

Storm hits the Alnwick Churchyard and fells the Boom Tree

In the 1700's there were several trees in and about the churchyard. The plot of land at the west end of the church, which was known as Painter Hill, was thickly studded with trees. In maintaining the churchyard, in 1713 Matthew Forster received "3s one y^e work-mane three day, in cutting down tree and driseing wood."



A little nearer the church was the site of the old Boom tree, opposite the entrance into Rotten Row. It was a fine specimen of the common ash and for successive generations its noble appearance had become entwined in the history of the building. The name was thought to have come from Saxon times,

perhaps from what is now "baum", a tree.

"The young were accustomed to gather under its branches, and the more advanced in life had a tender and affectionate regard for it."

It was one of a number of ash trees which had been in the churchyard. Mr. Dickson, the Clerk of the Peace for the County of Northumberland, who had acted as vestry clerk for the last 35 years, recorded in the Vestry Minute Book in 1765 "the six Ash Trees, then standing in the churchyard were directed to be cut down. But which order did not extend to this great tree."

At about four o'clock in the afternoon of Wednesday the 17th of February 1836, being Ash Wednesday, the Boom Tree was blown down. It was measured to be "310 cubic feet" and "the girt at the lower part 13 ½ feet"

The great trunk of the tree was placed under the belfry tower. The Reverend William Procter, the Incumbent, gave the rest to the Church Wardens to dispose of. It was "To be Sold by Auction, On Monday, February 22nd " The day of the sale brought together a good many of the inhabitants, several of whom were anxious to possess some memento of this old remain. The relic hunters were able to collect "curiosities of value, which had been manufactured from the wood of this tree, consisting of tables, chairs, work boxes, &c."