

RITUAL PROTECTION MARKS IN GOATCHURCH CAVERN, BURRINGTON COMBE, NORTH SOMERSET

by

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WITH AN APPENDIX ON THE USE OF CONJOINED Vs
TO PROTECT A DWELLING

by

T. EASTON

ABSTRACT

Markings found in Goatchurch Cavern, North Somerset have been identified as ritual protection marks, possibly dating from the period 1550 to 1750. The similarity of these marks to those found in timbered buildings of this period is discussed. An Appendix provides previously unpublished reasoning for the assertion that the W or conjoined V mark is associated with the Virgin Mary. The term ritual protection mark is preferred to the description "witch marks" used in some references, to avoid confusion with the same term which is used in many writings to refer to the marks left on a witch's body by its familiar, used as a diagnostic in many witchcraft trials.

INTRODUCTION

On 29th November, 2003, during conservation work in Goatchurch Cavern, some inscribed marks were noticed near the Giants' Steps. Water sprays were used to clean some modern pencil and carbide graffiti from white flowstone and during this process the marks were found and further cleaning revealed more detail.

Three finely cut marks were uncovered, resembling the letter W. Their patina is considerably darker than the lighter exposed calcite which can be seen nearby in graffiti dated 1704. The markings are on a layer of flowstone, rather than on exposed limestone and are considerably finer and smaller than the majority of the graffiti and other inscriptions in this area of the cave. Photographs of the marks were taken but no conclusions were reached at the time about their age or significance.

Five months later, an article was seen in The Guardian newspaper (Thursday, April 29, 2004) entitled "Scare witch project. Repairs at Kew Palace uncover a tradition of superstition". The article described "witchmarks" cut into timbers in the palace "to keep witches from flying in at the window or down the chimney", discovered by the curator, Lee Prosser, during recent renovations. The article quoted him as saying, "They had been spotted before, but dismissed as carpenters' marks, but these are quite different, sun symbols, eye shapes, M-shapes to invoke the protection of the Virgin Mary, classic witchmarks – and from exactly the period, and in the positions near the potential points of danger, the door and window entry points, where you would expect to find them." A photograph of one of the marks was included, an M shape, with the middle branches of the letter crossed.

The similarity to the markings from Goatchurch was immediately apparent, although the ones from the cave resembled Ws, rather than the M illustrated in the article. On enquiry, Lee Prosser kindly supplied copies of two papers, by Easton, T. (2000) and Roberts, R. (2003).



Figure 1. *The three sets of conjoined Vs on the left wall of Goatchurch Cavern above the Giants' Steps.*

Photo: G.J. Mullan.

These papers discuss marks found on timber beams in old buildings in Suffolk and Hampshire, and contain various illustrations including ones resembling Ws believed by the authors of the papers to be two conjoined Vs, which are said to be marks invoking the protection of the Virgin Mary.

Contact was made with Timothy Easton, who has conducted extensive research on ritual marks, both on timber and on stone. He agreed with the conclusion reached by the authors that the marks in Goatchurch are similar in form and size to ritual protection marks found elsewhere, both in timber buildings and on stonework in various churches and he has contributed an Appendix to this paper in which he advances the reasons for his belief that the conjoined double V or W is in fact an invocation to the Virgin Mary.

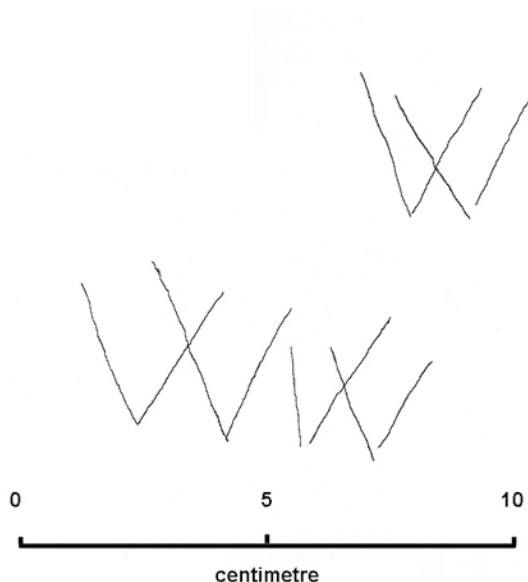


Figure 2. *Drawing of three sets of conjoined Vs on the left wall of Goatchurch Cavern above the Giants' Steps.*

