

St Andrew's church, Mottisfont

Historical graffiti survey report



Date of survey: **24th November 2023**

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Post code: SO51 0LL Grid Ref: SU 325267 Church Heritage Record No: 641295

Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Survey

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

St Andrew's church, Mottisfont: a brief description

This church is Grade 1 Listed. It consists of a nave and chancel with a shingled bell-turret at the west end. Its earliest features are the early 12th century nave with the impressive Norman chancel arch (Fig.1). The plain round-headed south doorway, now leading into the vestry, is of a similar date, as is the font basin. The chancel was remodelled in the late 14th and early 15th century when the fine east window was installed, and the west end of the nave extended to include the west doorway. The timber supports for the belfry are 15th century. Restoration took place in 1874, when the pews and galleries were removed, and from 1880 to 1890.



Fig 1 Interior looking east to the chancel arch

Graffiti survey methodology

The survey group consisted of National Trust volunteers from Mottisfont Abbey and members of the Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Project. They first scanned the building to locate the graffiti, using a raking light source in the interior, and ambient daylight on the exterior. The team photographed 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

The church interior

South doorway



Fig 2 South doorway, looking into nave from vestry

There is ancient graffiti around the south doorway into the nave (Fig 2).

This graffiti includes a finely carved budded cross (with circular indentations at the terminals) (Fig 3) on the east jamb, next to the modern light switch. Scratched crosses are common finds at church entrances and may have been made as signs of personal devotion by local parishioners.



Fig 3 South doorway, east jamb. Budded cross

The chancel monument

Most of the historical graffiti found within the church is scratched onto the large standing monument on the south side of the chancel (Fig 4). This memorial is described in Pevsner as being in “the Italian Renaissance tradition of Bishop Gardiner’s Chantry at Winchester Cathedral, but not a sophisticated work” and may be connected with the Sandys family, because of its local ties.

A diagram showing the location of the graffiti, and the numbers of the photographs taken, can be found as Appendix 1.



Fig 4 Chancel monument

At the top of the memorial is the date 1584 (although the number 4 is of an unusual form) (Fig 5) and the initials IM (Fig 6). Unusually this monument does not bear the name of the person(s) commemorated so it has been suggested that these initials are those of the mason. The kneeling mourners, some badly damaged, have carefully carved clothing details and characterful faces that must be drawn from life.



Fig 5 Chancel monument, date 1584



Fig 6. Chancel monument, initials IM

The graffiti includes names and initials, some of which are repeated several times. At the top of the monument, on the panel running above the central cartouche is a name which is hard to decipher, as it includes some superscripts which may stand for missing letters, or which could just represent a fancy flourish by the maker. The first letter is an S in the form of double F (ff) and may be Siman (Simon), and the surname may be Ellioatt (Elliott)(Fig 7).

