

# St Bartholomew's Church, Hyde, Winchester

## Historical graffiti survey report



Date of survey: **17<sup>th</sup> October 2025**

Surveyors: **Mark Barden, Ron Brading, Karen Parker, James Thomas, Karen Wardley.**

Post code: S023 7DF   Grid Ref: SU 48140 30174   Church Heritage Record No: 641358

**Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Project**

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

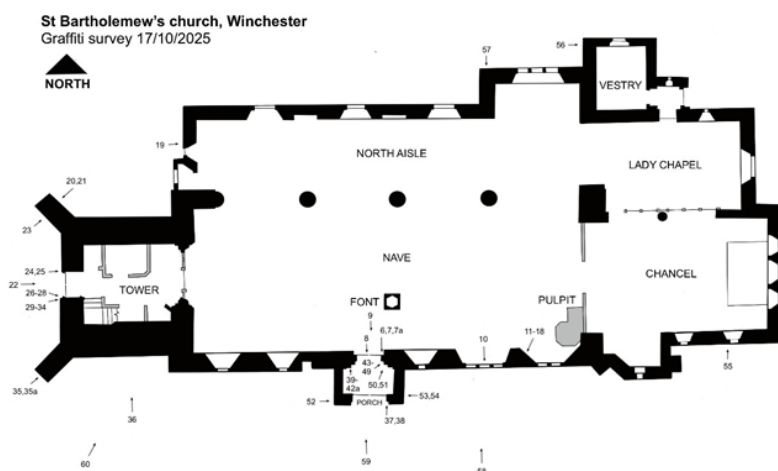
## St Bartholomew's church, Hyde: a brief description

The church is listed Grade II\*. It was built in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century by Hyde Abbey to serve its tenants and lay officials and is now the parish church of Hyde and Abbots Barton. Although much repaired in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some Norman elements remain, for example the south wall and the impressive south doorway of c1130. The tower, of chequered knapped flint and freestone, was built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century using stone from the Abbey. A new north aisle and south porch were added in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. On display in the church are five impressive Romanesque capitals and a springer stone from the cloisters at the Abbey. Many reused stones from the Abbey, including some architectural mouldings, can be seen incorporated into the church's masonry.

## Graffiti survey methodology

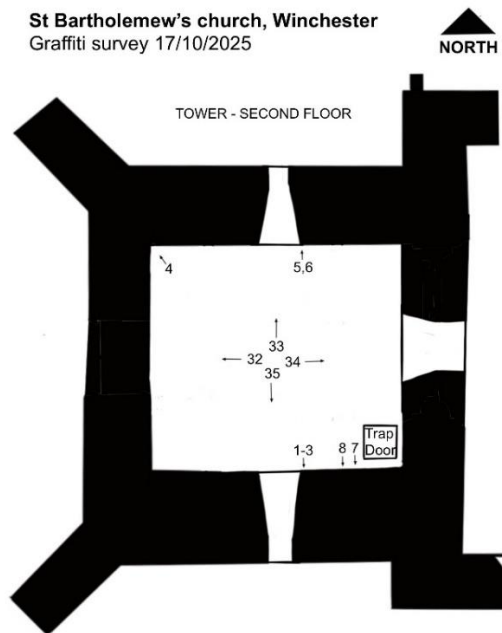
A survey of the main church building and tower took place in October 2025. The survey group consisted of volunteers from the Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Project, which is part of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society. The team first scanned the buildings to locate the graffiti, using a raking light source in the interior, and ambient daylight on the exterior. Each mark or set of marks was photographed with a digital camera or iPad. Sometimes multiple images were taken using different angles of light source.

A floor plan of the church and plans of the second and third floors of the tower were produced with the location of the photographs taken marked (see Plans A, B & C below). The location and descriptions 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 recorded.

