

Combined Reports on St Lawrence Church, Stratford Sub Castle, Wiltshire.

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**A survey of Historic Graffiti St Lawrence Church,
Stratford Sub Castle, Wiltshire**
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**Report on St Lawrence, Stratford sub Castle Church Screen and Fittings,
Box Pews and Doors**
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Report



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Introduction

A survey of the historical graffiti within St Lawrence Church, Stratford Sub Castle was conducted between the 4th and the 14th of July 2017. The survey identified four hundred and sixty five individual marks ranging from simple vertical scratches to a complex geometric design that could represent the trinity or a celestial map. The marks are distributed through the interior of the church with concentrations in the tower, around the south porch and around the now sealed up north door.

Methodology

A systematic photographic survey was conducted using digital cameras and raking light sources in accordance with established best practice (Champion, 2014; Ingram, 2015, 2016). Each graffiti mark once identified utilising the raking light source was recorded as a digital image. The photograph number, location and short description of the mark recorded to allow later analysis.

Once the images have been recorded, they can be processed to ensure colour balance and exposure using Adobe Photoshop CC, the marks are then traced where required to enhance visibility using Corel Draw X6.

In addition to the general raking light survey, a number of marks were recorded using Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI).

Reflectance Transformation Imaging is a composite photographic process that utilises a series of photographs taken of a static subject or object with a directed light source. The specific method used here is the Highlight method, a reflective sphere is placed in shot and used to identify the directionality of the light source in creating a virtual dome around the subject. The images are then processed to form a single file allowing for virtual lighting from any angle (Cultural Heritage Imaging 2018).

Results of Survey

The survey identified four hundred and sixty five individual marks distributed through the interior and across the exterior of St Lawrence's Church. These marks are distributed through the following groups (Table 1) and locations (Table 2).

Table 1. Graffiti by class of mark

Mark Type	Number identified
Cross	46
Person	1
Compass Drawn	16
Date	59
Textual	207
Votive	44
Architectural	2
Ship	1
Animal	1
Apotropaic	1
Linear geometric	35
Vertical lines	20
Weapons	1
Masons marks	1
Memorial	2
Merchants mark	1
Pentagrams etc	2
Dot drawn marks	25

Table 2. Graffiti distribution by location

Location	Number
North Door	45
South Porch external	61
South Porch internal	98
South Door	4
West Door	13
Nave	3
Vestry	2
Chancel	2
Chancel arch	4
Bell Ringers room	2
Clock Room	165
Tower stairs	12
Exterior South Wall	12
Exterior North Wall	2
Pew - North rear next to font	40

Within this distribution a number of marks stand out for specific mention.

Memorial marks

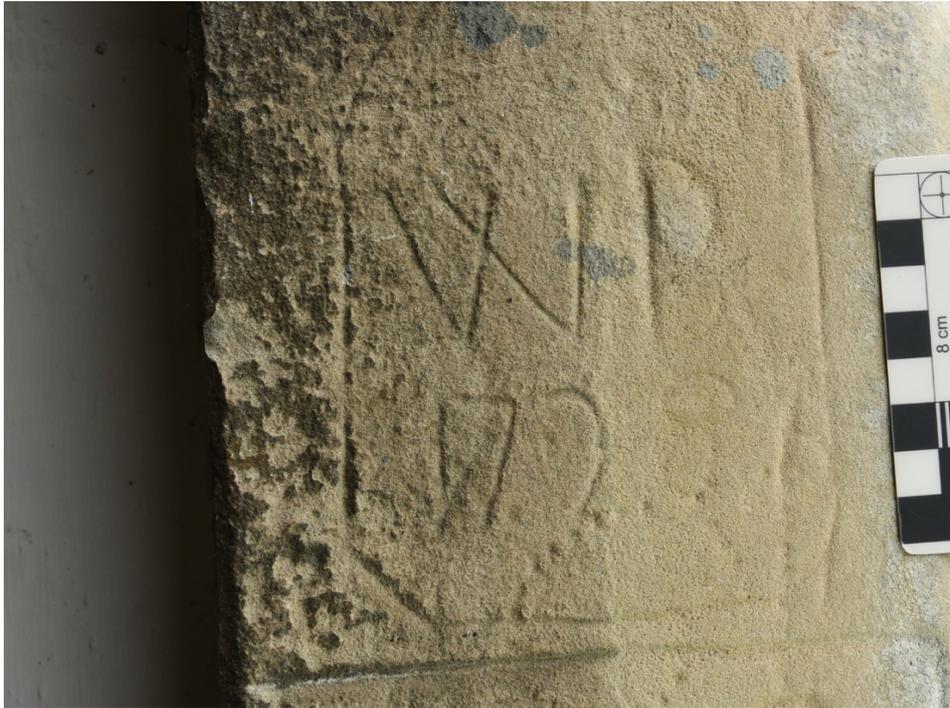


Figure 1. Probable memorial mark to WB 1728, south porch (authors own image 2017)