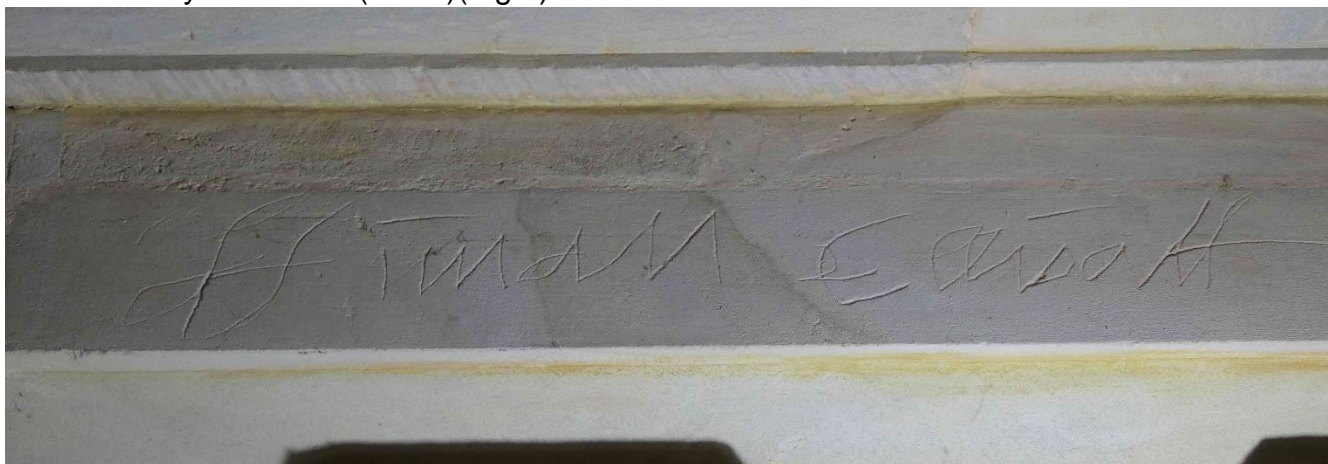


Fig 7 Chancel monument, top panel. Name Siman Ellioatt (?Simon Elliott)

The initials SE are repeated next to the full name (Fig 8) and on the west edge of the monument. The full name appears again, lower down on the monument.



Fig 8 Chancel monument. Name Ellioatt followed by initials SE

Another name, in an unusual script, reads Margeri hering (a common surname in the 16th and 17th centuries) (Fig 9).



Fig 9. Chancel monument. Margeri Hering

It seems the writer made a few attempts to write this, as the first part of the name appears twice to the left of the full inscription. Above the name is a device consisting of a circle with lines radiating out from it, flanked by the initials M and H. The circular device is repeated lower down on the monument but is less deeply incised. There are two occurrences of another finely carved name, Claus [?F]oll[?e]r. The Christian name Claus (Klaus?) is the Dutch/German abbreviation of Niklaus, suggesting a foreign name which might also explain why this script is unfamiliar to our paleographers (Fig 10). The inscription was made before 1715 as in another area the same name in the same hand is overlain by WM 1715 (Fig 11).

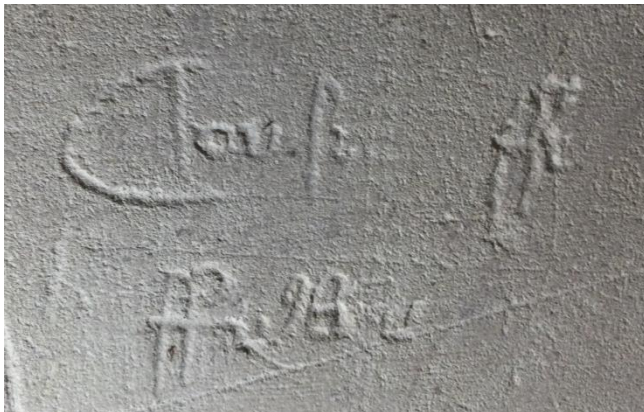


Fig 10 Chancel monument. Name Claus [?F]oll[?e]r

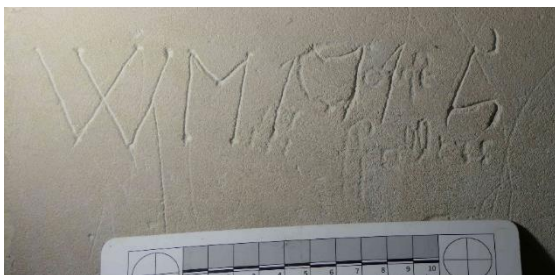


Fig 11 Chancel monument. Same name overlain by WM 1715

There are many initials carved onto the central cartouche, some occurring twice or more, with many ending in C: IC, LC, RC, WC, and HC, perhaps representing

members of the same family. There are also some boxed initials with a date: LHC 1880 (Fig 12).