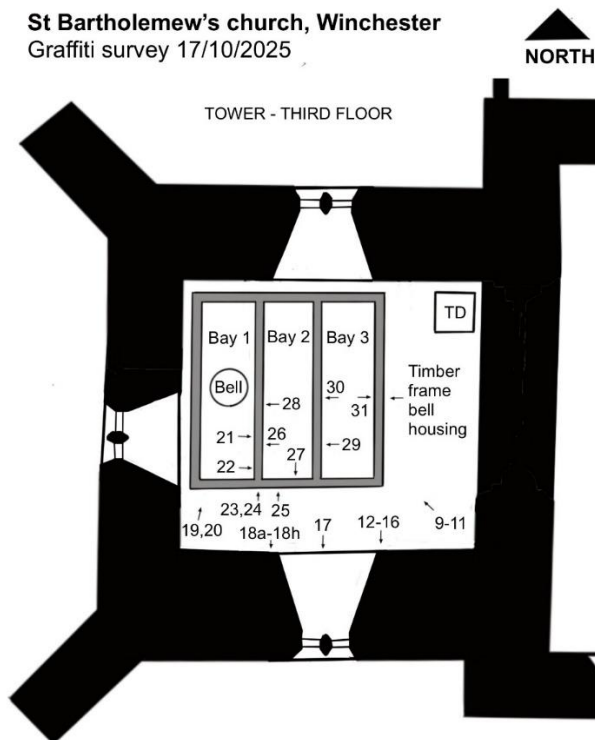


Plan A. St Bartholomew's church. Floor plan showing location of photographs taken

**Plan B. St Bartholomew's church tower, second floor. Plan showing location of photographs taken**



**Plan C. St Bartholomew's church tower, third floor. Plan showing location of photographs taken**



## Graffiti summary and discussion

### The tower interior

The tower was built of stone and timber from Hyde Abbey, following its dissolution in 1539. The church guide dates the tower to 1591. It consists of a ground floor which houses modern facilities including a kitchenette and toilet, a first floor used for storage, a second floor (Fig 1) and the top third floor (Fig 2) housing the wooden framework for the bell, which carries the date 1659.



*Fig 1. Church tower. Second floor*



*Fig 2. Church tower. Third floor (bell chamber)*

Many names and initials, some dated, occur as graffiti in the bell chamber and the floor below (the second floor), carved into the stone and woodwork. Carpenters' marks can be seen on the exposed timber framework on the first to third floors.

## Carpenters' marks

Although not graffiti as such, the survey recorded the carpenters' marks which are on many of the main timbers in the tower. Timber buildings were first constructed off site, in a framing yard where the carpenters could assemble the wall-frames and roof trusses by laying them out flat on the ground and pegging them together temporarily. Then they would mark up and number the frames before dismantling them for transport to the construction site. The numbers ensured that the right tenons went into the right mortises for an accurate fit. The marks were always positioned next to a joint with the same number written in Roman numerals on both joining timbers.

The numbers ran in sequence. A good example of this can be seen on the roof timbers of the bell chamber, where there are joints numbered with 3, 2 and 1 lines on the north/south beams running from west to east (Figs 3 - 5). See Plan B



*Fig 3. Tower. Bell chamber. Joint marked III*



*Fig 4. Tower. Bell chamber. Joint marked II*



*Fig 5. Tower. Bell chamber. Joint marked I*

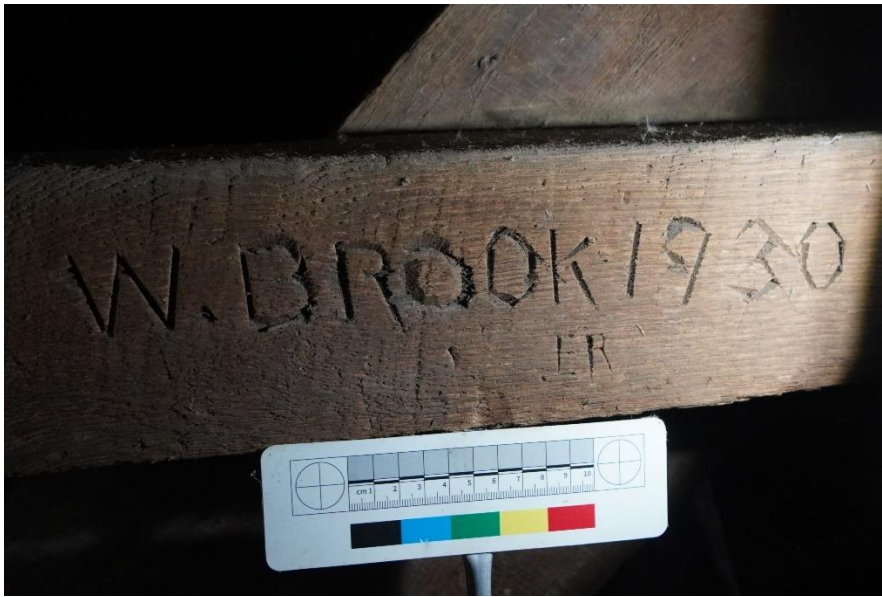
Geometric shapes, like arrows, were also found on timbers on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors (Fig 6). These are not next to joints but were probably also made as marks to aid construction.



