

## 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 June, we look at the Coston Memorial

Sited on the north wall of the Old Church, immediately opposite the main entrance, one cannot avoid seeing and then admiring the Coston Memorial, dated 1637.



The Coston Memorial

This is an elaborate and beautiful memorial to Bridget Coston, wife of Simon and mother of six children, all of whom appear in the memorial, the five daughters as weepers behind their mother, who is suckling her baby and praying to God at the same time. You will need to climb to the west gallery in order to see the suckling feature. The daughters are Frances, Mary, Jane, Anne and Philadelphia, and the baby is called John. I always feel a little sorry for Simon in having five daughters! And poor Baby John didn't stand a chance!

The story of Simon and Bridget Coston is of a legendary nature! It is a "rags-to-riches" theme and has a charm all of its own! Legends are so good, because as there is no documentary evidence one way or another, the story can be embellished and embroidered at will. And it frequently is!

The legend has Simon as a local Greenford lad who comes into sudden riches at the expense of the local miller who has died whilst counting his money. The miller was a miser who had accumulated a fortune. Simon Coston entered the mill to find the miller dead amidst his fortune. The cash then enters Simon's bag and off he goes, without delay, to seek his fortune. He finds it through trading in the wool markets of Flanders, where he also found Bridget, his wife. The elaborate monument is a sign of wealth, and perhaps also a sign of love? The font in the Old Church was given in memory of her late mother by Frances, the oldest daughter, in 1638.

In a very sad postscript to the Coston story, please note that Frances and Mary are in fact replicas, the originals being stolen in 1998 between two weddings. The replicas are so good, nobody would ever guess!