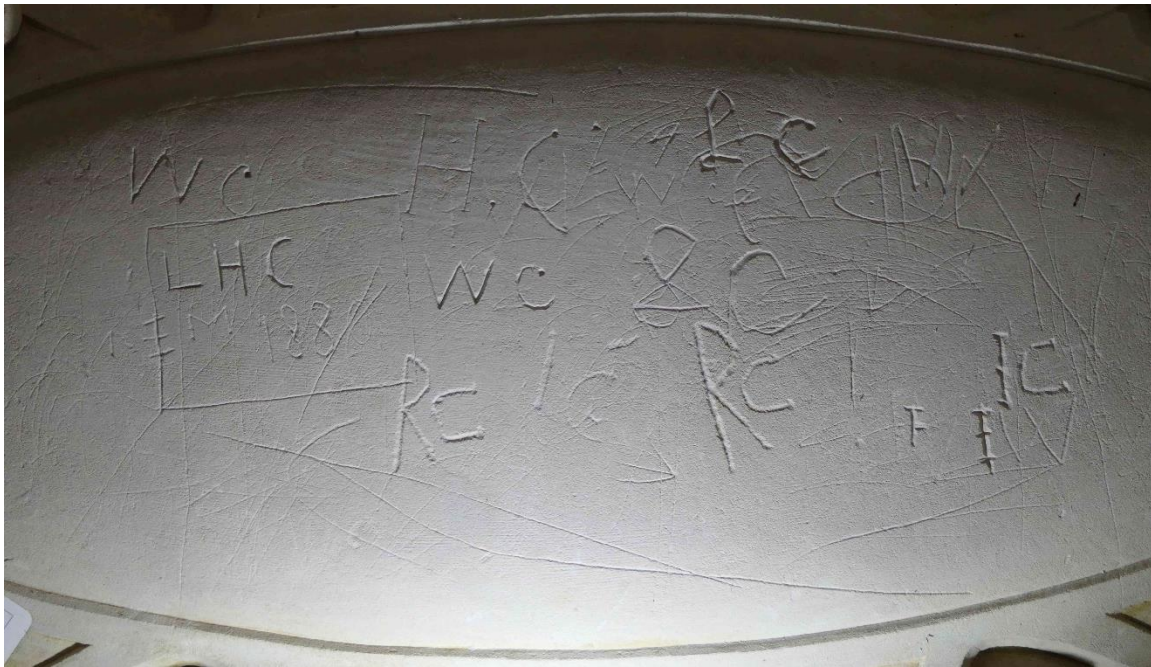


Fig 12 Chancel monument, central cartouche. Initials including boxed LHC 1880

More initials are carved into the panels below the kneeling figures, and include RC again, JC, PH, MH twice, and dated initials: WM 1715 and CG 1845. One of the cartouches, on the far right, also has a pattern of lines and dots at the bottom, whose significance is unknown (Fig 13).



Fig 13 Chancel monument, lower cartouche, far right. Initials and pattern

There is a faint compass-drawn six-petalled rosette shape, often known as a daisy-wheel, on the panel beneath the kneeling mourner figures (Fig 14). This device is



Fig 14 Chancel monument, central panel, six-petalled rosette

very common in graffiti in both churches and in domestic buildings. Originally a Christian symbol, post-Reformation its religious significance declined, and it became more of an apotropaic or protective mark. Another apotropaic mark which was originally a Christian symbol, the pentagram, was found on the far-left base panel of the monument, in the top right corner of the cartouche (Fig 15).