Figure 2. Possible memorial mark to FB 1885, south wall (authors own image 2017)

Marks like these (Figure 1 and Figure 2) can be found on many churches through the country and have been shown to correspond to entries in death entries in parish records. It is therefore likely that these and two more that have been identified on the exterior of St Lawrence are similarly attributable to being memorial marks.

South porch composite marks

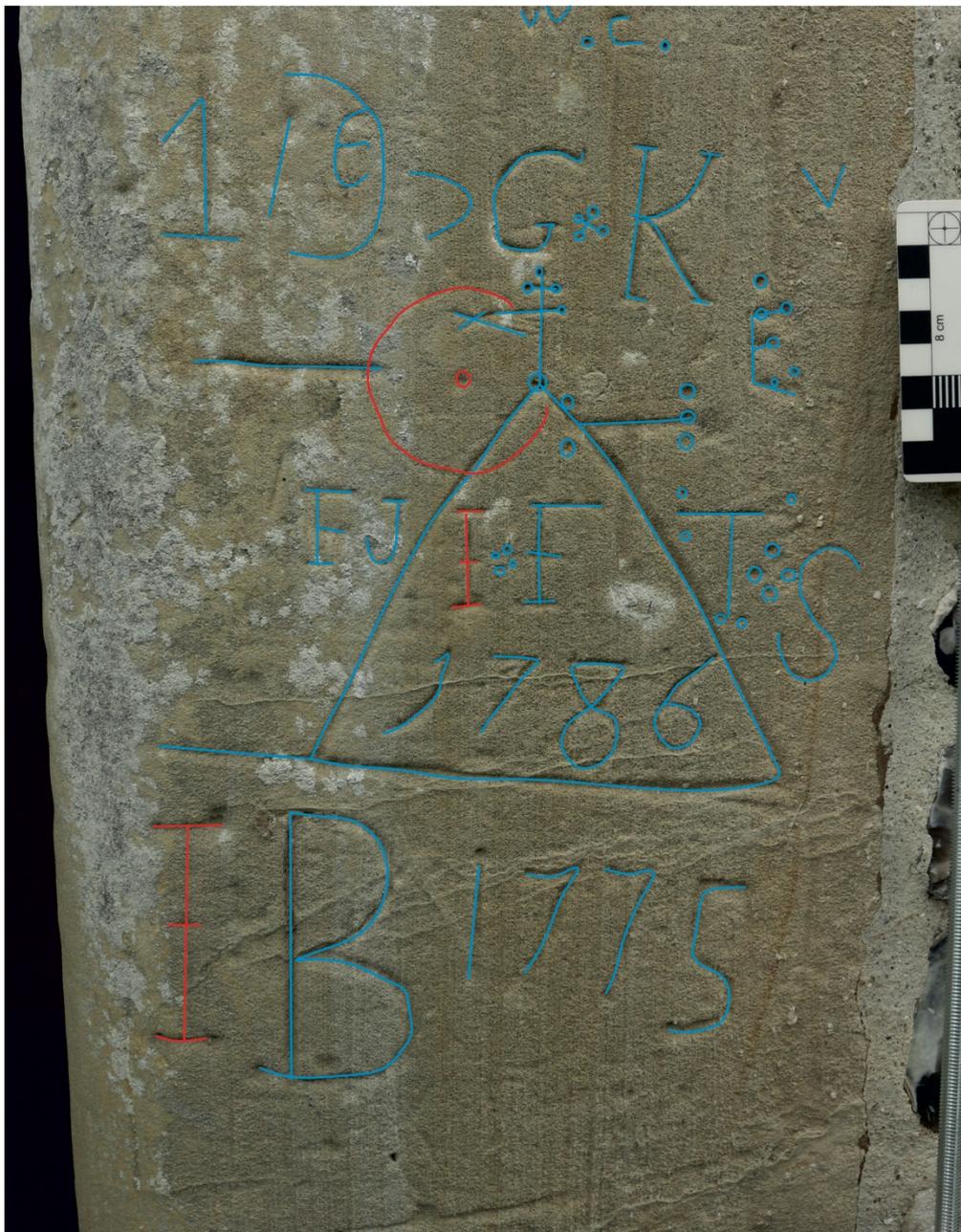


Figure 3. A complex composite of marks, south porch (authors own image)

This complex panel (Figure 3) appears to be a multi period composite comprising of a series of later dates, initials and geometric patterns over cutting, and in some cases reusing, older marks. It is probably that the compass drawn mark and the two archaic J forms, all shown in red, are significantly earlier than the other marks. The significant number of crosses present are impossible to date and therefore could relate to either the earlier or later collection of marks.

