



# Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Project

## Volunteer Handbook

### List of contents

1. Aims of the project	1
2. Scope of the project	1
3. Before you start	1
4. Carrying out the survey	2
5. Working with the HER	4
6. Things to remember	5
7. Copyright and Intellectual Property	5
8. Health and Safety	5
9. Useful links and bibliography	6
Appendix 1. Medieval graffiti types	
Appendix 2. Site recording sheet	
Appendix 3. Photo record sheet	

2nd draft: September 2016

## 1. Aims of the project

The Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Project is a research project coordinated by the Historic Buildings section of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society (Hampshire Field Club). The aim is to carry out a systematic and wide-scale survey to record and photograph the graffiti in the county's medieval churches and other appropriate medieval buildings, to produce an accessible body of data which will enhance our understanding of the past. It is one of a growing number of volunteer-run county surveys inspired by the pioneering Norfolk Medieval Graffiti Survey. The Hampshire project was launched in May 2016.

## 2. Scope of the project

### **Despite its name, not all the graffiti we record is medieval!**

While the focus of our attention is on pre-Reformation graffiti, we are recording all graffiti up to the present day. This enables us to build a more complete picture of the changes in graffiti styles and subject matter through the centuries. Graffiti is also very difficult to date, so we record everything now and hope that, as our database and knowledge increases, we may be able to interpret it more accurately in the future. We are also producing a benchmark of all the graffiti present at a site, so later additions can be more readily identified in the future. Even recent graffiti, therefore, should be recorded.

### **And not everything we record is graffiti!**

It would be a wasted opportunity to carry out such detailed studies and not record other traces from the medieval period. We therefore include other inscriptions, such as masons' marks, architectural sketches and drawings, and mass or scratch dials.

## 3. Before you start

### **Choosing your site**

Check out via the Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/HampshireMedievalGraffitiSurvey>) or the HFC website (<http://www.hantsfieldclub.org.uk/medieval-graffiti/index.html>) which churches have already been or are due to be surveyed. You may wish to join an existing survey group, or strike out on your own. However, many people find it rewarding to undertake surveys in small groups, sharing ideas and experiences, and it is a valuable way to learn, while you develop your own style and techniques (and see Section 4, below). Churches with arcade piers and bare stone surfaces tend to yield better results rather than those that have been heavily "restored".

### **Preparation**

It is worthwhile undertaking some research on your chosen site before embarking on your survey. Pevsner's Hampshire volume of the Buildings of England series is a good start, though please note the revised edition currently only covers half the county. The Victoria County History may also prove useful, and is currently being updated. NADFAS (National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies) is undertaking a national survey of church furnishings and their reports on the Hampshire Churches already surveyed are housed at the Hampshire Record Office (record reference 82039-NADFAS). These reports are very thorough and can include

graffiti. To see them you will need a reader's ticket (available on the day, with photo ID). Also check to see if the church has its own website. This may contain useful information about the history of the building, as well as service times, contact details and opening arrangements. It is advisable to contact the church before conducting a survey to ensure it will be open and that there are no other events taking place that day. You may also be able to arrange access to areas which are usually locked, such as the tower. Church members may well be interested to hear about the survey and could be potential recruits.

## **4. Carrying out the Survey**

### **Equipment**

To undertake a successful survey you will require a minimum level of equipment. This should include, but not be limited to, a digital camera, light source (torch, lamps, etc), photometric scale, copies of the survey sheets and photo record sheets, clipboard, tape measure, pen/pencil, spare batteries and even binoculars (restoration and re-building has sometimes resulted in stones with graffiti being found in surprising positions). For larger scale surveys it is also recommended that you have camera tripods and portable high-powered light sources. It is a good idea to carry out surveys in groups of two or three, so that there are enough hands to manipulate the camera, scale and light source, and to complete record sheets.

