



Little Somborne All Saints' church - medieval graffiti report

OS Grid Reference: SU 383 326.

Post code: SO20 6QT



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Karen Parker and Karen Wardley, 15th September 2020

Hampshire Medieval Graffiti Survey

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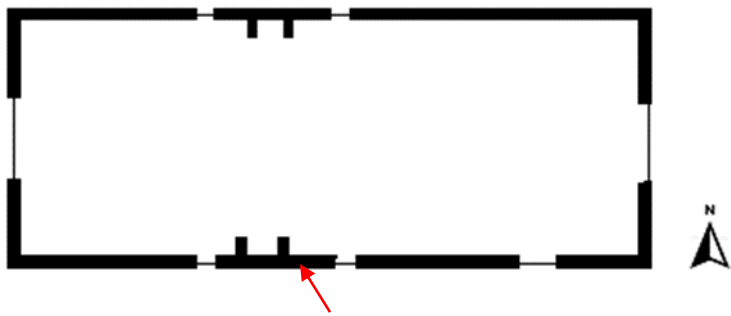
Brief History of All Saints' church, Little Somborne

This small, remote church is almost certainly one of the two churches in Somborne mentioned in Domesday. It has plastered flint walls with a small wooden bell-turret. It retains a number of Late Saxon features including the characteristic lesene or pilaster strip and a double-splayed window on the north wall, and re-used long and short work on the quoins of the west wall. The nave was extended c1170 and a chancel added, although this was demolished in the 17th c. In the north wall is a blocked opening for a tiny 13th c anchorite cell, later used as an Easter Sepulchre. Further windows were added in the 13th c. Some restoration was carried out in the 19th c, but by the 1960s its use had declined and the church was declared redundant. It has been under the care of the Churches Conservation Trust since 1975. A detailed church plan and description can be found in the CCT guidebook.

Graffiti summary

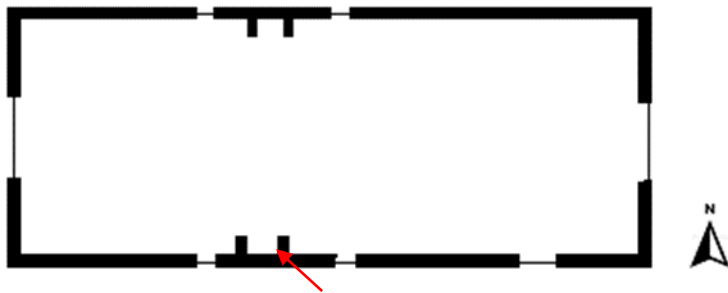
The CCT guide refers to the graffiti on the Norman south doorway which includes a well-defined cross, and a number of "small crusader crosses". Current thinking would now attribute such crosses to acts of personal devotion by local parishioners or passing pilgrims, rather than associating them with crusaders. The Ordnance Survey benchmark to the east of the doorway is also noted.

Our survey picked up some additional graffiti around the south-east window of the nave, on the 12th c jambs. On the west jamb is what could be a version of an *ih̄s* sacred monogram, and some faint traces of other lettering. On the east jamb is a tiny cross, and a circle with a rectangular shape superimposed over it. The cross and monogram represent further traces of acts of devotion. The circle could be apotropaic, as such forms are often found around windows and doorways, thought to have been put there to repel evil spirits and the Devil.



Location:
Exterior.
East of
south
doorway

Description:
Ordnance Survey
benchmark. Marked
on OS 25" map for
1892-1914

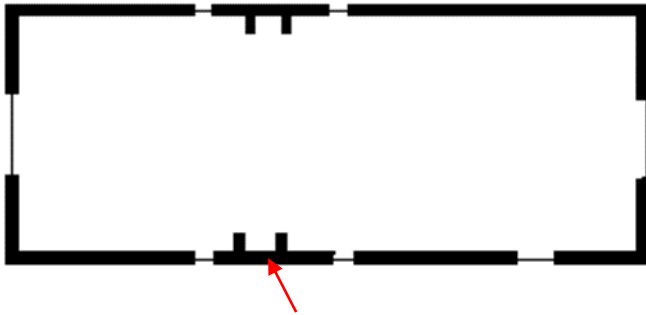


Location:

Exterior.
South doorway,
east side.
7 courses
up from
ground
level.

Description:

Incised cross



Location:

Exterior.
South doorway, top of arch above doorway beneath hood moulding.