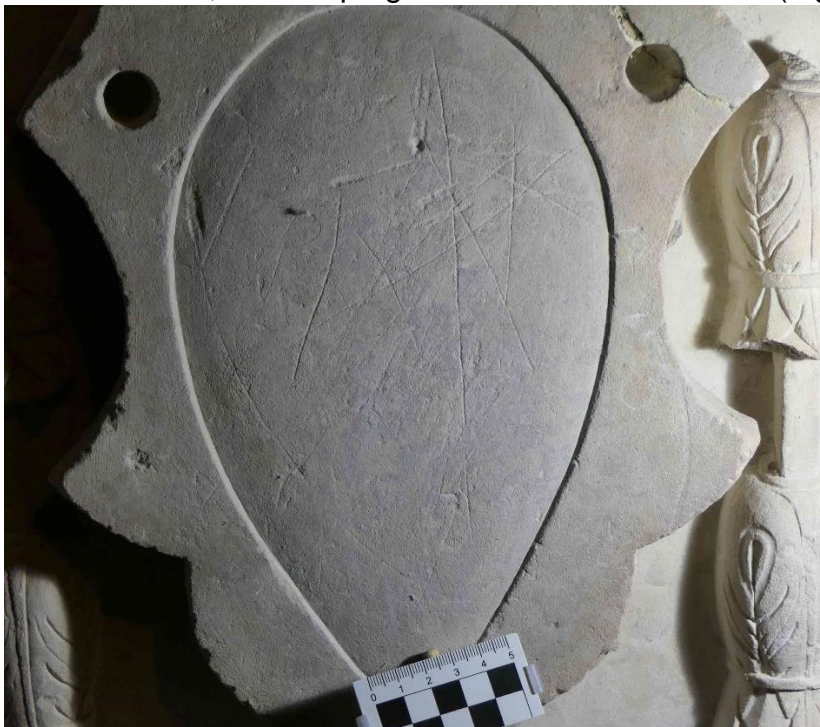


Fig 15 Chancel monument, far left base panel, scratched pentagram

The quantity of graffiti on this monument contrasts with the lack of graffiti of a similar post medieval date elsewhere in the church. It is unusual to have so much graffiti in the chancel area of a church as it would have been harder to make surreptitiously.

Also, some of the graffiti names are high up and would have been difficult to inscribe if standing on the current ground level. This leads us to wonder if the monument had originally been elsewhere, in a location where leaving graffiti would have been easier. It has been mooted that it may have come from the Holy Trinity Chapel in Basingstoke because of connections with the Sandys family. We are indebted to the historian John Hare who has done considerable research in this area for these thoughts: "The Holy Trinity chapel was added to the Holy Ghost chapel in 1520s as a chantry chapel by William, the first lord Sandys who also installed the magnificent window glass, and was buried here after his death in 1540. The glass was taken from Holy Trinity to the Vyne in the early 17c. before the civil war. The Vyne was sold by the Sandys family c.1649. After the civil war the chapel would have been a ruin, with the Holy Ghost chapel remaining as a school. Any tomb could have been a target of decay and schoolboys. By then the sale of the Vyne would have left Mottisfont Church as the natural place for a tomb rescued by the family. The most likely person would seem to have been William 2nd Lord Sandys who died in 1556, whose father and grandson were both buried here." (John Hare pers.comm.)

William 2nd Lord Sandys had 4 children, 2 sons and 2 daughters, which matches the mourners depicted on the monument. The monument would also fit stylistically, although the date 1584 seems late for this attribution.

The chancel glass was long thought to have come from this chapel although the VCH states that "The east window is completely filled with 15th-century white and gold glass, generally said to have been brought from the Holy Ghost Chapel near Basingstoke and made out with new glass. The style, however, is entirely unlike that of the glass now in Basingstoke Church, which is known to have been in the chapel." Also, the conservator who most recently repaired the monument did not find any evidence of the monument being dismantled and re-erected (Roger Harris, pers. comm.) and no documentary reference to the removal of the monument yet been found.

As ever, the study of historical graffiti raises more questions than answers, and questions which warrant further research.

The pews and vestry walls

More recent graffiti occurs on the wooden pews, which were installed in 1876. This includes caricatures of people and names and initials. It is often said that such graffiti was made by "naughty choirboys" and this is actually borne out at St Andrew's as C Hutchens, 14, and S Johnson both wrote their names, each helpfully labelling himself as a choirboy (Figs 16 and 17).