### **Lighting**

To identify existing graffiti it is usually necessary to shine a light source at an oblique angle across the surface of the wall or pier (raking light). This will usually be sufficient to spot even the shallowest of inscriptions. There are no set rules or guidelines about the light source that you use and everyone has their own favourite. In many cases the choice of light source will depend upon the surface you are examining. The very white light emitted by LED torches often works well on bare stone surfaces, whilst larger halogen lamps are found to be useful on rougher textured surfaces. The key is to experiment and discover what works best for you.

### **Scales**

It is essential that you try and include a scale in any photographs that you take of graffiti inscriptions. Small 10cm scales can be obtained from Past Horizons, [www.digstore.co.uk](http://www.digstore.co.uk) and are also supplied free-of-charge by the project via the HFC website. Although it is tempting to use blue-tack to fasten the scale to the stone surface, please do NOT use this method as it may damage the stone or any traces of limewash or paint that remain. It also leaves a residue which will attract dust and dirt in the future. Instead, it is recommended that you, or a companion, simply hold the scale in place whilst the images are taken. Some surveyors have found it useful to attach scales to thin pieces of wood or dowelling with Velcro, or magnets, or to use the split end of a cane, thus avoiding fingers in the images. We recognise that, in some cases, particularly when working alone and in challenging conditions, it may not be possible to include a scale in every single photograph. We therefore recommend that a scale is included in at least one of the images of a particular inscription, or a separate note is made of the dimensions on the photo record sheet.

## **Photographs**

Taking photographs of graffiti inscriptions can be challenging. It is well worth experimenting with a variety of light sources and angles to obtain the best results. A good photograph gives an almost 3D effect where inscriptions can appear to “jump out”. If the images have too much light they can often look bleached and difficult to interpret. Too little light, or not enough contrast, can be just as frustrating. We recommend the use of digital cameras so that poor images may be easily deleted without cost. In addition, it is not essential to have an expensive professional level camera to take great photographs. A simple ‘point and shoot’ camera will often give as good results as many thousands of pounds worth of camera equipment, as will phone cameras and ipads. Don’t forget that modern cameras on “auto” setting do a great deal of adjustment for the light available. Adjust your lighting by using what appears on the viewfinder rather than what your eyes see.

## **Documentation**

The documentation needed to undertake a graffiti survey is very straightforward and consists of two simple sheets that need to be filled in. Both survey sheets can be found on the Hampshire Field Club website and are included here as Appendices 2 and 3. These sheets are designed to be easy to complete and represent the very minimum of information required to undertake a successful survey. Please do not hesitate to include any further information that you feel might be either useful or relevant. A wider photograph or a rough sketch to locate the graffiti will suffice (some church guides contain useful measured plans). Completed survey sheets and accompanying photo record sheets should be returned to HMGP via Dropbox. Please keep a copy for your own records.

## **Using Dropbox**

Useful notes on using Dropbox can be found here:

<http://waveneyarchaeology.org/dropbox-a-quick-guide>

To summarise, Dropbox is an app which sets up a shared folder on your PC to enable you to share pictures via the Internet. It is preferable to sending pictures by e-mail as you are not limited by size.

You will need to download and install Dropbox from Dropbox.com. Once you have created your Dropbox account you will be able to send your images and scanned or photographed record sheets to the HMGP Dropbox. From here, results of our survey will be sent to the national database.

## **Graffiti terminology**

A glossary of graffiti types is contained within this handbook as Appendix 1 and is also available on the HFC website. Please make sure you follow these terms when producing your record, to ensure consistency with national standards. However, much graffiti can be hard to categorise so don’t hesitate to use a more general description if you are unsure.

## **5. Working with the Historic Environment Records**

The Historic Environment Record (HER), formerly known as the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) is the comprehensive and supposedly definitive record of the historic environment of a county. It exists to provide a record of all areas of known archaeological activity, sites, finds, cropmarks, earthworks, industrial remains, defensive structures and historic buildings in the county it covers. The data held in the historic environment record is used for planning advice, research, education, landscape management, local history studies and monument protection.