Octagram



Figure 4. Octagram low on the interior of the south porch (authors own image 2017)

Less common than the pentagram, it is likely that this eight-pointed star (Figure 4) is similarly an apotropaic mark intended to provide some form of spiritual protection within the entrance to the church.

World War 2 marks



Figure 5. Probable World War 2 mark, clock room in tower (authors own image 2017)

It is likely that this mark (Figure 5) relates to the troops camped in the area as part of the invasion of occupied Europe. The identity of the geometric forms is unknown.

Other marks

Alongside the specific marks highlighted are a number of votive marks (Figure 6 and Figure 7), crosses and other initials, the photographic records of these are included with this report as an archive and can be identified utilising the associated spreadsheet data.



Figure 6. Votive mark IR at north door (authors own image 2017)



Figure 7. Votive mark VV at west door (authors own image 2017)

The Tower

Whilst it is generally accepted that the tower dates from the reconstruction work in 1711 it is probable that some of the graffiti present predates this. Of particular note is the compass drawn mark on the central window mullion (Figure 8) which would appear to be earlier than the surrounding text inscriptions. Also present is a votive I (J) on the opposite side of the mullion (Figure 8), this votive mark is in a clearly different hand to the added B which also appears to overcut it indicating that it is a later addition to modify an existing inscription and reform it into a new meaning.



Figure 8. Compass drawn mark on mullion (authors own image 2017)



Figure 9. Votive I(J) on window mullion, clock room in tower (Authors own image 2017)

Reflectance Transformation Imaging results

A limited number of selected panels of graffiti were recorded using RTI, this technique enhances the photographic imaging and can reveal otherwise lost marks. The results are particularly strong for a panel that is located on the west side of the external arch that forms the south porch. These results reveal a complex design constructed from a series of connected circles that probably form a representation of the spiritual or celestial world.

