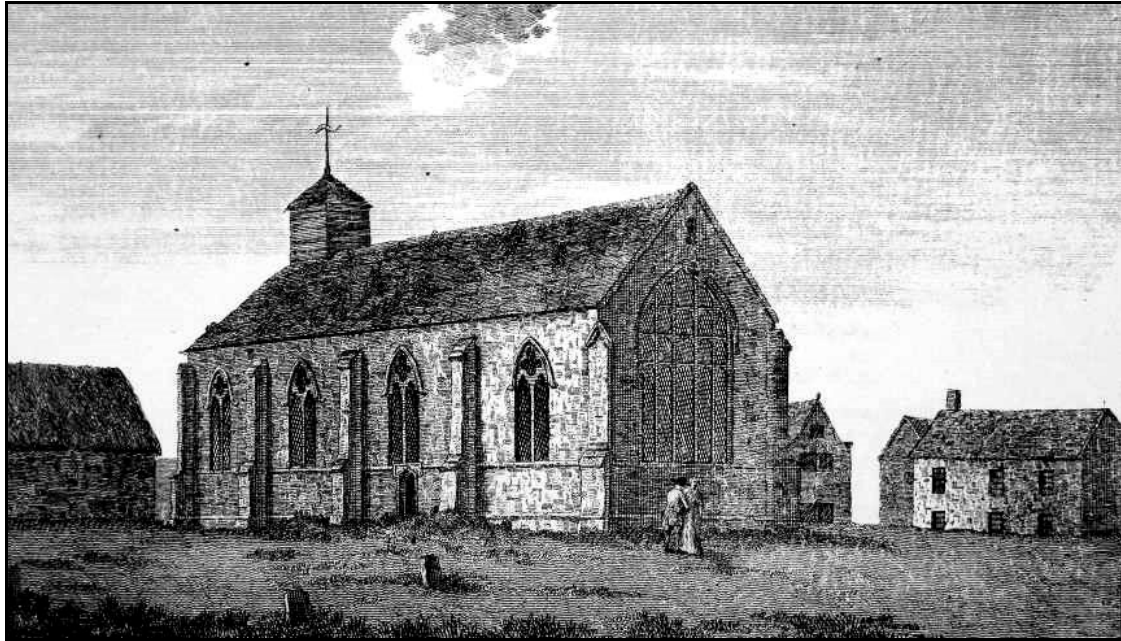


## THE 13<sup>th</sup> CENTURY CHURCH OF ST. MARY THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND GRAVE YARD IN THE VILLAGE OF OSGATHORPE



A 1795 ENGRAVING OF THE CHURCH

This 1795 engraving of St. Mary's Church, Osgathorpe taken from "*John Nichol's History and Antiquities of Leicestershire*" is the earliest known illustration of the church. Note the bell tower encased in wood and capped by the tiled steeple, later to be covered in lead. The Alms Houses, built by Thomas Harley can be seen in the distance. The church was awarded Grade II listing in 1965

BY SAMUEL T STEWART - DECEMBER 2023

## **COMPLIMENTARY READING ON AUTHORS WEBSITE**

**"The Osgathorpe Churchwarden's Accounts 1674 - 1716**

**"A Story About The Goodmans....."**

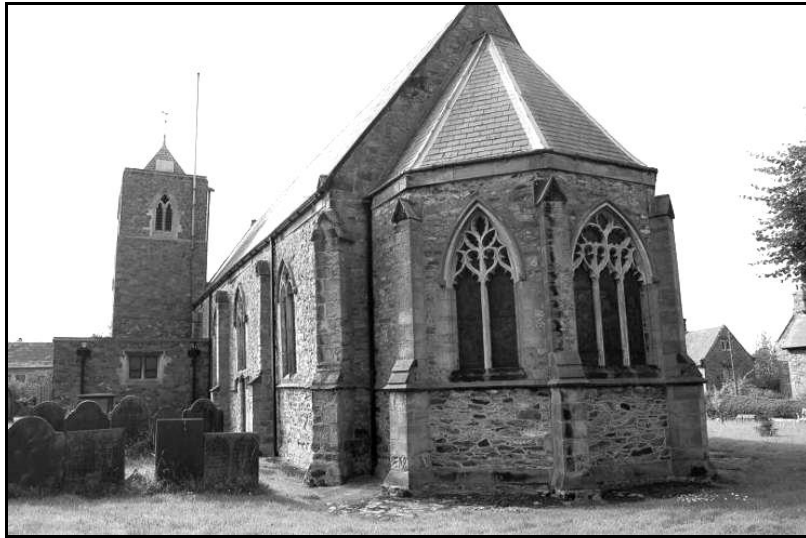
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## A HISTORY OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH, OSGATHORPE



**RECENT PHOTOGRAPH OF CHURCH**

The parish church to Saint Mary the Blessed Virgin, is recorded as being first founded in 1204. According to John Nichols History and Antiquities of Leicestershire, its first rector, William the chaplain, was presented to Angodefthorpe in 1224.