Much of the data that graffiti surveys are discovering has not been previously recorded on the county HERs. As many of the inscriptions being found are of significant historical value it is essential that the information we record is made available so it can be properly used to inform future planning and conservation decisions. For this reason, the Hampshire HER Officers are keen to work with our survey, and to record summaries of our findings on the HER record.

The approach we are taking is consistent with that in other counties. Due to the huge amount of data the graffiti surveys generate, it is not possible to put it all onto the HER. Instead, we will create a short summary for each church we visit, giving a brief outline of the quantity and quality of graffiti present, which can be added to the HER record for that site. In addition, we will submit 2 or 3 images of some of the graffiti present alongside a checklist of the main types of graffiti recorded there. There will also be a link to our own database and the national online database that contains the full graffiti record. This allows the HER to contain summary information that can be quickly entered onto the system, but also allows searchers of the HER to access the full record via the external link.

### **Contact details for your local Hampshire HER Officers**

#### **County of Hampshire**

Alan Whitney  
[alan.whitney@hants.gov.uk](mailto:alan.whitney@hants.gov.uk)

#### **City of Portsmouth**

Jennifer Macey  
[jennifer.macey@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:jennifer.macey@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

#### **City of Southampton**

Ingrid Peckham  
[HER@southampton.gov.uk](mailto:HER@southampton.gov.uk)

#### **City of Winchester**

Tracey Matthews  
[tmatthews@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:tmatthews@winchester.gov.uk)

Details of how to contact your local HER can also be found here:  
<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/CHR/>

## 6. Things to remember

- Some graffiti inscriptions are difficult to interpret. What may appear as a meaningless jumble of lines during a survey may turn out to be something quite important, so always take a photograph.
- Some churches may contain very complex series of inscriptions that take far more than a single visit to record. Multiple visits are often very productive and almost always reveal something new.
- Please remember that churches are active places of worship. Please respect those who look after and care for these buildings.
- Please sign the visitors' book. Many churches use visitor numbers to help support future projects and find funding. Every visitor is important.
- If you have to find a key-holder to access the church please remember to lock up when you leave – and return the key.
- When visiting churches, please park responsibly and do not block access to people's properties.

## 7. Copyright and Intellectual Property

All information and images gathered by you while taking part as a volunteer in the Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Project remains your copyright. However, by submitting the information and images to the Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Project, which is managed by the Hampshire Field Club, you agree that the Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Project may use, publish and reproduce this information and images for the benefit of academic research and the furtherance of the project's objectives. In addition, all images and information submitted may be recorded on the regional Historic Environment Record.

## 8. Health and Safety

It is your responsibility to ensure your own safety and that of those with you when undertaking the survey. While volunteers are covered by Hampshire Field Club insurance, you must avoid taking unnecessary risks and keep both feet firmly on the ground. Remember that lighting inside churches can be poor, and there is often uneven ground and unexpected drops outside. Remember to bring warm clothing with you during the colder months, and drinking water when it's hotter.

**And an important Health Warning: searching for medieval graffiti is addictive and can take over your life.**

## 9. Useful links and bibliography

Hampshire Field Club  
[www.hantsfieldclub.org.uk](http://www.hantsfieldclub.org.uk)

Hampshire Record Office  
<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/archives>

Norfolk Medieval Graffiti Survey  
<http://www.medieval-graffiti.co.uk/>

Hampshire & the Islands Historic Churches Trust (HIHCT)  
[www.hihct.org.uk](http://www.hihct.org.uk)

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)  
<http://www.spab.org.uk/>

