



The Rector of Clopton, the Rev. Frank Rowell, with the footprint inscribed in lead which he rescued from the church roof.

F.L. MADE HIS MARK IN 1871

SHINNING up to the top of the parish church at Clopton must be a feat that is good for the sole.

Over at least 100 or so years it has been a village tradition, with the more adventurous types tackling not exactly the foothills of Clopton but a tricky climb nonetheless.

It is 80 feet to the top of the tower . . . and there were several more feet when the summit was reached. For climbers who inched their way to the top often made their marks with a footprint etched into the lead on the roof.

But now the footprints and other marks have gone because of work in a major renovation project.

All that is except one . . . a mysterious print initialled "F.L. 1871". It has been saved by the Rector of Clopton, the Rev. Frank Rowell.

"Over the years people have been proud to reach the top after the climb which involves five ladders, and many of them left their marks with foot impressions, names and dates," he said on Wednesday.

"The one I have got now was the best. The others have gone, as the lead had to be re-cast. I am going to keep it in the church and it should be something of a conversation piece."

The church helped to prove that graffiti was not

such a modern phenomenon as might be thought, he said.

There were several inscriptions of names and dates on various other parts of the building, the earliest dating back to 1570 when a merchant's mark was scratched in the wall of the porch.

Renovation work on the 14th century church would cost about £19,000. Hoped-for grants would assist the tiny village and would bring the total it needed to raise down to an amount which would be within reach — but there would still have to be a big fund-raising effort.