

Humshaugh Churchyard Story

Name(s): Rev John Henry Pitman BA RN
Maud Pitman

Grave(s): *Vicarage end of path to vicarage from church, on the left hand (south) side*

Text on Grave(s):

Maud Pitman Died 8th Sep 1901
John Henry Pitman Died 18th Sept 1927

Story

From 'Humshaugh: A History ' (original author Mrs Elsie Hunter): the institution of Rev John Henry Pitman was 19th December 1899.

“Those who were children while Mr Pitman was Vicar were no less fortunate, for the kindly ex-Chaplain bought sweets by the pond for his young friends. He retired in 1921 and died in September, 1927.

“As a token of their appreciation and great affection , his former parishioners bought two light oak doors which now give admittance to the nave from the porch. On the 21st December 1928 , Bishop Wilfrid B. Hornby dedicated this beautiful gift ‘in loving memory of our vicar’ . The grave of John Henry and Maud Pitman in the old churchyard lies near to the path which they must have trodden countless times on their way from the Vicarage to the Church and is marked at Mrs Pitman’s request by a block of local stone , once a foundation stone in the cottage of Joseph Hedley , a local character who was cruelly murdered.

“In May 1920, towards the close Mr Pitman’s vicariate, the harmonium at the west end of the nave was replaced by the fine two manual pipe organ of which the Misses D & E Cruddas presented to the Church”

In fact Maud died in September 1901 so they cannot have trodden the path too many times together. There is a memorial plaque to Maud inside the church: it is just by the steps to the pulpit and in the remaining 20 years of his service as vicar John Henry may have passed this plaque many times.

The reference to his being an ‘ex-Chaplain’ bears out the use of the letters RN by his name on both the doors and the plaque to Maud. The church was built by Greenwich Hospital in 1818 as a means to employ ex-Royal Naval chaplains, and nearly 100 years later the tradition is still being observed.

Pitman presided over other changes in the Church: on 13th October 1900 a faculty was authorised to insert a stained glass window on the south side (the Kempe window) paid for by WD Cruddas Esq MP. On 15th October 1914 a further Faculty was to remove two rows of Free seats and replace the whole of the remaining ones with wider seats which were ‘more commodious’. 11 rows of Free seats were replaced with 9 new rows.

The harmonium that was replaced in 1920 was described in the Faculty as 'an American organ'. The new organ cost £550. To make way for it a brass tablet in memory of Mr Elliot, who sang in the choir for 36 years and was Churchwarden for 20 years longstanding was moved to its current position just north of the doors on the west wall.

Further links:

Joseph Hedley was 'Joe the Quilter' murdered in his cottage in the parish of Warden on 3rd January 1826.

<https://www.northumberlandarchives.com/2017/01/31/the-murder-of-joe-the-quilter/>

A replica of his cottage, of which the Pitman's gravestone was said to have been a foundation stone, has been built by Beamish Museum

<http://www.beamish.org.uk/exhibits/joe-the-quilter/>

Further sources and references:

N/A

Photographs:

