

Burials in Wicken 1538 - Present Day

Notes to data files

Local History

- The current Parish of Wicken dates from 1587 formed from two parishes with their separate churches dating back to shortly after the Domesday Book. St James's in Wick Hamon became disused after the unification of the parishes and was demolished in 1619. This church stood close to Home Farm adjacent to the Leckhampstead Road. The church for Wick Dyve, St John the Evangelist, was rebuilt by Lord Penrhyn in 1896-97.
- The early records do not seem to differentiate between the two parishes and it is unclear if all the post-1559 burials include both parishes.
- In 1722 the Parish Register is headed up "An account of the burials in the parish of Wick Hammon and Wickdive" which is the first year in which this was observed and long after the unification.
- On some earlier records, it refers to "Woolen" in the parish of Wicken but it is unclear to where this refers.

Background

- Parish Records of burials were only required from 1538 but the earliest records we have for Wicken are for 1559. At the start, only the name and date were essential. Latterly, the place of residence, the occupation and the age at the date of death were included. Estimated years of birth have been included and adjusted if the precise age has been given, otherwise, an infant has been assumed to have died in the current year.
- It should be noted that the calendar in the UK changed in 1752 from the Julian to the Gregorian which had two major impacts. The legal year moved from the 25th March to the 1st of January and days were lost from September 1752. Wednesday 2nd September 1752 was immediately followed by Thursday 14th September 1752. In this study the calendar year as we now know it is used rather than the historic legal year.
- The General Register Office only records deaths from 1837. Death certificates became a requirement on 1st July that year.
- The Cremation Act of 1902 permitted authorities to establish crematoria for the first time.

Conventions used in these lists

- It would be safe to assume that most entries before 1700 have had some amendment to the digitised record (available on Ancestry) either to the names or the burial dates through errors in transcription.
- To aid statistical analysis "infants" are regarded as not yet having reached their first birthday so are recorded here as an age of zero
- The residence of the deceased is Wicken unless otherwise stated. In some records, the details include the name of the father and mother of the deceased or the name of the spouse.
- Some records are unreadable owing to damage to the original document. Missing information is classified in the lists as follows

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- NYD = Not yet deciphered
- U/R = unreadable
- NG = information not given

Missing records

- The official record stops in 1587 when the parishes were unified and does not resume until 1596. It would appear that the early records are a re-construction of the register from 1559 to 1584 by Simon Gibbes, the pastor, and Peter Chapman, the parish clerk
- There appear to be no entries for the period around the Great Plague of 1665-1666
- The following years have no entries:

1500's	1600's
1570	1642
1579	1648
1585	1650 - 1651
1587 - 1596	1654
	1659
	1660
	1663- 1665
	1667

Medieval Handwriting

- Before 1700 it was common practice to write official documents in a handwriting style known as Secretary Hand.

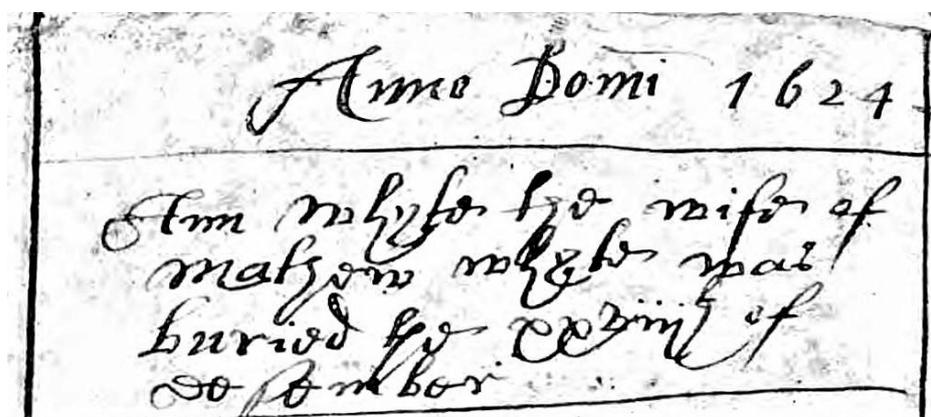


Figure 1: Ann Whyte the wife of Mathew Whyte was buried the xxvij (28th) of September

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- Letters are not necessarily formed in a modern way and there are numerous variations as to the style of letter formation. The author has matched letters to crib sheets of Secretary Hand to decipher names.
- It was also common under Secretary Hand to treat "i" and "j" as interchangeable. The spelling of names could be idiosyncratic and nearer to a phonetic spelling in some cases. It was often the case that an additional "e" was added at the end of the word. Some of the scribes completing Wicken Parish Records were not particularly accurate in their calligraphy which challenges the interpretation of names.
- Some entries are written in Latin and most dates before 1700 were written in Latin. So x =10, v=b=5, and i or j =1. if the last numeral was a single i , it was the convention to replace the final i with a j

Local spellings

- It will be noted that the spelling of modern-day Deanshanger has changed from Daneshanger to Denshanger and then to Deanshanger over this period.
- Some names are consistently spelt in a way not used today e.g. Alis or Ales for Alice.

Recorded Burials

- There are at least 2775 recorded burials up to the present day in Wicken Churchyard. There are 50 instances of names appearing on headstones where there is no corresponding entry in the Parish Burial Register. Confirmation of all but 5 of those names have been located in other records such as the death index or probate records. 78% Of the missing entries relate to post 1960 with the 1960s and 1980s accounting for 18% of the total each. The parish burial register ceased to be the prime legal record after 1837 when the General Register Office took over.
- There are 356 gravestones which represent at least 520 individuals. The oldest identifiable headstone dates from 1709.
- Given the period since churches were founded in Wicken just after 1086, there must be many burials for which there is no record whatsoever. Therefore, the cumulative numbers of these lists must be an under-estimate.
- The height of the ground level of the churchyard, when compared to Church Lane, may account for the number of corpses which may have been interred.

Key to text in headstone lists

The majority of information in the lists is read directly from the headstones during the research period 2020/2021.

Where data is illegible or abbreviated then it has been cross-referenced to the Parish Burial Register and/or the previous study conducted by Northamptonshire Family History Society in 1999. It was hoped that the 21-year gap would demonstrate to what extent inscriptions had become effaced.

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The 1999 study did not benefit from access to digitised records so there are errors created by misreading inscriptions. Some burials do not have a corresponding record in the Parish Register and these have been highlighted where observed.

Some of the headstones deemed unreadable in 1999 are, in fact, legible or partially legible. A non-invasive technique of re-directing sunlight or bright LED light enabled some inscriptions to be read.

Variations taken from the Parish Register are shown in blue. If additional data was held in the previous 1999 study then this has been added in purple.

Data from other sources is shown in bold.

An abbreviated key is shown at the foot of each page.

Key to text in Parish Record lists

Spellings are copied from the original document in most cases so may follow a contemporary spelling. As far as possible this record shows what the original source says including any typographical or spelling errors. Proofreading has highlighted potential issues and corrections made where necessary.

Relationships are generally abbreviated so d. = daughter, w. = wife.

GRO refers to the General Register Office which can provide cross-reference for deaths after 1837.

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Wicken

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