

Survey of Gravestones

at

St Mary Magdalene Church, Huntshaw, N Devon.



Compiled by Richard Sears

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- Ledgers and memorials within the church from CM01 to CM27
- Headstones outside from G001 to G252

Section 1 – Introduction

Being someone who has an interest in family trees, I have been helped greatly over the years by websites where people can place photos of headstones on, giving easy access to info without having to drive hundreds of miles to get to that cemetery or church.

I started photographing the headstones at Huntshaw in 2013 with a view to putting them on one of these websites, and have continued to do so on and off ever since, until completing this compilation in 2020.

The search for the Plan and plot Numbers!



What was always missing was a plan with plot numbers on. It was known that one existed in the dim and distant past but none of our congregation knew where this was and so after searching in all of the usual places in the vestry and asking previous Church Wardens etc. we concluded it must be lost. In the vestry there still was the incredibly heavy Iron chest, made in 1813 after the 1812 registration act called for all important documents to be kept safe (ie registers of births, marriages and deaths), but this key was also lost.

I did turn the chest upside down a few times and it appeared empty, but when we started renovations on the church in 2019 and managed to open ithey presto there it was!

It was the old method of direct print off a tracing onto photo paper, dated 1988 and measuring about 2 feet square. After a little research I found that the plan was done by a Manpower Services Commission team under the auspices of N Devon Community Agency in 1987/88 for the PCC, and a copy of an index of these plots was held in the North Devon Records office (NDR) in Barnstaple.

Section 2 contains photos on A4 laminates of this plan that show original graves up to 1987, and superimposed on this I have marked more recent headstones, up to March 2020.

Two lever arch files held in the church.

Once the coronavirus pandemic is over, (hopefully before 2021) two files containing photos of all the headstones, with their inscriptions will be placed in the church, one copy to be kept in the church, and the other that can be signed out by families that would like some time to study the information. In the meantime electronic copies will be placed onto the Friend's website for all to view on (www.huntshawchurch.com) and also the Gravestone Photographic Resource Project (GPR) website (www.gravestonephotos.com) for wider viewing.

What the files contain:-

From the typed index of plots from the NDR in **Section 3** I have created an excel sheet that contains numerical plot number, name, dates and age plus any other information known (eg where the person lived) and done some limited cross-referencing. **Section 4** contains this same list but is sorted alphabetically by Surname.

Cont'd

On individual sheets in **Section 6** there are 27 no photos (CM01 to CM27) of ledger stones, memorials and plaques etc. from within the church and 252 no (G001 to G252) of headstones and memorials outside. Where inscriptions are legible all of these are recoded on the sheets. The 5 plans of plot no's are laminated so anyone wanting to find a family grave can wander outside having noted the Plot number from the file. (But please put it back afterwards!)

Summary of the Survey.

The first record of St Mary Magdalene Church in Huntshaw is in 1277 when the first Rector, Stephen De Cokenton, was instituted. At that time the church probably comprised only of the Chancel (as existing) with probably only thatched roof. It may well be there was a previous building on the site with an itinerant rector visiting, but certainly from this time burials would have been placed around the church.

In 1439 under Bishop Edmund Lacy the church was enlarged by increasing the size of the Nave, adding on a North Aisle and the building of the West Tower to house the 3 bells. The oldest marked burials at Huntshaw are within the church when it became popular in the 16th century to follow the trend started by nobility in the larger churches (and pay a fee!).

Some of the most interesting ledgers are under the carpet of the N Aisle and in the belfry. The oldest burial is probably CM 18, the wife of Rev Thomas Robinson who was Rector from 1590 to 1617, followed by a close second of that of CM 09, John Burgen who died in 1617. The oldest gravestone outside is that of John Saltren (G005) of Fair oak who died in 1639.

In the middle ages it was not normal to mark a grave unless it was someone of importance and so we cannot know how many burials there are in the churchyard, but even with Huntshaw's small population there are well over a 1000 souls buried here.

Although the current survey only gives us 280 headstones and ledgers mentioning 336 people being interred, if we take all of the records we have into account:-

- Total burials taken from the church registers 1746 to 1915 = 679
- Actual numbers taken from headstones from 1916 to 2020 = 89
- Actual numbers taken from headstones from 1617 to 1745 = 27
- Numbers from 1277 (or before) to 1616 (unmarked)?

Although this gives about 800 souls buried in about 400 years, many of the stones from the 1600's and 1700's up to 1745 have fallen and been lost, plus from 1277 to the 1600's we will never know how many unmarked graves there were.

The church registers (from 1746 to 1915) currently are held in the County Archives in Exeter, but **Section 5** does give a full listing.

Section 2

Plans of Plot Numbers of graves within the churchyard and also inside the church of St Mary Magdalene, Huntshaw.

There are 5 plans showing positions of graves - they are laminated so they can be taken outside to find the location of the graves.

Please return them to the lever arch file when you have finished with them.

Church Memorials and ledgers stones within the church are marked with CM no's 1 to 27

The 4 corners of the church yard show Plot no's G001 to G252

Section 3

Index of Plot Numbers – Numerical Order

This Numbering system is based on the 5 laminated plot diagrams held in Section 2 and falls into two parts:-

Burials and Memorials within the Church:-

CM01 to CM27

Burials and Memorials outside the Church in the graveyard, Plot No's:-

G001 to G252

Section 4

Index of Plot Numbers – Alphabetical Order

The Plot Numbers are shown on the 5 laminated plot diagrams held in Section 2 and fall into two parts as listed in Section 6 (those within the Church and those outside within the churchyard)

The 3rd column in the following index lists the surname alphabetically.

Section 5

Index of Burials at St Mary Magdalene Church Huntshaw
taken from the church registers.

This Index is in Alphabetical Order and is placed here as
additional information.

From 1746 to 1915

NB – these records are compiled from the church burial registers that once were held in the Vestry, but are now held in the County Archives.

Like many churches, records were kept in church registers in the 1600's and before, but are now lost. The first register for Huntshaw parish starts in the year 1746.

This listing records 679 burials in the church yard between 1746 and 1915, which is far more than can be counted from the current gravestones. That is because over the centuries many of the headstones have been lost or have fallen, plus not all families placed headstones on the graves.

The current register from 1915 is still held in the Vestry.

Section 6

Individual sheets with photographs of headstones and record of inscription for

- Ledgers and memorials within the church Plot No's from CM01 to CM27
- Headstones outside with Plot No's G001 to G252