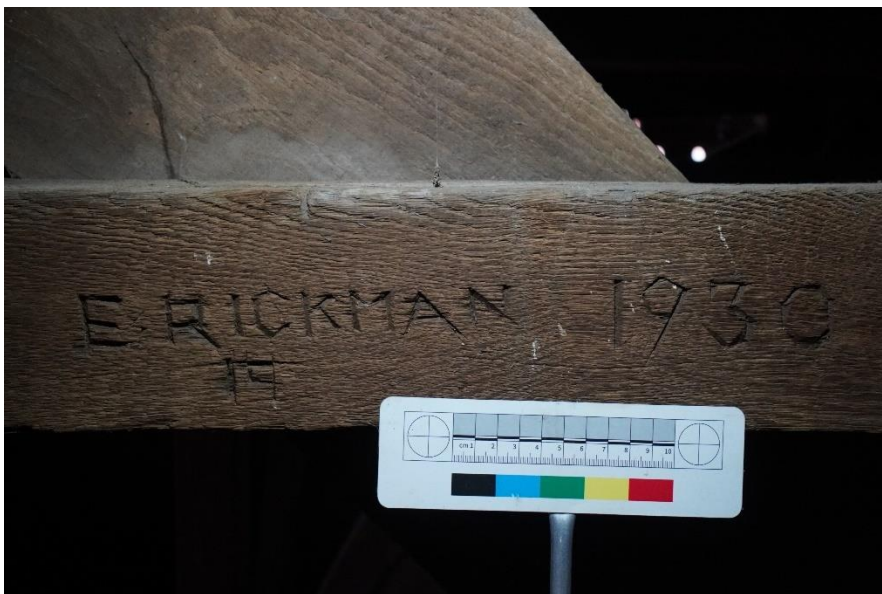
*Fig 6. Tower. Bell chamber. Bay 1. Carpenter's marks*

Carefully carved names and dates from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are on some of the timbers. It seems likely these were made by carpenters who were working in the

tower at this time. In the bell chamber are two, both dated 1930, made by W. Brook (Fig 7) and E. Rickman (Fig 8).



*Fig 7. Tower. Bell chamber. W. Brook 1930*



*Fig 8. Tower. bell chamber. E. Rickman 1930*

Initial searching of local trade directories for 1930 has failed to identify these names with certainty. There are also the pairs of initials DW and JH, which were left on a beam in 1942.

There is an earlier inscription, made by Joe Clark in 1879 (Fig 9). Joe has written the J back-to-front, suggesting he was not so confident at writing. We know there were repair works going on in the church in 1879 so it is likely that Joe was involved with these. There are two references to members of the Clark family in the 1880 Masters Winchester Trade Directory: Job Clark, the householder at 79 Hyde Street, and

Joseph Clark, at 39 Hyde Street. It seems likely that Joe was associated with one of these families, bearing in mind their proximity to the church.



Fig 9. Tower. Bell chamber. Joe Clark 1879

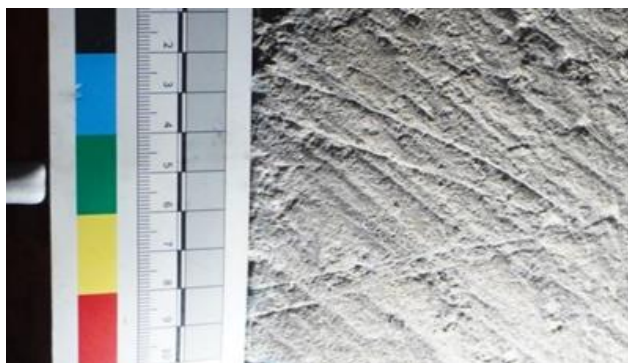


Fig 10. Tower. Second floor. South window jamb. V shape, possibly apotropaic

Other people left their marks on the stonework in the tower. These were mainly as initials, names and dates, although there is a V-shaped mark on the east jamb of the south window on the second floor (Fig 10). This could be a mason's mark, but as no other masons' marks were found this is less likely, so it could be an apotropaic mark.