It was extensively restored c.1861 by Joseph Mitchell at a cost of £800, raised by the exertions of the then rector Thomas Naylor Bland. It is described as being of grey igneous un-coursed rubble (Charnwood granite stone) with string course and buttresses. It is a long single cell with a polygonal apse added c.1861, and a bell turret in wood, with a spire covered in lead (formally tiled) was placed at the west end (see 1795 engraving on front page). The floor of the Aisles and Apse etc were laid with tessellated tiles in pattern, which are admired for their quality and colour. A tower and vestry to the south west corner of the nave was added c.1931 as shown in the above photograph. This contains two bells which are now rung by a clockwork mechanism. North and south doorways have ogee arches, the north being decorated with two carved heads as ornamental capitals, and a fleur de lys. Windows of simple decorated tracery have hood moulds capped by fleur de lys, but with much stonework renewed.

An interesting feature in the south wall of the nave is a hagioscope (commonly known as a squint). This is an architectural term denoting a small splayed opening or tunnel at seated eye-level, through an internal masonry dividing wall of a church in an oblique direction (south-east or north-east), giving worshippers a view of the altar and therefore of the elevation of the host. A small ogee arched priest's door is also incorporated. There are two trefoiled piscinas and a plain octagonal font.

The old parts of the church graveyard were closed for burials in 1873.

The church is recorded in Kelly's 1916 directory as being part of the rural deanery of west Akely.

**Continued over page**

**The following text in blue is taken from the publication by the author entitled "The Osgathorpe Churchwarden's Accounts 1674 - 1716" :-**

The greatest expense of the parish was the maintenance of the church. The religious upheavals of the 16th century had led to a fossilisation of the church as well as a transformation of the interior. During this time it took the church wardens all their time to keep pace with the swings of the ecclesiastical pendulum. Payments were noted in the accounts for repairs, and improvements as well as general housekeeping. The ringing of the church bell was responsible for a major recurrent item of expenditure; bell-ringers were obliged to ring on all important public occasions as well as on Sundays. The bell wheel required regular repair, either by a joiner or by the village blacksmith. Bell ropes were replaced most years, a testament to the frequency of bell ringing, the poor quality of the ropes or perhaps the friction caused by a crude bell wheel.

In 1700, possibly to celebrate the new century, a new bell wheel was commissioned. The old bell was taken to Nottingham at a cost of 2s., and probably melted down, the bell founder charged £3 15s. 2d. for casting the new bell, and the return trip including expenses came to 5s. It cost a further 10 shillings for its hanging, 7s. 4d. for new ironwork and 2s. 3d. for a new bell rope. The bell clapper needed mending the following year and either one or two new ropes were purchased every year until 1716.

Whether coincidentally or not, the steeple also needed substantial repair three times during the same period. Only one payment of 1 shilling is recorded as having been made to the bell ringers on Christmas Day 1710 directly from the church funds. Apart from bell ropes the following were regularly repaired or replaced: bell wheels, bell hangers, bell fastenings, iron work for the bell, bell clapper, and ironwork for the bell wheel. The church was substantially re-pointed in 1675 and 1677 and was roofed with local slate (presumably Swithland slate):-

- 1685 - Paid Stephen Clarke for bringing slates 5 shillings, for slates at pitts 12 shillings, and for nails and laithes £2 7s. 9d.

Many loads of stones were brought to build, and later repair, the churchyard wall; the stones were set in lime mortar.

- 1693 - *Paid for mending churchyard wall and lime for it, 1s. 4d.*
- 1696 - *Paid for mending churchyard wall 2s. 6d.*
- 1706 - *Paid for twelve loads of stone for ye churchyard wall, 3 shillings.*

A gate and style in the wall required frequent minor repairs.

- 1674 - *Paid for lock for church gate, 4d.*
- 1682 - *For borde and nailes for ye gate 2 shillings.*  
*For work on ye church style 6 shillings.*  
*For ironwork round it 1s. 4d.*
- 1706 - *Paid for churchyard style and the carriage of it, 15 shillings*

The church steeple requires frequent repair.

- 1702 - *For repairing ye steeple for wood boards and work 10s 6d. for nails for ye steeple 6d.*
- 1705 - *For Tomlinson for mending ye steeple 10d.*
- 1706 - *For boards, nailes and workmanship for ye church steeple 6s 2d.*

Eric Bailey, who mended the bell wheel in 1689 and 1693, was a carpenter, as was Tomlinson who mended the steeple in 1705. Thomas Clarke was certainly a blacksmith supplying ironwork, *nailes* and fastenings from 1690 to 1712 for the bell wheels and the church gate. Both lived and worked in Osgathorpe. The only indication of rates of pay were those of a mason who worked on the church wall for

30 days and charged 15s 6d. for his labour. Mr. Vaughan supplied stone and Mr. Boutbee boards of wood.

