

## Manorfield Detectives.

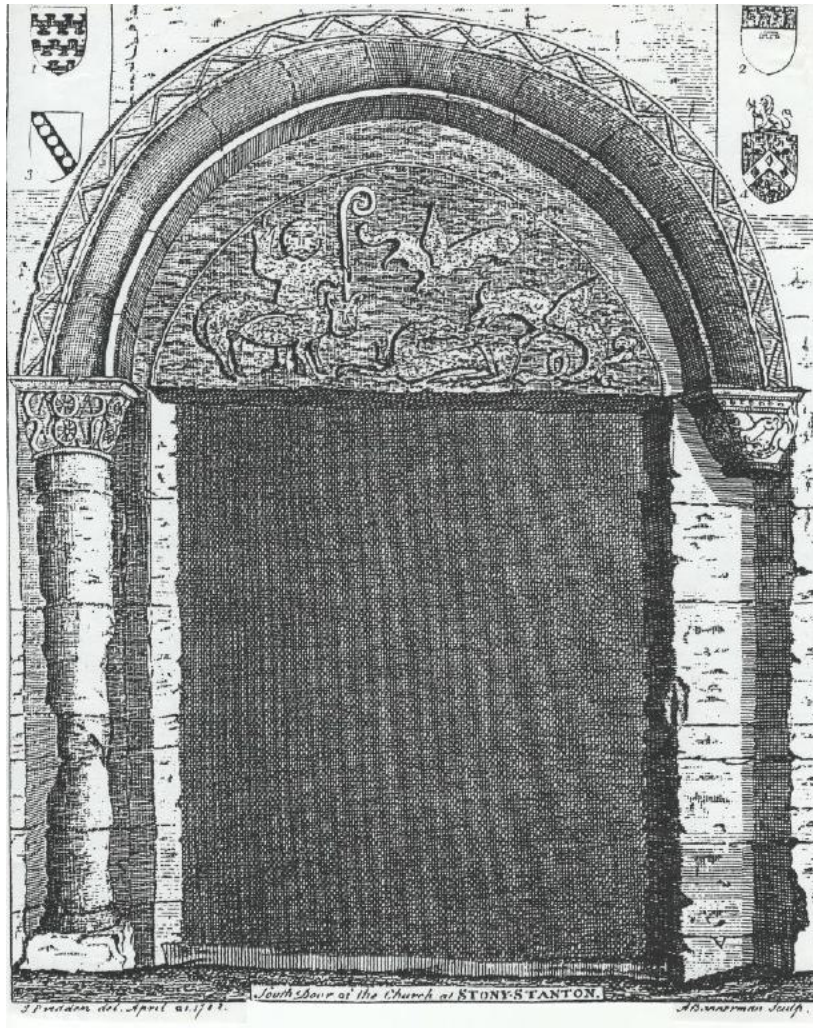


Well, here's a curiosity. What on earth is this all about and why is it where it is above St. Michael's church vestry door?

It's called a 'tympanum' and was part of a very old doorway which was originally on the south side of the church, not the north side where you will find it today.

Needless to say it's very old, nobody is completely sure but probably late Saxon, which makes it over a thousand years old at least.

It was part of this Norman doorway (picture below), when it was a much smaller church. This drawing was done in 1788; the church was extended in 1842/3 with the addition of the south aisle, which meant the destruction of this beautiful original Norman doorway.



The image carved into the stone is believed possibly to represent a bishop, because he is holding his hand in the way of a blessing and he has a crozier in his left hand.

On St. Michael's church website, there are a couple of theories too- that he is either St. Michael himself or St. Wilfred.

St. Wilfred was from a noble family in Northumbria born in 633, he is believed to have been Bishop of Leicester in 706. If true, this may date the carving and make it even older.

There are all sorts of weird and wonderful creatures depicted. One, thought to be a dragon being subdued by other animals including the bird, thought to be an eagle.

The images may look quite strange to us, but we have to remember that whoever carved these creatures in Anglo-Saxon times may never have actually seen any of those animals, and may have been copying from manuscript images like these.



Here is a link to some other quite famous Anglo-Saxon carvings in Leicestershire. Maybe you will be able to visit later after lock-down is over.

<https://www.leicestershirechurches.co.uk/breedon-on-the-hill-st-mary-st-hardulph/>

The link below explains a little about how and when Anglo-Saxons became Christians.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/clips/zppg9qt>

*Maybe you can create a story to explain what's happening in the tympanum image.*

*Remember, the story is based on a Christian man and think about what the dragon might represent. Why might the other animals be helping the man?*

**Tympanum- a semi circular or triangular decorated surface usually over a doorway or window.**