

## Our Finger Pillory



Finger stocks were once used in churches for minor offences, like not paying attention during a sermon. Ours may be the only surviving one in Britain. It is made of oak and fastened into the wall. We are unsure of its age, but it is mentioned in accounts of the church dating back to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

The finger pillory has semi-circular cut-outs on both front edges. The lower edge also has vertical holes in which the first two joints of the finger are inserted. Once the stocks are closed, the finger (which is bent at the middle joint) cannot be removed. It is sufficient to imprison only the index or middle finger of each hand in this manner. The holes are of different sizes, presumably to capture both adults and children.

Finger stocks were also routinely used in upper class halls to punish the disorderly during social gatherings, and to discipline servants. A particularly fine example can be found in Littlecote House, Wiltshire, where it is still regularly used on unruly diners during contemporary medieval banquets!

*Portable finger pillory from Littlecote Hall*

