

Recording St Mary's Churchyard, Norton, 2021 – People

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Introduction – origins

Although some surnames found in Section (A) of St Mary's churchyard appear in St Mary's baptismal and marriage records in the 1600s, in most cases we have been unable to confirm Norton connections this far back. A likely exception is George Longhorn (c.1690-1771). There is a St Mary's baptismal record (in Latin) for '*Gorgius [George] Longthorne*', son of '*Heneryci [Henry]*' dated 10 Nov 1869, whose brother '*Petrus [Peter]*' was also baptised here on 30 Sept 1686 (CFHSa): and the will of Henry Longhorn, yeoman of Norton (probate 1827) names George and Peter Longhorn as two of his three sons (NEID, n/d). There are two monuments (1810 and 1818) for Wetherell family members: the father Robert WETHERELL (d.1821 aged 55yrs) was baptised in St Mary's (as Robert WEATHERILL, son of Robert) on 19 January 1767. The surname appears, with spelling variations, in St Mary's parish records from 1861 (baptism: WETHRLLE) continuing through the 1600s and 1700s with the latest record being an 1872 burial (WETHERELL, 1872) (CFHSb, c).

In most cases, we could only trace Norton connections back to the 1700s and 1800s. Several of those interred and/or commemorated were second or third generation Norton residents; several first-generation residents; some had lived in Norton temporarily before moving elsewhere. Some had children or in-laws who had settled here, although their own addresses were elsewhere. Several lived in Hartburn or Stockton, perhaps typifying ongoing emotional ties to Norton after Stockton ceased to be part of Norton parish in 1713; and more lived around Norton to the north, east, and west.

Whilst most people interred in Section (A) had been born in County Durham or in Yorkshire (mostly North Yorkshire), some people travelled long distances. The monument to Mary Ann Shelley (d.1812) states she was born in Brandnich, Devonshire – in pre-railway days, very far away indeed. One monument commemorates a son (Master Mariner) who drowned in Port Natal, South Africa in 1854; another a son who died in Boston USA in 1862. Investigating others, we find for example birthplaces in Cambridgeshire or in Lincolnshire; but not, as yet, in Scotland.

In some cases, placenames are a hint as to a birthplace. Thus, a monument to George Clark (d.1870) states he is '*of Whitby*', and this is confirmed as his birthplace in various records. However, placenames can also be misleading. The monument to William Corner (d.1897) states he is '*of Wh...k(am?)*', confirmed as '*Whickham [Gateshead]*' on the burial records – in his case, he was born near Heighington (Durham), had lived temporarily in Norton in the 1850s, and had moved to Whickham (where he died) between the 1881 and 1891 censuses.

Beliefs

This is a Christian burial place, and the church is Church of England. Commemorated in Section (A) are two St Mary's churchwardens, George Marshall d.1814 and Michael Rayne d.1818, and one St Mary's parish clerk, John Wilkinson, d.1885. It is reasonable to consider these (and probably their immediate families) as regular churchgoers. Otherwise, we cannot be sure whether any given person commemorated here is a regular or irregular churchgoer, or a non-attender at church services.

Similarly, whilst the likelihood is that all interred here are at least nominally Church of England, the same cannot be said of the inscriptions. Several inscriptions refer to family members who died 'elsewhere'. One is to Dinah Mark nee Moon who died in 1825 in Hamsterley, Co Durham, where she is buried in the Baptist church she attended in life. It is not clear which denomination, if any, her husband John Mark adhered to. Be that as it may, he moved late in life to Stockton where a married son lived, and was buried in St Mary's in 1854, and his wife Dinah's name is included on his monument.

Discrepancies

Researching biographies of those commemorated, some discrepancies arose between monumental inscriptions and documentary records, and also between one record and another. This is generally to be expected on researching biographical details.

Most of the discrepancies involved surname spellings, forenames, and ages. Until at least the mid-19th Century (and in parts of the UK up to the early 20th Century), surname spellings were fluid. An example is the Wetherall family mentioned above: St Mary's parish records contain more variations than those mentioned here. People could be 'officially' registered under one forename and known to family and friends by another (abbreviations, nicknames); and their nickname may appear in some documents. Names can be misheard. Incorrect ages could be mistakenly entered on, for example, censuses or death records; or deliberately entered incorrectly on these and other records.

