

The Green Man of Cercles

TREE NOSES

In the cloister of St Bertrand des Comminges, Haut Garonne, lurks this mysterious ancient mask with foliage growing on the forehead :



Fig 1 : St Bertrand Tree Nose

The stone is nearly black and so shiny that one imagines it has been stroked by countless hands over the centuries for good luck. There are endless Renaissance Green Men carved in wood on the famous choir stalls but nowhere did I find a mention of this simple and primitive one outside.

I wrote to Dr Mercia MacDermott, author of “Explore Green Men” for her comments. She replied, “The curious head with the trefoil on its forehead has parallels in England. There are two in Northamptonshire, at All Saints church in Wilbarston and St Peter’s, Kettering. There is also one in St Andrew’s church in Foxton, Leicestershire.”

Dr MacDermott also sent me a sketch of the two Tree Noses of Northamptonshire from a book by Peter Hill entitled, “In Search of the Green Man in Northamptonshire”

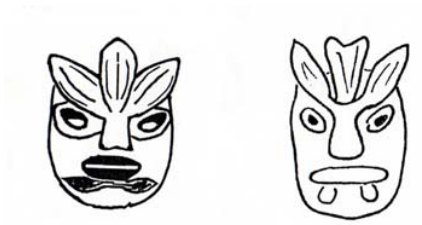


Fig 2 : Sketch by Peter Hill

An email exchange with Tina Negus followed. She sent me photographs of the two Tree Noses of Northamptonshire and three more Tree Nose images from Lincolnshire, where Tina lives. She has kindly given permission for these to be used :

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Fig 3 : Gosberton Tree Nose

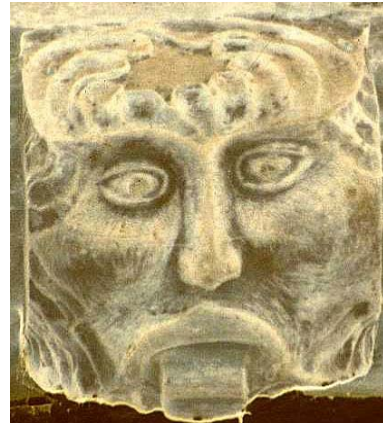


Fig 4 : Saxilby Tree Nose



Fig 5 : Pinchbeck Tree Nose



Fig 6 : Kettering Tree Nose



Fig 7 : Wilbarston Tree Nose

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Recently, Tim Healey www.greenmantrail.co.uk sent me this superb example of a Tree Nose from Chadlington, in Oxfordshire :



Fig 8 : Chadlington Tree Nose

It seems that the Tree Nose is a simplified version of “the face made of leaves”, and as such, qualifies to be a foliate head or Green Man. My final photograph is Gallo-Roman, 1st century AD, from Vesunna Museum in Périgueux.



Fig 9 : Vesunna Green Man

Not only a Tree Nose, but also a Face made of Leaves.

If we accept these very basic masks within the foliate category, I think we should also accept the category of Heads among Foliage - also very common - as “Green Men”.

(To be continued)

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Julianna Lees – Montagrier 2008