A Guide to the Graffiti and Masons' Marks in St James' Church, Louth

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**Introduction**

All churches have graffiti and even the most casual of visitors cannot fail to have noticed some of the larger pieces on the tower columns within St James'. However what the casual observer may not be aware of is that with a little closer investigation and the use of light raking across the surface of the stone a whole new world may be revealed. Using this method more and more graffiti has been found and new areas have been opened up to reveal even more. It is now clear that there is a real opportunity to record a whole new aspect of local and social history within St James' Church. These are the marks of the ordinary people that used, and worshipped within, the church. Had they not left their mark behind for future generations to see then these people would not, for the most part, be known to us today.

Many counties now have their own medieval graffiti groups surveying the churches in their area and it is likely that St James will be on the Lincolnshire itinerary fairly shortly. These surveys are showing that similar graffiti symbols and the reasons for them exist all over the country and they are rarely exclusive to one locality. My own survey also continues and a first draft of the tower floor, nave and chancel has now been completed. There are approximately 400 items of graffiti and 300 masons' marks recorded so far. This number will eventually be dwarfed by the content of the tower gallery (former bell ringers' chamber), the spire void and last (but certainly not least) the tower vice itself.

**What is graffiti?** *(singular = graffito)*

In its simplest form this can mean any casual, or unofficial mark made on any surface. At St James' so far this means on wood or stone although at other sites we might also include lead, plaster and glass. Many churches have, or have had, large amounts of graffiti on their lead roof panels and graffiti can also be seen on other lead objects such as the guttering down-pipes at Beverley Minster. All this graffiti may include various symbols, protection marks, drawings, initials, full names and in some instances addresses, dates, heraldic shields, merchants' marks & etc. In this brief look at the marks we will also be looking at one of the more common symbols present on the structure from the people who actually built it - the masons.

**What is graffiti for?**

There are many reasons for the graffiti in St James' Church ranging from a simple wish to commemorate a visit, to commemorate an event - a birth, marriage betrothal or death, to advertise a trade or profession, to air a
grievance, and even in one case to warn of impending doom, although in that instance the date has passed and we are all still here. A myriad of other reasons will prevail for which we may never learn the reason due to the passage of time and the lack of documentary evidence.

**Who made the graffiti?**

Some names can already be recognised from the local historical records. These range from a possible priest of one of the Guilds to a Corporation Bailiff and Town Crier, a Warden of the Old Corporation, and the son of a former 17th century Vicar of St James'. We even learn for the first time the name of an 18th century *Organer* or musician. A family name may be suggested for one of the merchant's marks and some names crop up again and again suggesting a family connection to the church. In some dated cases these connections appear to have extended over a long period and through several generations.

Some initials, especially those in groups of four, may with further research into the Churchwarden's Accounts prove to be those of the Churchwardens themselves. Some of the known name associations will be discussed in the 'names' section later on.

Sadly the origin of the great majority of this graffiti, particularly when there are only initials, will probably never be known. However it can still be of interest to us in recording frequency, use of different letter types and styles, literacy, and with comparison to other sites.

**What can the graffiti tell us?**

Once the masons' mark survey is complete the distribution patterns may help us to better understand the building phases within the various parts of the church. On the large pier and pillar on the north side of the tower (on the plan it is N2) a total of 123 masons' marks have been recorded in the first 10 feet of height and the current total found within the church now exceeds 300.

We have also learnt for instance the names, trades and professions of people working within the church. The name and profession of an *Organer* dated 1732 has been found and this pre-dates the official records for the new organ and organist provided from 1768.

Many other minor details might be recovered that may never have been known to us by any other means. The current door into the former bell ringers' chamber has upon it the initials 'IR' and the date 1737 proving the door was in place by that time. A minor detail perhaps but such items can sometimes lead to far wider-ranging conclusions when applied to the overall scene.
We might learn for instance when literacy became more common, particularly when collating results with other sites. Some of the symbols may reveal folk beliefs that have long been forgotten and other aspects that may not seem important to us now but may reveal themselves in due course when the current ongoing research into the meaning of these symbols is understood better.

Internal alterations to the fabric might also be observed. The sheer number of names on the walls of the internal gallery above the West window, including some on the top of the balustrade over the precipice and facing the wrong way, were a mystery at first. Further research led to the realisation that until 1818 there was a floor at this level and it was here that the bell ringers' chamber was at one time located. Some of the myriad of graffiti on the walls and pillars here include engravings of bells suggesting that many of the names will be those of former bell ringers. There are also two official looking memorials engraved on the higher walls and one of them, Nathaniel Maddison, is dated 1735. Other memorials on the lower walls are of the same period but appear to be more casual in nature.

Thomas Espin in his 'Short Account of Louth Church' published in 1807 suggested that the internal view in the tower would be much improved by moving this chamber up beyond the present crown of the tower. The Churchwarden's Accounts inform us that by 1818 the bells when rung caused so much stress on the tower that the jolts could be physically felt. The remedy was to reinforce the present belfry (some 30' higher than the original) and to re-site the bells. This then opened up the splendid internal vaulted groyne of the tower so that it was visible from ground level as we see it today.

**GRAFFITI NAMES**

Research into the names represented by the graffiti is still at a very early stage and has so far consisted of looking into secondary sources i.e. published local history books and records posted on the internet. St James' is lucky to have a run of Churchwardens' Accounts dating from 1500 into modern times. These are located in the Lincolnshire Archives at Lincoln and are yet to be consulted. The first book from 1500-1524 is however easily accessible as it was published by Reginald Dudding in 1941 and this volume includes the busy period of the building of the spire. The later volumes will need to be searched in the archives and searches for names in those will hopefully correlate with and augment the names represented in the graffiti. St James' General Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths are also deposited in the same archives and it will be a time-consuming and long-term project to search all of these.
ABRAHAM MASINGBERD

Fig.1 - Abraham Masingberd S2 Column 11 in entrance to Choir Vestry

Abraham Masingberd (now Massingberd) was a member of the Lincolnshire
family of landed gentry that start to appear in Lincolnshire records from the
reigns of Edward I and II in Sutterton and later Bratoft and other holdings in
the Skegness/Burgh-le-Marsh area. They eventually settled at Gunby and this
became their principal seat in the county. Gunby Hall dating from 1700 still
stands today and is in the care of The National Trust. Another branch of the
family settled at South Ormsby and became Massingberd-Mundy.

