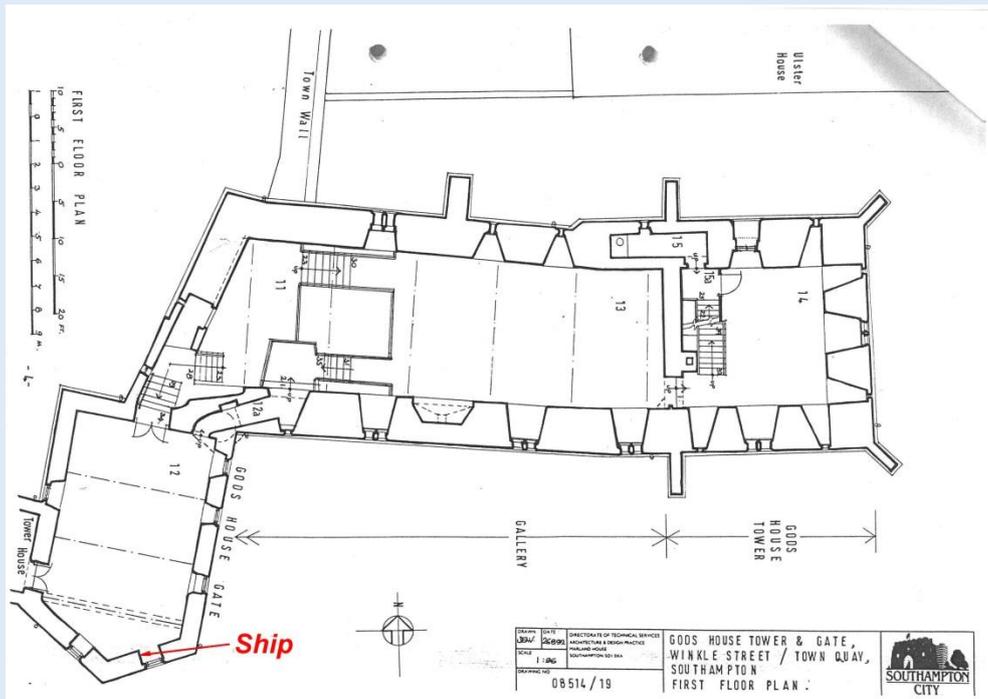
Ground Floor

©Southampton City Council



Mezzanine

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First floor

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A further visit is required to survey the modern boiler room, which is currently full of equipment obstructing access to the walls.

A full record of the survey is maintained by the Hampshire Field Club. For contact details see www.hantsfieldclub.org.uk

Karen Wardley

11th January 2018