

# St Andrew's church, Timsbury

## Historical graffiti survey report



Southampton Archaeology Society



Date of survey: **26<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

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Post code: SO51 0NA    Grid Ref: SU 347246    Church Heritage Record No: 641294

Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Survey

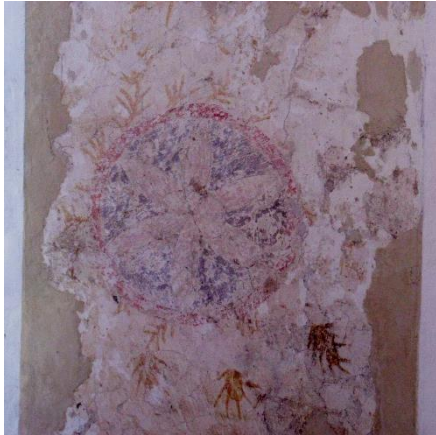
<http://www.hantsfieldclub.org.uk/medieval-graffiti/index.html>

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## St Andrew's church, Timsbury: a brief description

The cursory description in Pevsner's *The buildings of England. Hampshire: South* (2018), which concentrates on the 2014 fire, does little justice to this fascinating church. The church is medieval in date, with a 16<sup>th</sup> century porch, and its interior includes some historical gems. The wall paintings which survive on the walls of the nave are spectacular. On the south wall these show a range of contemporary (early sixteenth century) timber framed buildings, of which there is only one other example in the country. On the north wall are Tudor roses, traces of black lettering, and a small area depicting plants and rushes which could be the lower part of a St



Christopher scene.

In the east jamb of the north nave window is an elaborate six-petalled rosette (Fig 1), a Christian symbol which evolved in the post-Reformation period as an apotropaic device, and is a common graffiti find in both domestic and religious buildings. The 16<sup>th</sup> century rood screen survives as do the sturdy wooden pews from the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

1 Six-petalled rosette wall painting by north nave window

A book cupboard given by curate of the parish Timothy Goodacker, in 1714, with some of its original contents, is located on the north wall of the nave.

The church did indeed suffer a devastating fire in 2014, which destroyed the west end and bell turret, but this is now rebuilt. The font was smashed by the falling bell, and has been repaired, the joins evident.

## 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 bright sunlight meant fainter marks were more difficult to see. The team then split into two groups of surveyors, who 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 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 also recorded.

## Graffiti summary and discussion

Graffiti is found in many locations around the church building. On the exterior, it consists of initials and names, some dated, inscribed into the surfaces of the quoins and window surrounds. Many of these marks are very weathered. Inside, there are concentrations around the window frames and sills of the south and north chancel

windows, including marks thought to represent Marian devotional symbols. The font, shattered by the falling bell during the fire, has been carefully repaired and has many initials dating to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries incised into it. Masons' marks, and carpenters' assembly marks were also found, and taper burn marks on the rood screen.

## The exterior

The main areas of graffiti are around the chancel windows. They mainly comprise initials and dates. Pairs of initials WB and WO with the date 1811 are on the west side of the north chancel window (Fig 2). More sets of initials and some elaborate shapes are on the west side of the south chancel window (Fig 3).



*2 Initials and date, west of north chancel window*



*3 Initials and shapes, west of south chancel window*

More names and initials are on the quoins at the north and east corners. On the east face of the south-east corner are the framed initials EY next to another framed set dated 1876 (Fig 4).



*4 Framed initials on south-east corner of chancel*



*5 Worn names and initials, north corner of chancel*

There is a concentration of worn names and initials on the east face of the north corner of the chancel (Fig 5). This is an example of “graffiti attracting graffiti” – once some marks have been inscribed more will follow.

Some initials are scratched into the surround of the west window. TY is repeated, once within a frame.



The remains of a scratch or mass dial, noted by Green (1943), are on a block at the south-east angle of the chancel, with a small cross incised above (Fig 6).

*6 Mass dial with cross above, south-east angle of chancel*

### **The church porch**

Simple carpenters' marks, made to assist assembly, are visible on the roof timbers inside the porch. These include single lines and a possible VI on the tie beam over the doorway (Fig 7).



*7 Carpenter mark, possibly VI, on tie beam, porch*

## The church door

There is graffiti in the form of an upward-pointing arrow on the outside face of the wooden door, above the end of the top hinge (Fig 8). Near the arrow are some faintly incised X shapes. The initials EH are carefully carved into the east side of the door frame (Fig 9).



