

Graffiti

It's been with us a long time. Ancient cave drawings were perhaps the earliest version of the modern "Kev was here" or maybe they were art, or religion, or something else. Greeks and Romans certainly adorned available walls with both pictures and text from the erudite to the profane.

Closer to home many churches have their own share of graffiti.

Up to about 1850 church graffiti was perfectly acceptable, but has gradually moved to being

considered as vandalism. In

recent years attention has

focussed on the historical

value of church graffiti,

specifically what it can tell us

about the life and attitudes of

the common folk, as opposed to historical documents. Historical

documents are dominated by the words of the rich. There was a

project to record church graffiti in Norfolk set up by Matthew

Champion which has since extended to other counties but I'm not

aware of it extending into Cambridgeshire yet. St. Laurences'

almost certainly had its own share of graffiti but most was

probably obscured during Victorian

renovations. There

is a fair amount

still visible such as

this one in the nave

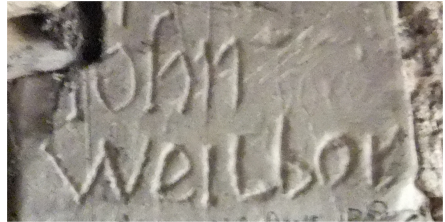
(left) if you raise

your eyes, or this

dog? (right) just

after you've

collected your tea.



The most recent I noticed was 'HB 1930' but they go back much further eg 1679.

There are several ritual protection or apotropaic marks as well as the odd picture. The most common protection mark looks like "W" but it may be two "V"s and have something to do with the

Virgin Mary. Random clusters of small holes are thought to be a medieval cure-all. Taking some powder of the church, imbued with its goodness, is better than nothing. The most interesting



picture is possibly Mary and Joseph riding.



Some are even well executed with elegant letters.

I.S.