There are many initials and one full name, H. Bull, around the south window on the second floor (Fig 11), with dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

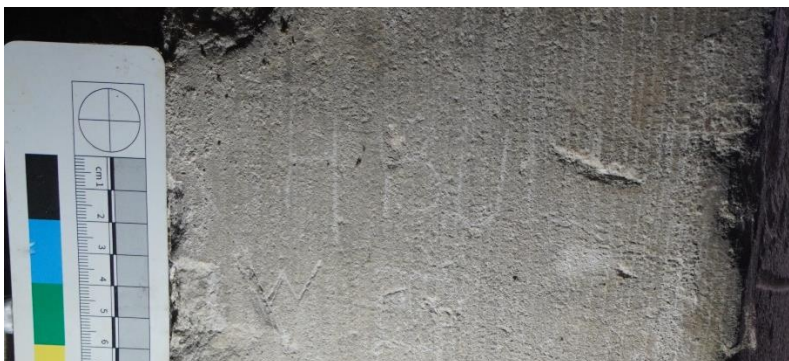
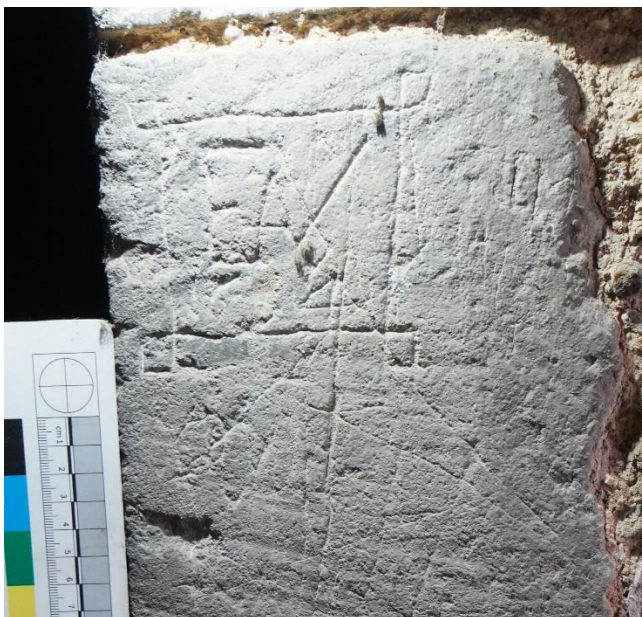


Fig 11. Tower. Second floor, south window. H Bull

Some initials are carved within boxes, for example HP (Fig 12). Above this is a large rectangular shape or cartouche containing writing, probably a name, which has been vigorously hacked out, although the date 1690 is still visible. That someone wished to obliterate this name suggests bad feeling directed towards an individual who has perhaps misbehaved or offended in some way.