DISCUSSION

Description of the marks

All the marks found, both on the first occasion and subsequently, are variations of the double conjoined V symbol, having the appearance of a W with the middle branches of the letters crossed. The grooves are darkly patinated and do not resemble the fresher lighter colour of more recent graffiti. The marks are small, none of them are bigger than 40 mm x 40 mm and they are all finely incised and appear likely to have been made with a metal blade.

The marks are in the immediate vicinity of the feature known as the Giants' Steps, an inclined shaft about 7 m deep which links the upper passage of the cave from the Main Entrance to a lower route leading to the Back Door (opened around 1923). One set of marks is at approximately shoulder height on the left hand wall, as one approaches the top of the Giants' Steps (Figures 1 and 2) and one particularly distinctive "W" is on a boulder facing towards the dark entrance to the Steps themselves (Figures 3 and 4). In this part of the cave there is often a noticeable coldness in the air caused by draughting air from the lower part of the cave. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the movement of cold air here would have been stronger and more noticeable prior to the opening of the Back Door since there would then have been a greater air pressure differential across this part of the cave.



Figure 3. *Conjoined Vs on a boulder near the Giants' Steps, Goatchurch Cavern.*

Ritual Protection Marks on buildings

This section owes much to the work of Timothy Easton; see especially Easton, 1999 and 2000 and is included to provide a wider context for the type of marks found by the authors in Goatchurch Cavern.

The majority of ritual protection marks are believed to date from the mid 16th to the mid 18th centuries, a period in which there was strong belief in the existence of evil in general and witchcraft in particular. Witches, either in their human form, or through their animal familiars were believed

to cause damage to the occupants of houses. This fear was at its peak in England in the 17th century. A treatise on the subject of witches, "Daemonologie", written by King James I and published in 1597 refers to the perceived threat to householders from witches' familiars:

"For some of them sayeth that being transformed in the likeness of a little beast or fowl, they will come and pierce through whatever house or church, though all ordinary passages be closed, by whatsoever open(ing) the air may enter in at."

The parts of domestic buildings most believed to be at risk of such penetration by witches and their familiars were the doors, windows and the hearth, with its associated chimney. This is an example of a much older belief in the significance of boundaries, crossing places such as fords and thresholds in general which finds expression in such diverse places as the biblical story of the struggle of Jacob and the crossing-spirit (Genesis 32: 23 - 29) and in modern variants of vampire stories, where the undead cannot enter a building without invitation, which finds one of its most recent expressions in the popular television series, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

The use of marks to provide protection, in the form of scribed, painted, carved or indented symbols is described in detail in the context of historic buildings by several authors and such marks are often referred to as "apotropaic" marks or symbols [Chambers 20th Century Dictionary, 1983 : Apotropaic, *adj.* turning aside (or intended to turn aside) evil.]. Such

symbols are often very small and faint and may need to be carefully lit, usually from the side, to be easily seen. In buildings, they can be confused with carpenters' marks or masons' marks, but no such confusion can arise with those found in Goatchurch, as there is no architectural context here to lead to misinterpretation.

In buildings, they vary in type and include interlocking circles, sometimes producing flowers or "daisy wheels" which have a long history as motifs and are thought to be sun symbols; crosses, single lines and grouped lines, some resembling runes, (such as the long X with vertical signs, sometimes compared to the Anglo-Saxon dagaz rune), and the Ms mentioned by Lee Prosser in the Guardian article. Saltire crosses, Ms and Vs or conjoined Vs are among the most common marks. What appears to

be a single scribed W, crossing in the middle is stated by Timothy Easton to be a double V standing for *Virgo Virginum* ("Virgin of Virgins"). [See Appendix.]

