

Memorial Inscriptions

Uncovering Family Stories from Grave Headstones

Introduction to Memorial Inscriptions

- What are Memorial Inscriptions?
- Types of Sites:
 - Churchyards
 - Metropolitan Cemeteries
 - Military Burial Sites
- Significance for Family Historians:
 - Personal and historical insights
 - Unique genealogical details
 - Stories of societal and family values

Churchyard Inscriptions in Rural Parish Settings

- Importance of Parish Churchyards:
 - Central role in rural communities
 - Generations of families buried together
- Typical Features of Inscriptions:
 - Modest and often religious in nature
 - Common details: names, birth and death dates, relationships
- Information for Genealogists:
 - Occupations (e.g., farmer, laborer, yeoman)
 - Symbolic motifs and Bible verses
- Challenges with Older Stones:
 - Erosion and readability issues
 - Importance of documentation

Inscriptions in Metropolitan Cemeteries

- **Origins of Metropolitan Cemeteries:**
 - Urban expansion and overcrowded churchyards
 - Establishment of large, purpose-built cemeteries
- **Characteristics of Inscriptions:**
 - Often more elaborate and expressive than rural inscriptions
 - Inclusion of personal messages, family tributes, and symbols
- **Victorian Influence:**
 - Styles range from Gothic to classical
 - Reflection of Victorian values about death and remembrance
- **Insights for Genealogists:**
 - Family plots with detailed epitaphs
 - Social and cultural information about the deceased

Cemetery Records and Communal Grave Sites

- **Cemetery Records:**
 - Essential for tracing family history and locating burial plots
 - Often maintained by local authorities or cemetery management
- **Types of Records:**
 - Burial registers detailing names, dates, and plot locations
 - Maps and plans of cemetery layouts for easier navigation
- **Communal Grave Sites:**
 - Designed for individuals unable to afford individual plots
 - Often contain multiple burials in a single plot
- **Historical Context:**
 - Reflect societal attitudes towards poverty and death
 - Common in the 19th and early 20th centuries, often in urban areas
- **Research Considerations:**
 - Accessing records can vary by location and time period
 - Importance of understanding local burial practices and regulations

Cemeteries at Former Workhouses and Asylums

- **Historical Context:**
 - Many workhouses and asylums had their own burial grounds
 - Reflects societal approaches to poverty and mental health
- **Types of Institutions:**
 - Workhouses: Managed the poor, often with harsh conditions
 - Asylums: Provided care for the mentally ill, frequently stigmatized
- **Burial Practices:**
 - Commonly used communal graves for those without funds
 - Records may be sparse or poorly maintained
- **Cemetery Features:**
 - Often unmarked or minimally marked graves
 - Memorials reflecting the societal attitudes of the time
- **Research Considerations:**
 - Importance of local archives and historical societies
 - Challenges in tracing individuals due to lack of documentation

Memorial Inscriptions in Military Cemeteries and Memorials in the UK

- **Development of Military Cemeteries:**
 - Impact of WWI and WWII on burial practices
 - Emergence of dedicated military cemeteries
- **Uniformity and Design:**
 - Rows of uniform headstones
 - Simple yet powerful inscriptions
- **Content of Military Inscriptions:**
 - Name, rank, regiment, date of death
 - Family-chosen epitaphs reflecting personal sentiments
- **Role of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC):**
 - Maintenance and preservation of military cemeteries
 - Ensuring dignity and uniformity across sites

Shorncliffe Military Cemetery: A Historical Site of Remembrance

- **Location and Significance:**
 - Situated near Shorncliffe Barracks, Folkestone, Kent
 - Established in the early 20th century to serve military personnel
- **Historical Context:**
 - Used primarily during WWI and WWII
 - Graves from soldiers who served at the barracks & nearby hospitals
- **Key Features:**
 - Managed by the CWGC, featuring standardized headstones
 - Memorials for soldiers from various Commonwealth nations, including Labour Corps
- **Notable Burials:**
 - Commemorates soldiers from the WWI Labour Corps, including Chinese and other nationalities
 - Highlights the contributions of diverse groups in the military
- **Importance for Research:**
 - Valuable resource for genealogical research on military ancestors
 - Insights into the impact of war on local communities and families

CWGC War Graves in Local Churchyards: A Preserved Heritage

- **Definition of CWGC War Graves:**
 - Burials of military personnel recognized by the CWGC
 - Commonly found in local churchyards across the UK
- **Notable Features:**
 - Standardized headstones and inscriptions
 - Typically maintained in good condition by the CWGC
- **Role of the CWGC:**
 - Ensures proper maintenance and documentation
 - Provides resources for families and researchers
- **Exploration of Local Heritage:**
 - Churchyards as sites for discovering CWGC graves
 - Valuable for genealogical research and family histories
- **Challenges:**
 - Awareness of CWGC graves among the public
 - Importance of community involvement in preservation

Military Cemeteries Overseas: A Global Legacy

- **British Military Burials Worldwide:**
 - Soldiers buried in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Pacific
 - Significance of locations tied to major battles
- **Inscriptions Reflecting Home:**
 - Regimental insignias, religious symbols
 - Inscriptions chosen by families to honor origins
- **Role of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC):**
 - Preservation of overseas cemeteries
 - Ensuring continuity and respect across international sites
- **Importance to Genealogists:**
 - Overseas cemeteries as family history landmarks
 - Sources of information for those with military ancestors

Memorials for the Missing: Inscriptions without Graves

- Purpose of Memorials for the Missing:
 - Honor those with no known grave
 - Names inscribed as a lasting tribute
- Examples of Notable Memorials:
 - The Thiepval Memorial, France
 - The Menin Gate, Belgium
 - The Brookwood Memorial, UK
- Role of the CWGC:
 - Commemorates those whose bodies were never recovered
 - Maintains records and access to these memorials
- Importance for Family Historians:
 - Links to ancestors who served and were lost
 - Personalizes the impact of war and loss