Below is part of the Massingberd family tree relating to Abraham and from this
and other records we learn that he was born c1614, was resident in Louth and
died "prior to 1649." In that relatively short life he had 5 children by his wife
Grace Pennyston who he married in 1634. Two of the children died in infancy.
In the same period at least one (perhaps two) Thomas Massingberds had been
clerk of Louth Town Corporation (one dying in 1636) and there are further
records of family interments at Louth.

Thomas Massingberd, eldest son of Augustine, succeeded his
grandfather; he was a Burgess for the town of Calais in the parliament which met in 1552. He died in 1584, and was buried at Gunby. His first wife was Alice, daughter and heir to Richard Bevercotes, Gent. of Newark, by whom he had issue three sons and three daughters.

1 Thomas, who became his heir.

2 George, who by Alice his wife the daughter of ______ Milles of Abingdon, Berkshire, had issue, Augustine, who died in infancy; Edward baptized in June 1589, and George interred at Bratoft in 1590. Edward married Judith, daughter of Armigill Sharples, of Louth, where he resided; by her he had issue, Lionel; Frances; Elizabeth, and Anne, who all died in infancy; also two sons, Abraham and Charles who survived him. Abraham also resided at Louth, where he died prior to 1649, having had issue by his wife Grace, Frances; Edward; James; Elizabeth and Judith.
Although Abraham was not in the front tier of the family lineage, nevertheless his name carved in the wall of St James' is a good indicator that graffiti might be attributed to almost any level in society at that time. Indeed there are records known of the (deposed) King of Portugal etching an inscription on a lead panel on the tower roof behind Windsor Palace in 1581.

Two instances of a similar name with different spellings exist as graffiti. Both are very finely engraved and the dated example **JOHN WHALEY 1578** on pillar N9 is perhaps the finest executed piece of graffiti within the church. The second example **JOHN WHALAY** is in the former bell ringers' chamber, undated, but another fine piece of engraving. Spelling at this time was quite arbitrary and names were often written phonetically as the clerk interpreted them. Thus Thomas Sudbury who bequeathed the famous 'Sudbury Hutch' to the church appears as 'Sudbere' in the Churchwardens' Accounts.

In the written record for 'Whetlay and Wheitley' we have the following - R W Goulding- ‘Louth Parish Church: The Building of Louth Spire 1501-1515’ (1908) quoting from the first book of Churchwardens' Accounts.

"In 1513-4 there was a widely-extended gift of service, 32 loads of stone being carried in "boun wayns," (i.e., in wagons free of charge)..............other priests Edward Otyll, William Beverlay, Symon Maltby, John Hyrn, William Hasqwyth, George Pullay and **John Whetlay**, one load".

R W Goulding - 'Louth Old Corporation Records' (1891) - Guild of the Blessed Mary (entry for 1546).

"The incumbents of the said guild are **John Wheitley**, aged 60 years (well-qualified to serve the cure) and John Goshanke, aged 44 years, neither of them holding any other preferment, and each having for his yearly salary, one
annuity of £5 13s. 4d. for the term of his life, by a deed sealed with the common seal of the Alderman, brethren and sisters of the said guild, with a clause of distress”.

It can be seen that both of the written records include a 'T' in the name. There is a slight possibility that the graffiti name in the chancel has a ligature 'TL' in the engraving but clearly not in the second example in the gallery. Also by 1578 John Whaley if he is the same man would have been in his 90s - a stretch but not impossible. William Heneage the High Steward of Louth died in 1610 at the age of 91. It has also been suggested that the cartouche around the engraving is similar to those on some memorials of the same period. He may of course be a later relative, although perhaps not a son, as priests were not allowed to marry until an Act of Edward VI in 1547.

Since this graffito was discovered further examples of the name have also been found in Lincoln Cathedral dated 1576 and in the cloisters at Norwich Cathedral. This strongly suggests that our man was likely to be a member of the clergy.

SAMUEL ADCOCKE

Fig.4 - Samuel Adcocke 1700 Tower Gallery

In the Tower Gallery on the large flat surface of the arch that runs over the walkway from the central window pillar to the balustrade over the parapet and engraved in a large hand is - Sam\ll : adcocke 1700. In the list of Vicars and Rectors of St James' a Samuel Adcock appears for the years 1668-1671. From records we learn -

Samuel Adcocke was admitted to Sidney Sussex College aged 18 on January 23rd 1661-2. He was the son of Giles, a weaver from Oakham, Rutland and attended school there before going on to Cambridge. Matriculated in 1662 he gained a B.A. in 1665-6 and M.A in 1669. He was ordained a priest in Lincoln Cathedral on September 20th 1668 and according to the records was appointed Vicar of Louth the very next day on 21st September 1668. He served a relatively
short term in Louth until 3rd April 1671 on which date the record shows he was replaced by William Wetherill. In that same year he is listed as Rector of Gayton-le-Marsh, a small village some 8 miles from Louth and by 1691 was also Rector of nearby Withern-with-Stain. He died in 1693-4 on either 22nd January or 22nd July. For this there are conflicting entries between the Gayton le Marsh and Church of England Registers.

Here, our story might have ended were it not for the fact that the Adcocke family line has been added, probably by Samuel's own hand, to the front of Gayton's General Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths. This Register has subsequently been preserved in the Lincolnshire Archives and from this we learn -

**Samuel Adcocke of Gayton, Rector & Elizabeth Barker of Louth, Spinster were married in the parish church of Yarburgh on 3rd December, 1672.**

Samuel and Elizabeth then had issue and from January 1673-4 to November 1693 had 11 children between them, three of whom unfortunately died early, two in infancy and one at birth. Samuel died in the year following the last birth in 1694. Of particular interest to us is the second born child and first born son -

**Samuel Adcocke was borne about 2 of ye clocke in ye morninge upon Monday the 8th of March & baptised March 11th 1674.**

A search of genealogy sites has not revealed another Samuel Adcocke of the period appearing in local archives suggesting therefore that this may be our man. Whether he had a later connection to the church or came merely to leave a memorial for his father will have to be left to further research. It will be noted however that of the many places that could have been chosen, the name was engraved in the bell ringers' chamber. There are two other definite memorials of death high up on the walls of this chamber, both beyond the reach of casual graffiti artists and several others on the lower walls which may also be records of death.

