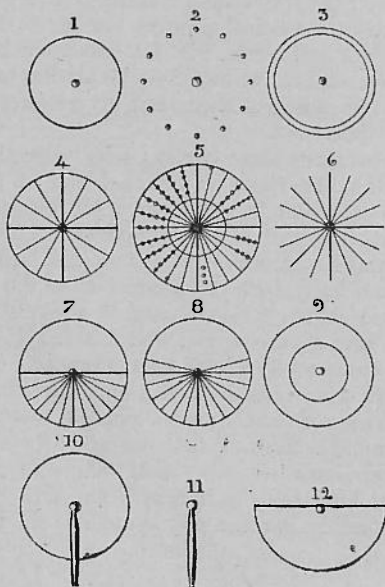


CUP AND CIRCLE MARKINGS ON CHURCH WALLS IN WARWICKSHIRE AND THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

By W. ANDREWS.

In 1882 the Warwickshire Field Club visited Solihull, when upon the west end of the church upon both sides of the doorway we found about 100 well-formed cup marks upon the wall, within a few feet of the ground. They were hemispherical, and about 2 ins. in diameter, smooth inside and well-finished, and had evidently been produced by a drill; upwards of forty were upon one block of stone. No knowledge of the origin of them was possessed by the officials of the church. Interspersed among them were a number of vertical grooves. These grooves are very common upon church walls in Warwickshire, and are traditionally believed to have been produced by sharpening arrows. Two years later I noticed a number of similar cup marks upon the tower of Yardley Church, near Birmingham; and afterwards about fifty upon the south face of the tower of All Saints' Church, Derby. This led me to make further researches, and within the last year I have found similar marks upon at least a dozen village churches within a few miles of Coventry. There are also a great number upon the bell tower at Evesham. I can give no opinion about the origin of these cup marks, but two theories have been suggested. The first is, that they are bullet marks. This theory would suppose that the walls of three-fourths of the Warwickshire churches have been used for target practice, which I find difficult to believe. Also the Solihull marks have certainly been made by a drill. I have seen thousands of bullet marks upon walls on the battle-fields of the continent, but they bear no resemblance to these cups upon the church walls. Possibly, however, the following may throw some light upon the subject. In the proceedings of the Berlin Anthropological Society for June, 1875 (see *Nature*, June 8th, 1882), attention was called to the existence of cup marks on the church of Cottbus in Brandenburg. The result of this was that similar marks were afterwards discovered in more than twenty different localities in Prussia, also in Germany, Switzerland and Sweden. They are usually on the south side of churches, near an entrance, and not beyond the height of a man's arm. These cups are believed to possess healing virtues, chiefly for charming away fevers, and in some modern instances these cups in the church walls have been anointed with grease like the cups in the prehistoric elf-stenar in Sweden. In Posen a tradition refers to the cups as the work of damned souls, who ground them out in the night time.

I have also found that church walls contain other markings, especially incised circles, which often have rays diverging from the centre. The smallest which I have yet found is $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. in diameter upon Nuneaton Church, and the largest 23 in. in diameter (half a circle only) upon the Church of Hampton in Arden. The simplest form is a plain circle with hole in centre Fig. 1. There are thirteen of this pattern, about 7 in. in



diameter, upon a buttress at the north-west corner of the Abbey Church at Bath. One similar in size upon Dadlington Church, Leicestershire. Three smaller ones upon Floore Church, Northamptonshire, &c. There are six spot circles, similar to Fig. 2, upon the south wall of Nuneaton Church. They vary from $1\frac{3}{4}$ to $3\frac{1}{4}$ in. in diameter. There is one 18 in. in diameter, represented by Fig. 3, upon a south buttress of the chancel of Cubbington Church, Warwickshire. Of Fig. 4 there are two examples on Nuneaton Church; one upon Berkswell Church, Warwickshire; and two upon Norton Church, Northamptonshire. They vary from $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 9 in. in diameter.

Upon Stoke Golding Church, Leicestershire, is a 12 in. circle, of which Fig. 5 is a sketch. Beside the diverging rays there are rows of holes sometimes coinciding with the rays and sometimes not. Upon Knowle Church, Warwickshire, is a group of sixteen rays of 7 in. in diameter, but without a circle similar to Fig. 6. Fig. 7 is a common pattern. These usually are from 6 to 8 in. in diameter, and at first sight look like miniature sun dials. But the rays are equi-distant or nearly so, and consequently do not correspond to the hour lines upon a dial. Also no figures are engraved. There are four of these upon Shilton Church, near Coventry, three of which are close together and near the ground. The south wall of Floore Church, Northamptonshire, has the remains of nine of this pattern, some of them seem not to have

been properly completed. There are also examples upon the churches of Cubbington and Chilvers Coton, Warwickshire; and also at Hinckley, Leicestershire. There is a well cut example of Fig. 8 upon the south side of Ledbury church, Herefordshire, also another of similar appearance, but not so distinct. Upon Hampton in Arden church is a seven inch circle, shewn in Fig. 9, with another circle concentric within it. Here is also a five inch circle, Fig. 10, with a vertical groove below the centre. Also upon the same wall ten vertical grooves similar to Fig. 11. Upon this church is also a plain half circle. Fig. 12, fifteen inches in diameter. At Bradford Abbas, Dorset, are two rayed circles similar to Fig. 7. I have unfortunately spoiled the sketch of them, but my recollection is that one of them overlaps the other.

It will be asked, Who made these circles; why were they made; and when were they made? To these questions I can at present give no answer. Further investigation is desirable. All the circles contain a small central hole, and, as I have already explained, many of them possess rays. There is no uniform number of rays to the circle. Fig. 6 has sixteen. Twelve in the half circle or twenty-four to the circle is not an uncommon number. A sketch which I have of a circle upon Nuneaton church contains only ten to the circle, and I think it is correct. My belief is that some of these rayed circles have been left unfinished. On Nuneaton church there is a central spot with only three rays, and another with only one ray. The worn and decayed state of most of these circles shews that they are ancient. Most of them are upon the south side of the churches. I only know of one instance (Bath) where I have found circles upon the north side. This seems to indicate that, although they are not sun dials, they may possibly in some way symbolize the sun.