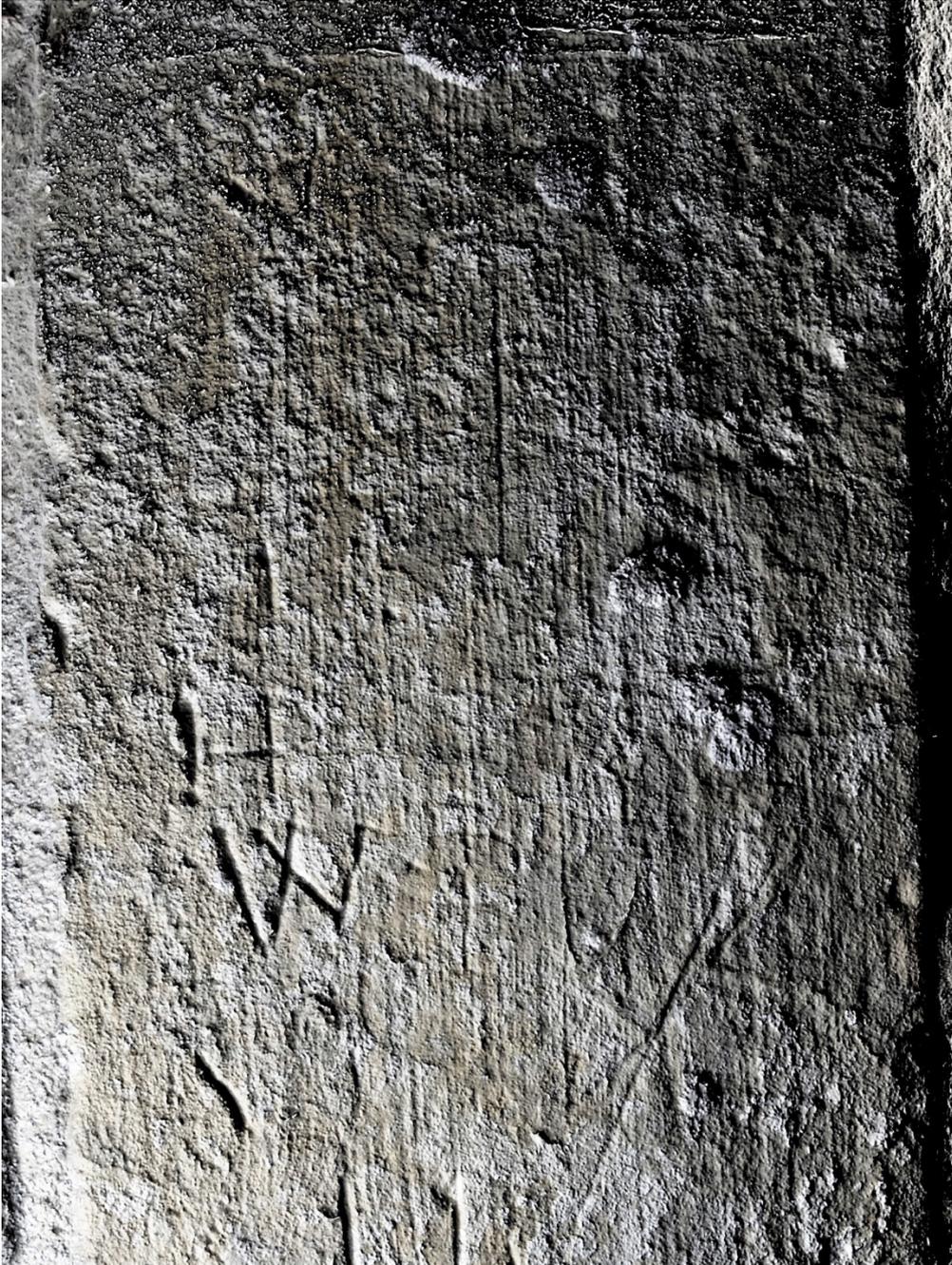


Figure 10. Output from RTI file showing possible celestial or spiritual diagram (authors own image 2017)

The compiled files are included in the photographic archive along with a copy of the viewer program.

Interpretation

The graffiti present at St Lawrence, Stratford Sub Castle shows evidence of continual deposition from the first use of the church following its construction to the mid twentieth century and possibly beyond. There is evidence of probable medieval graffiti consisting of crosses and compass drawn marks as well as the votive VV marks associated with the Marian cult. Some of these marks being overcut by later graffiti associated with the eighteenth century such as those seen in figure 3.

The graffiti in the generally accessible areas of the church shows clustering around the south door and porch (163 marks in total) as well as the now closed up north door (45 marks). This clustering would suggest that both entrances have been used historically by the population of the parish for access to the church with the south entrance and porch seeing the majority of use. The other significant clustering appears in the clock room of the tower. This consisting of a collection of marks made by clock makers and church wardens along with others who have had access to this space, of particular note in the mark shown in figure 5 which may be connected with the deployment and encampment of troops during the second world war.

Whilst there are a low number of marks present in the nave and chancel those marks that are present are of interest, these include the collection of trees and figures marked onto the pew closest to the font at the time of survey and the crude architectural design on the south east side of the chancel arch, this design may depict either a window or an arch under construction.

The significant number of textual graffiti suggests a strongly literate population over the life of the church. It is likely that much of this textual graffiti is post reformation and a proportion of it is dated to the 18th century and corresponds with the period after the partial reconstruction of the church. It is also possible that there was a significant level of literacy in the community given the vicinity with the city and the historic connection with the cathedral (Crittall, 1962) and as such some of the textual graffiti may be earlier in date.

There is the possibility that some of the stones containing graffiti have been relocated to their current positions during the periodic rebuilding and repair work that has been undertaken at the church from the 16th century to present (Crittall, 1962). Though given that many of the graffiti panels span multiple blocks and that the majority of this work is reported as being restricted to “retiling and repointing” and the 18th century reconstruction of the tower (Crittall, 1962) this is unlikely, therefor the present position of the graffiti is likely to be its original location.

In conclusion the collection of graffiti at St Lawrence Church, Stratford Sub Castle represents an archaeological assemblage standing for activity within the parish and village over several hundred years. As such it should be noted and future works undertaken at the church should take note not to damage areas that contain such marks.

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Report on St Lawrence, Stratford sub Castle Church Screen and Fittings, Box Pews and Doors with some Supplementary Remarks on the Church's Royal Arms and Nave Corbels

Penny Copeland and Jude Jones

Penny Copeland and Jude Jones visited the Old Sarum Project run by the Archaeology Department of Southampton University at Stratford Sub Castle on the 23rd July 2018, which included a visit to St Lawrence's parish church. We were kindly hosted by Mr Jim Platt, the chair of the fabric committee, who allowed us access to elements of the church's architecture in which we had previously shown an interest. In response to queries about the nature, age and construction of the chancel screen we have prepared this short report. While neither of us are experts on medieval chancel screens, Penny Copeland is a building archaeologist and Jude Jones has written extensively on early modern church furniture and fittings (e.g. Jones 2013a, 2013b, 2017a, Jones and Smith 2017b).