One monument demonstrating all these points is that commemorating William (d.1897) and Hannah (d.1876) Dickinson and their married daughter Susan Taylorson (c.1837-1866).

Hertfordshire-born William Dickinson worked initially as an agricultural labourer. By c.1854, the family is living in Stranton, West Hartlepool, where their son George was born. By 1871, they have moved to Norton, where William (in his late 60s) is now a labourer in the iron works, living in workers' accommodation in *Norton Iron Works Cottages* (later renamed *Furnaces, The Green, Norton*). In 1856, these iron furnaces had produced a large metal bell intended for the Clock Tower at the new Palace of Westminster, Big Ben (albeit in the event damaged en route to Westminster, so not ultimately used for this purpose). Widowed William was still living here with (now married) son George and his family in 1891: contemporary newspaper reports carry repeated concerns about the 'unsanitary' state of the workers' cottages at Furnaces, Norton (in which the Dickinsons lived), and about the unwillingness of the landlord to deal satisfactorily with this (Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 18 June 1890, p.3, col.3; Northern Echo, 17 July 1890, p.4, col.2).

In all censuses from 1861 onwards, William and Hannah are living with their son George Dickinson (born c.1854, Stranton, West Hartlepool). It is largely the consistency in George's records that keeps research into his parents 'on track' as, in census records, William and Hannah's names appear as Dixon (1861), both Dickenson and Dickinson (1871), and Dickinson (1881); and as Hannah (1861) and Ann (1871).

Hannah's birthplace is consistently recorded as Littleport, Cambridgeshire. William's Hertfordshire birthplace is, variously, written as Ormet Berry (1871), Little Normetberry (1881), and Orm(on?)dbury (1891). Most probably, this is Little Hornead Bury (Farm), near Buntingford, Herts: Little Hornead Bury House is now a Grade II listed building ((list entry number 1101836; listed 13 Dec 1984: Historic England). The reason for the family's move to the Northeast is not known, although the 1861 census records a John Dickinson (possibly another son of William and Hannah), married, mariner, born c.1835 (also in Littleport, Cambridgeshire), living in the (c.1854) birthplace of William and Hannah's son George, Stranton, West Hartlepool.

Most census records, the monumental inscription, and St Mary's burial records, all suggest William was born c.1804 and Hannah c.1799. However, their son George (age consistent on census data) was born c.1854 when Hannah would have been about 54-55 years old; and on the 1861 census, William's and Hannah's ages are out-of-step with other records, here recorded as significantly lower: 48 (William) and 50 (Hannah). This raises the possibility that George was their grandson, rather than son.

We could find no record of a marriage between Susan Dickinson and Taylorson (any spellings). There is a record for a marriage between William Taylerson and ANN Dixon in Stockton registration district in 1855 (FreeBMD website), Dixon being the spelling recorded for her parents in the 1861 census; and on the 1861 census this Ann was recorded as born c.1837 in Hannah's birthplace, Littleport, Cambridgeshire. This makes 'Ann' the same age as

the 'Susan' named on the monument. Hence, it seems the Susan commemorated here, and Ann, are the same person.

In some cases, documentary records contain clear errors. On the monumental inscription and St Mary's burial records, Mary Ann Wanless (interred here) is recorded as having died in 1896. However, a premature newspaper death notice was published for her over forty years earlier:

'On the 18th inst [August 1855] ... same day, aged 38, Mary Ann, wife of Mr Joseph Wanless, of Blakeston Hall, Norton, leaving him six children under 11 years of age to feel her loss' (North & South Shields Gazette and Northumberland and Durham Advertiser, 23 Aug 1855, p.5, col.5).

The details accurately describe this Mary Ann Wanless. The woman who actually died was a namesake of an approximately similar age, also a resident of Norton.

On a few monuments, the carved date of death disagrees with burial and other records. On the monument to Robert Thorman, his inscribed date of death is 21 June 1854. He was reasonably well-known: and St Mary's burial records, newspaper death notices, and a newspaper account of his funeral containing a brief obituary, all agree he had been buried two weeks prior to his carved date of death, on 7 June 1854, having died on 5 June 1854 (Newcastle Courant, 16 June 1854, p.8, col.5; also Burial records St Mary). As with other apparent inscription errors, we do not know whether this error was made by the stone mason, or if the mason had been given inaccurate information (in this case, the monument was carved years later, after the death of his widow).