The most detailed list of bell components appears in 1693 comprising "a bolt, a plate, a cotter, two wedges, and two staples for the bell rope".

Seats were either installed or increased in number inside the church in 1674 at a cost of £2 13s. 0d. plus 2 shillings for nailes and 1 shilling for labour. The wardens own charges for 2s. 8d. for *ye presentiment of seats in the same year* reflects the work done in allocating the seats to householders (or commonly to houses). The inside of the church was coated in 1687 using lime wash, the coat of arms was mended using 6d. worth of nailes and the painter was paid £4 for "*beautifying ye church*". In 1707, two locks were brought for the parish chest, in which money for alms and parish records were kept, and a catch was fitted to the pulpit door.

From 1674 to 1716, regular sums of money, some substantial, were spent in glazing the church windows. A total of £3 5s. 10d. was paid for seventeen separate visits of the glazier and his materials. This could be the belated repair of glass damage during the Commonwealth, as it seems rather high for wear and tear. "*Quarrels*" (quarries) for the church floor were brought for 6/3, "fetching" cost of £1 0s. 1d. and laying 3s. 9d. This was taken to mean quarry tiles but the same term was later used to describe material to repair the church windows (possibly the sills).

The Bishop's representative paid two visits to the parish each year, at Michaelmass and Easter. The fees paid for this visitation to inspect the parish were considerable. The apparitor (known as the pallitor locally) was the official messenger of the church court and charged the parish for various documents it was obliged to receive. A bible, prayer books, alterations to prayer books and other ecclesiastical literature were purchased from the meagre funds of the parish. It was charged by the apparitor for a proclamation regarding "*The Union*" (with Scotland) in 1706 and "*prayers concerning ye wars*" in 1709. Other proclamations of fasts, humiliation and thanksgivings for various National events also had to be purchased to be read out in church. The rector was also obliged by government to keep a register (of births, deaths and marriages) that was brought along with supplies of parchment. At the Michaelmass visitation, the apparitor received a transcript of the register for the bishop's records. Every few years the parish was obliged to produce a terrier or descriptive list of all church lands and properties. This list, and its copy, and the fee for presenting the document were also paid from the parish fund, the copies being taken by the apparitor.

#### NOTE

**John Nichols recorded in 1802 that there were two church bells so it is assumed that another bell was installed sometime between 1716 and 1800, although no further evidence of this has been found.**

## THE CHURCH AS DESCRIBED BY JOHN NICHOLS IN HIS "HISTORY OF THE ANTIQUITIES OF LEICESTERSHIRE" 1802 (part transcribed):-

Dedicated to St. Mary, consists of a small tower (see the preceding engraving), in which are two bells, suspended under two arches; a nave and chancel, all of one pace.

The church, though small, looks neat (though the pews are old) from being kept extremely clean. On the south side of the chancel is a piscena.

On the screen which separates the nave from the chancel are the King's arms, lately done by Boulton; and on the east wall of the chancel are the arms and crest of *Hastings earl of Huntingdon*.

In the *Marriculus* of 1220, **Osgathorpe** is described to be within the parish of Whitwick (ecclesiastical?), and having a chapel that was served by a chaplain resident. William, the chaplain was at the period inducted parson there; and, in right of his vicarage, received all tithes, oblations, and profits, as well of wheat as of other things arising from eight vertigates of land; except the chief mortuary (*principale testamentum*), which, *cum corporibus*, belonged to the mother church.

A pension of 20 shillings, formerly paid out of the chapelry of **Osgathorpe**, to the prior of Holland (otherwise Croyland), continued to be paid when it was converted into a rectory.

In 1344, the entry is, "**Osgarthorp** folebat effe nunc vero ecclesia parochialis, & non taxatur" (transcribed from the original by Mr Carte).

In 1552, the commissioners reported that the church contained:- In primis, one chalice; tow vestmentes, one of fay, and one of farfnet; one cope of hawdekyn; tow amyffes of white cloth; one furples; one croffe of laryn; tow belles

In 1650 the rectory was returned worth £30; and the incumbent as "sufficient".

"I Cadwallader Vaughan doe hereby promife that foe lond as I fhall continue to be parfon of Osgathorp, as often as I shall there officiate, I will read the Communion Service in the chancel att Communion table, as well before as after fermon, at att all fuch times as the Rubrick requires it to be read, as well when there is noe Communion as when there is, and unlefs the contrary be injoynd by act of Parliament hereafter to be made. Witnefs my hand this fixteenth day of Sepember 1679. Cadw. Vaughan". (transcribed from the original by Mr. Carte)

The present value in the King's books is £7. The certified value is £67. 14s., but it is now worth about £120. a year. The Episcopal procurations are, 1s. 3d.



