

## How Interesting!

During 2011, Magna will publish notes about twelve notable and interesting graves and headstones, in and around Holy Cross Church and environs, written by Neil Richardson.

For March, we look at a grave with an illegible inscription.



Here is a small headstone with the motif of the skull and cross bone or Memento Mori.

**Memento Mori** is a Latin phrase meaning to put the reader or viewer in mind of their own death. It may, at first sight, appear rather grim and unpleasant, and in its origin was probably meant to sound a warning note about the terrifying events of Judgement Day. Our predecessors in the faith had a very lurid vision of this Day!

But if you look at it more positively, a memento mori is more like a spring-board to launch the living into an ever better life of service to others and fulfilment of their skills and abilities. It is a means by which the dead speak to the living with words of encouragement whilst pointing out the inevitable. It is a clarion call for us not to waste our lives or spend them on worthless things, neither to waste our time and emotions bearing grudges and holding unpleasant thoughts.

How kind of the deceased person to think about us and do something to encourage us. Thank you!

This is just one of several memento mori sitting in Holy Cross church yard, close to the south porch. The skull and crossbones represent the reminder of mortality and, contrary to the suggestions of many visitors of all ages, they are not indicative of piratical activities in the vicinity of the river Brent as it flowed through the ancient village of Greenford on its way to the Thames at Isleworth.

Although I do like the idea of Captain Pugwash and his crew sitting at the back of the church during Evensong, one Sunday evening, puffing on their long pipes and muttering to each other under their pirate breath, "shiver me timbers, ship mate!" Then one of them would leap to his feet and interrupt the droning sermon with the following announcement- "See 'ere, ye scurvy knave! If 'ee don't finish ye sermon by the time I finish me pipe, I'll make 'ee walk the plank and feed 'ee to the sharks...hah, hah, hah!" "What did you put in the collection plate me hearty? Pieces of eight?"