

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 April, we look at a member of the Ravenor family



One of the little oddities in the Old Church is the large plaque which commemorates the Ravenor family, in the south east corner of the nave just near the shrine to the Blessed Virgin Mary. By the way, this statue was once christened by the late Churchwarden Carolyn Bennison as "Our Lady of the traffic cone!"

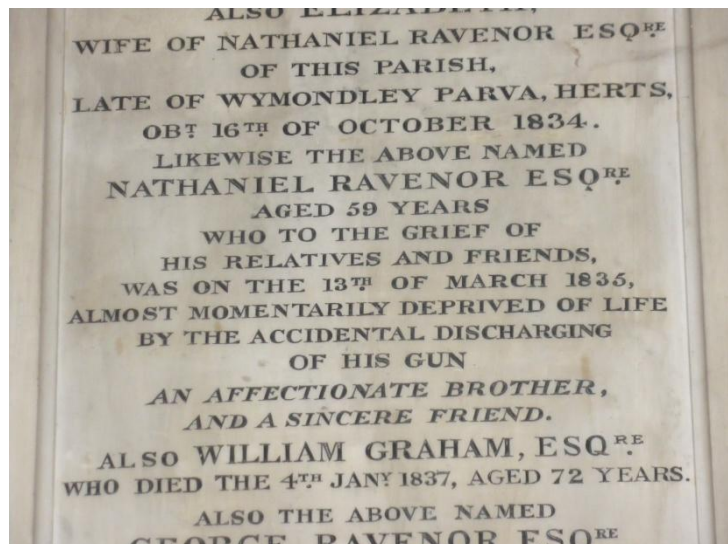
The Ravenors were a major presence in Greenford for some time. Simon Ravenor was a Churchwarden in 1709, according to the candelabra in the sanctuary, given that year by Arthur Boldero of Brentford. They were still around in the middle of the 20th century.

The oddity arises concerning the death of Nathaniel Ravenor, at the age of 59. The cause of death stated in the memorial is that to the grief of his relatives and friends, he:

WAS ON THE 13TH OF MARCH, 1835,
ALMOST MOMENTARILY DEPRIVED OF LIFE
BY THE ACCIDENTAL DISCHARGING
OF HIS GUN.

It is hard not to imagine a variety of possible scenarios. Was this a hearty hunting party event, with much guffawing and drinking beer and playfulness, only to end in tragedy with Nathaniel being accidentally shot dead? Was it a dark and lonely night, with a depressed or even sick Nathaniel, having a "goodbye cruel world" moment and sadly pointing the gun at himself and pulling the trigger? Or could he have been such an incompetent person with a gun that he really did somehow manage to shoot himself accidentally?

Unlikely, isn't it?
I feel suspicion creeping into my mind.



The presence of the word "accidentally" is very important. In those days, suicides were forbidden burial in consecrated land and it was then of the greatest importance to stress the accidental nature of the incident so that he could be buried in or near the church. The "almost momentarily" suggests that he lived on after the fatal wound, long enough, perhaps, to utter a few last words before his eyelids closed for the final time. It is, again, tempting to guess what these last few words might have been!

You try it?