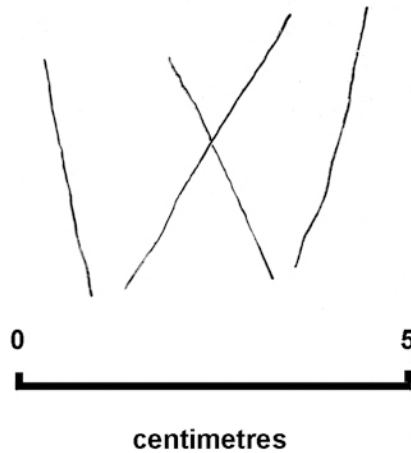


Figure 4. *Drawing of conjoined Vs on a boulder near the Giants' Steps, Goatchurch Cavern.*

Goatchurch Cavern – What's in a name?

There is little archaeological evidence associated with Goatchurch Cavern, except for the finding of a single flint (Dawkins, 1864), and there are no clues in any writings from the relevant period which shed light on its use, if any, by people during the mid-16th to mid-18th centuries. The cave is first referred to by the antiquarian John Strachey (1671-1743) in one of his notebooks where he states, "Goechurch is a Cave due S. from Langford as remarkable as Wokey Hole but remote fro any Great Town & therefore not so much regarded". This observation dates from about 1736. It is possible that the cave was also known by the name of Guy Hole, (Williams, 1987.) However, D.J. Irwin (*pers. Comm.*) associates this name with Read's Cavern, instead.

A further variant of the name appears in the notebooks of William Beard in 1829 where there is a reference to the cave of *Gochurch* also spelt *Gotechurch*, which may indicate the pronunciation in use at that time (Beard, [1824-1865]). The first recorded use of the spelling *Goatchurch* is by John Rutter also in 1829. He records that:

"... higher up the combe, not far from Goatchurch, is an extensive and intricate cavern, but little known. Its entrance on the side of the hill is small, but on advancing, it is found more spacious, and presents magnificent masses of stalactite and of stalagmite. One of these is shaped like a throne, surmounted by a curiously formed canopy of fret work. A second descent of about twenty

feet, leads to another portion of the cavern, which opens into numerous ramifications, so intricate that even the miners, who reside in the vicinity, find it requisite to use twine as a guide for their return; the terminations of these passages have never yet been thoroughly explored.”

In this account, the cave itself is not named but it is associated with a place known as Goatchurch and it is by this name, and spelling, that the cave has been known ever since. There is no known association of the cave with goats, nor is it known to have been used as a place of worship, so the origin of the modern version of the name remains unknown. Although the appearance of goats in the imagery of witchcraft and devil worship is well established any connection in this context must remain conjecture.¹

Goats have grazed in the Combe on occasion in small numbers in the last two decades but there is no earlier known association of them with the area. There are no records of the grazing of goats in the Burrington area during the 15th to the 17th centuries. Farming is likely to have been limited to the summer grazing of sheep for much of this period. The 1911 Commons Act permitted a variety of grazing rights including sheep, cattle, geese, pigs, ponies and horses, but there is no mention of goats (Nicholas Pearson Associates, 1995). However, slightly further away, it is known that an inhabitant of Wookey Hole kept goats, for the human and animal bones were discovered close together (Tratman, 1975) and goats are certainly well suited to foraging in rocky gorges such as Burrington, Ebbor and Cheddar.

Caves as a context for ritual protection marks

Caves have been used as dwellings and places of refuge by humans from the times of our earliest ancestors. Caves feature in many myths from around the world in which the survivors of various disasters emerge from them to repopulate the world and their use as shelters and living places is amply demonstrated by archaeology. In addition, the concept of caves as sanctuaries is discussed at length in many studies of prehistoric art and there is some agreement amongst researchers in this field that the caves themselves may have held deep significance for their prehistoric users. Caves have also been regarded as places of fear and mystery and in later mythologies they come to be associated with the underworld and provide a means of access to those dark and dangerous realms. Superstitions have long been associated with caves and it was during the mid 16th to the mid 17th centuries (D.J. Irwin, *pers. comm.*) that the belief arose that a large stalagmite in Wookey Hole was the petrified figure of an old woman and so this formation became known as the Witch of Wookey.