Status and occupation

Those interred in Section (A) range from labourers and charwomen, to prosperous gentlemen and yeomen. There are no immensely wealthy individuals here, although some were 'well-connected'. Towards one end of the (comfortable) scale are the 'gentleman' Christopher family, some of whose relations became very wealthy indeed. Another is three generations of the Ingledew family, interred in three connected graves. The grandfather Robert Ingledew (d.1846) had had a successful business as iron founder/ ironmonger/ nail maker, with business premises in Silver Street and Quayside, Stockton on Tees. His will, and 'for sale' notices of his property after his death, mention twenty-two residential properties, the building he had used as his iron foundry, land for building, and a shop and house in Silver Street (NEID; Durham Chronicle, 20 Aug 1847, p.1, col.4).

At the other end of the social scale are labourers, for example the Simpson family, whose monument has collapsed since 1991/1992 and is now lying face up on the ground. They are among the oldest Norton families found here: Thomas Simpson and his wife Isabella Robinson married in Billingham on 23 March 1791 (Family Search website), and had moved to Norton by 1799, where several of their subsequent children were baptised in St Mary's.

There may have been a difference of opinion at times as to perceived social status. The Bishops' Transcripts for St Mary's Norton record a few occupations among burials recorded in the early 1800s; but where there is a choice as to how to best describe an occupation, several record a lower-status occupation. Thus, one Ritson Jones (c.1787-1810) is described when buried as 'son of Thomas Jones, shopkeeper'. However, on his own burial record the same year, this Thomas Jones (c.1740-1810) is 'hawker and peddler'. Isaac Robinson (c.1847-1800) is 'labourer' on the burial records: but his will describes him as 'innkeeper' and the property in his will consists of more than a labourer would generally possess. George Marshall (c.1766-1814) had married into a 'gentleman' family, some of whom became very wealthy. His own occupation is described on his will as 'book seller' (NEID) and elsewhere as 'printer' (Nichols, 1853, pp.109-112); on burial records he is simply 'shop keeper'. His father-in-law, William Christopher, owned a 'small [freehold] estate' (Ibid): on burial records he is a farmer, whereas the other local 'farmers' were tenant farmers. In all these cases, it could be that those concerned had worked in both roles; but in the Bishop's Transcripts they do seem to have been 'levelled down' (Bishops Transcripts, Durham, Norton 1762-1846: Family search website (catalog)).

There is no correlation between the size and type of monument, and social status. A large elaborate monument is as likely to commemorate a labourer as a gentleman or a landowner: the same applies to smaller monuments.

However, a few monuments state the occupation of at least one of those commemorated, and a few others offer clues: although information gleaned from the monuments is one-sided, as in general only those in better-paid roles recorded the facts on the monuments.

One monument is noticeably smaller than most in this graveyard, is undecorated, and contains a brief Latin inscription: 'I G / OBIT JUNE 5TH 1852/ AGED 56'. These details correspond to one John Gibson (in Latin, the letter J is written as I), buried here on 10 June 1852. The Latin usage suggests education and perhaps culture; and on census records he is living '*on independent means*' with his wife and two children in St Ann Hill, Stockton. Some years after his death, a newspaper marriage notice for his daughter Mary Huddleston Gibson describes her as the '*only surviving child of the late John Gibson, Esq, R.N.*' (Morning Herald (London), 8 Nov 1858, p.8, col.3). In turn, a generation later, the marriage of her daughter Jessie Boulton in Beverley was described as '*one of those events, in fashionable life ...*' (Beverley Independent, 17 Aug 1889, p.4, col.3). One could wonder if the monument was left small and plain (with the initials and Latin wording included) to deliberately imply a higher-than-average social status.

Another monument stands out as it is made of cast iron, not stone; erected by William Middleton to Elizabeth (nee Webber) (d.1858), the first of his three wives. On Census data, William was a 'pattern maker' employed in an iron foundry: making the 'patterns' (preliminary moulds) used to make the final moulds used to cast iron. As such, this choice of material is both a pointer to his occupation, and a very personal tribute to his wife.