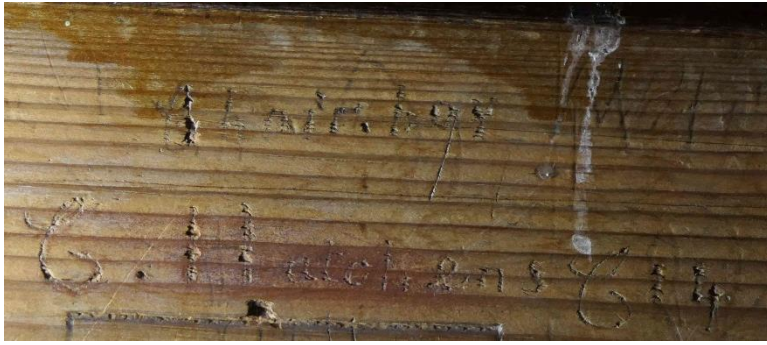


Fig 16 Church pew, south side. Choir boy C Hutchens 14

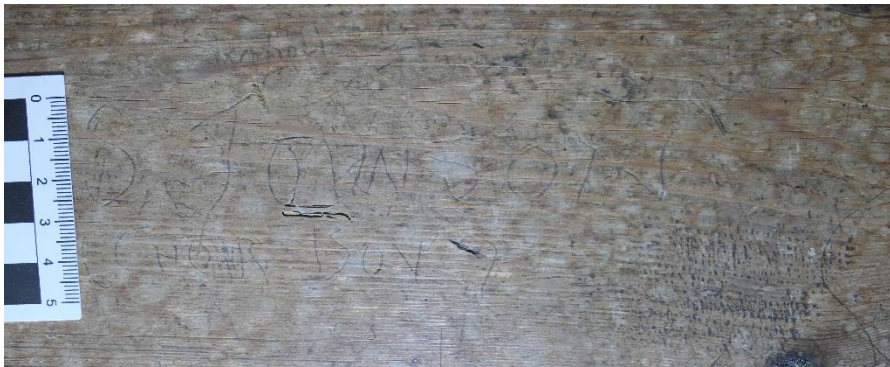


Fig 17 Church pew, south side. Choir boy S Johnson

Perhaps F Dale and another person whose name is now illegible, were also choirboys as they put their ages, 14, next to their names.

There are also many sets of initials including RB, dated 1926, and an elaborate RM (Fig 18).



Fig 18 church pew, north side. Initials RM



Little stick figures occur, and a more detailed profile of a bearded man wearing a top hat (Fig 19), who is perhaps a familiar local character?

Fig 19 Church pew, north side. Man with top hat

Names are also written on the wooden vestry wall, not really as graffiti but as unofficial labelling of coat pegs, suggesting people liked to stake their own peg. The photograph (Fig 20) and plan (Fig 21) show the location of these names, which include F Connors (Fig 22), B Pragnell, E Sill and R Stocker. Although relatively recent, these names are a useful resource for local historians and some of these families may still live locally.



Fig 20 church vestry, east wall. Coat pegs

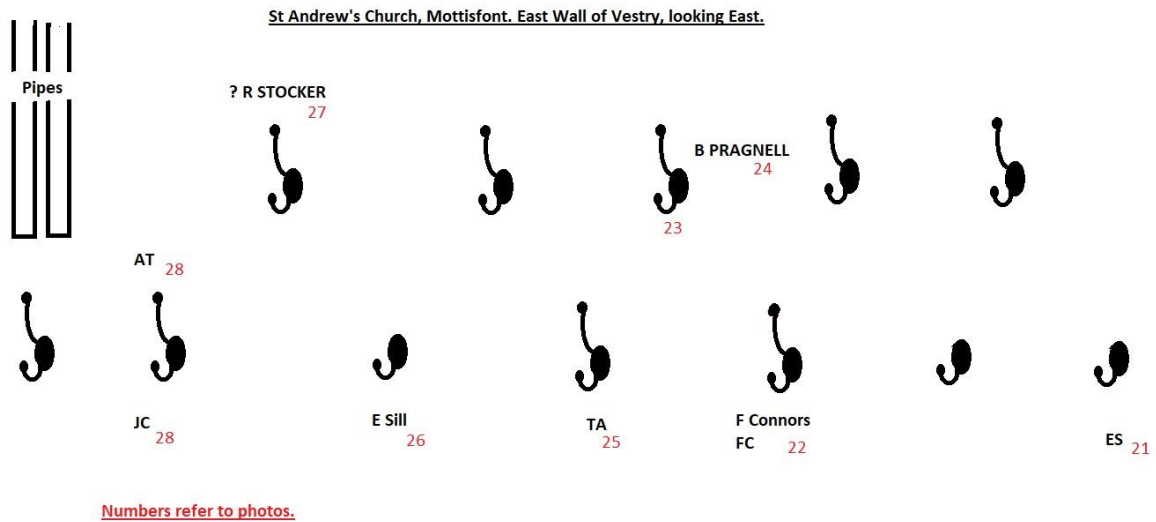


Fig 21 Church vestry, east wall. Plan of coat pegs and names



Fig 22 Church vestry. F Connors name and initials beneath coat peg

On the day of our survey, we were unable to gain access to the organ room, where there may be more 19th and 20th century graffiti.