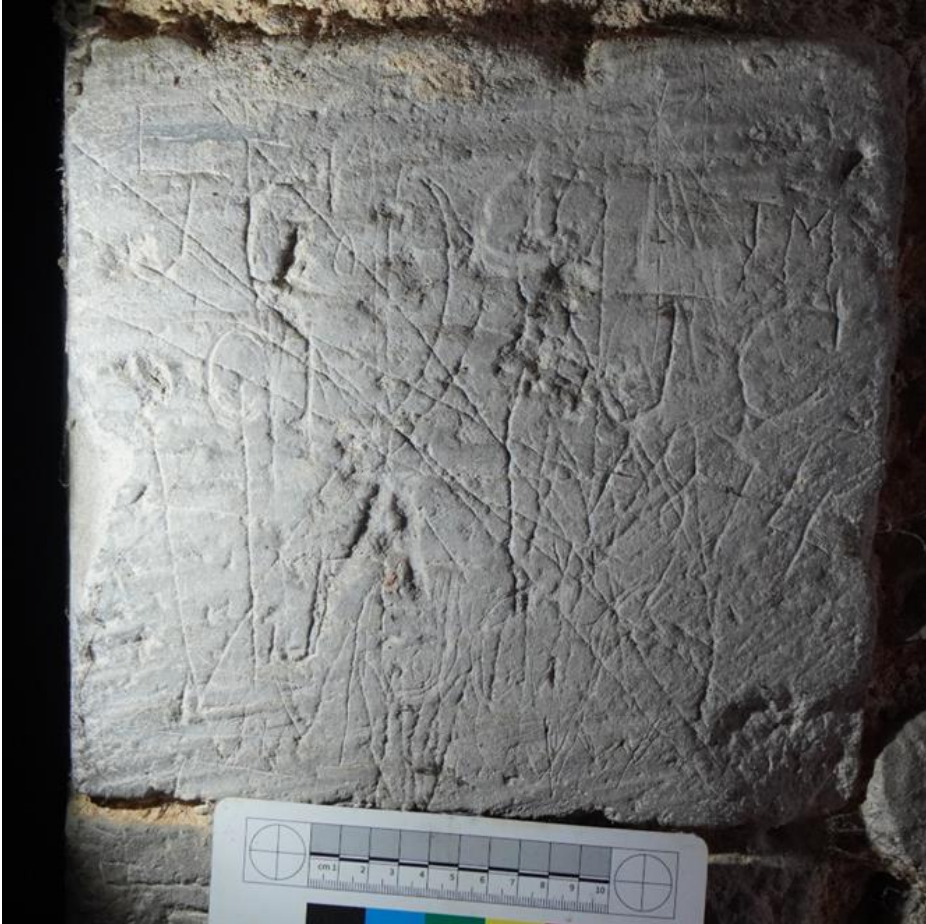
*Fig 12. Tower. second floor. HP and hacked out inscription, probably a name*



*Fig 13. Tower. Second floor. EA in frame*

In the same area the initials EA occur within an elaborate frame, with looped corners (Fig 13). There are later shapes and lines overlying it, making it hard to read.

Above this is another block with many shapes and initials scratched onto it, and the date 1874 (Fig 14). We can only guess at the identity of the makers of these marks, but they could be bell ringers, workmen, or visitors with some other business in the tower.



*Fig 14. Tower. Second floor. Initials and date 1874*

## The tower exterior



Fig 15. Tower. West doorway

The west doorway of the tower (Fig 15) has graffiti on both sides of the arch. There are matching dates at roughly the same height on each side. That on the north side is incomplete with only 176 remaining (Fig 16), but the full date 1763 can be seen opposite, associated with the initials IE (Fig 17). Above the date on the north side is a shape which might be an initial W, or it might be a VV symbol, of interlocking Vs. Such marks are apotropaic in function and derive from the Christian symbol of devotion to the Virgin Mary, the VV standing for *Virgo Virginum*, or Virgin of the Virgins. Post-Reformation, this symbol seems to have lost its religious connotations and became more of a lucky symbol. It is often found around windows and doorways of buildings, to prevent the ingress of evil spirits. A similar VV shape, now very faint, can be seen above the 1763 date on the south side. Below the date is a wavy line whose significance is unknown. There was probably a lot more graffiti in this area but

the stone surface is very weathered and much detail has been lost. An initial S can be seen further down, along with other fainter lines and initials (Fig 18).



*Fig 16. Tower. West doorway. North jamb. Partial date 176 with VV above*



*Fig 17. Tower. West doorway. South jamb. IE 1763. VV above*



*Fig 18. Tower, West doorway. South jamb. Initial S*

On the northwest buttress of the tower is scratched a 3x3 grid pattern (Fig 19). These grid or net patterns are found in both religious and domestic buildings, and are thought to

have had an apotropaic or protective function, made to entrap or ward off evil spirits. On the northwest buttress of the tower is a scratched 3x3 grid pattern.

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The number three, or multiples of it, also has a connection with protective devices (Easton, 2024).



*Fig 19. Tower. Northwest buttress. Grid pattern*

There is an Ordnance Survey benchmark on the southwest buttress of the tower (Fig 20). It cannot be dated precisely but it is shown on the 1897 6" Ordnance Survey map as B.M.149.6 (Fig 21).