Of the 8 surviving children only Elizabeth the third born has been traced any further. She married Thomas Dales, a man 10 years her senior, at Withern on August 6th 1702. They were themselves to produce a further 8 children, the last born just one month after the death of her husband in October 1714.

Of Samuel Adcocke the younger there is (so far) no further trace and perhaps the only lasting memorial to him and his father will be, by his own hand, the name engraved on the wall in the tower of St James' Church, Louth.
William Wakelin was the Louth Corporation Bailiff, Surveyor and Inspector, and occasional Town Crier from 1795-1816. Several generations of the Wakelin family were also later to hold the position of town crier. William Wakelin is the only graffiti name so far for which we have a depiction - an engraving in Goulding's 'Old Corporation Records'.

From the firemen we turn to two of the minor officials of the town, resplendent in uniforms which would make any firemen look plain. They were the bailiff and the town crier.

In 1776 Nicholas Atkinson, the bailiff, was pensioned off with £1 10s. a year for his lodgings, and 8d. a day for his dinner and a pint of ale. In 1825 it was
resolved that the bailiff "when in the execution of his duty or in attendance upon the Corporation, be required to wear a Livery, consisting of a blue coat and waistcoat, a gold lace buttonhole upon the collar of his coat, black velveteen breeches, and a gold hat girdle," and that the Town Clerk was to obtain a button bearing the town arms of a "wolf salient in or."

It had been decided thirteen years earlier that Richard Wakelin the town crier, should be provided with "a round hat with the skirts bound with a gold band, a gold girdle, and a plain blue coat with lace on the collar". James Wakelin was town crier in 1856. The William Wakelin who was bailiff from 1797 to 1816 seems to have held a dual office, for it is said that when asked to "cry" a certain forthcoming event he replied, "I cannot cry today. My wife is dead."

From a newspaper article - 'A History of Louth Markets'
"Payments to the town crier - the earliest named is Fenicke in 1662, though the Wakelins (Richard 1812, and James 1849) are the most famous - show that in 1748 he cried "not to sell or shave on Sundays" and Appleby the crier in 1772 was also paid for "crying off doing any business on Sundays".

The town crier position survived well into the 20th century via the Blythe family. There is a well known picture of a liveried Jack Blythe holding a bell and poster for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. The shadow at the bottom of the picture is said to be a man holding Jack upright after he had imbibed rather too strongly during the celebrations. His son George who was the last Louth town crier also appears in a later photograph on the Fish Shambles possibly crying the Louth Flood in 1920.

**FENICK(E) - EDWARD, THOMAS, GEORGE and 'W'**

![Fig.6 - Thomas Fenick 1682](tower-gallery.jpg)
![Fig.7 - Edward Fenick](pillar-s2-column-7-tower-floor.jpg)

This is a family of serial graffiti artists and the name Edward in particular appears many times on the tower columns, on the walls of the tower vice and
in the former bell ringers' chamber. 'W' FENICK(E) appears on the same column as the large, crudely executed Edward piece that has been previously interpreted as - 'Edward Fenick weds Heather Bell'.

In the former bell ringers' chamber Thomas and George Fenick are also represented. Where dated the names cover the period from the 1650s to 1682. The most prolific is Edward and his graffiti is always block lettered, crudely carved and the level of literacy is low. The letter 'N' is often reversed and in one instance the 'W' appears upside down reading EDMARD. In the most conspicuous of his marks the 'E' is missing thus making FNICK. Several initials 'EF' also appear in the same style on the tower walls probably made by the same man. In contrast the graffiti for Thomas (dated 1682) George (dated 1685) are both executed in a more proficient style. The name is variously spelt FENIK, FENICK or FENICKE proving that even members of the same family might spell their names in a different manner.

With all the names being represented in the former bell ringer's chamber (and on the walls up to it) it is tempting to suggest that they may once all have been bell ringers. The family undoubtedly had a more than passing connection to the Church and the Louth Corporation in the 17th century as in the Churchwarden's accounts of 1663 there appears a payment of one shilling -

"to ffenicke for dressing Sudbury Hutch".

This finely carved chest bequeathed by the late-16th century vicar Thomas Sudbury still exists in St James' today. In the Corporation Records for 1662 we see a payment of 6 pence -

"to ffenicke for cryinge the causes to be swept".

(crying the causeways [footpaths] to be kept clean upon pain of 6d for every offence committed)

We have seen the various ways in which the name can be spelt. Today the name is more likely to be 'FENWICK' and the name is a well-known one in Louth. In 1724 a Frederick Fenwick is listed as a witness to a St James' inventory and on the choir vestry floor is a ledger stone -

"In memory of Mary wife of Fidance Fenwick who died ye July 19 : 1733 aged 59"

On the WWII memorial in St Stephen's Chapel the name Roy Fenwick is remembered and Fenwick's Garage stood on Upgate in the middle years of the 20th century.
Two separate pieces of graffiti lead us to the name of an early 'organer' or musician at the church. In keeping with his musical profession the name Appleby is arranged along a four-line musical stave. The earliest mention of an organ in St James' comes from the Guild Accounts book for 1475 and various mentions of 'pairs' of organs in the Churchwardens Accounts. With the removal of the rood loft (and presumably the great organ) references to organs cease until 1768 when a David Atkinson provided the funds for a new one. That is 36 years after the date of our graffiti so this is one example of graffiti adding additional information to the written record.

A Thomas Hardy was Warden of Louth Corporation in 1690 and 1697. In the Parish Register, Burials 1703 -

"mr Thomas Hardy an Assistant was buried 25 September"
The only name that has been carved on a pillar in the Nave. In other churches the Nave is common territory for graffiti but this is not the case in St James'. This piece is perhaps 16th-17th century in date. The Sellwood name has connections in the 19th century to Alfred Tennyson the Poet Laureate and Sir John Franklin the Arctic explorer both of whom attended Louth Grammar School. Sarah Sellwood was a niece of Franklin and the mother of Emily Sellwood who married Tennyson. There is a memorial stone to her in St Mary's Church, Horncastle.

