

The Templer Obelisk, St. Edmund's Graveyard

A very interesting request came from Simon and Sue Millar whose family history includes the Templers from Hampshire and Lancashire and the Needhams from Castleton. They have done a great job (ably helped by Tim Alderson from Trough Cottage) of clearing away the ivy and brambles from the grave. Now that it can be seen more clearly, it's obvious that it contains a mystery yet to be uncovered. The obelisk itself is interesting in that it is unlike almost all the other monuments in the graveyard. What is particularly intriguing is the wealth of Freemasonry symbols and letters. In addition to the well-known hammer, square and compasses, the letters HTWS STKS appear intertwined in the carvings. These apparently stand for Hiram Tyrian Widow's Son Sent To King Solomon. If anyone can explain the significance of this- please let CHS know.

The plot in which the monument stands is larger than expected, suggesting that there may be more burials there. However, the whole structure is at considerable risk from the roots of a very large tree planted some 25 years ago behind the obelisk.. Access to the rear is very difficult at the moment and the Millars are exploring the possibility having the size reduced or even removing the tree. If anyone has any suggestions as to the best way forward with this, again please let CHS know. It's not just the Templer monument that is at risk!

The obelisk has 4 marble panels but only those on the North and South faces are inscribed - the others are blank. This suggests that further burials were planned when the obelisk was erected sometime after 1877 but for some reason did not happen, or at least not here in Castleton.

The North face details 3 children of William Templer and Eliza Needham, who are not buried here but at Mount Jerome Cemetery in Dublin. All of them died very young: (Joseph 1 year; William Joseph 1 year; Mary Ann 3 1/2 years) in the 1850s/early 60s). The inscription on the South face records Martha Helena Templer who died aged 7 in Pilkington near Manchester on 3 November 1877 but who is buried in Castleton.

William Templer married Eliza Needham in Castleton on 25th December 1848. It seems they then moved to Liverpool where William worked as a Skinner. He clearly took to his trade, eventually becoming a Leather Merchant employing 38 men and 12 boys in Pilkington. Between 1851 and 1870, however, the family were living in Dublin where 7 of their 8 children were born.

What brought William to Castleton? Did he have connections with the Needhams? Why did William and Eliza go to Dublin and what were they doing there? Why did they undertake the long and difficult journey to Castleton from Pilkington with the coffin of their youngest child? Does anyone know of any Castleton Needhams who may be related?

If anyone can help to uncover the mystery of the Templer obelisk, Sue and Simon and CHS would be delighted to know.