*Figs 20 & 21. Tower. Southwest buttress. Ordnance Survey benchmark with location marked on 1897 map*

## The church interior

### The south door



Fig 22. Nave. South doorway



Figs 23 & 24. South doorway. East jamb.  
Crosses



The south doorway in the nave (Fig 22) has small crosses incised into the archway on the east side (Figs 23 & 24). Such crosses were probably made as a symbol of

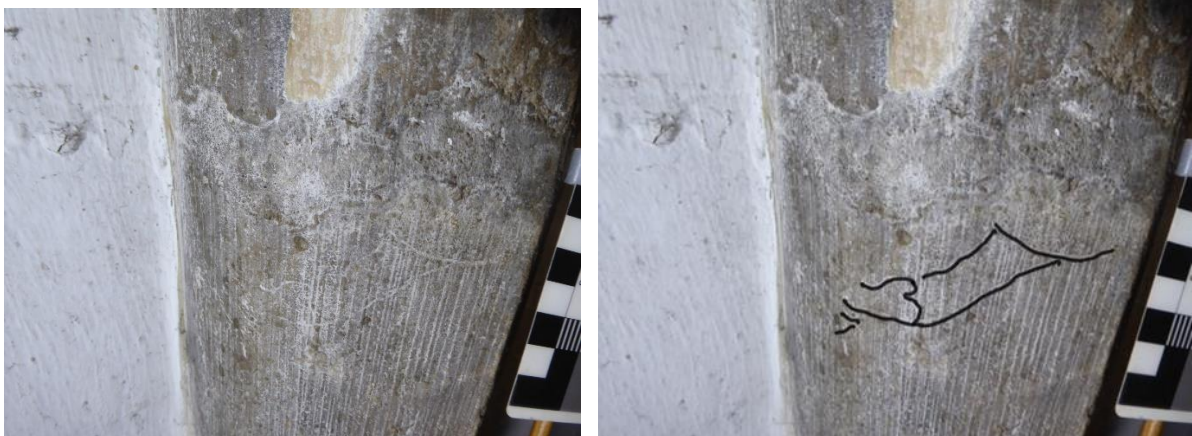
personal devotion by parishioners entering or leaving the church and are a common form of graffiti found in churches.



On the south side of the nave, near the pulpit, a pilaster which came from Hyde Abbey is built into the wall (Fig 25).

*Fig 25. Nave. South wall. Pilaster from Hyde Abbey*

On its east face are incised some faint lines which appear to have been made deliberately and may be figurative (Fig 26).



*Fig 26. South nave. Pilaster. Possible depiction of arm protruding from sleeve*

They could resemble the depiction of an arm protruding from a sleeve, with linked hands, reminiscent of Tudor portraits which often show sitters in this pose with similar sleeves.

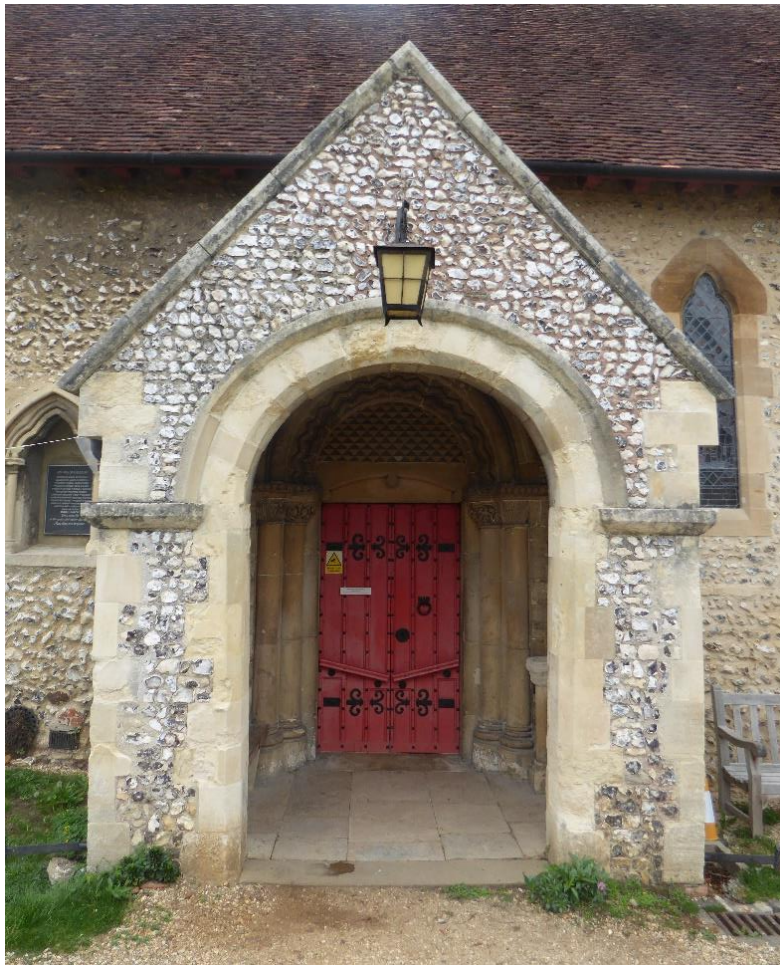
However, this is pure supposition of the part of the graffiti group, and other explanations are equally likely.