TRADESMEN

No building survives without regular repairs and maintenance and in various places, particularly on the tower columns, we have evidence of some of the tradesmen that have worked at St James' over the years. Some of the graffiti exhibits the remains of a coloured inlay suggesting this was no casual work but a deliberate attempt to highlight and enhance the lettering. Perhaps work on the church may have been done at favourable rates to allow for this advertising? The dated trade graffiti runs in quite a tight time-frame from 1774 to 1805 and this was a time when trade directories were just beginning and when the benefits of advertising a business was being realised.

Future searches of the Churchwardens' Accounts may reveal more facts and for the dated examples may reveal what particular work was required at that time.
Barkwith the glazier is represented a total of six times on all four major piers of the tower. All of the pieces have the date 1774 with five only having the initials 'HB'. In one example he gives his surname and location and in another he gives his trade. Piecing them together we have -

**H BARKWITH, GLAZIER, LOUTH 1774.**

From the parish registers we learn that his name was Hewson and he married Mary Blackborne on 23 May 1786. They had three children, his first born son also named Hewson (or Hughson) was baptised 27 September 1789. He was buried aged 78 on 12 June 1832 making him around 20 years of age when he made these marks. An indenture of 1795 describes him as a ‘master plumber’.

**J x COOK 1805 PAINTER**

As befitting his trade a neatly executed piece of work.
Engraved down a column between a south window and a badly cracked arch in the former bell ringers' chamber -

**GT 1786 : HB 1786 : JOHN CROW BRICKLAYER LOUTH MAY 21 1786**

John Crow the bricklayer is further represented on the parapet in the same chamber with the date 1784. Another piece - *(G) R CROW 1815* may be a son or other relative. The 'HB 1786' might be another example of H Barkwith the Glazier.

**CRISTOPHER ARDIN**
On a window reveal in the former bell ringers' chamber. The use of congruent compass-drawn circles (not shown) and a 3-spires motif suggest this man may have worked on the building and was perhaps an architect or mason.

JOHN ATKIN, WILLIAM THOROLD, G.W. 1760

Fig.17 - External north side window reveal

The only example of external graffiti found so far at ground level this is marked on a window reveal on the north side of the church. Further research is required to ascertain if these were workmen or Churchwardens. Thorold is an old Louth name. An Edward Thorold had issued a trade token in 1670 and at the time of this graffiti there was in Louth Samuel Thorold a mercer, Edward Thorold a butcher and William Thorold (son of Thomas) a baker. If the latter is our man then the graffiti is likely to be of Churchwardens rather than tradesmen. An old wall stone dated 1816 preserved at Louth Museum reads -

"1816 This stone is placed by John Atkin to perpetuate John Musgrave's right to build within nine Inches of this and any other building"

Accompanying the stone is a plaque -

"John Atkin, millwright and John Musgrave, malster owned adjoining properties on the north side of Padnole (Northgate)"

DRAWINGS

Much rarer than the ubiquitous graffiti names and initials are the little graffiti drawings occasionally found. Often enigmatic they are usually crudely formed but have a certain charm nonetheless.
On the west wall to the right of the west door is this lightly scored scene of a standing huntsman holding a spear. Above his head is depicted an antlered stag. The overlaying initials 'T P' may be contemporary. The hat and waisted tunic is typical of the late-medieval period and if contemporary with the drawing this would place it as the earliest known piece of graffiti within the church. The stone on which it sits would have been built in place there perhaps in the 1440s. At St Botolph and St John the Baptist Church, Croxton Kerrial, Leicestershire, a graffiti figure (albeit much better executed), dressed in a similar hat and tunic has been dated stylistically to the 15th century. This is outlined in red in the photograph for clarity.

On the base of a pillar on the north side (N7) is a small depiction of a sword.
fight between two protagonists. There is also a four-legged animal on the same surface and faint marks suggesting that at one time other figures may have been present. The stuffed-breeches worn by the "duellists" were in vogue in the 16th-17th centuries.

Whether casual graffiti or commemorating an actual event or folk memory is open to conjecture. In the Court Rolls 21st of Henry VI (1443) there is an entry- "Robert Curteys, walker was amerced 6d for committing an assault with drawn sword upon Thomas Rede in the cemetery of St James the Apostle".

Entries appear in the Court Rolls from time-to-time as fines for "drawing blood."

CLERICAL FIGURE PERHAPS A BOY BISHOP

High on the tower vice wall on a white stone is a figure dressed in a mitre and clerical robes and this may be a representation of a Boy Bishop. Payments of 6d are recorded in the churchwardens’ accounts every year from 1500 to 1524 for the “childe bishop”. Boy bishops were appointed yearly to hold office from the Feast of St Stephen to Holy Innocents Day (6th – 28th December) and as part of his duties he might process around the parish or even deliver a sermon.
On an arch in the former bell ringers' chamber appears this depiction of a sailing ship. Graffiti of ships appear in great frequency in churches throughout the country, often but not exclusively, near the coast. On a recent visit to All Saints Church, Theddlethorpe no less than fourteen were found, including three on a lead panel that had been removed from the roof and mounted on the wall. One suggestion for so many ships depicted in churches may be that they were 'prayers marked in stone' for the safe return of a ship and its passengers and cargo at a time when such means of travel was still very dangerous. Great sums of money could also be invested in cargo and lost along with the ship.
On a pillar in the former bell ringers' chamber is a SABRE engraved over the name and date 'W. SMITH 1814'. The date is of particular interest as this was during the height of the Napoleonic Wars and just a year before the Battle of Waterloo. Is this a soldier going off to war and leaving his mark in prayer for a safe return or is it a memorial to his death?

**RITUAL AND SPIRITUAL PROTECTION MARKS**
This group is usually listed under the term 'apotropaic' from the Greek *apotropaios* - to 'turn away evil'. An apotropaic image or symbol is a mark that was believed to provide protection to the person that made it or to the area on which it is marked. These marks can be made for good luck, to ward off bad luck or to avert the 'evil eye'. One such mark is also used by a stone mason in St James’ (see no.6 inside cover). The mason’s mark can be distinguished by its finely cut appearance achieved with a chisel rather than the more casually executed marks. Apotropaic marks are amongst the most common marks found in churches and are often also present in old domestic and agricultural properties and even on furniture and metalwork.

