

HERITAGE FAMILY HISTORY

Bringing your Past into the Present

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www.heritagefamilyhistory.co.uk

Interpreting Churches and Gravestones.

Symbols Found in Churches and on Gravestones and their Meanings.

Ape or monkey: represents lust

Bear: Evil power

Butterfly: the Resurrection

Circle or equilateral triangle or three identical images woven together: The Trinity

Crane: Vigilance

Dog: faithfulness

Dove: the Holy Spirit or peace.

Dragon: Satan

Eagle: Divine inspiration. Used to represent St John the Evangelist

Fish: Jesus Three interwoven fishes shows the Trinity.

Hand emerging from a cloud or a halo of light: God's presence.

Lamb: Jesus.

Oak: faith, strength and durability

Owl: Wisdom (often associated with St Jerome). Sometimes however it was used to represent evil because of its association with the night.

Peacock: In medieval times it was believed that the peacock did not decay after it had died and it came to represent immortality.

Pelican: The pelican was thought to feed its young with its own blood and is used to represent Jesus' sacrifice on the cross

Phoenix: The resurrection.

Rabbit or hare: Lust

Rose: purity. Also the sign for the Virgin Mary

Serpent encircling its own tail: eternity

Star of David: Two interwoven triangles creating a six pointed star represents The Creation and also the Trinity, which was present at the Creation.

Thistles: hardship or sin

Unicorn: Purity and strength. Likened to God's incarnation in Jesus.

Three interwoven symbols will usually represent the Trinity.

Organisations.

<http://www.visitchurches.org.uk/> **The Churches Conservation Trust.** The Trust cares for redundant churches that are of historical significance and encourages their use by the local community. They are always on the lookout for volunteers to help care for churches and raise the profile of the Trust. If you don't have time to volunteer take a look at their website for a list of local churches to visit.

www.worldburialindex.com **World Burial Index.** Gives you the opportunity to search through a unique survey of thousands of Memorial Inscriptions, but you can also help preserve a record of this fragile genealogical source by sending in your own photographs of gravestones. Current subscription rate only £12 and free if you submit your photographs!

<http://www.memorialinscriptions.org.uk/> **NAOMI** (National Archive of Memorial Inscriptions) – Online project to record Monumental Inscriptions.

www.angus.gov.uk/history/archives Grave transcriptions for Angus, Scotland
<http://www.scotsfind.org/> Memorial inscriptions for St Cuthbert's, Edinburgh

Further Reading.

Richard Taylor	How to Read a Church
Roy Strong	A Little History of the English country church
Alec Clifton – Taylor	English Parish Churches