However, caves can also provide convenient shelter and many have been used as living places at a variety of times but in the deeply superstitious period when ritual protection marks were made it is unlikely that caves were commonly used as shelters unless a person was driven by a particular need, such as to find refuge from the elements

In 1763, the Reverend Augustus Montague Toplady, a minister in the nearby village of Blagdon, took cover from a thunderstorm beside a limestone outcrop in Burrington Combe, not far from the bottom of the West Twin Brook valley in which Goatchurch is found. This experience inspired him to write the words of the well known hymn *Rock of Ages* and the outcrop now bears this name. If the Reverend Toplady had strayed slightly further from the road, he

¹A suggested derivation of the name is given by A. Cox (1967) who states that *Gota* is Old English for *streamway* and *Chyrr* is West Saxon for *winding*. This has not been checked by the authors but is noted here for completeness.

might have found a more convenient place to shelter in Goatchurch Cavern but it is unlikely that even in 1763 a cave would have been regarded as a sensible place to take refuge from a storm unless the need was great.

F. A. Knight, writing in the *Heart of Mendip* (1915) described Goatchurch as “....a very network of narrow and multitudinous passages, in which it is said that men have lost their way, and have died of starvation before they could be rescued.” Knight himself clearly thought there was little foundation for these stories or for the ubiquitous tales of dogs which entered caves at one point and exited them many miles away, several weeks later, (usually hairless) but these stories, common in one form or another throughout the country illustrate a widely held view of caves as dangerous places containing many traps for the unwary. Even now, in hopefully more enlightened times, it is still felt by many that only the foolhardy venture underground.

CONCLUSIONS

The marks in Goatchurch Cavern undeniably resemble the ritual protection marks found in timbered buildings dating from the mid 16th to mid 18th centuries and also the markings found around doorways and on carved figures in some churches but clearly other possibilities should also be considered.

It may be that the marks have no protective function and were simply made by an individual to record their presence in the cave in the same way as visitors to caves have done for many hundreds of years. However, evidence from inscriptions left by visitors both in Goatchurch Cavern and elsewhere demonstrate that the majority of the older inscriptions in caves are either surnames with initials or pairs of initials representing forename and surname, often coupled with a date. The same is true of more recent graffiti. It could be argued that the person who made the marks had a first name and surname beginning with W, but in the absence of an associated date and as a result of other factors mentioned here, it is felt that the marks were not simply made to record the presence of a particular individual. It is unusual to find a single initial used in this way and it should be noted in this context that two of the marks are single ones.

Close examination of the two conjoined Vs above the Giants’ Steps which are the nearest together reveal that they are of different sizes and are slightly differently orientated, possibly indicating that the person who made the marks was standing in a different position when each was drawn, which is unlikely to have been the case if they were simply done one after the other, on the same occasion, to denote a name.

As well as the factors noted above, the authors consider the position of the marks to be one of the major indicators of their purpose. They have been placed above and in front of a hole leading to the lower part of the cave. It is believed that their positioning reflects the general desire discussed above to protect vulnerable areas within dwellings such as chimney breasts and lintels over staircases, which is what the Giants’ Steps closely resemble. It is not known whether there were any marks in or around the entrance area, as this was modified in the late 19th Century to increase its size.

If it is accepted that the symbols are ritual protection marks, further consideration needs to be given to why they were inscribed in the cave. One possibility is that they represent an attempt made by a person occupying the cave temporarily, maybe for one night only, to invoke protection from supernatural harm. As stated above, at such a deeply superstitious period of history, it seems unlikely that a cave would have been viewed with anything other

than suspicion and its occupation even on a temporary basis was most probably as a result of the need to take shelter from the elements, in the same way that Reverend Toplady did nearby in the Combe. If this hypothesis is correct, then it appears that the cave was treated in the same way as an occupant would have treated a house or a vulnerable place within a dwelling.

A second possibility is that the marks were made by superstitious local people who viewed the cave as a threatening place harbouring harmful spirits. Inscribing protective symbols at the point where cold air noticeably issues from the depths of the cave could have been an attempt to ensure that evil remained confined within the cave. This assumes that the existence of the cave was generally known to the inhabitants of the surrounding area at the relevant period, but this is not an unreasonable suggestion as the cave was clearly known to the antiquarian John Strachey in 1736 and it is likely that he knew of its existence from enquiry of local people.