Researching Memorial Inscriptions: Tips and Resources

- Documenting Inscriptions:
 - Photographing and transcribing details
 - Preserving readability for future reference
- Key Resources for Research:
 - CWGC website for military graves and memorials
 - Find a Grave and BillionGraves for public access records
 - Local archives and family history societies
- Techniques for Hard-to-Read Inscriptions:
 - Using chalk or flour (carefully and respectfully)
 - Digital enhancements through photo editing
- Value for Genealogists:
 - Confirming family relationships and historical context
 - Gaining insights into ancestors' social status, faith, and community

Case Studies: Personal Stories from Memorial Inscriptions

- **Story 2: A Beloved Son & Wife - the Sharpsons**
 - Amy and Walter John Sharpson
 - The Aunt who (probably) brought up my Grandmother
- **Story 3: Unexpected Discoveries - Lily Webb**
 - A half-great aunt discovered at a cemetery in Yorkshire
 - Reveals the only known gravestone for any of my direct ancestors
- **Story 1: A Fallen Soldier's Legacy**
 - Private Sidney Charles George Andrews, WWI veteran
 - Inscription revealing his bravery and family ties
- **Insights Gained:**
 - How inscriptions provide personal context
 - The unexpected connections to family history



In Loving Memory
of

OUR DEAR SISTER

LILY WEBB,

WHO DIED JUNE 4TH 1932,

AGED 29 YEARS.

ALSO OF

OUR DEAR FATHER & MOTHER

JAMES WEBB,

WHO DIED DEC. 10TH 1928,

AGED 70 YEARS.

GERTRUDE MARY WEBB,

WHO DIED DEC. 15TH 1928,

AGED 54 YEARS.

SADLY MISSED.

ALSO JOHN, THEIR DEAR SON,

ACCIDENTALLY KILLED IN INDIA,

OCT. 15TH 1940, AGED 29 YEARS.

REUNITED

Lily Webb, James Webb & Gertrude Mary Webb in Southgate Cemetery, Hornsea, East Riding of Yorkshire - (Find A Grave)

In Loving Memory of our dear sister Lily Webb

who died June 4th 1932 aged 29 years

Also of our dear father & mother James Webb

who died Dec. 10th 1928 aged 70 years

Getrude Mary Webb who died Dec. 19th 1928 aged 54 years

Sadly missed

Also John their dear son accidentally killed in India Oct 18th 1940 aged 29 years

Reunited



AMY SOPHIA SHARPSON

THE DEAREST OF MOTHERS

WALTER SHARPSON

BORN JULY 29 1865

FELL ASLEEP JANUARY 10 1909

AGED 43 YEARS

What God has brought together
He will surely keep together

ALSO OF WALTER JOHN SHARPSON

ONLY SON OF MOTHER

BORN DECEMBER 31 1901

CALLED TO HIS MOTHERS ARMS

FEBRUARY 24 1906

AGED 4 YEARS

By the side of his mother
on the 10th day of January 1909

WALTER SHARPSON

WEDDED FEBRUARY 20 1906

AGED 40 YEARS

WEDDED FEBRUARY 20 1906

Amy Sophia Sharpson, Walter John Sharpson & Walter Sharpson, in Ramsgate Cemetery, Ramsgate, Kent - (Find A Grave)

AMY SOPHIA SHARPSON - TENDER.....BELOVED WIFE OF
WALTER SHARPSON

BORN JULY 19th 1865- FELL ASLEEP JANUARY 18th Jan 1909
.....YEARS?

ALSO OF WALTER JOHN SHARPSON - ONLY SON OF THE ABOVE?

BORN DECEMBER 31ST 1909 - CALLED TO HIS MOTHERS' ARMS
FEBRUARY 4TH 1909 - AGED 7 YEARS

WALTER SHARPSON HUSBAND OF AMY?

FEBRUARY 14TH 1864.....DIED JANUARY 20TH 1924
AGED 60 YEARS



Sidney Charles George Andrews on Helles Memorial - Gallipoli, Turkey - (CWGC)

Name: Sidney Charles George Andrews

Nationality: United Kingdom Rank: Private

Regiment: Worcestershire Regiment 4th Battalion

Age: 20 Date of Death: 06/08/1915

Service No: 15373

Son of William and Sarah Jane Andrews, of Fisherton, Salisbury; husband of Elsie V. Gregory (formerly Andrews,) of 213, Vauxhall Rd., Birmingham.

Grave/Memorial Reference: Panel 104 to 113

Conclusion: The Importance of Memorial Inscriptions in Family History

- **Connecting with Ancestral Stories:**
 - Personal connections through memorials
 - Understanding family legacies and histories
- **Preservation of Cultural Heritage:**
 - Role of inscriptions in maintaining historical narratives
 - Importance of recording and sharing findings
- **Encouragement for Further Research:**
 - Exploring local cemeteries and memorials
 - Utilizing online resources and community support
- **Final Thoughts:**
 - Memorial inscriptions as lasting tributes
 - Our role in keeping these stories alive

Q&A Session

- Invitation to Ask Questions:
- Open the floor for questions about memorial inscriptions.
- Encourage sharing of personal experiences and insights.
- Discussion Topics:
- Specific challenges in researching memorials.
- Personal discoveries related to ancestors' inscriptions.
- Resources and tools that have been helpful.
- Encouragement for Participation:
- Everyone's experiences and questions are valuable.
- Foster a collaborative learning environment.





Remember

Families that had the money to provide headstones for their relatives left an invaluable resource for future researchers



Happy hunting!

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