Inscriptions on four monuments commemorate Master Mariners (on documentary evidence, all Mercantile (now Merchant) Navy). Voluntary examinations for Masters and Mates of foreign trade vessels were introduced by the Board of Trade in the mid-1800s. A few years later, the Mercantile Marine Act 1850 required such examinations to be compulsory, and new Masters/Mates passing the examination were granted Certificates of Competency. 'Grandfather' exceptions were made for those already serving as Masters/Mates on foreign going vessels prior to 1 January 1851: these were granted Certificates of Service. In 1854, the requirement for certification was extended to Masters and Mates of home trade vessels. (*Mariners - tracing Master Mariners in British Records: website of the Mariners Mailing List: online*).

The monuments demonstrate the dangers of the work: only two of these Master Mariners died 'at home' and are actually buried here. One (William Coates Usher) died of fever in Gibraltar in 1898; and one drowned in Port Natal, South Africa, (after emigrating there) in 1854. Newspaper reports tell of a shipwreck in which Usher had been involved in Portland Sound in 1896, a few years before his death. The Ariel, the ship of which he was captain, ran onto rocks in Plymouth Sound during a gale (there were no casualties). Despite the atrocious weather (and a cable securing her had snapped whilst inside Plymouth breakwater, causing her to be driven out into the Sound), the Board of Trade inquiry the following month considered him partially at fault, and suspended his Certificate for 3 months (*Shipping Gazette and Lloyd's List, 4 January 1897, p.3, col.1*).

As the 1800s progressed, ships increasingly required steam engines, and people to design them. The monument commemorating Robert Thorman describes him as '*Engineer of Newcastle upon Tyne*'. He was the son of an iron agent; and became an engineer and engine builder. In 1848, he became a Member of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers in the second year of that body's existence. His career took him from England to Bavaria (where some of his children were born); and in 1847 he obtained a post as a Chief Engineer to the Ottoman government. His later work took him to Stockton on Tees, working for the shipbuilding firm of Fossick and Hackworth:

'Fossick and Hackworth of Stockton-on-Tees: [in] 1853 [Fossick and Hackworth] supplied the first pair of marine engines for the first two ships built at Stockton. These were built under the direction of Robert

Thorman who died soon after; eventually marine engineering replaced the railway work' (Grace's guide to British industrial history).

In the 1800s, railways transformed life through enabling personal travel and transport of goods; and opened up an entirely new 'industry' of employment. One monument here commemorates Thomas Bell, Civil Engineer (c.1801-1875) whose almost entire working life was spent in the railway industry. He probably started working life illiterate or semi-literate, as his marriage record is signed with *'his mark X'*, but his career took him quickly into roles requiring fluent literacy and numeracy. His signature on his 1854 application to become an Associate Member of the Institute of Civil Engineers is polished: and the application reads

'... after being practically engaged in Works for many years, he was employed for 3 years as Inspector on the Stockton and Darlington Railway, then for 3 years as Contractor, for 9 years as Superintendent and for 2 years as Resident Engineer on the Clarence Railway and for 9 years as Resident Engineer on the Clarence and West Hartlepool Railway [his place of work was given as the West Hartlepool Railway Office]'
(UK, Civil Engineer Records 1820-1930, in Ancestry website)

Thomas Bell probably typifies a generation whose employment prospects, and hence their lives, were advanced by the new opportunities opened up by the railway industry: and all but one of his sons and sons-in-law also pursued careers in the railway industry.

Four monuments contain the word *'House'* or *'Hall'* in the address of those commemorated. All are market gardens or tenant farms. Kelly's 1890 Directory of Durham lists thirty-three farmers and seventeen market gardeners in and around Norton: market gardening in particular, close to a rapidly increasing population, would have been a highly relevant occupation. Tenant farmers not infrequently moved from one farm to another, and not all had children who wished to continue farming after their parents retired: there are various newspaper advertisements for the sale of farm animals and of farm and household equipment as tenant farmers retired. Many of these farms and market gardens are now, however, swallowed up in housing. One market garden, Rankler House, mentioned on a 1910 (Jackson) memorial, is now partially beneath the A19 just east of Norton.