St James' has its share of these marks and it would appear that the area under the tower and near the west door was in particular need of protection. Another area with 'mysterious' symbols is near the top of the steps that would once have led to the rood loft - that is the vice within pier S8. Perhaps the church treasures within the rood loft were in need of this special protection. In other churches it has been noted that the area around the font is often a productive site for these marks.

**DAISY WHEEL OR HEXFOIL**

![Fig.23 - Pillar N1 Tower Floor](image)

Usually compass drawn, the 'daisy wheel' consists of an outer circle or circles, the centre filled with arcs forming a pattern likened to the petals of a daisy.
The protective element of this symbol is based on the endless line whereby a spirit or demon is attracted to the line and will try to follow it to its end thus trapping itself within the symbol. Such beliefs precede Christianity and can be found in the stories of sacred knots and puzzles of the Gordian and Solomon's knot. Two examples of this type of protective symbol have been found on the base of the pillar N1 close to the west wall and door. These are currently situated within the verger's cupboard.

PENTANGLES

Before the Reformation the pentangle was a specifically Christian symbol only afterwards becoming associated with the 'magic arts'. There is some written evidence for its protective and inspirational qualities from a 14th century manuscript by an unknown poet 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight' in which a golden pentangle is painted upon the knight's shield. In the poem it is described as the symbol of Solomon known in England as the 'endless knot' and would protect the knight in five ways. It was the symbol of the five wounds of Christ; of his five faultless fingers; of the five senses; of the five joys of the Virgin Mary in her son and lastly of the five virtues of knighthood.

Pentangles are the most obvious of the protection marks within St James' and are located on the pillar S1 (column 4) which is near the tower vice door and the main west door. Although some are faint there are a total of 7 pentangles here interspersed with other symbols that form a 'protective frieze'. I have been told that within living memory travelling gypsies would come into the church to touch these symbols for good luck. There is another pentangle conjoined with a partial compass-drawn circle on the north-facing wall of pier N2.
Marked on the tread of a step within the pier S8 and close to the door that would have led into the rood loft is a group of 7 symbols. Believed to be apotropaic in nature they may have been placed there to protect the contents of the loft. One of the symbols is the 'VV' *Virgo Virginum* (Virgin of Virgins) mark or in inverted as an 'M' known as a 'Marian' mark, both of which are associated with the cult of St Mary. This is a common symbol in many other churches too. In the Churchwardens Accounts for 1512-13 and 1540-41 there are two entries for the rood loft -

"a lock of the treasure house in the rood loft was mended"
"...and the little images in the rood loft were dressed"

The rood loft was removed in 1561-62 and the steps would then have become redundant although there is one later piece of graffiti on the wall dated 1714.

**CONSECRATION CROSS**
In medieval times whenever a new church was built and before it could be used for worship it would undergo a ceremony of consecration where the building would be anointed with holy oil by the local bishop. This anointing would be done 12 times inside and 12 times outside the church, the places to be anointed first being marked with a cross. Major reconstruction of a church could also result in a re-consecration ceremony taking place for example if walls had been demolished and moved or altars disrupted. Where consecration crosses survive they usually consist of a cross within a circle and are often painted red.

On a small section of north-facing wall under the tower is a small, faint compass-drawn circle containing just such a cross. As it is at a height of 12 feet and very lightly engraved the lines have been enhanced with pencil so that it can now be seen by the public. At one time this cross may have been painted to highlight it but if so no pigment remains today. On the west wall of the same pier there is a partial mark that may also once have been the site of a consecration cross.

**MERCHANDS’ or PERSONAL MARKS**

These are symbols used in lieu of a signature and they are often used by merchants and traders as a kind of trademark. At a time of low literacy these symbols would have been readily recognised as belonging to a particular merchant when marked on his goods. They also passed as personal marks and can be seen on memorial tombs, effigies, brass memorial plaques, within coats of arms and even on personal finger rings to mark in sealing wax.

St James’ is lucky to have at least eight of these marks. One is in the spire void and two in the bell ringers’ chamber, one of which in monogram form for 'HENRY' is a very fine piece of engraving. The others are clustered on two pillars in the chancel denoting that the owners of these marks were important men within the church and that this was a favoured area, perhaps part of a side chapel, at one time. This clustering has been noticed in other churches too. One example is dated 1580 and the others are likely to be 16th century too. That is perhaps a generation too late for these men to be Guild or Chantry members although some of them might still have been patrons of the church or churchwardens.

All the marks have the initials of the owner as part of the design and this must have some particular significance at St James’ as this is not always the case for merchants' marks. Another point of interest is that two of the marks are on the same pillar as the graffito for JOHN WHALEY (1578) who, if he is the same man as in the earlier records (Whetlay/Wheitley), was a priest of the Guild of St Mary. Might this point to these men being members of the same group?
Whilst we cannot positively assign names to these initials, one suggestion for 'IC' might be **JOHN CHAPMAN**.

In 1501-2 a John Chapman ‘merchand’ gave £20 to the building of the spire - a considerable sum of money in those days. He is listed as a churchwarden in 1504-5 and a further note gives the date 1505 when he died and was buried in the church. A later John Chapman was chosen as a captain of the Wapentake of Louth Eske at a muster at Julian Bower Cross during the Lincolnshire Rising in 1536. John Chapman of Thorpe Hall is also mentioned as a patron of the John Louth Chantry in the ‘pariche of Louth’ in 1547, and as Warden of the Corporation in 1557. A later John Chapman issued a Louth farthing trade token in 1658 and 1661. Clearly several generations of the Chapman family carried the Christian name John.
MASONS' MARKS

Also known as ‘banker’ marks after the stone bench on which masons worked, these are often the most prolific of marks in a church. They are usually finely cut with a chisel and generally consist of straight lines arranged in various simple patterns. They may have been cut into the dressed stones as a method...
of quality control and also sometimes to calculate the payments due to individual masons. We know from the records relating to the building of the spire that the masons or 'latomi', as they are sometimes referred to, were retained and paid weekly and so these marks were not necessary for the calculation of wages for that part of the building. The evidence on the walls of the spire so far confirm the written record as no masons' marks have yet been found within the spire void.

