

Graffiti Trail, St Catherine's Church Ludham

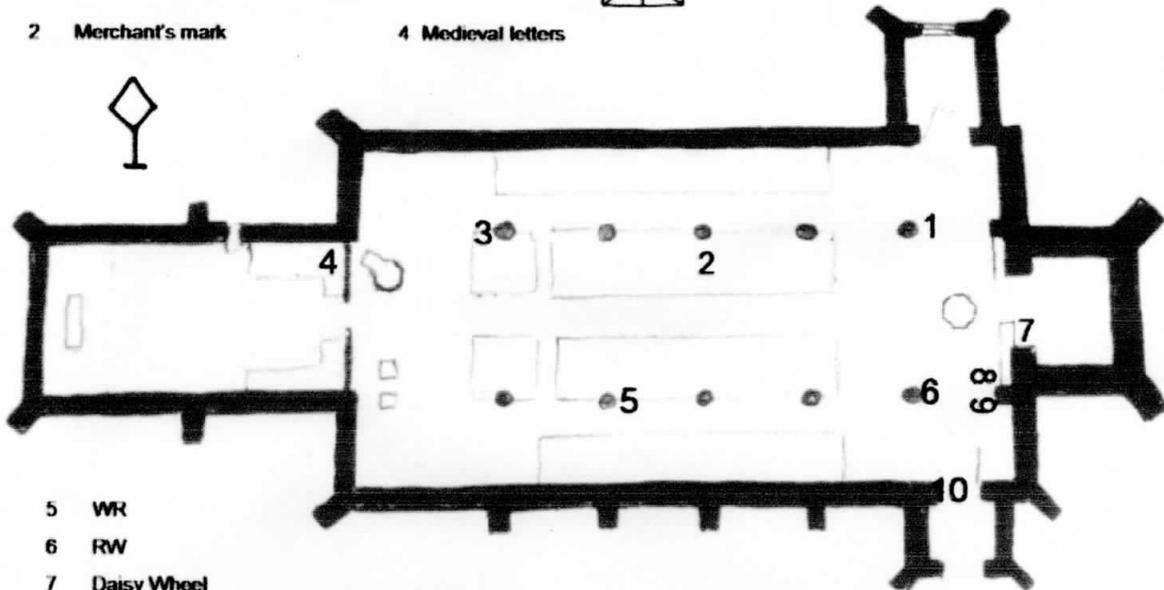
1 Star

3 Square pattern



2 Merchant's mark

4 Medieval letters



5 WR

6 RW

7 Daisy Wheel



8 Medieval writing

9 Shoe



10 Cross



## St Catherine's Church Historic Graffiti Trail

All medieval churches probably contained graffiti, although in some churches these have been lost under later plaster and limewash. Unlike today graffiti were not considered to be vandalism, but were part of accepted religious practise and social custom. Often, they were made by ordinary members of the congregation. This means historic graffiti can give us insights into the lives of people who otherwise have made no mark in history.

Some graffiti are difficult to find. Shining a torch across the face of the stonework creates shadows in the scratch marks and makes them easier to see.

This trail will help you find ten graffiti, but there are many more around the church – see how many you can find!

- 1 **Star:** This is a Mason's mark. Each stone mason had his own 'logo' which he would carve into the stones of a building during construction. These marks were probably used to show which mason had carried out which piece of work – to make sure they got paid properly. One church can contain many different marks.
- 2 **Merchant's mark:** This is probably a Merchant's mark. Like Masons, each merchant had his own 'logo'. When used in a church, it may have advertised the fact that the merchant had donated funds to the building.
- 3 **Square pattern:** Possibly a 'Butterfly' mark, using the diagonal St Andrew's cross – a symbol of good luck and protection
- 4 **Medieval letters:** These letters don't appear to form words. They could be examples of someone (perhaps a monk from St Benet's Abbey) practising decorative letter shapes.
- 5 **WR:** Somebody's initials – possibly a Mason's mark
- 6 **RW:** Somebody's initials – the lack of craftsmanship suggests someone making a record of their visit, in a similar way to more modern graffiti
- 7 **Daisy Wheel:** A compass-drawn design commonly found in churches and other historic buildings. It's an ancient symbol, used to bring good luck or to resist evil, and seems to have been adopted by the Christian church in the medieval period.
- 8 **Medieval writing:** Graffiti are usually found at head height or lower, where people could reach to make the marks. This piece of medieval writing is much higher than usual. It also appears to be upside-down. The letters spell 'Bestelbyh' which is probably a surname.

It's likely that the stone with the graffito has been moved from its original position and re-used at a time when the nave of the church was rebuilt in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

9 Shoe: This might be a graffito version of the Catholic tradition of making miniature models of arms, legs, feet and torsos, which were left by grateful worshippers to show which parts of their bodies had been healed through prayer. It's interesting to note that there is a similar, more modern, example of a foot graffito inside the gatehouse at St Benet's Abbey.

10 Cross: This is one of several crosses in the porch area. Church porches were often used by local people as a place to make legal agreements and sign contracts. These crosses might be marks made by medieval villagers as a record of agreements they had made here.

With thanks to the Norfolk Medieval Graffiti Survey ([www.medieval-graffiti.co.uk](http://www.medieval-graffiti.co.uk)), Norfolk Archaeological Trust, and St Benet's Abbey Historic Graffiti Survey volunteers.