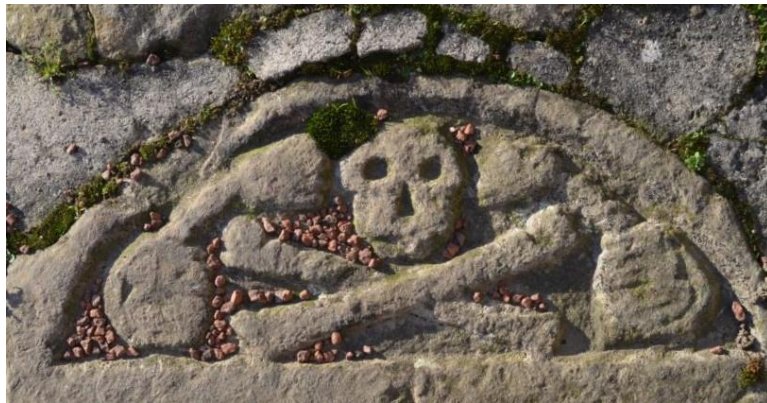


Recording St. Michael's Graveyard for Posterity



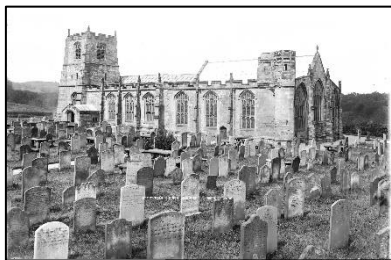
This 17th century carving is a memento mori to remind passers-by of the deceased and their own mortality.

The church and graveyard are frequently contacted and visited by families and historians. People are looking to find a grave or gather information from a gravestone about their ancestor. Their resting place provides an ending to their ancestor's life.

The church no longer holds its original records as in 1980 all the church records that existed were deposited at Woodhorn Museum and Archive. Besides being of interest to family historians, the records are of historical importance to the church and the people of the town.

In order to preserve these records for the church and make them accessible a project has been undertaken to record the historic interments. The burial records started in 1647 and continue up until 1992. The churchyard closed in 1856 when it was full and the new cemetery on South Road opened. However, families who had a close link to the graveyard were allowed for a time to continue to be buried there.

The grave stones in the church yard were recorded in 1885 by FR Wilson in his role as a church warden. There was also a notebook at the time which listed the main names in alphabetical order, and also had diagrams of the areas of the church yard with reference numbers to the graves then there. The late Mr AC "Joe" Kent, church warden, compiled a card index from these records in the 1990's which listed about 4,000 burials which he said was incomplete as they had been collected over time and found in "odd" places. Joe also for many years answered requests from family historians and his records have been invaluable.



Since 1885 when 700 tombstones were recorded there are today approximately 550 in the churchyard. Part of the project has been to record tombstones that were there in the past and those currently in the church yard.

During 2019 we have brought together all the records available for burials from 1646. This

includes the Cholera victims and where their known graves are in the church yard. A memorial stone to them is proposed.

Surprisingly the number of burials in this, the roughly 1.5 acre parish graveyard, runs to over 19,000, on average a density of 3-4 burials per plot size. South Road cemetery, a five acre site, currently has 16,000 burials.

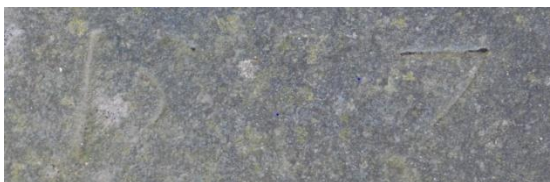
FamName	Forename	Death Date	Age	YoB	YoD	DoBur	GravelD	G-Loc	AlnBurf
BEALL	Thomas	20-12-1813	65	1748	1813		A174	1J5	
BURNETT	Eleanor	22-6-1858	74	1784	1858	24/06/1858	A175	1J4	8-1361
BURNETT	William	4-1-1856	69	1787	1856	06/01/1856	A175	1J4	8-1194

420th Anniversary

Burials were under the church floor and in the churchyard. The earliest gravestone still visible is for Edward Alnwicke who died in 1597. His epitaph below is no longer visible and has been found recorded in 1822 by William Davison.

“Here lyeth under Buried the Body of Edward Alnwicke who departed 12th February 1597”

The date on the stone can just be made out.



If you would like information about an ancestor who is buried in the church yard please contact us via the church or web site and we will be pleased to help.

We are also looking for information about the collapse of the churchyard wall when burials were exposed and the wall was rebuilt.

Patricia Jones and Colin Watson