On the west face of the pilaster, higher up, are more curved lines which seem to have been carved deliberately (Fig 27). These may have been decorative or figurative.

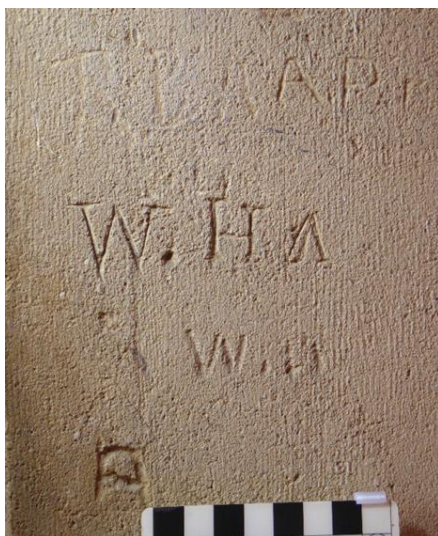


*Fig 27. South nave. Pilaster. Curved lines*

## The south porch



The south porch was built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in front of the fine Norman doorway, which is dated to c1130. There is modern graffiti on the west wall of the porch, including lines and initials.



*Figs 28 & 29. South porch. Initials*

On the west jamb of the inner doorway into the church are incised single and pairs of initials, including AP and WH (Fig 28), with the date 1821 and a single initial C (Fig 29) on the east jamb.

On the wall to the east of the door is a scratch or mass dial (Figs 30 & 31). A central stick or gnomon would have been placed in the central hole and cast a shadow onto the diagonal lines radiating from the hole, to mark the times of the daily church services. Inside the porch, below the mass dial, is a holy water stoup, originally from Hyde Abbey.



*Figs 30 & 31. South porch. Mass dial on wall to east of doorway*

Within the church fabric are many reused stones from the Abbey, which was dissolved in 1539. These have been recorded elsewhere, and are outside of the remit of this report, but worthy of note here is a circular stone from a column, which has a mason's marking out line clearly visible on it (Fig 32). Another block, near to

the west doorway leading into the north aisle, has unusual geometric shapes carved into it (Fig 33).



*Figs 32 & 33. Reused stones from abbey built into church fabric*

## **Acknowledgements**

Our thanks go to Alys Blakeway who kindly arranged access to the church and tower and to Edward Fennell who met us on the day and unlocked for us.

Thanks also go to Karen Parker for researching the names in local trade directories.

## **References**

Bullen, Michael, Crook, John, Hubbock, Rodney, and Pevsner, Nikolaus (2010) **The buildings of England. Hampshire: Winchester and the North.**

Easton, Timothy (2024), "No witches in sight", **Vernacular Architecture, Vol 55.**

<https://historicensland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1350689?section=official-list-entry>

<https://threesaints.org.uk/st-bartholomew>

## **Survey archive**

32 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 Winchester Historic Environment Record and with the church, and the report has been posted on the HFC website [www.hantsfieldclub.org.uk](http://www.hantsfieldclub.org.uk).

## **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,

**January 2026**