However, some 300 masons' marks have been found within the tower floor, nave and chancel to a wall height of approximately 10 feet and there will be many more on the higher tower levels that have yet to be surveyed. 123 masons' marks with 10 different masons represented in the total have been found on just one large pillar and pier under the tower (N2 on the plan).

Unlike the later spire for which the records name the masters and masons that worked on it we do not know who was responsible for the work on the tower. There is one 'superior' mark on the south wall of S2 (Fig.36 top left) currently situated in the gift shop that remains unique in the record - perhaps an approval mark of the master mason? In time we may be able to learn more of the building phases within the different areas of the church by researching these marks. 25 different masons' marks throughout the church have been found so far.

![Fig.36 - Masons' Marks Nave and Tower Floor](image1)

![Fig.37 - Masons' Marks Nave and Tower Floor](image2)

**LOMBARDIC SINGLE LETTERS**
(Fig.36 middle of top row)

The true purpose of these marks is still uncertain but St James' is not alone in having them as they have been recorded in many other churches too. One theory at the moment is that they may be related in some way to the masons...
that worked on the building. Certainly in St James' they appear in some places that would be difficult to reach for anyone intent on some casual graffiti.

The main location for them is on the nave pillars where all examples are of the letter 'N'. In particular, pillar N3 in the nave arcade has eight examples with four of them inverted suggesting they may have been marked before the stones were set in place. This may support the masons' mark theory as conventional masons' marks also appear in various degrees of orientation. There is another example on pillar N6 and on the south arcade, pillars S3, S4, S6 and S7 all have one example on the base. In addition to these there are two examples of a Lombardic lower-case 'R' on the west wall, one in the choir vestry and one above the tower vice door. These are both well out of the reach of casual graffiti marking.

**MISCELLANEOUS**

The following pieces are not arranged into any particular categories but are shown to highlight the full range of graffiti that can be found within St James'.

**HERALDIC SHIELD**

![Fig.38 - Pillar S2 base to right of Gift Shop](image)

Heraldry is well represented in churches across the country but this small shield is the only one found so far within St James'. There are labels or compartments along the top but no arms can be seen within the shield. Heraldry in graffiti form is always difficult to identify due to the lack of tinctures. If this shield was ever coloured then no trace remains today.
Within an elaborate cartouche 'F 24 1634 FSA'. The 'F' believed to be for February. Similar cartouches are known from other churches where they can be related to meetings, gatherings or military musters. It is uncertain in this case whether the graffiti commemorates an event or is a memorial to 'FSA'.

INITIALS CUT IN RELIEF
Large heavy mark 'W E' where the background has been cut away to leave strong letters in relief. The position of this piece in the chancel and the work involved is likely to denote that this man may have been a church official or a reasonably prominent man in local society.

**MONOGRAM**

![Image of monogram](image1)

Fig.41 - Pillar S10 in Chancel

A finely engraved mark in monogram form - possibly 'HBP' (B reversed). Its purpose is yet uncertain. It is probably not a mason's mark as it is not repeated anywhere else in the church and on the same pillar base on a side face there is also 'HP 171' (HP ligature) which may be related.

**NAME WITH 17thC DATE**

![Image of name and date](image2)

Fig.42 Pillar S11 in Chancel

**John Hardy 1671.** Further research is required to track this man down. Nearby is a 'VV' mark also known as a 'Marian' mark for St Mary and often used as an apotropaic protection mark. Others may be spotted around the church although they are not to be confused with the more finely chisel-cut examples which are a mason's mark.
MODERN TAG OVER 15TH CENTURY MASON'S MARK

Fig. 43 Tower Vice
Spotted on the wall of the vice - the winding stairs within the tower 'JG13'. Presumably in 2013 someone with the initials 'JG' has unwittingly put his (or her) tag over a 15th century cross-crosslet mason's mark. The old with the new.

TOWER GALLERY
Some of the finest graffiti in the church is located on this narrow walkway in the tower that was once part of the bell ringers' chamber. Sadly concrete strengthening and the resulting raising of the gallery floor has meant the surrounding parapet is now too low to allow safe public access. Below is just a flavour of the masses of graffiti that smother most of the walls here.

'MAZE'

Fig. 44
Even the experts have been unable to explain this one so far. One possibility is that it may relate to the apotropaic symbol group with a 'never-ending' line to trap evil spirits.
'SHIP'S MAST'?  

Another unexplained mystery item but it does resemble a ship's mast with streamer at the masthead and sails either side.

FRAMED INITIALS AND DATE  

Little chapel-like graffiti 'houses' with initials and dates appear in churches countrywide and are usually of 17th-18th century date. This one contains - **I·R 17·35**. These may be memorials to the dead.
F(rancis) Isles, Healing 1811 and W Chapman, Marshchapel 1810
Both entered Louth Grammar School in 1808.

Framed initials dated 1732 with bells engraved alongside suggesting that they were all bell ringers.
GRAFFITI WALL 3

Large sprawling piece of work 'WiLiAM DAVY OCTOBeR THE 30 1705'

GRAFFITI WALL 4

J MURPHY - W FREEMAN - JOHN REYNOLDS
GRAFFITI WALL 5

Fig. 51 - A couple of 19th century characters.

