The Mystery of England's 'Witches' Marks' May Finally Be Solved

A new explanation for England's so-called "witches' marks" is challenging a long-running theory about mysterious symbols carved into old churches, homes and historic buildings.

According to the Daily Mail, the circular marks, often called daisy wheels or hexafoils, have been found across England and have often been described as possible ritual protection symbols.

But Professor Jennifer Alexander, a professor of architectural history at Warwick University and author of "Stonemasons' Marks," says the evidence points in a far more practical direction.

"Do you remember at school when you were first given a pair of compasses and you made a daisy wheel? It's that," Alexander told The Guardian.

"There are hundreds of such marks and they tend to be [of] varying degrees of skill," she said.

Rather than proof of occult activity, Alexander argues the carvings were likely practice marks left behind by stonemasons learning their craft.

"It's much more the sort of thing you'd use to train apprentices with, giving them skills in using tools on intractable surfaces like stone," she said.

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Not Every Mystery Is Occult

Historic England has previously noted that the hexafoil, or daisy wheel, is the most common mark recorded in surveys of these symbols.

“The most common mark recorded is the hexafoil, or daisy wheel, which range from the straightforward singletons to complex interlinked multiple examples,” Historic England explained.

The symbols have been discovered in medieval buildings, churches, farm buildings and even 19th-century structures.

That matters because it complicates the popular idea that these marks were always spiritual protection symbols, or that every mysterious carving in an old church should immediately be tied to witchcraft, demons or folk magic.

As Christians, we do not need to deny the supernatural to exercise discernment. Scripture is clear that witchcraft is real, demons are real and spiritual warfare is real. But discernment also requires us to test claims carefully instead of baptizing speculation as fact.

Alexander was direct in rejecting the “witches’ marks” label.

She said there is “absolutely no evidence” the marks were actually connected to witches.

“The daisy wheels are practices for drawing on stone and learning how to use compasses with straight edges to do geometry,” she said.

Spiritual Warfare Is Still Real

That does not mean the occult is imaginary. It does not mean the demonic realm is symbolic. It does not mean Scripture was exaggerating when it warned us about sorcery, deception and

the powers of darkness.

It means this specific claim may not hold up, and that is an important distinction for us.

The Bible does not call us to be gullible. It calls us to be watchful. Paul told us in Ephesians 6 that “we wrestle not against flesh and blood,” but against spiritual powers. That is the reality of our faith.

At the same time, 1 Thessalonians 5:21 tells us to “test all things; hold firmly that which is good.”

We can believe fully in spiritual warfare while also admitting that some old carvings may have been apprentice practice. We can reject witchcraft without forcing every historical oddity into an occult category.

That is not compromise. That is discernment.

The supernatural is real. The occult is real. Demonic deception is real.

But truth matters, and we should be the first people willing to separate fact from folklore.

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