

What can you see every time you visit the church, but is invisible from every pew?

The Gravestones

I have been fascinated by them ever since I came to the village 50 years ago. They provide a marvellous setting for any church, and their mere age provides a contact with the past and a sense of continuity over the years. Look more closely and you see the stone they are made of, the carvings, the inscriptions. Most give formal details of the interred, some give family information, jobs, place of origin, others extracts from the scriptures or poems of joy or sadness.

Baslow churchyard is well preserved and regularly cared for, but it is sad to see some have been pushed over for safety reasons, or fallen spontaneously, and the growth of trees that can only harm them. Even so a remarkable number are in good condition: unfortunately the inevitable erosion and flaking of the stone have marred quite a number.

There are 852 gravestones and 1914 names recorded on them. This does not include any from the modern burial ground next door. At least three are dated before 1700

The information on the stones is irreplaceable. Fortunately they have now been mapped, fully recorded and photographed, a project that has taken 30 years and except for a few photographs is all but complete. The results (but not yet the photographs), can be seen in the church, at the County Library at Matlock and on line through the Church Website. This resource will be of benefit to local historians, and even more to family historians.

That said, we still have the real gravestones, hard stone, available for us to walk around, to admire and enjoy, to touch and feel the story of the craftsmen who made them and the people laid to rest beneath them.

Perhaps you can find Thomas Brushfield near the Church Rooms. He lived and worked at Church Cottage. Maybe he is watching you.

Sacred
To the memory of
Thomas Brushfield
Who departed this life
October 16th 1797 aged 80 years
*My sledge and hammer here reclined
My bellows too have lost their wind
My fire extinct my forge decayed
And in the earth my voice is laid
My coal is spent my iron's gone
My last anvils drawn my work is done*

David Dalrymple-Smith

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