Fig.1 Looking down the nave to the screen

Screen between chancel and nave

The arch between the nave and the chancel is relatively narrow, and therefore we think that it is unlikely to have had a full rood loft – these were generally to be found in later, wider arches and are generally accompanied by stairs within the fabric of the walls. Accordingly, this church is likely to have been fitted with a non-load bearing rood or chancel screen, rather than the full loft which would be capable of supporting statuary, musicians and/or preachers. It may however have been suited to bearing the usual statuary i.e. a central crucifix (often flanked by the figures of the Virgin Mary and St John the Baptist) and thus the beam itself might also have housed candles used to illuminate the statues during the crucial festivals of the liturgical year (Pounds 2000:457-8, Whiting 2010 3-5).



Fig.2 Closer east-west view of the screen from the chancel.

Most of the screen is heavily covered in dark brown paint. On the chancel side, it is clear that some of this paint is “graining” - designed to imitate wood work. It is also obvious in places that the panels have moved fractionally exposing a layer of white – either part of a white paint scheme or gesso as preparation for a later wood effect (Figs. 3 and 4). White (or grey) painted panelling is commonly found in early-mid 18th century churches (a good example is the chancel pew, pulpit and gallery panelling in St James-without-the-Priory-Gates, Southwick, Hants which, like St Lawrence, had a complete make-over in the early years of the 18th century (Pevsner and Lloyd 1967: 604-9, Jenkins 2000 254-5, www.stjamesouthwick.org.uk). The church retains these changes into the present - see Fig.5). Graining (used as an alternative in 17th century panelling) came back into fashion by 1800 (Parissien 1999: 175, 180) so this may help date the present scheme.

Traces of red and green paint seem to be visible under the brown on the open screen uprights, although these posts have less paint on them than the tracery above, suggesting they are later replacements.



Fig. 3 Eastern side of the screen panelling from within the northern pew

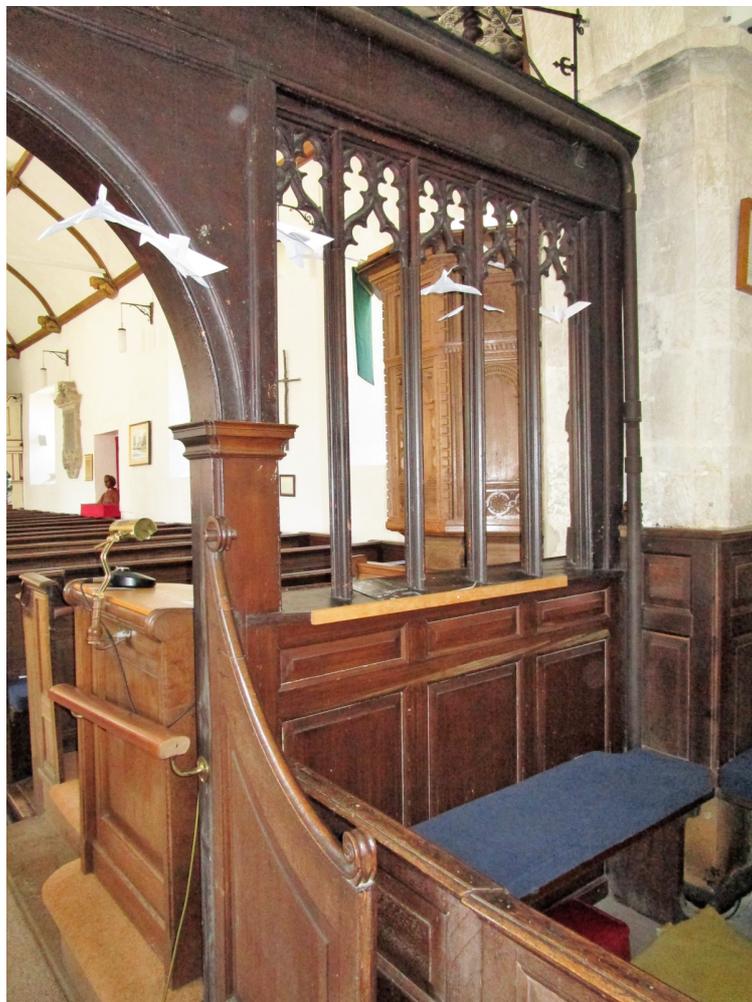


Fig. 4 North eastern corner of the screen



Fig. 5 Norton gentry pews in St James-without-the-Priory-Gate's chancel, Southwick, Hants, showing the effect of 18th century white paint. The men's pew is to the north, arranged in two ranked tiers. The nearer south pew is for the Norton ladies and subdivided into two compartments suggesting one caters for the senior family women and the other for lesser female relations or household members.