**COCKNEY BOB** and **DOBBIN FREEMAN**

ON THE TOWER GALLERY PARAPET

Fig. 52

**1640 STEPHEN : Avdrye Ianvarie : 6**

This example was cut apparently 'upside-down' on the parapet - a mystery that led to the discovery there had once been a floor at this level for the former bell ringers' chamber. Stephen appears in the parish register buried April 14th 1654.
THE EVIDENCE FOR BOY BISHOPS AT ST JAMES’ CHURCH, LOUTH

'The custom of electing a boy-bishop on the feast of St. Nicholas dates from very early times, and was in vogue in most Catholic countries, but chiefly in England, where it prevailed certainly in all the larger monastic and scholastic establishments, and also in many country parishes besides, with the full approbation of authority, ecclesiastical and civil. The boy-bishop was chosen from among the children of the monastery school, the cathedral choir, or pupils of the grammar school. Elected on St. Nicholas’s Day (6 December), he was dressed in pontifical vestments and, followed by his companions in priest’s robes, went in procession round the parish, blessing the people. He then took possession of the church, where he presided at all the ceremonies and offices until Holy Innocents Day on 28 December. The custom was abolished by Henry VIII, restored by Queen Mary and again abolished by Elizabeth I, though here and there it lingered on for some time longer’. (Catholic Encyclopedia 1913)

High on the tower vice of St James’s Church in Louth, Lincolnshire is a narrow passage that leads to a small locked cell. This still contains the medieval tread-wheel that was used to haul up the stone used in the building of the spire from 1501-1515. On a piece of chalk stone just inside the passage entrance is the graffito illustrated of a clerical figure dressed in chasuble, alb and wearing a mitre.

The graffito may date between the late-15th century when the tower was being completed in readiness for the building of the spire and the abolition of boy bishop ceremonies in the 1540s by Henry VIII who denounced them as ‘chyldysh observaunces’.

After the Lincolnshire Rising, which had started in this church just a few years earlier, it is likely that the church would be very compliant to new legislation and act swiftly to suppress the ceremony. The custom did however enjoy a brief revival elsewhere during the Catholic revival during Mary’s reign in the 1550s.

Written records of payments for a boy bishop in Louth are good as 'The First
Churchwardens’ Accounts Book’ (Dudding, published in 1941) shows regular payments to the chosen or elected boy during each year of the account book’s remit from 1500-1524. Although the spelling varies somewhat he is always referred to as a ‘chyld byschop’ rather than a ‘boy’.

Although we have few records at Louth prior to 1500 it seems that the ceremony was already well established by then and therefore may have been an ancient one. The payment to the boy bishop throughout the period of the churchwardens’ accounts is 6d but in some years in addition to the simple accounting there are a few clues to flesh out a little more detail of the ceremony.

In 1500 and again in 1501 there are entries for payments -

‘to the chyld byschop at cristynmes for j paire cloffs’

That is for the purchase of a pair of gloves for the boy bishop to wear during his tenure. Other than the graffito this is the only clue to any additional items of dress that may have been worn although in an inventory of the goods of St James’s Church dated 1486 there appears the following entry - ‘also ij copis of childer of silke’ - that is two copes of silk for children. At Magdalen College, Oxford on the eve of St Nicholas when their boy bishop was elected it is recorded that one of the items he was presented with was a pair of gloves as a mark of dignity.

In 1500 we see payments to Thomas Couper and Joh. Bradpull for nayls (nails) and in 1501 and again in 1505 –

‘for one child bishop – nayles, makyng his see’.

‘Item paid for making the childe bishop see’.

These payments suggest a prop or staging was used in the ceremony. Perhaps a seat or throne had been made or, given the small sums involved, a previously made item had been repaired.

In many places the boy bishop was chosen on 6th December at The Feast of St Nicholas and held office until Holy Innocents Day on December 28th. We do not know if this was the case at Louth, for we have no evidence for the election itself, but the boy bishop certainly presided on Holy Innocents Day as in 1513-14 a payment of 6d is made –

‘for the childe bischop at cristynmes of childermes day’.

‘Childermes’ or ‘Childermass’ is an ancient name for The Feast of the Holy Innocents when it had also become customary for boy bishops to deliver a sermon. At Louth it seems likely that the title when bestowed was held until the next boy was appointed for in the year 1502 we see an entry –

'Item paid to the child byschope at Cristynmes for a yer in part of his expenses'......6d.
Although the written record for Boy Bishop ceremonies is widespread, tangible evidence of their existence is very much rarer. There is a small episcopal tomb effigy in Salisbury Cathedral (where boy bishop ceremonies are well documented) which was long believed to be that of a boy bishop but this is now more generally believed to be that of a secondary heart or viscera burial of a real bishop.

In 1842-3 on the removal of some priest’s stalls in St Mary’s Church, Bury St Edmunds a number of coin-like lead tokens were discovered. Since that time many more of these tokens have been found usually bearing a bishop’s mitre or the head of a bishop on one side and with a legend that often includes the inscription SANCTE NICOLAE (St Nicholas) or similar. These are mainly seen in the Bury St Edmunds and Suffolk area and are believed to be connected to the boy bishop ceremonies held there. They may have been distributed by the boy bishop as part of the ceremony which did in many places include feasting and perambulations around ‘his’ parish. Other examples of similar tokens exist in Continental countries too.

In addition to these few examples we may now perhaps also enter into the record a graffito representation of a boy bishop at St James’s Church in Louth. It is hoped that as the recording of graffiti from buildings becomes more common as a means of acquiring historical evidence then further examples may come to light of this once common but now lost medieval ceremony.

In recent years in some places the boy bishop ceremony has been reintroduced with Hereford and Salisbury Cathedral amongst others resurrecting it. There are many references to Boy Bishops online and the links below are just a useful sample of the information that can be found.

Curious Church Gleanings – Boy Bishops
https://archive.org/stream/curiouschurchgl00unkngoog#page/n255/mode/2up

Camden Miscellany – Two Sermons preached by the Boy Bishop……
https://archive.org/stream/camdenmiscellany07camduoft#page/n7/mode/2up

St Nicholas Center – Boy Bishops or Nicholas Youth Bishops
http://www.stnicholascenter.org/pages/boy-youth-bishops/

St Nicholas Center – Boy Bishops - general links
http://www.stnicholascenter.org/pages/search/?query=boy+bishop

St Nicholas or ‘Boy Bishop’ tokens in fifteenth and sixteenth century East Anglia
http://www.caitlingreen.org/2015/01/st-nicholas-or-boy-bishop-tokens-in.html
This small graffito is carved in the nave on the base of the north pillar (N7) to the side of the communion rails. It was initially discovered in 2016 during a survey recording all of the church graffiti.

The purpose of this short article is to consider whether the graffito is merely a casual work or might in fact preserve the memory of an actual event. Are there indeed any local events that might fit the scenario?

