

Weston on the Green Churchyard

The churchyard would have looked very different in the past. Grass would be cut with a scythe once or twice a year for hay and at other times grazed by sheep, goats or cattle. On its boundary were farm buildings and yards and probably the village pound.

The earliest burial for which a written record still exists is that of William Ladyman who died in 1636. The earliest grave marker which is still decipherable is dated 1684. In fact, 80 per cent of all burials in the records have no grave marker. The vast majority of the stones relate to under two dozen village families who were either from the Manor or else held a trade or profession – millers, bakers, masons, smiths, wheelwrights, farmers, clergymen and publicans.

We have the usual mix of memorial styles here, ranging from chest tombs, railed tombs, head and foot markers, curbed plots, coped stones and horizontal slabs to the smaller cremation markers. For those buried here it is their place in the village community which remains of interest today.

It is important to remember that all land and buildings in the parish, apart from a couple of pieces, belonged to the Manor and so all inhabitants were tenants without the comfort of ownership of the property they lived in or traded from. This was the case until 1918.

Begin this tour by turning to your right as you leave the porch.

Moving round the tower, in the far corner is the memorial to **Richard and Ann Tombs**. Richard was a publican recorded in the mid - 19th century as running the Chequers.

On the wall of the tower is a plaque dedicated to **Thomas Pulley** who was churchwarden and tythingman. Neither baptised nor married in Weston, his will details bequests to his wife, five daughters and two sons. His responsibilities as tythingman meant that he would be called upon to apprehend, detain and present at court any felons. Another responsibility was to attempt to get the father of a child born out of wedlock to pay for the child's upkeep. After Thomas's death William Bartlett Sen. and Jun., yeomen of Bletchington, were each made to pay £30 to answer for the child of Matilda Pulley, one of Thomas's daughters. Matilda's son – baptised Henry Bartlett Pulley - was baptised in 1826. Thomas (described in Jackson's Oxford Journal as *a respectable farmer*) left each of his children a bequest, and his wife

Anne received £3,000 - "*all and everything, my ready money, securities for money, household furniture, farming stock, cattle and implements in husbandry etc provided she continues my widow*".

Moving along the north side of the church – there is a possibility that there was a north aisle or chapel which protruded beyond the present wall of the church. In this area is the memorial to one of the residents of the Manor - **Frederick Arthur Bertie**, 1837-1885, who was the son of Frederick and Lady Georgina Bertie. He had seven brothers and four sisters. Lady G was herself the daughter of a Lord. Frederick Arthur married Rose Emily, the daughter of John de Montmorency of Castle Morres, Ireland. They had four daughters and one son. Rose outlived her husband by 50 years.

Just beyond the end wall of the church is the grave of **Esther, widow of Uriah Read**. This stone is unusual in that Uriah and his children were labourers, not professional people. Their great-grandson purchased property when the village was sold in 1918 and subsequently gave the land on which the Memorial Village Hall was erected after the First World War.



The four **Coggins** graves – Ann, Thirza, Clementina and Eliza were all daughters of William and Ann Coggins of Weston Park Farm. William and Ann had nine daughters in all, six of whom died before their 20th birthday – 19th century life was hard.

On the end wall of the church is a monument to **Stuart Bevan**. He brings us back to the Manor. He and his wife lived there 1934-6. He is remembered for giving all the schoolchildren a '*new minted*' sixpence to mark the silver jubilee of King George V in 1935.

Turning round we can see the change in level of the ground. This marks the original boundary of the churchyard. On the lower ground once stood a farm, barns and farm yard. These were destroyed by fire in 1850 and then, 40 years later the land was taken into the churchyard, the road realigned and the space began to be used for burials.

The gates were made by the village blacksmith in memory of those lost during the Second World War. This, newer, area of the churchyard is



full of aconites and scillas in spring, while the older areas have many primrose plants. Graves here commemorate another publican at the Chequers - **Thomas Daniel** and **Mary Kirtland**. He is also remembered as being a shoe and boot maker with a wicked sense of humour. The **Hawtin** and **Porter** families who were both involved in running local shops and the post office are also in this area. One of our most noted residents - **Haman Porter** is commemorated with a small horizontal slab marker. He was an example of someone who left school age nine and lived in the village. He worked as a labourer all his life yet rose to be a Deputy Lieutenant of the county and a friend and colleague of many in power – including Lloyd George.

There are four Commonwealth War Graves – two were men serving at the airfield during WWI in the infancy of flying. The remaining two are commemorated on the war memorial plaques in the church. Looking back towards the church there are several monuments in the area to the south-east recording village families. See if you can find them!

Emmanuel and **Mary Eaglestone** lived in what is now Prospect House. It, and the land on which the chapel was built in 1838, was one small area not in the hands of the Berties at the Manor. The Eaglestones often entertained the local Relieving Officer. His diaries detail help given to the poor of Weston and the enforcement of employment rules regarding children.

There are many stones commemorating the **Rowles** family. They first appear in Weston records very early in the 19th century and remained farmers throughout the century and into the early 20th century.

The **Boddingtons** were another family of tradesmen who moved into the village in late 18th century. They were carpenters and wheelwrights, only ceasing trading in the 1950s and the long association with the village and church continued until late in the 20th century.



The **Ancil** family came to the village in the early 20th century – William being a farmer. He also bred racehorses and there are many tales of his two sons – Christopher and Bernard who rode for him. One horse - Carfax - probably cost many in the village a few shillings when it ran in, but didn't win, the Grand National.

Moving along the path towards the church the change in stonework on the end wall denotes the width – 6.4m - of the chancel which once extended 11.7m into the churchyard.

The **Spittle** family seem to have ranged from farmers to agricultural labourers with one even being deported for sheep stealing. Church records begin in the early 18th century and continue to the late 20th century with over 100 different people of this surname recorded. Obviously it is the farmers who could afford monuments . We return now to more publicans – the **Wards**



who ran the Ben Jonson.

The chest tomb, which is a listed monument in its own right, was built for **Richard Williams** who was a mason and set out details regarding his tomb to be made of Horton stone.

The **Whiting** grave commemorates William and Phoebe Whiting and is notable both for its ornate shape and for the type of stone used. William was a stonemason and master builder who worked for many years on the repair of the church. William Whiting was



reserved and always wore his best apparel on Sundays. He died in an accident on Islip bridge. Finally there is a group of early graves, quite close to the church – all are for people about whom we know very little. **Samuel Badger**, along with his wife Mary and daughter Hannah is exceptional in that he is noted as a yeoman, a term usually denoting a free man with his own land. He had been churchwarden here, a '*notable*' farmer who also sold peat – presumably dug from the local peat pits - of '*unblemished character*' at the time of his death.