Top rood beam or cornice:

The rood beam is ornately moulded but the ornament appears only on one side, facing the nave. The other side has been boarded over with a bead moulding, a possible Georgian alteration. This suggests that the beam has somehow been modified, the boarding concealing the evidence. In addition, the ornaments on St. Lawrence's beam (discussed below) are not symmetrical to the opening. There is an ornament right up against the stone work on the south side, whereas on the north side, the ornament is set away from the wall.

Roses on the ornaments suggests a Tudor date but these are also commonly found on Stuart tomb monuments and architecture into the 18th century, though by this time they are evidence of a more conservative or traditional taste. The dating also applies to the winged cherubs which are similarly found on Tudor/Stuart-early 18th century monumental and decorative church architecture where they are symbolic of the soul, released by death and flying up to Heaven (see Tarlow 1999 and Llewellyn 2000 for mortuary symbolism in monumental church imagery). From their style these would seem to be later examples and possibly contemporary with the insertion of the central classical arch (see Figs. 6 and 7). Fig 8 shows the reredos of the altar at St James, Southwick, featuring a plethora of winged cherubs and painted in the early 1720s by an anonymous Italian artist (Jones 2013b:105). Winged cherub heads are a common mortuary motif found on 17th-18th century tombs, memorials and graves.



Fig. 6 West side of screen showing ornaments on the beam.



Fig. 7 Rose plaques and winged cherub head ornamental carvings.



Fig. 8 Painted reredos in St James-without-the-Priory-Gates, Southwick, Hants, depicting winged cherubs ushering the Christian soul up to Heaven

Top tracery:



Fig. 9 Top tracery and beam

The tracery fits very well into the beam suggesting that they were constructed as a set. The tracery style is much simpler than many extant examples of 15th century chancel screen tracery found in churches in, for example, Devon and Norfolk and its age contrasts with the later upright mullions that connect up to it. The tracery appears to be oak. One ornamental post (imitation buttress) is present in the upper section of the north corner of the screen, sitting under an ornament on the top beam, appearing very much as the original end to the upper part of the screen (*see Fig. 10*). The equivalent post at the southern end could not be accommodated in the available space indicating that the screen has been cut down. The similarity of the tracery and upper panels to perpendicular decoration that one can find on table, chest and wall tombs of the 14-15th centuries suggests that it is late medieval.



Fig 10 Northern end of the screen showing the imitation buttress and arrangement of ornaments.

Central band:

The central band below the upper tracery incorporates narrow panels with quarter bead moulding. This moulding, very similar to that on the west and south doors, is likely to be Georgian and constructed out of softwood (*See Fig. 11*).

Transom or Lower band :

The lower band has evidence at the northern end against the arch that it has come from another screen – a junction and post very close to the wall. The junction of two beams with a post at this point is an extremely unlikely construction. This also indicates that all of the lower tracery panels are from another location (*See Fig. 12 below*).



Fig. 11 Central band with recessed panel with quarter bead moulding above lower band.



Fig. 12 Lower post with peg holes from the insertion of the lower band on either side. The band to the north has been severely truncated by the wall and frame



Fig. 13 Fretwork design on lower band with replacement at the southern end

The southern half of the band has a very fine piece of carving on the west side – very flowing and elegant, suggestive of the Order of the Garter (*see Figs. 13 and 14*). It has been lengthened at some point, and while that replacement is very well done and shows how it was made by a subtraction technique, it is slightly thicker and unpainted. We have not yet found a direct comparison but there are a wide variety of decorated bands of equally complex designs on other chancel screens. The back of this section is panelled softwood painted dark brown over gesso or white lead.



Fig 14 Detail of band and dado/lower panel tracery



Fig. 15 Northernmost tracery and panel of the south side of the screen's dado showing the overlap of the arch structure.