## A RECORD OF OLD GRAVES IN ST. MARY'S, GRAVEYARD BY JOHN NICHOLS

Burial in the surrounding church graveyard ceased in 1873. The following old grave details were given in John Nichols "History of the Antiquities of Leicestershire" 1802. Unfortunately most of these are now missing:-

**All have been transcribed into modern English**

### **On three alter-tombs, nearly petrified**

1. Here lieth the body of Francis Harley, gent. Who departed this life the 19<sup>th</sup> day of October, 1715, aged 76. He had by Dorcas his wife, three sons, who died young; and three daughters, Mary, Sarah and Elizabeth, now living.
2. Here lieth the body of Dorcas Harley, wife of Francis Harley, gent, who departed this life the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, 1718, aged 70.
3. Under this stone lieth Elizabeth, one of the daughters of Henry Peach, of Derby, gent., and Sarah his wife who departed this life the fifteenth of February, 1732, aged 9 years and 5 months. Here also lies the body of Sarah Peach, mother of the above-said Elizabeth, who departed this life the 8<sup>th</sup> day of April, 1737, aged 53 years. She was one of the daughters of Francis Harley, of this town, gentleman. Here also lieth the body of Sarah Peach, second daughter of the above said Henry Peach, who died June 5, 1738, aged 25 years. Here also lieth the body of Henry Peach, of Derby, gent. who departed this life the 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 1752, in the 70<sup>th</sup> year of his age.

### **ON A STONE AGAINST THE NORTH WALL OF THE CHURCH**

To the memory of Susannah, relic of Giles Rainsford, clerk, A. B. (and Ann their daughter). She was a native of the province of Virginia in America; and, after a residence of 42 years at this place, she died the 30<sup>th</sup> of November, 1779, aged 82 years.



**2020 Photograph**

### **ON A STONE AGAINST THE SOUTH WALL**

Elizabeth, relict of John Brailsford, late rector of Kirby, co., Nottingham, died July 31, 1775, in her 75<sup>th</sup> year. Her daughter Rachel, "after life most exemplary for filial (devoted) and social duties", died January 3, 1790, aged 58

### **ON UPRIGHT STONES**

Thomas Clarke and Sarah his wife. He died March 26, 1725 – 6; she died April 14, 1717, each aged 88

Here lieth the body of William Boulton, gent., who died Oct. 3, 1757, aged 92. And near this place lie the bodies of Ruth his wife, who died Aug. 12, 1738, aged 73; and Ann their daughter, who died Sept. 22, 1755, aged 49

Thomas Boulton, late of Storden Grange, gent, died July 10, 1785, aged 61.  
Jane Boulton, died April 2, 1789, aged 57.

