

An unrecorded medieval chest at St Mary's church, Horsham

The pin-hinged, clamped chests in Sussex, many of which have carved roundels, have been relatively well-known since Johnston's 1907 article. At St Mary's Horsham he refers to a plain 'early thirteenth century' chest whose dimensions match a plain boarded chest which is still there. To find the chest shown here standing almost next to it was therefore a complete surprise.

The plain facade has a bold triple moulding and contrasts with the busy foot decoration with a gothic lunette with roundel-carved bosses and column, and separate star roundels. The chest has a later lid but its feet are full height and it has its original internal sliding bolt lock under a wooden cover. The till box has a concealed flat-bottomed lower section. The left-hand pin hinge survives with its stop-chamfered cleat and original tapered iron plate over the end of the pin. The lozenge-shaped escutcheon is original and the iron discs are decorative rather than concealing the bolts or nails



above Medieval chest at St Mary's church, Horsham



retaining the wooden cover as in some cases. Like many Sussex chests of this group it has iron studs on top of the pegs of the mortise and tenon joints.

At 96 cm high, 180 cm wide and 70 cm deep the chest is particularly capacious and could have been used for vestments. (The Exeter synod of 1287 required churches to provide chests for books and vestments – ‘*cistam ad libros et vestimenta*’). The chest is of oak but proved to be too fast grown to allow dendro-dating. Other

left Detail showing the elaborate 'column/lunette' carving on the foot of the front left stile

pin-hinged, clamped chests have yielded felling date ranges from 1167–1199 to 1302–1334. The unusual tool marks on the facade may be made by a paring tool rather than a plane. It is not known how long the chest has been in St Mary's church.

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Johnston, P. M. 'Church chests of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in England', *Archaeological Journal*, vol. 64 (1907), pp. 243–306.

Pickvance, C. G. 'The medieval chest at St Mary's church, Horsham: an important unrecorded pin-hinged, clamped chest', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, vol. 155 (2017), pp. 203–07. Available at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321490083>

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