This arrangement is not followed here suggesting that pieces come from different screens, perhaps put together with the upper band. The tracery also has wider perpendicular posts than the upper panels and the panels themselves seem more elaborate, with the spandrels and carving indicating a possible late 15th- early 16th century date (which might be contemporary with the 16th century church refitting mentioned in the Victoria County History for Wiltshire if the transom was reused (Critall 1962: 199-213)). The panels are in oak and were designed to be fully enclosed, providing a barrier to both access and view. We have yet to find a researched comparison with the spandrel carvings. The early woodwork has been painted brown, but it may well have originally been brightly coloured and the larger flat panels would have had paintings of saints or patriarchs facing the nave (*see Fig 17*). As nearly all the flat panels have been replaced with oak and other timber in the recent past, the saints may have been taken as art or removed in the later Reformation. Only one of the panels survives but the lowest section has been replaced, possibly due to water damage (*see Fig 16*).

The back of the tracery is panelled with softwood painted dark brown imitation wood over white lead or gesso.



Fig. 16 The earliest surviving panel and the scarfed in elements of panel, sill and muntins.



The Stambourne screen including imitation buttresses, similar cusping and spandrels.
<http://www.essexviews.uk/photos/Essex%20Churches/Essex%20Churches%20S-T/Stambourne-Church-Essex-Chancel-Screen.jpg>

Arch opening:

This is later than both the lower and the upper tracery as it sits over part of both on the southern side (see Fig. 15 for example). It is formed from soft wood, in contrast to all the wall panelling and box pews of the chancel.



Fig. 18 Neoclassical arch inserted into gothic screen

This is a definitive insertion and must date to Pitt's renovations which finished around 1711. Its architectural style presents a strongly marked contrast to the Gothic qualities of the rest of the screen in its uncompromising classical post-Renaissance form and is highly redolent of the late 17th/early 18th century auditory church architecture of Wren and Hawksmoor etc. (Jones and Smith 2017). The fact that the rest of the chancel screen has been remodelled from a previous or refitted medieval oak screen or screens and the softwood arch inserted implies that if this is an element of the Pitt refurbishment a conscious decision was made simply to open up the chancel by means of the arch and its half doors rather than to remove it or completely rebuild it in a more contemporary neo-classical style. Perhaps a money-saving decision was made here. At any rate, the retention of the screen also suggests that the moderniser was a traditionalist, not just from the nature of the ornaments added to the beam but from his (?) desire to delineate the chancel pews from those in the nave by means of maintaining this architectural barrier between them, thereby continuing to enhance the status of those occupying the chancel pews.

General conclusions on the screen:

The screen comprises three separate elements. The top beam and upper tracery are late medieval, but do not originate from this position. The lower tracery and framework are also late medieval but belong to a different screen almost certainly not from this church. The composition of this screen suggests someone who did not understand the rules of perpendicular architecture, especially when one bears in mind, as mentioned above, the upper perforated panels of perpendicular chancel screens would normally spatially match their lower filled in and painted counterparts, either on a one to one basis or in multiples of twos or threes which is not the case here. Finally, there is the neoclassical arch and panelling most likely to be from the Pitt modernisation.

There remains therefore the question of where the screen elements might have come from. In particular, the rood beam and upper tracery may be part of a larger full rood loft set forward from its present location, or from a different church where it may have been part of a parclose. Without

removing the boarding at the rear of the beam, it is difficult to confirm why it was necessary to conceal the back, unless the beam was previously used as a construction timber. It also seems likely that even before the Reformation and the new laws devised by Edward VI and Elizabeth I concerning the removal of rood lofts and their statuary together with the general substitution of roods with more permeable chancel screens, St Lawrence's previously had a simple wooden screen (similar to the present one) rather than a more elaborate version (see Pounds 2000:446-450 for more on rood screens). As we have discussed above, we infer this from the fact that there is no sign of rood loft stairs or mortices on either side of the chancel arch to enable the priest or his officiants to access the loft for ceremonial, preaching or musical purposes.

Other observations:

Chancel pews:

The chancel has a well preserved set of oak box pews with oak wall panelling (wainscot) up to the altar rail (in contrast to the arch). Up until the 19th century a system of honour applied to pews whereby those closest to the pulpit (or occasionally to the altar) were regarded as being the most desirable seats and the church authorities charged pew rentals in line with this system and according to the size of the pew (Hayman 2007:147). The practice of seating patrons and the more reputable local families in the chancel became commonplace from the 17th century onwards when rural demographics show that parish populations were increasing. This allowed less influential



Fig. 19 Detail of marks left by upholstery studs in upper panelling band of northwest box pew of the chancel.

parishioners to expand their pew space within the nave but catered for the highly stratified and hierarchical nature of country society during this period by housing upper class parishioners separately during services (Marsh 2011:145-6).