Description:

3 diagonal lines incised into stone block



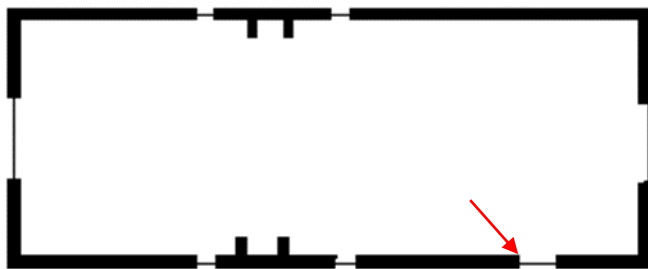
Location:
Exterior. South
doorway

Description:
General view of
south doorway



Location:
Interior.
South-east
window of
nave

Description:
General view
of window and
jambs



Location:
Interior.
South-east
window.
West side of
window,
lowest chalk
block, wall
face

Description:
Small cross
with dots at
terminals

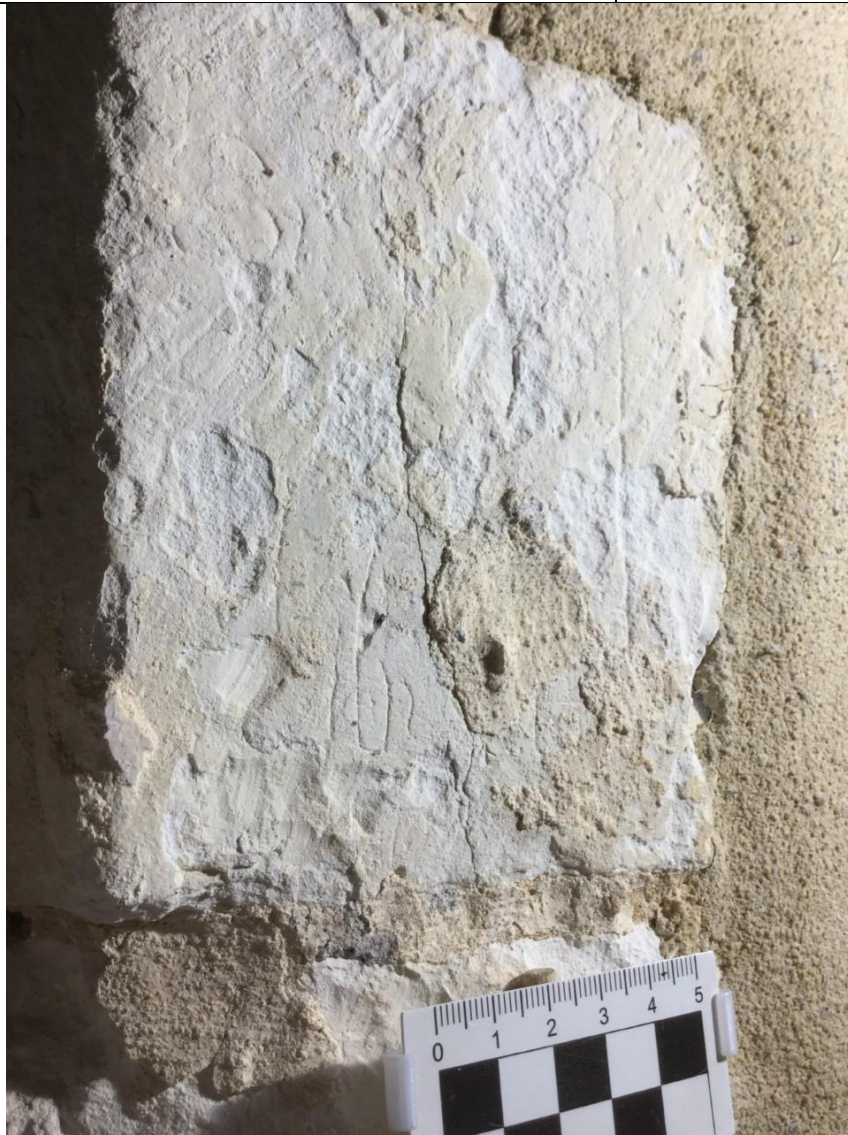


Location:

Interior.
South-east
window.
West side of
window,
lowest chalk
block, jamb
face

Description:

Circle, with
superimposed
bisected
diamond
shape. Group
of vertical lines
beneath.



Location:

Interior.
South-east
window.
East side
of
window,
4th chalk
block up,
jamb face

Description:

Possible sacred
monogram *ih̄s*,
although with
reversed S.
Vertical line
running across
block is probably
a marking-out
line.



Location:
Interior.
South-east window.
East side of window,
2nd chalk block up, jamb face

Description:
Initial M, Incised shapes forming xix could be devotional crosses, or Roman numerals.

References

Bullen M., Crook J., Hubbock R., Pevsner N., (2010), *The Buildings of England, Hampshire: Winchester and the North*

Dalton C., Sawyer R., (2005), Churches Conservation Trust. *All Saints' church, Little Somborne, Hampshire*

Disclaimer

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