

Hello Heritage...

St Helen's Churchyard

www.sthelensashby.net



Dunn Family **Chest Monument**, covering a brick vault

The churchyard has probably existed since Anglo Saxon times but there are no records before the 16th century. The gravestones, mainly of Swithland slate, date from 1716 and were laid flat in the 19th century. In 1812 an additional area was added to the west end, and the gravestones from this area were moved against the wall in the 1960s.

There are a number of parts of chest tombs, showing that far more of these big monuments existed once, and were taken apart as they deteriorated. See if you can find them.

Children were traditionally buried near a boundary, and here there are child burials near the easterly wall. 200 French Prisoners lived in the area during the Napoleonic Wars. Some are buried in the churchyard: such as *Francis Rabin, 'French prisoner,' October 19th, 1808.*

The churchyard was closed for burials – other than interment of ashes – in 1855. Now the churchyard is a haven for wildlife: tawny owls call from the trees on winter nights. Snowdrops, violets and celandines bloom in spring, attracting insects. What can you see and hear?



The churchyard before 1878



The Grade II listed 1914-18 **War Memorial**, is made of red brick on a stone plinth. A polygonal shaft terminates in a gabled relief of the Crucifixion.



18th century grade 2 listed stone gateway into the churchyard. On the top of the piers on the far side you can see skull and crossbones, denoting a burial site.



The **Daisy Wheel graffiti** beneath the sundial was a witch's mark, or ritual protection, which was probably moved from inside the church during the late 19th century restoration. Can you find it?



The **sundial** on the south side of the tower dates from the 1470s. It was designed to be seen from the castle solar. It was refurbished in 2000.

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