The northern pew up against the chancel arch has indications of tacked upholstery all around the pew, with the exception of the panelling of the screen and the panelling on the chancel arch (see Fig 19). However, there are no surviving tack marks at floor level on east and south sides, suggesting that those pew sides have been lowered. It is possible that this lowering of the pew walls was carried out over the whole chancel and this theory is supported by scarring on the north eastern pew. In the centre of the wall panelling is a scar for a cross wall at the same height as the wall panelling.

Both the two lower box pews and the longer narrower ones to the east were specifically designed for the most important gentry families in the parish (therefore either one or both may have been introduced and subsequently rented by the Pitt family). The longer pews would have been subdivided to provide space for a series of other gentry families. If the Pitts rented both box pews in

the chancel it is possible to speculate that the women sat on one side and the men on the other (see Fig. 5 of *St James, Southwick for the Norton family pews as an exemplar of this system*).



Fig. 21 North pew panelling with upholstery stud marks at the top and 17th century double pegging.

In conclusion, it seems likely that the panelled box pews in the chancel predate the installation of the chancel screen's arch and accordingly also the reconfiguration of the screen. The six box pews were, as stated above, of two differing sizes with the two western box pews being the largest. However, we also consider that the two upper, eastern pews on either side have been cut down from originally having seats on three sides to their present state of having a single bench and so would have accommodated more people. With regard to dating, the construction in oak of large panels with double pegs implies mid to late 17th century pews (Hall 2005: 139). After this period softwood was more common, as indicated by the chancel arch. As observed, the stud marks provide evidence for upholstery in the north western box pew showing an increased concern for comfort here. The corresponding pew to the south holds remains of metal brackets for curtain screens such as were popular in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Again, this demonstrates the elite quality of these pews since their fittings provide both comfort and privacy.



Fig. 22 View of north and south box pews and half doors with heavy bracket hinges.



Fig. 23 Chief gentry pew and presently undivided long pew to the east, but note scar on timber where the front of the long pew may have originally been set.

Doors to West door lobby:



Fig. 24 West internal tower doors. There is a tradition that these doors came from the screen.

The doors to the west tower have traditionally been considered to have originally come from the screen. However, we cannot see any surviving evidence for this. The doors are seated in some substantial timber framing of a Georgian or earlier date, creating a wall across the opening. The width of the doors contradicts the supposition that they are from the screen because their combined width is 129cm, and the opening in the chancel screen is only approximately 116cm. The huge folding hinges are too large for the doors and overshoot the posts (*see fig. 25*). The lower ones may have some age but the upper ones are blacksmith made in the last hundred years.



Fig. 25 Lower hinge to interior West door

The doors themselves have some original timbers but most are replacements (and the older ones were possibly more substantial as indicated by the hinges). All of the tracery and spandrels of the doors are imitative of the screen's tracery and the middle band is also similar (*see Fig 26*). Since we think that the screen is a composite of three phases, this implies that the doors were created after the present screen had been established. It seems likely that these doors are accordingly a replacement made to match the screen.



Fig. 26 Detail of tracery on the interior West doors.

Outer West door:

This is a Georgian 6 panel door with quarter bead moulding (*see Fig. 27*). The top of the door is flat with rounded corners but is set into a 4 centered arch so there is a mismatch and therefore it is not the original west door. The hinges are substantial iron straps fitting onto a pintle (vertical bar) hammered into the wall, a technique that was uncommon after the Jacobean period (Calloway 1996: 19). The lower pintle, in particular, does not appear to have any age (it is shiny and without rust!) and must be a replacement. Missing wood on the door close to the hinges suggests these are also replacement hinges.

Mortices on both side of the door frame are in place for bars to go across internally, suggesting a great need for security when the tower was first built, unlikely at the date shown on the outside (1711). Can we suggest therefore that, during the Pitt refurbishing, the tower was only partially rebuilt including refacing on the western exterior elevation where it shows very fine chequerboard knapped flint, in contrast to the other sides of the tower? We note the church's northern exterior also boasts more ancient flint chequerwork which was popular during the 14th century and which tends to confirm St Lawrence's significance as a parish church during the late medieval period.

Obviously these are very brief observations and more work is required to confirm or refute these suggestions.



Fig. 27 Interior view of outer West door with surviving bar in place.

South door:

This is a Georgian door with an arched shape and enormous strap hinges similar to the outer west door. Interestingly it has a metal bar driven in above the lower west pintle to prevent lifting the door, suggesting again a greater need for security. We have also noted that the lock plate is upside down - possibly an apotropaic sign, to ward off evil?



Fig. 28 Interior view of South door



Fig. 29 Pintle with bar across the top preventing the door from being lifted off its hinges.

Illustrations:

Except for exceptions noted in the captions all photo illustrations have been taken by the authors.

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