

The Westgate, Southampton



Graffiti Survey Summary

A team from Southampton Archaeology Society visited the Westgate, Southampton on 26th March 2019. The team included Sue & Derek Stewart, Gill & Roger James, Joan & Brian Webb, Karen Wardley, Sarah Hanna and Martyn Dowell.

The Westgate is situated at the end of the street of that name. It is a plain un-buttressed gate tower, with two stories above the gate passage. Built in the mid fourteenth century it is contemporary with the adjoining town wall. On the west side of the Westgate there are two splayed gun ports and on the second floor are two smaller side gun ports. The Westgate was built at a time when guns were being introduced. The grooves of the portcullis gates and the apertures through which the defenders of the town could harass attackers may still be seen.

The only graffiti of any age found within the structure was on the second floor, on a stone beneath the sill of the aumbry on the east wall. This had lines radiating out from a central point with additional diagonal lines possibly forming a pentagram. The stone type and condition, and the presence of graffiti, indicate this was a reused stone. More recent graffiti included pencil lines at the same height on each side of the east window.

A quantity of modern graffiti was found within the archway, some scratched, some of paint, chalk or crayon, and mostly indistinct.

An historic plaque on the exterior of the building reads:

This important Westgate led directly to the West Quay, which for many centuries was the only commercial quay the town possessed. Through this archway marched some of the army of Henry V on their way to Agincourt in 1415. The Pilgrim Fathers embarked here from the West Quay on the Mayflower, 16th August 1620.

Sue & Derek Stewart - 31st March 2019.



Steps leading to first floor entrance to Westgate Tower, viewed from the East



Westgate viewed from the west



A View of the first floor looking west. A modern spiral staircase leading up to the second floor is located in the Southwest corner

No graffiti was found in the first-floor room



Second floor East window showing aumbries either side of window



Scratched lines on stone sill of aumbry, to north of east window on second floor



An example of modern graffiti found in the passage under the tower