Two other monuments are to (Stockton-based) surgeons: William Foss and his brother Robert Crisp Foss. Whilst their inscriptions are partially eroded, available documentary evidence suggests both were well thought of: both have glowing obituaries in local newspapers, and the monument to Robert Crisp Foss contains the Latin words *'Dignus Laude, Multi Habilis'*, loosely translated as *'worthy of praise, multi-skilled'*.

Relationships – and missing spouses (the absence of a spouse's name does not mean absence of a spouse)

For some families, only one monument commemorates family names. For others, several monuments are present, generally positioned close to one another. Some family groupings are obvious, others confirmed only through examination of records.

It was usual to include some biographical information on the inscriptions, such as *'beloved wife of...'*. Not all family relationships are included on any one monument: lack of space is one factor, although the Gaskill monument, for example, commemorates ten individuals. In general, the names mentioned reflect the concerns of those commissioning the monument – hence, the relationships mentioned may reflect spouse/children, or one's birth family.

There are some significant omissions – particularly, missing spouses. Two of the monuments mentioned above, to William Coates Usher (d.1898) and Robert Crisp Foss (d.1837) were, in both cases, erected by their birth families. Both men were married (Usher with two pre-school children); but there is no hint of a spouse on either monument.

Married daughters commemorated along with their parents are generally at least given their married name: again, this is not consistent. Thus, the Ward family monument gives both the married name, and bereaved spouse, of their

daughter Elizabeth (d.1852). On the other hand, a Wilkinson monument commemorates the family's daughter Dorothy/Dossie, without giving any surname. She died elsewhere: Newcastle, 1918. It is only when researching the biographies that we learn that Dorothy was married with a family of her own.

In several cases, a surviving spouse remarried, but the existence of a second or even third spouse is infrequently acknowledged on the monuments. The monument of Robert Watson (1870) is one of only a few exceptions. His wife Mary is explicitly named as his 'second wife', and his first wife Elizabeth is named as the mother of his daughters. In this case, this is one of a family grouping of four memorials, another of which directly commemorates his first wife. A much more typical example is that of the monument to Isaac Robinson (d.1800) and his wife Elizabeth (d. 1819). It is only when researching records that we learn Elizabeth subsequently remarried and was buried under her 'new' married name of Wilson. There were no children to her second marriage, and her second husband's monument is alongside that of his birth family in another part of Section (A): no mention of their marriage appears on either monument.

In a few cases a second spouse is commemorated, without any mention of an earlier marriage. One example is that of John Lax (d.1889), owner of the last working windmill in Norton. The earliest record we have of him is a census record wherein he is already a widower with a young son: Jane, commemorated here, is his second wife (and likely the only mother his son remembers). We know nothing of his first wife.

(Near-) famous relatives

Two families here have relations of particular note.

Edward Jones (d.1810) was married to Elizabeth Sherrington/Sheraton (1765-1846). She was the daughter of a Stockton schoolteacher, and a younger half-sister to **Thomas Sheraton** (1851-1806). Thomas Sheraton was born in or near Stockton-on-Tees and became one of the most famous furniture designers in England (considered on a par with Chippendale). He published books of designs, and taught drawing: and was also a devout and near-evangelical Baptist. Despite his fame, though, he died in poverty in London in 1806 (British History Online).

Tamar Marshall nee Christopher (d.1829) was cousin to **William Christopher** (c.1734-1797), a son of her father's brother John. Also from Norton (christened in St Mary's on 7 May 1735), he was a Captain in the Hudson Bay Company Fleet, and in 1761 mapped the passage through Chesterfield Inlet, Hudson's Bay (Canada). He died an extremely wealthy man and is buried in another part of St Mary's churchyard. A plaque in the interior of St Mary's (transept) reads

Sacred to the memory of William CHRISTOPHER Esq formerly in the service of the Hudson Bay Co. who d. Nov 2 1797 aged 63yrs. His remains together with those of his wife Ann, his mother & his son John Thomas are deposited in a vault in the churchyard. This tablet is erected as a tribute of filial affection by his only surviving son George AD 1826

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