8 Arrow on outer face of door



9 Initials on east side of door frame



On the inside face is the elaborate lock mechanism casing (Fig 10). The ends of the wooden casing are decorated with a neat diamond pattern (Fig 11).

*10 Inside face of church door*



Similar forms of lock case decoration have been seen at other churches in the region, including St Andrew's Chilcomb and St Nicholas Bishop's Sutton.

*11 Decorative pattern on wooden lock case*

## The interior



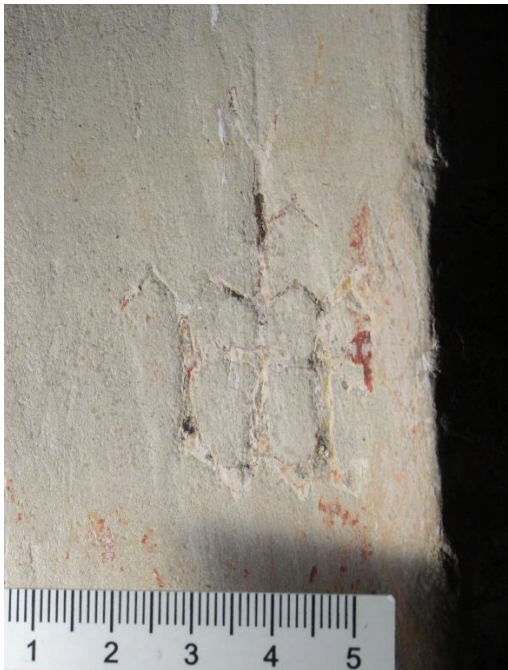
*Church interior, looking east*

On the interior fabric of the church most of the graffiti is clustered around the north and south windows of the chancel. The most significant finds are 2 initial Ms, very carefully incised in Gothic script, one on each window surround, on the north window to the east (Fig 12), and on the south window to the west (Fig 13). Each letter has a plant-like stem rising from the central bar.





12 Marian symbol by north chancel window



13 Marian symbol by south chancel window

The southern one has traces of red paint inside the incised lines so predates this paint scheme. The form of the letters suggests a late medieval date. It seems very likely that these initials were made as a devotional symbol for the Virgin Mary. The plant-like form in the centre of the letter could represent a lily, often associated with the Virgin Mary. It could also represent the association of the Virgin with the Tree of

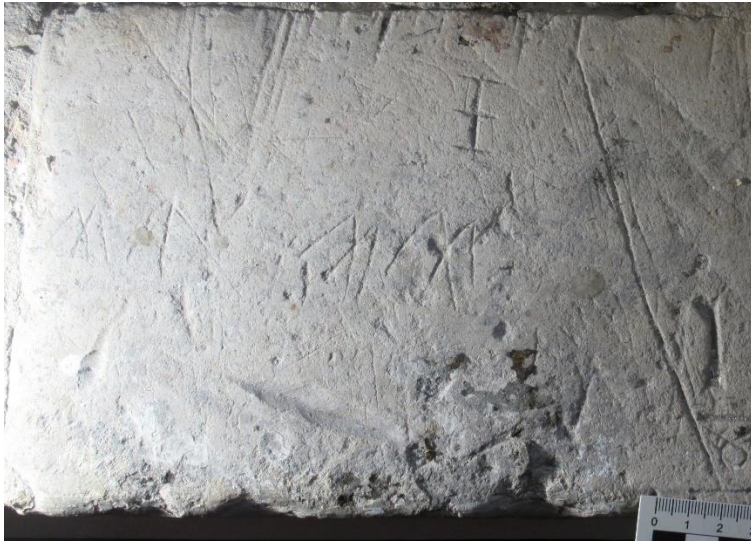
Jesse and the lineage of Christ. The concept of the Immaculate Conception that was developed for St. Anne and the Virgin Mary in the Early Church (2nd-4th centuries), was linked with the Tree of Jesse in the form of Marianism that evolved in the Western Church in the late 14th and the 15th centuries. It is perhaps also worth noting that William of Wykeham, who is firmly associated with this church, chose Mary as patron of Winchester College, where there is a Tree of Jesse window in the chapel.

Beneath the south window is a plant-like shape (Fig 14).



*14 Plant-like shape beneath south chancel window*

Other symbols here associated with worship of the Virgin Mary are so-called “Marian marks” consisting of 2 intersecting Vs, standing for Virgo Virginum, “Virgin of the Virgins”, and inverted intersecting Vs, forming the letter M, for Mary. These occur on the surrounds and windowsills of the north and south windows and are all quite roughly carved (Figs 15 and 16).