There is evidence for the specific belief in and fear of witches during this period from events in Frome, Somerset in 1658, when two local women were accused of witchcraft. Jane Broom was condemned to death at Chard Assizes and subsequently executed and her sister Alice, similarly accused, died in Shepton Mallet prison.

The answer to the question of why the marks were made will almost certainly never be known, as the person(s) who made them left no other evidence of their activities or the reasons for them, so all that remains is conjecture. However, the marks are interesting in the context of a cave as there have been no other published reports of the presence of ritual protection marks from this period in caves. The authors have not yet conducted any systematic search of caves which were open at the relevant period and it may well be that when such research has been undertaken that other markings of the same or similar type will be found. It is hoped that this paper will stimulate interest in this subject and so lead to further discoveries.

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APPENDIX:

THE USE OF CONJOINED Vs TO PROTECT A DWELLING

by

T. EASTON

INTRODUCTION

The passage taken from James Ist's *Daemonologie* quoted by Binding and Wilson above illustrates the fear, widespread in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, of the violation of a familiar space by witches. The devices used in Britain over the last two thousand years to protect entry points have taken many forms. The burial of animals or bones is perhaps the best-known method from this period (Merrifield, 1987). Other procedures in the early modern period involved the concealment of both broken and unbroken glass vessels above doorways; the insertion of broken knife blades or wooden skewers into wall cavities beside the frame; and the nailing or suspension of objects such as the ubiquitous horseshoe above the entry. 17th century commentators recorded the secretion of salt glazed bottles at entrances containing urine and objects to turn back the harm onto the witch who was thought to have placed the spell. (Merrifield, *op cit.*) The familiar fifth solo from the nursery rhyme 'Green grow the rushes O', 'Five for the symbols at your door' highlights a common way of marking entry points to buildings in the past.

DISCUSSION

Marking the doorway: the persistence of Marian protection?

Apotropaic symbols could be scribed, painted or carved around doorways (Easton, 1997). From the 16th century onwards some of the most commonly used forms used were plain circles, consecration crosses, arrows, and the six petals within a circle². The symbols which invoked the protection of the Virgin Mary in the early 16th century took the form of M, W, R, or a combination of M, AM, and R (Figure 5a). However, in some areas these symbols continued to be scribed by carpenters through the second half of the 16th and up to the end of the 17th century (Figure 5b). Were these markings continued by craftsmen out of habit who forgot their original meaning, and if the meaning was still apparent why weren't these marks defaced?

What may at first seem curious for its widespread use on timber, plaster and stone during the second half of the 16th century, and particularly during the Commonwealth period in East Anglia, is the continuation of the Virgin's monogram in its scribed forms. This part of England was always considered to be the seat of Puritan sympathy and sentiment. Many chimney lintels (Figure 5c) and inserted ceilings (Figure 5e) in houses have the M or W scribed onto the timber with a race-knife which is an essential part of the carpenter's equipment. The

² See Ayres, 2003. The door from Hulver Tree Farm, Laxfield, illustrated on p. 62, is a good example of the complexity of the symbols put on by a carpenter in the 17th century.