Robert Tatnell, died May 8, 1777, aged 58

Sarah Tatnell, died April 18, 1790, aged 74

Timothy Churchill, died Dec 14, 1738, aged 66

Elizabeth Churchill, died Dec 21, 1741, aged 76

Thomas Everard, died Nov 19, 1794, aged 69

Hannah Everard, died Dec 1, 1793, aged 58

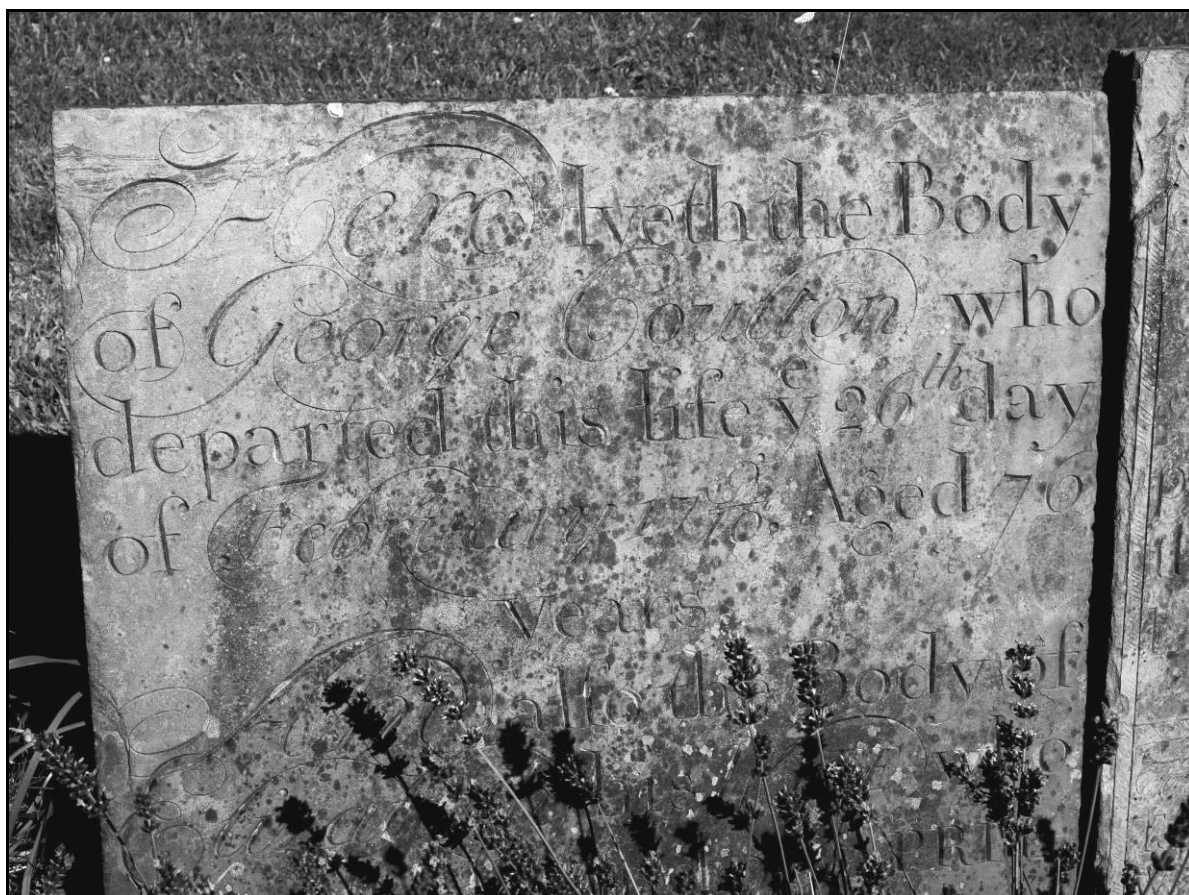


**18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY GRAVESTONES AUDITED AND  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY THE AUTHOR IN 2020**



**This is thought to be the oldest decipherable grave stone in the churchyard  
sited on the LH side of the path. The RH side of this stone has not survived but  
the wording is thought to have been as follows:-**

Jane the daughter of  
George Coulton  
elder died year 1685  
Elizabeth ye daughter of George Coulton  
younger dyed 30<sup>th</sup> September 1695