15 "Marian marks" on windowsill of north chancel window



16 "Marian marks" as pairs of intersecting Vs on windowsill of north chancel window

It is worth noting that the one graffito surviving at the west end of the church is another initial M, on the south side of the west window.

There is also a possible initial M in Gothic script, on the exterior of the building, on the window surround of the north chancel window, suggesting a connection with the marks on the interior.

Also around the chancel windows are various initials and other shapes, and on the south windowsill in the chancel are some possible traces of script, but these are illegible.

## The font



*17 The octagonal font*

The repaired octagonal font (Fig 17) retains most of the graffiti which was scratched into its sides, although some has been lost. The graffiti consists of initials and 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century dates. The most clearly cut and largest inscription is on the south-west face, reading MI 1681 (Fig 18).

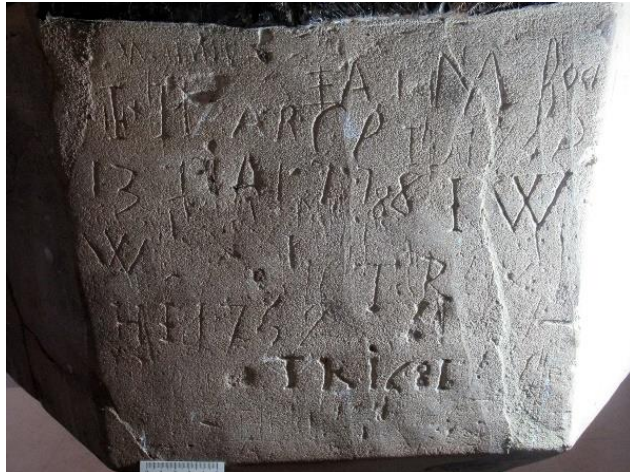


*18 Font, south-west face, MI 1681*

There are significant amounts of graffiti on other faces.

The west face has another set of initials, TR, dated 1681, and many more including IA, HI 1769, IW, and 1788 (Fig 19).

The north-west face has the initials HK, and JY next to a damaged date, possibly 1662 (Fig 20).



19 Font, west face. many dates and initials



20 Font, north-west face, dates, and initials

## The rood screen



21 Burn marks on west face of rood screen

This is a relatively rare survival in Hampshire, one of only ten in the county. While no graffiti was found, on the south side of the outer frame, on the west face are some burn marks (Fig 21). Such marks, once dismissed as the result of careless accidents with candles or tapers, have, following a detailed programme of archaeological experimentation, been demonstrated by Dean and Hill (2014), to more likely have been made deliberately. Although the motives for making such marks remain unclear, it has been suggested that they served some sort of apotropaic function, perhaps against fire, in this building, with only partial success.

## The pews

The 14<sup>th</sup> century pews are another rare occurrence in a Hampshire church, one of only two sets known. Unsurprisingly, they have graffiti on them, including some small compass-drawn circles, and initials. Perhaps of more interest are the longer, rough lines found on some of them which are reminiscent, although cruder, of carpenters' assembly marks, and perhaps were made to assist with construction (Figs 22, 23 and 24). It would be interesting to see if similar marks exist on other pews of a similar date. The pews have been moved many times, and some were possibly lost in the fire, so we cannot know if the marks relate to their original order within the body of the church.



*21 Pew back, possible carpenter marks,  
2 lines*



*23 Pew back, possible carpenter  
marks, 4 lines*



*24 Pew back, possible carpenter marks, 2 sets of 3 lines*

**Karen Wardley**

**HMGP Co-ordinator**

**July 12<sup>th</sup> 2023**

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to express our thanks to church warden John Glasspool for welcoming us to St Andrew's, and to the Rev Tom Benson for his interest and support. Special thanks must go to Mary and Roger Harris who shared their extensive knowledge of and love for this remarkable building with our group, giving us a tour and a fascinating talk about its history and the wonderful features it contains.

I would also like to thank Gavin Bowie for his insightful comments on the form of the Marian mark and its significance within the church at that time.

## **References**

Dean, John and Hill, Nick (2014), Burn marks on buildings: accidental or deliberate? Vernacular Architecture, Vol 45

Green, AR, (1943), Incised dials, scratch dials or mass-clocks on the walls of Hampshire churches, Proceedings Hampshire Field Club Vol XV, Part 3.

O'Brien, Charles, Bailey, Bruce, Lloyd, David W. and Pevsner, Nikolaus (2018) The buildings of England. Hampshire: South.

## **Survey archive**

164 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 reports have been posted on the HFC and SAS websites.

## **Disclaimer**

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