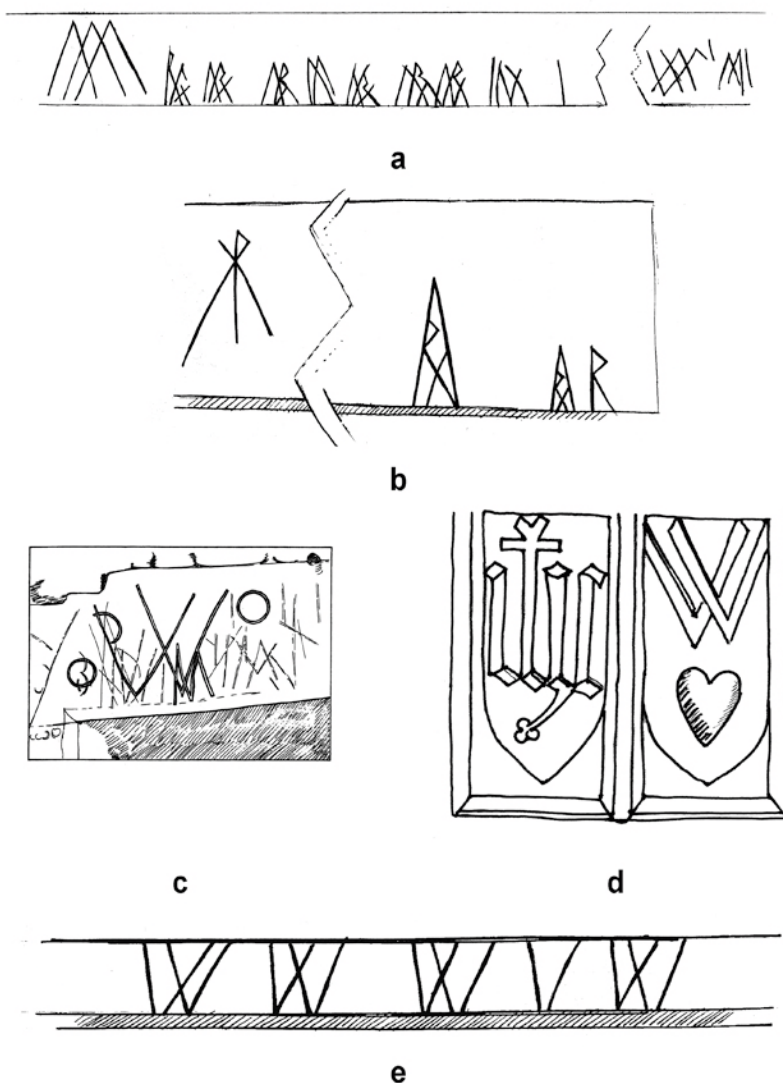


Figure 5. a: Elm Tree Farm, Mendlesham, Suffolk. A 16th century lintel in the parlour has been scribed using a race-knife: the precisely-cut set of symbols repeats the integrated letters M, AM and R, but each has a variation on the one preceding. **b:** Mill Farm, Worlingworth, Suffolk, inscribed mantle-beam in parlour, late 17th century. **c:** The Swan, Worlingworth, Suffolk. Simplified drawing of scribed marks on the mantle-beam in Hall. **d:** St Mawgan-in-Pydar parish church, Cornwall. Trinity and Christ monograms and the heart of Mary on a bench end, early 16th century. **e:** Ulveston Hall, Debenham, Suffolk. 17th century inserted ceiling in parlour chamber. These Ws and a V (Virgo) are on one side of a common joist: the race-knife symbols were scribed by the carpenter before the chamfer was cut. The centre beam has a W adjacent to some lighter multi-marks.

race-knife is used to scribe the numerals that mark the prefabricated components on the green timber of framed buildings or church roofs. These are commonly referred to as carpenters' marks. The distinctive protective symbols, which include Mary's monogram, are not usually found on the intersections of joints, and they do not have a discernible practical function in the construction. It is, therefore, their specific locations, around chimneys, windows and doors, that set these apart as being different to carpenters' construction marks.

The W formed of two intersecting Vs is understood to represent the name of Mary as Virgin of Virgins (*Virgo Virginum*). The popular Marian prayer attributed to Fr. Claude Bernard (1588 – 1641) includes the sentence 'I fly to thee, Mary, Virgin of virgins, mother of Jesus Christ' in the edition of the *Coeleste Palmetum* of 1741. The sentence is however omitted in the 1518 Paris edition of the *Antidotarius Animae* (<http://home.earthlink.net/~thesaurus/thesaurus/BVM/Memorare.html>). At what date the *Virgo Virginum* is first introduced between these dates is unknown. A prayer ascribed to Jacopone da Todi (1230 – 1306) starts with the line *Virgo Virginum praeclara* (famed Virgin of Virgins) (<http://www.catholic.org/clife/prayers>). Quite what source would have been sufficiently well known to English carpenters for this adoption of the symbol W as readily as the M is not certain. A few examples of pre-Reformation carved and painted forms are listed here, in order to support this interpretation.