The church exterior

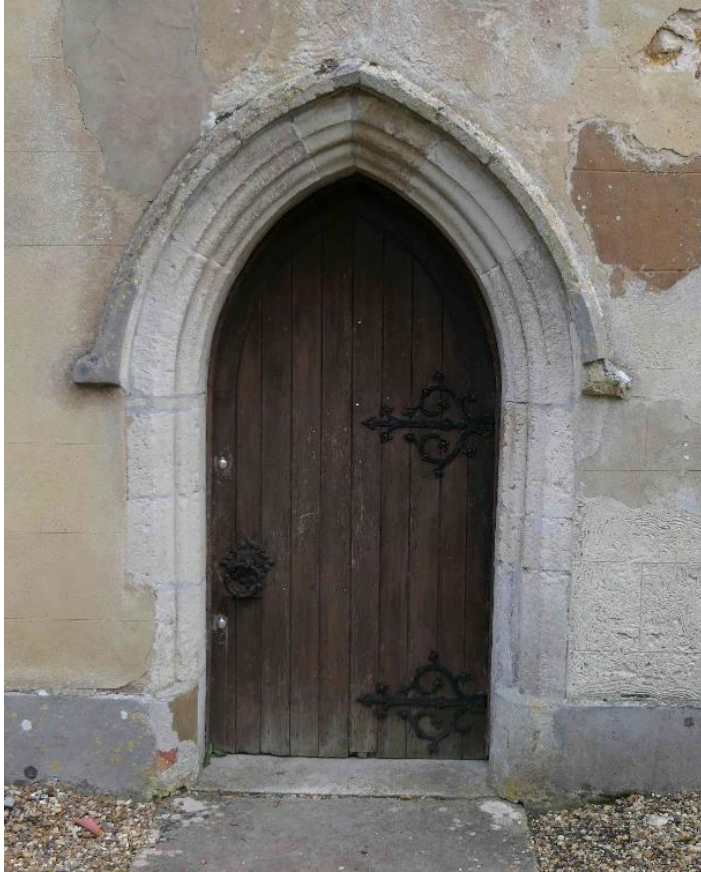


Fig 23 West doorway

All the graffiti found on the church exterior was around the west doorway (Fig 23) on both north and south sides. This graffiti is very weathered, consisting of initials made by those entering the church. The pairs of initials WH, WC and RP and single letters I and C on the south jamb are the most legible (Fig 24).



Fig 24 West doorway, south jamb. Initials WC and RP with I and C above

On the southeast buttress is a cut Ordnance Survey benchmark (Fig 25).



Fig 25 Southeast buttress. OS benchmark

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our thanks to the Rev Philip Bowden for allowing us access to the church, and to church warden Trish Armstrong for welcoming us to St Andrew's, and for providing us with a splendid array of hot drinks, biscuits and buns, which were all very welcome on such a cold day.

Thanks also go to John Hare for sharing his extensive knowledge on the history of the Holy Ghost chapel at Basingstoke, and its potential links with St Andrew's.

Special thanks go to our survey group members, Mark Barden and Mike Grover, for producing the plans and diagrams showing the graffiti locations.

References

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/hants/vol4/pp503-510>

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 website.

Disclaimer

This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part hereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project or assessment without the permission of the Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Project or the church.

Karen Wardley

HMGP Co-ordinator

February 2024

APPENDIX 1

Diagram to location of graffiti on chancel monument and photograph numbers

St Andrews Church, Mottisfont
Graffiti survey 24/11/23
Monument - indicative photo location plan

