Finch & Co



ENGLISH MEDIEVAL CARVED LIMESTONE GROTESQUE OF A LONG TONGUE POKING DEMON

AN ENGLISH MEDIEVAL CARVED LIMESTONE GROTESQUE OF A LONG TONGUE POKING DEMON

PROBABLY A CORNERSTONE

LATE 14TH – EARLY 15TH CENTURY

SIZE: 21CM HIGH, 14CM WIDE, 20CM DEEP - 8¼ INS HIGH, 5½ INS WIDE, 8 INS DEEP / 32CM HIGH - 12½ INS HIGH (WITH BASE)

LITERATURE

CONFRONTING ANYONE WHO CARED TO LOOK UP WITH A DIRECT AND MALEVOLENT STARE, THIS TONGUE BRANDISHING DEMON WAS CARVED AND CREATED TO IMPART A WARNING TO ALL BELIEVERS, AND AS A DEFENCE AGAINST THE FORCES OF EVIL. HIS EYES ARE FASHIONED FROM CAT-LIKE SLITS TO EMPHASISE HIS DEMONIC, OTHER WORLDLY STATUS AND THE LOWERING BROW AND GAPE OF THE MOUTH WITH ITS CURLING TONGUE LEND THE SCULPTURE AN INTRANSIGENT AND BROODING MENACE. THE PRESENCE OF THESE INTIMIDATING AND GROTESQUE IMAGES IN CHURCHES HAS BEEN CALLED 'FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE'. THE CONSTANT PRESENCE OF DEATH THAT PERMEATED EVERY QUARTER OF MEDIEVAL LIFE MADE FOR A MIXTURE OF CHRISTIAN AND PAGAN SYMBOLS AND A WILLINGNESS OF THE CHURCH TO ABSORB PAGAN CHARACTERISTICS INTO CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE. HAVING AN APOTROPAIC FUNCTION, THE CORNICES, CORBELS, CAPITALS, GARGOYLES AND FINIALS WERE ALL USED BY THE STONEMASONS TO DISPLAY THEIR ARTISTRY. BEYOND PROVIDING AN AGREED NUMBER OF CARVINGS OF A PARTICULAR TYPE IT SEEMS THAT THE MASONS HAD COMPLETE ARTISTIC LICENSE IN DETERMINING THE FORM AND PHYSIOGNOMY OF THEIR

CARVINGS.

PROVENANCE

EX ENGLISH COLLECTION

REPUTEDLY ACQUIRED FROM THE WEST COUNTRY