West Country bench ends are distinctive in their oblong shape, and the slabs of wood are frequently enlivened with pictorial or symbolic imagery (Easton, 1985). The outer surface is often divided into two units each containing related symbols. Two shields are a common form and when these contain an M or W closely linked to a heart, this represents the heart of Mary (Figure 5d). On some bench end carvings which lack the heart, the W can be found with a crown above it (Figure 6a) as is frequently seen in the flint and stone flushwork on many East Anglian church towers where elaborate Marian are displayed crowned (Figure 6b). The M and W are therefore seen to be interchangeable on timber, though a crown is sometimes added to the *Virgo Virginum* mark, emphasising Mary's role as Queen of Heaven.

At Cartmel Priory, Cumbria, one of the 16th century misericords has two crowned Ws on each side of the stall rest (Figure 6c). Although the guidebook suggests that these could be the initials of a prior, the presence of two elaborate crowns makes this unlikely (Rothwell, 1997). Painted, crowned Ws are also repeated many times on the restored early 16th century pulpit in Fotheringhay church in Northamptonshire.

The craftsman's role

Most Ms and Ws scribed with race-knives on the timber frames of buildings can be seen as original to the structure. Seasoned timber cannot be cut into as easily as green wood, and carpenters would always work with freshly felled timber if this was available. As many timber frames can be dated fairly accurately using dendrochronology, it is now possible to prove that the scribed monograms continuing to use the Marian symbol are mainly found on buildings dating from the 16th and 17th centuries. By the early 18th century the circular patterns, which were also used in the earlier period, had become the most commonly used scribed marks for averting evil (Figure 6d). Nevertheless, it is a fact that none of the many-recorded Marian symbols that the Author has observed have been defaced, even though statues of the Virgin Mary were broken or removed during the Commonwealth period, if not before. At the same time, many painted images of saints, and their names on church screens, were scratched across or painted over.

