

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 August, we look at the sad story of Mrs Elizabeth Pepper



Outside in the Churchyard again, you will find the headstone marking the grave of Mrs Elizabeth Pepper, wife of Mr Edward Pepper of Brentford.

Elizabeth died with her infant in childbirth on 20th November 1807, aged 28. The desperately sad nature of this grave brings emotions welling to the surface for many people. What should have been such a happy event turns into a double tragedy. The headstone has the following lines:

Relentless fate to strike this double blow.
Vain are our tears that sympathetic flow:
A sorrowing relict feels regret sincere
And holds thy virtuous memry ever dear.

I have never read these lines elsewhere and so far I have been unable to trace the author. Perhaps Edward Pepper was the author? If so, it is likely that these were his only published words as the sources for research seem to be silent on Mr Pepper of Brentford. The words are somewhat unusual in their lack of any hopefulness and any reference to the Christian faith in which Elizabeth must have been buried. The rector in 1807 was the Reverend Thomas Barrow. As Elizabeth's body was lowered into her grave, and using the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, he would have said:

FORASMUCH as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear *sister* here departed, we therefore commit *her* body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

Amen!