**Here lieth the body of George Coulton**

He Departed this life 26<sup>th</sup> day

Of February 1710 aged 76 years

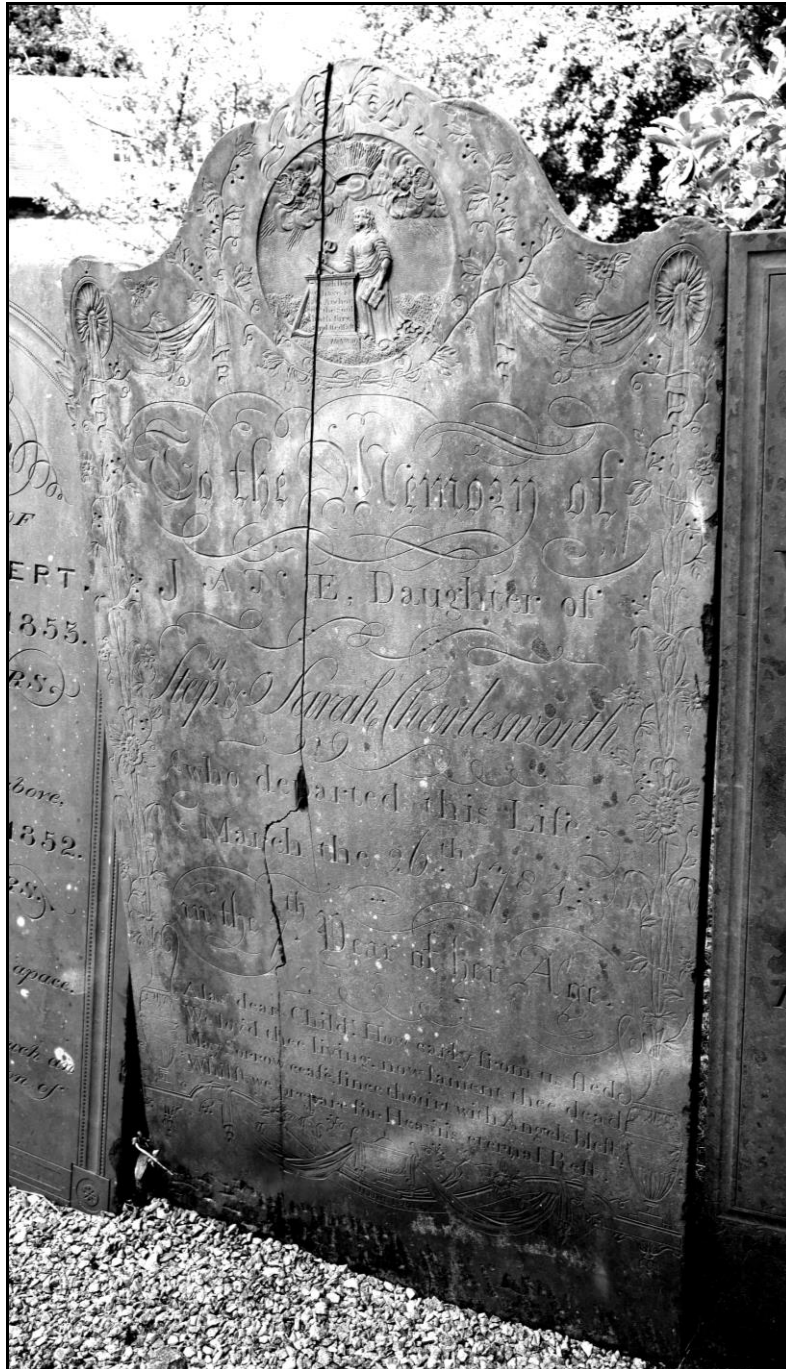
Years

And also the body of

Elizabeth his wife who

Died the second of April

1710 Aged 77 Years



To the memory of  
 Jane daughter of  
 Stephen & Sarah Charlesworth  
 Who departed this life  
 March 26<sup>th</sup> 1784  
 In the 7<sup>th</sup> Year of her Age

### ON THE LH SIDE OF THE STONE

In memory of Sarah Johnson, Relic of Samuel Johnson and daughter of Timothy Churchill, died December 2, 1771, aged 70 (LH side of gravestone)



### ON THE RH SIDE OF THE STONE

Mr James Churchill

Late of this place

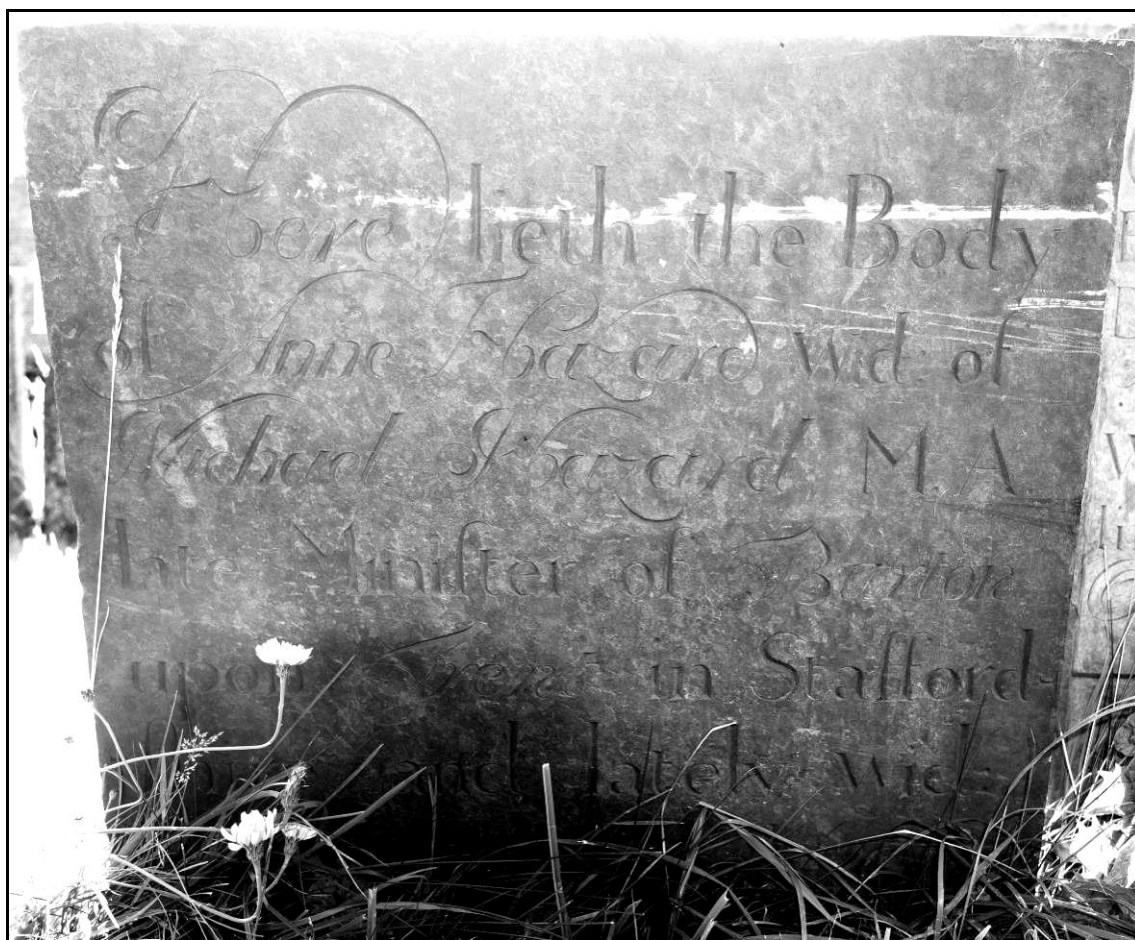
Who departed this life

The 7<sup>th</sup> of September

In the year of our Lord

1770

Aged 64 years



**Here lieth the body**

Of Anne Hazard Wid: of

Michael Hazard M.A.