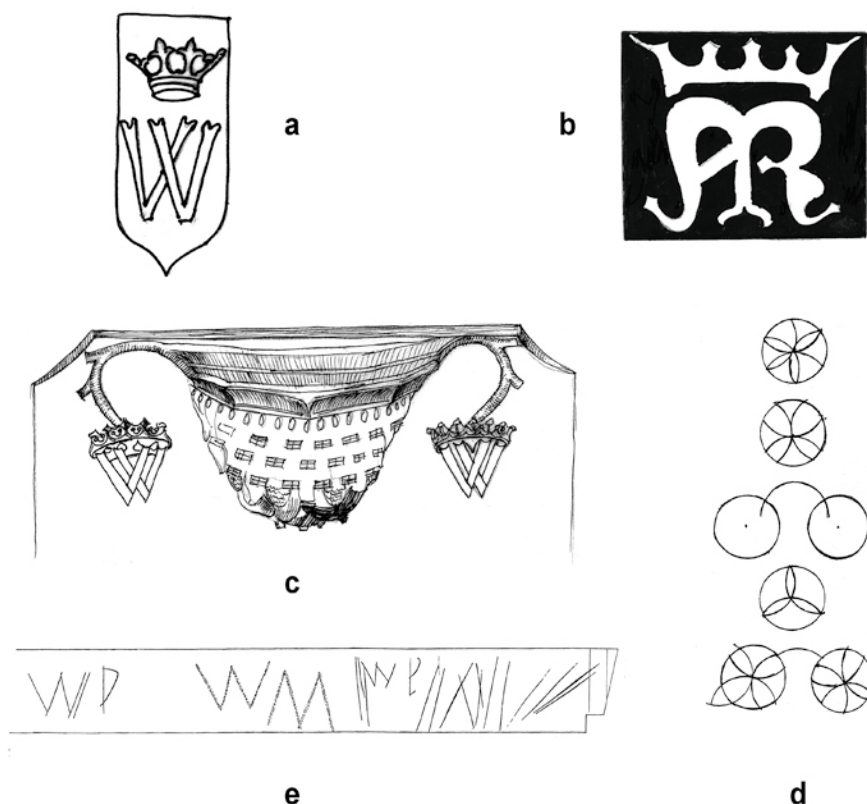


Figure 6. a: *St Columb Major parish church, Cornwall. Crowned W on bench end, early 16th century. b:* *The A, M and R integrated to form Maria or Ave Maria Regina. The Crown signifies her role as Queen of Heaven. This Monogram is typical of many that occur in East Anglian stone and flint flushwork on church towers and porches from before the Reformation. c:* *Cartmel Priory, Cumbria. Misericord stall with two crowned Ws each at the end of a branched stook either side of the Perk. d:* *Group of circular apotropaic marks frequently found inscribed into wood, plaster and stone. e:* *Part of the top plate of the 1733 brick drying shed from the Causeway Brickworks, near Petersham, Hampshire. Scribed marks inside the timber structure were possibly made at two different times in the 18th century.*

Many church doorways and pillars have scribed symbols following forms similar to those cited earlier for houses, but these are mostly scratched or incised into stone, and they are therefore generally less easy to date. The style and form of some of these symbols can, however, date them to a particular century. The W and M were not usually written with the crossed intersected strokes in the second half of the 18th and 19th centuries, so symbols of this type are most likely to have been executed in the 16th and 17th centuries. For instance, the adjacent W and M scribed marks on the interior surface of the brick-drying shed built in 1733,

from Causeway Brickworks, near Petersfield, Hampshire (Figure 6e) are both formed in the way they would be written today (Harris, 1999).

Specific graffiti

Between the 17th and 19th centuries many alabaster tomb monuments from the 15th and 16th centuries were defaced by the graffiti of visitors, who cut their initials into the surface. Amongst these, there are two symbols that are often repeated many times and they are clearly not the initials of a person: this is either the W or M. These may have been added in association with a person's initials as a form of personal protection. Were these individuals perhaps attaching their own or their family name to the tomb of a wealthy individual whose high rank was felt to be a conduit, which would take a protective prayer more directly to the other world? In the past, inscribed lead tablets were sometimes secreted near the graveyards of the privileged dead, such as monks, in the hope that they would carry the prayer or curse more speedily through the underworld to its final destination.

CONCLUSION

As can be seen from some of the examples listed above, the range of the Ms and Ws found in different parts of Britain demonstrates that the sight of a mark of protection, added to a doorway in the 16th or 17th century, would be readily understood even if its original meaning from before the Reformation had shifted. Even if the inscribers were not regular visitors, the act of marking and the knowledge that the symbols were there could have mitigated a distant fear of bad luck to a passer-by or an adjacent settlement. In vernacular Suffolk houses, marked doorways and stairs leading to attic voids, that were not used frequently other than for storage, were often given apotropaic marks, or had objects secreted nearby, as were cupboards under stairs.. Perhaps a dark space, like a cave that had to be passed by, might have been viewed in the past as a suitable hiding place for a malevolent force. Bats might have taken residence in the cave and, as James 1st's *Daemonologie* states, these could have been viewed as witches' familiars particularly during the 16th and 17th centuries.

The inscribed circle, with or without the three, six or twelve petals, has often been dismissed as a doodle, because we all learned to make these with compasses at school. However, the six-petal 'hex mark' was a very ancient symbol for the sun. It was widely used from pre-Christian times to the 20th century, both on and in large buildings like churches and cathedrals, as well as on furniture and small objects. The heart and diamond were also used as apotropaic symbols and should not simply be dismissed as decoration, or symbols of love. Similarly, the M and W symbols may be found on their own or with other related marks, some of which can be lightly done, and may simply look like scratches. It is worth recording all related individual marks, as well as their precise location and orientation, to see if some common ingredients can be found. This could establish whether caves, or areas within them, were regarded as places that could harbour malevolent forces, which therefore required some particular respect such as the placing of symbols that had a universal meaning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Linda Wilson for bringing the Goatchurch Cavern marks to my attention and giving me the opportunity to write this appendix to illuminate the possibilities of another potential source for ritual protection marks in the early modern period and to Richard Harris for permission to reproduce his drawing of the brick-drying shed from Petersfield. Professor Ronald Hutton read the paper and suggested some useful caveats. Joanna and Edward Martin offered suggestions and sources for the Marian prayers.

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