The Churches Conservation Trust  
<http://www.visitchurches.org.uk/>

*Medieval Graffiti: The Lost Voices of England* by Matt Champion, 2015

*English Medieval Graffiti* by Violet Pritchard, 2008

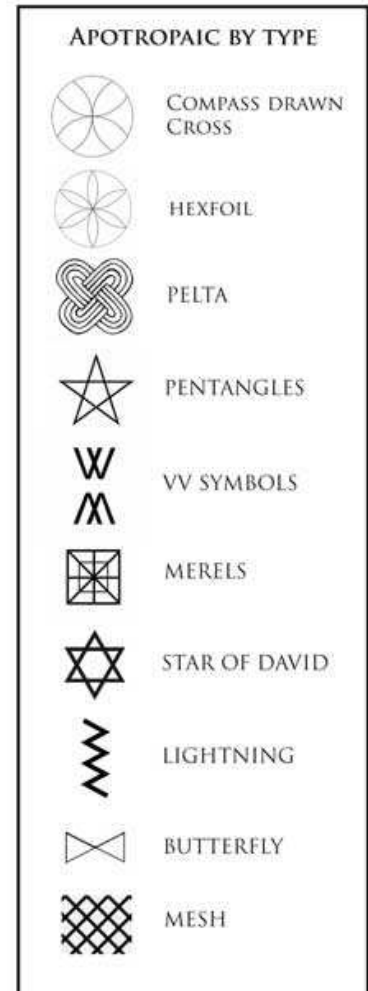
*Hampshire: Winchester and the North (Pevsner Architectural Guides: Buildings of England)* by Michael Bullen, Rodney Hubbock, John Crook, Nikolaus Pevsner, 2010

A more detailed bibliography can be found on the Norfolk Medieval Graffiti Survey website, see above.



## MEDIEVAL GRAFFITI TYPES

- 1. APOTROPAIC
  - COMPASS DRAWN
    - HEXFOIL
    - CROSSES
    - TRISKELE
  - PENTANGLES
  - VV SYMBOLS
  - MERELS
  - DELTA
  - MESH
  - LIGHTNING
  - BUTTERFLY
  - STAR OF DAVID
- 2. CROSSES
  - CALVARY CROSSES
- 3. SHIPS
- 4. TEXT
- 5. ARCHITECTURAL
  - BUILDING
    - CASTLES
    - CHURCHES
    - WINDMILLS
  - DESIGN
- 6. MERCHANTS MARKS
- 7. MASONS MARKS
- 8. MASS DIALS
- 9. MUSICAL
  - INSTRUMENTS
  - NOTATION
- 10. HERALDIC
  - SHIELD
  - HELMET
- 11. FIGURES
  - FULL LENGTH FIGURE
  - FACES
  - DEMONS
  - GROTESQUES
- 12. ANIMALS
  - HORSE
  - DEER
  - DOG
  - BIRD
  - FISH
- 13. RAGGED STAFF
- 14. HANDS
- 15. SHOES/FEET
- 16. GAMING BOARDS
- 17. WEAPONS
- 18. PLANTS
- 19. OTHER





# Site Recording Sheet



Parish: \_\_\_\_\_

Church Dedication: \_\_\_\_\_

Survey Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Surveyor: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return completed survey sheets and accompanying photo record sheets to HMGP. Please also keep a copy for your records.

A large, empty rectangular box intended for a hand-drawn sketch of the church's interior.

Sketch of church interior

Mark piers, if present, from west to east and north to south, e.g. N1, N2, N3 and S1, S2, S3 (see volunteer handbook)

Wall Fabric Surface: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

General Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Weather Conditions: \_\_\_\_\_

Light Source(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Quantity of Graffiti: \_\_\_\_\_

Quality of Graffiti: \_\_\_\_\_

- Masons' Marks  Yes
- Ritual Circles  Yes
- Textual Inscriptions  Yes
- Heraldic  Yes
- Merchants' Marks  Yes
- Crosses  Yes
- VV Symbols  Yes
- Musical  Yes
- Scratch Dials  Yes

- Ships  Yes
- Swastika Pelta  Yes
- Architectural  Yes
- Animals/Fish/Birds  Yes
- Hands/Feet/Limbs  Yes
- Faces/Heads  Yes
- Weapons  Yes
- Plants  Yes
- Other  Yes