The minister of Burton

Upon Trent in Stafford

shire and lately Wid.....





**Here lie the remains of**  
 Catharine Baresby  
 Daughter of the  
 Re. John Cave  
 Formerly Rector of Catthorpe  
 And widow of the late  
 Rev. William Baresby  
 Vicar of Loseby  
 In this County  
 She departed this life  
 On the 21<sup>st</sup> day of April 1781  
 In the 79<sup>th</sup> year of her age



#### LH SIDE

Here lieth the body of  
Elizabeth the wife  
Of Timothy Churchill  
Who departed this life  
The 21<sup>st</sup> day of Dec  
1741 aged 70 years

#### RH SIDE

Here lieth the body of  
Timothy Churchill  
Who departed this life  
The 14<sup>th</sup> day of Dec.  
1738 aged 66 years





**Beneath are interred the remains of**

**LH SIDE**

Francis Everard

Who departed this life

The 19<sup>th</sup> day of November

Anno Domini 1794

Aged 65 years

**RH SIDE**

Hannah Everard

His wife; she died

The 11<sup>th</sup> day of December

In the year of our Lord 1793

Aged 58 years



**Beneath are deposited the remains of**

**LH SIDE**

John Earp  
 Who resigned this mortal  
 State of existence  
 On the 17<sup>th</sup> day of June 1792  
 Aged 60 years

**RH SIDE**

Thomas Earp  
 Who exchanged this  
 for an immortal state  
 On the 24<sup>th</sup> day of  
 November 1802  
 In the 80<sup>th</sup> year of his age