The scene is clearly of two men fighting with swords with one of them being pierced in the stomach or side. They are dressed in the type of stuffed breeches that were current in the 16th and 17th centuries. When we look closely at the pillar it can also be seen that there are other markings in this area including a small animal and the faint outline of another figure that may also be holding a sword. Whether the latter has worn away over time or was never completed is open to conjecture.

In general terms, altercations and fights often appear in the local records, and in the case noted below might even take place within the church bounds. In the Court Rolls (21st of Henry VI, 1443) there is this entry-

Robert Curteys walker was amerced 6d for committing an assault with drawn sword upon Thomas Rede in the cemetery of St James the Apostle.

Entries also appear in the Court Rolls from time to time as fines for 'drawing blood'. However, the mode of dress depicted in this carving appears to be later than that of the 15th century.

Another period for inspiration might be during the events surrounding the English Civil war in the 1640s. There are a few revealing entries in the burial registers at this time –
Three strangers was slaine at the scrimins [and] being soulgeres was Buryed the iij Daye of June.

Thomas Skill a Shoulger was Buryed the xxiiiij Day May.
William Birde a Shoulger was Buryed the xxx Daye October.

Mā’ Nickolas Archur a shoulger was Buryed the ij Daye October.

Of course we do not know whether these men were killed by sword or gun nor indeed on which side of the argument they fought. Many of the local gentry, including the Bolles, were firmly Royalist and had to pay heavy fines after the war had ended. Although Louth saw only minor actions or skirmishes during the war it nevertheless appears that St James’ suffered some damage at this time. Canon Burton in his church guide records that in a preamble to a later subscription list of 1720-21 the following appears –

‘the pews and seats as well as the pavement thereof were very much ruinated in the time of our unfortunate Civil wars, and never since regularly mended, some or most of them being the same as they were left by those enemies of our place of devotion’.

From Swaby’s 'History of Louth’ we learn that the 1643 skirmish at Louth occurred when a party of Royalists left Gainsborough on 1st June and was found lodging in Louth the next day. A Parliamentary force was sent to intercept them and made such rapid progress that they arrived in the early hours of the 3rd June taking the Royalists completely by surprise. Such was the rout they afterwards took a hundred prisoners on to Lincoln. A report states "the chief commanders of the enemy saved themselves by flight". The fate of Lincolnshire was sealed in the same year at the nearby Battle of Winceby. The Parliamentary forces however failed to take Newark Castle and when relieved by Prince Rupert in 1644 it became the base for several later raids into Lincolnshire. These may have been the reason for the later church register entries of 1644 and 1645.

No documentary evidence has been found for the oft repeated local anecdotes that Oliver Cromwell slept in a house in the market place before the nearby battle of Winceby or indeed that Sir Charles Bolle hid under Ramsgate Bridge whilst being pursued by Parliamentary forces during the skirmish described above.

Clearly then there are several episodes during the Civil War which might have inspired our graffito but are there any others in the records? There is
in fact one recorded event that would fit the scene very neatly and this occurred in Louth in 1631 - a sword fight or duel between John Legard and Richard Bolls (Bolle or Bolles).

The facts are recorded in a petition from John Legard’s father to King Charles I found amongst papers at Melbourne Hall in Derbyshire. On 14th April 1631 John Legard came upon Richard Bolls in Louth and on hearing his name was Bolls asked if he was ‘of Gaton’. Someone said he was the son of him of Gaton (also named Richard) who was now dead. Legard said Bolls’ father owed a Mr Brampton £40 and that this debt was now due to him. Bolls countered that Brampton owed his father 100 marks for which he had a judgement. There then followed various insults with Bolls calling Brampton a base fellow and footman whereupon Legard then struck him. Bolls dared Legard to fight and called him a coward and a schoolboy. The challenge was accepted and they presently went into a pit a little out of town to fight also being accompanied by Jackson a friend of Richard Bolls.

Legard fought in his riding coat with a stick in his left hand. A smith working nearby heard them draw swords and attempted to part them with a staff but Jackson took it from him and with it knocked the stick out of Legard’s hand. Legard hurt Bolls in the right shoulder at the first pass and after they drew breath he then wounded him in the right arm. At this stage Legard moved to leave but again Bolls called him a coward. Legard said he hoped he had satisfied him otherwise and wished to leave as Bolls was hurt. At this stage Jackson intervened imploring Bolls to fight again saying ‘I pray thee Dick one bout more for my sake’. They started to fight again and this time Legard severely wounded Bolls on the right side. As he fell Legard said ‘Woe is me I have
done too much’. Within half an hour Bolls was dead but not before confessing the actions were his own fault.

At a coroner’s court the next day Legard was charged with manslaughter. It is believed that this John Legard was the son of Robert Legard of Anlaby in Yorkshire. If so then his petition was a successful one as John succeeded his father and married Jane the daughter of Robert Hildyard by whom he had several children.

Richard Bolle was buried the next day, his name appearing in St James’ burial register on 15th April 1631 –

Richard is believed to be the son of Richard Bolle of Gayton-le-Marsh which would be the ‘Gaton’ mentioned in the petition. Richard Bolle senior was the uncle of Sir John Bolle of Thorpe Hall (see picture above), the latter being the hero of Cadiz and the Bolle connected with the legend of the Green Lady of Thorpe Hall. Richard senior sold Thorpe Hall to John in 1595 and thereafter settled with his family at Gayton-le-Marsh.

Richard Junior may have been born ca. 1590 and would therefore have been around 40 years of age at his death. The Consistory Court Calendar shows the Will of Richard Bolls, Gent of Theddlethorpe receiving probate in 1631. A ‘widow’ Bole (perhaps of Richard?) was buried at Theddlethorpe on February 14th 1654-5.

The pit ‘a little out of town’ where the fight took place may have been the Quarry on the London Road where the town’s butts had once been set up for archery practice. The beast markets were also held there during Fair time, hence it later becoming the site of the town’s cattle market. In the description of the fight it was said to be surrounded by hills which would suit the location of the Quarry very well.

Although we cannot say with any degree of certainty that this little graffito is directly associated with any of the events described above, it does nevertheless offer an opportunity to reveal some rather fascinating facts about early Louth that may not otherwise have been brought to our attention.
REPAIRS TO SPIRE 1936-37
Walter Albert Owen (on right)