**Here lieth the body of**

Mary Tatnell

Daughter of Robert

Tatnell by Sarah his

Wife departed this

Life the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of July

Anno Domini 1717

Aged 2 Years



**Here lyeth the body**

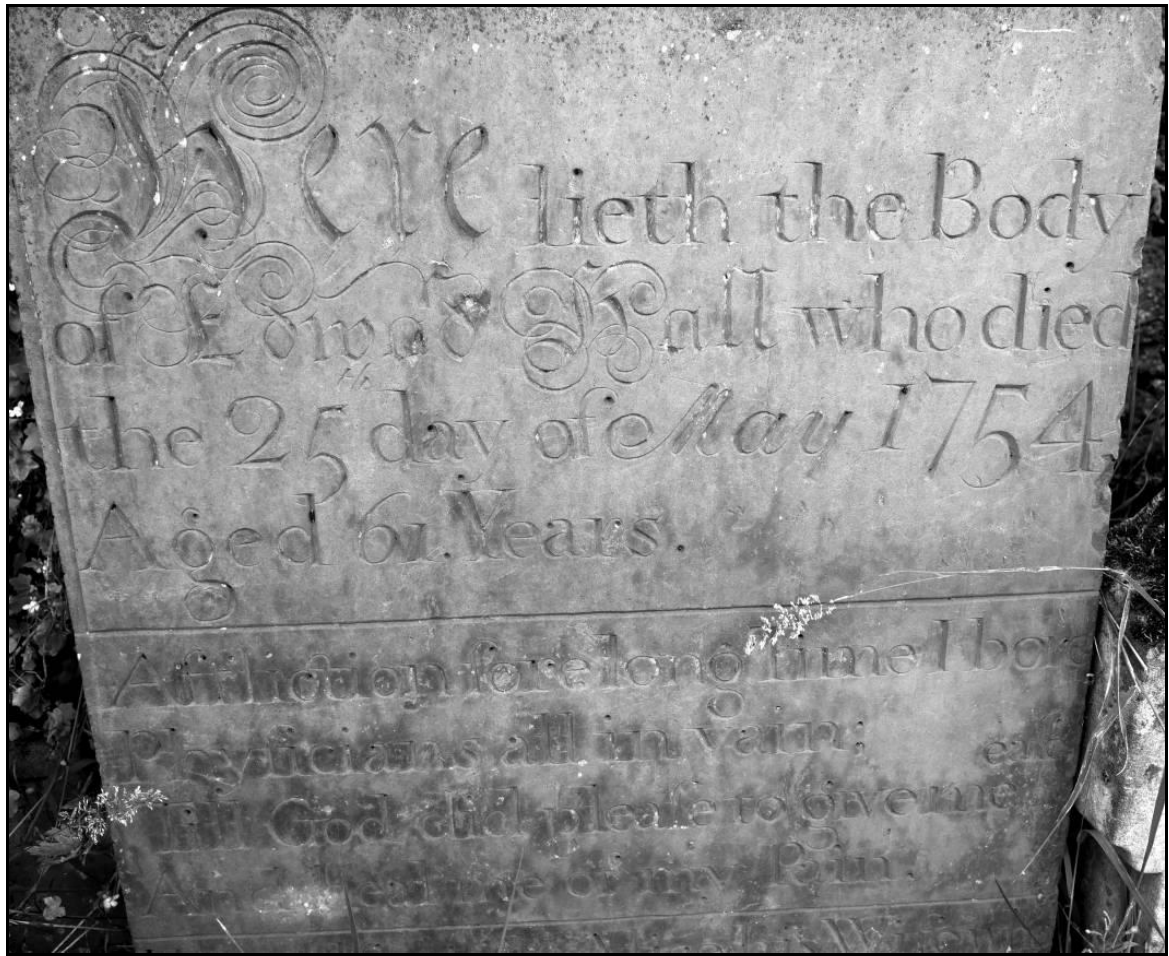
Of Susannah the wife of

John Tatnell who departed

This life the 6<sup>th</sup> day of April

Anno Dom. 1732 in the

44<sup>th</sup> year of her age



**Here lieth the body**

Of Tomas Hall who died

The 25<sup>th</sup> day of May 1754

Aged 61 years



## AN INTERESTING 19th CENTURY GRAVESTONE



A photograph of Elizabeth Ann Parr's (nee. Goodman) and her father William Goodman's grave in the old graveyard at St. Mary's Church, Osgathorpe. The old manor house is in the background. The inscription on the grave stone can be clearly read when it is enlarged.

This gravestone is of particular interest because the renowned Osgathorpe Goodman family were all staunch Wesleyan Methodists and attended Osgathorpe Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, so would normally have been buried in a non-conformist graveyard such as that adjoining the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel at Griffydham.

## TECHNICAL NOTES ON GRAVES STONES

It is unusual to see a local grave yard with the majority of the gravestones in slate from the Swithland deposits. There are fewer made from Welsh Slate which is more regular and easier to split being much more subject to lamination.

Slate is a fine-grained, foliated, homogeneous metamorphic rock derived from an original shale-type sedimentary rock composed of clay or volcanic ash through low-grade regional metamorphism. These forces and heat modify the clay minerals in the shale and mudstone. Foliation develops at right angles to the compressive forces of the convergent plate boundary to yield a vertical foliation that usually crosses the bedding planes that existed in the shale. It is the finest grained foliated metamorphic rock that tends to split along parallel cleavage planes, usually at an angle to the planes of stratification.



The above photograph is unusual in that it shows in the LH gravestone the turbulent pressure flow within the slate during its formation millions of years ago. On the rear of the split right hand stone, the mason's pointed chisel marks can be clearly observed.



Front of RH split stone (see over page for more details)





**An enlarged section of the front of the split gravestone referred to in the preceding page. The fine carving demonstrates the skill of the stone mason**



Another example in St. Mary's graveyard of fine relief carving in Welsh slate

## SLATE QUARRYING AT SWITHLAND

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Swithland Slate has been a traditional local roofing material since Roman times. Swithland gives its name to a line of 'slate' outcrops found along the east side of Charnwood, from Hallgates and Little John, through Swithland Wood and The Brand, up to Woodhouse Eaves. All these locations have old slate quarry pits, as does a corresponding outcrop on the other side of the Charnwood anticline at Groby. Swithland Wood had been quarried for many centuries for small-scale slate production. Many of the 24 small pits in Swithland Wood may relate to early slate quarrying. Unlike the management of the woodland, the quarries were leased to local quarrymen. Two industrial scale quarries developed within the woods, one in the 'Great Pit' in the centre of the woods, and the other near the road at the northern end. Similar scales of activity also developed on the other side of Swithland Road, in The Brand, where four more water-filled pits remain.

By the mid-19th century under the management of John Ellis of Leicester, among other things Chairman of the Midland Railway, slate in the Great Pit was being extracted from a depth of more than 55 m. Swithland Slate began being used on vernacular roofs from around 1750 and is still very common on older buildings throughout Charnwood and beyond. Unlike the thinner, lighter Welsh Slates, which are used with fixed sized slates, Swithland Slate roofs are graded from small slates along the ridge to largest sizes at the base.

Notable buildings on which the slates were used included the Midland Railway's London terminus at St Pancras railway station and the Leicester houses designed by Ernest Gimson. Headstones for graves have been made from Swithland Slate since the 17th century and are found in graveyards throughout Leicestershire and in neighbouring counties. They could be engraved with detailed letterings and patterns, which prove to be much more durable than on many other types of stone. Other uses included kerbstones, windowsills and sinks. Once the canals and railways could transport Welsh slate in large quantities at low prices, the demand for local slates diminished. Quarrying in the northern pit ended in 1838, and then in 1887 the Great Pit ceased production. Both pits now have deep water and are fenced off for safety reasons, but paths around the quarries afford good views of the pools and rock faces.

**Continued over page**





**Swithland slate**



**Swithland slate - Green slate from another deposit**