

Manorfield Detectives.



This is one of the many slate headstones in St. Michael's churchyard. It is in memory of John Garret and his wife Elizabeth.

The headstone is one of the two oldest surviving headstones in the churchyard.

It dates from 1721, meaning next year in 2021, it will have stood in our churchyard for 300 years.

It reads-

Here Lieth the body
of John Garrat who de-
Parted this life October the 16th 1729
aged 74 years.

Also the body of Elizabeth
his wife who departed this life
April the 7th
1721 aged 65 years.

It is important for that reason and the fact it is made from Swithland slate, famous throughout Leicestershire and surrounding counties.

Some of the earliest surviving Swithland slate headstones date to the 1680's and 1690's; this one dates to only 30 years later. The fact that it is an earlier headstone is also apparent in the shape and carving on the stone. It is, in comparison to other later ones, quite plain.

There are many 'Swithland slate' head and footstones in St. Michael's churchyard. Not only was the slate used for headstones but for roof slates on houses too.

In Manorfield Detectives Task 19, Thomas Franks's headstone is also made from Swithland slate. It is dated to 1802, the shape is much more ornate and the decoration is very complicated compared to John Garret's.

An even earlier known use of Swithland slate locally, is in the 2nd century CE, by the Romans-who used Swithland slate tesserae as part of a mosaic pavement at the Forum in Leicester dated 175 CE.

This link shows you how the Forum might have looked; there are also pictures in the Gallery, of different Roman finds from Leicester, including some mosaic floors and pavements. The black mosaic tiles (or tesserae) were possibly the slate ones.

<https://www.storyofleicester.info/a-place-to-live/living-like-a-roman/>

Another reason that this headstone is significant is that the Last Will and Testament of John Garret has also survived until today. From the Will we can find out much more about John and his family. Firstly, if you look at the original Will, you will probably think it's impossible to read, that's ok I've transcribed it for you underneath.

In the name of God Amen I John Garratt of Hony Stanton in the County
of Gloucester Yeoman being of good and sound mind ^{memory} and ^{understanding} do make and publish
this to be my last Will and Testament
in manner following And first to God thank my Saviour Jesus Christ
Almightie hoping through his merits death and passion of my dear
Saviour Jesus Christ to have and receive full pardon and remission of
all my sins and to Inherite ever lasting life And as for and concern
my worldly estate as it hath pleased God to bestow upon me I give and
dispose as followeth (viz) I give and bequeath unto my
loving daughter Sarah Garratt the Sum of four hundred and twenty
pounds of lawfull British money to be paid to her within six calendar
months next after my decease with lawfull interest for the same time
I give to my Grandson John Garratt William Vincent and John Vincent
one Guinea apiece of good British Coin I give to the poore of
Stanton aforesaid twenty shillings and to the poore of the
County of Gloucester ten shillings to be paid to such poore respectively
within one month after my decease and distributed amongst them
by my Executor in such sort manner and proportion as he shall think
fit And all the rest of my good chattels and personall estate (after
payment of my debts legall and funerall-charges) I do give
~~unto my son George Garratt and do make him sole Executor~~
of this my last Will and Testament And by Revoking all other
by me heretofore made or pretended to be made In witness
whereof I have hereunto set my hand and Seale this Eleventh
Day of March In the yeare of our Lord Christ and thousand
seven hundred twenty and five

Witnessed published and declared by the
named John Garratt to be his last
Will and Testament in the presence of us
named above herunto Subscribed
witness and in his sight & presence

Mary Barget

Richard Higginson

John Smith

John Garratt
1729

In the name of God Amen I John Garrett of Stoney Stanton in the County of Leicester Yeoman being of good and sound mind memory and understanding God be praised do make and ordain this to be my last will and testament in manner following And _____ do commend my soul unto the hands of God Almighty hoping through the meritorious death and passion of my blessed Saviour Jesus Christ to have and receive full pardon and admission of all my sins and to inherit ever lasting life and as for and concerning such worldly estate as it hath pleased God to bestow upon me I give and _____ as followeth viz Imprimis I give and bequeath unto my _____ing daughter Sarah Garratt the sum of ffour hundred and twenty pounds of lawful British money to be paid to her within six calendar months next after my decease with lawful interest for the same Item I give unto my grandsons John Barfoot William Vincent and John Vincent one Guinea apeece of good British coins Item I give to the poore of Stanton aforesaid twenty shillings and to the poore of Leire in the County of Leicester ten shillings to such poore _____ within one month after my decease and distributed amongst them by my executor in such sort manner and proporcend as he shall think fitt Item All the rest of my goods chattels and personal estate less payment of my debts legal fees funeral charges I doe give unto my son George Garratt and doe make _____ of this my last will and testament hereby Revoking all others by me here to fore made or pretended to be made In witness whereof I have hereunto sett my hand and seale the eleventh day of March in the yeare of our Lord Christ one thousand seven hundred twenty and five

Dated published and declared by the
Named John Garratt to be his last
will and testament in the presence of us
named here hereunto subscribed
request and in his sight and presence

John Garrett

Mary Barfoot

Nicholas Higginson

John Smith

It says at the beginning, '**In the name of God, Amen**' this is because at the time when John Garret was alive, in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, everyone was very religious and believed in God without question.

In writing your Last Will and Testament you are telling people what you want to happen to your possessions after you die.

A Will and a Testament used to be two different legal documents, the Will was concerned with land that you owned and the Testament dealt with your chattels (personal possessions).

John tells us he is from Stoney Stanton in Leicestershire and then he states his occupation- a **yeoman**.

What was a yeoman – here's a clue, he **didn't** work at the Tower of London!

After telling us his job, he then gives a great deal of thanks to God and Jesus, expressing how strong his faith is. This was very important as John had hopefully lived a good Christian life and wanted to go to heaven.

He also states that he is '**of sound mind and memory**'-this confirms to the reader that he fully understands exactly what he is doing and who he is leaving what to.

Only then does he begin to explain what he wants to give and who he wants to give it to.

From looking in the parish baptism records, John and Elizabeth had 7 children;

George in 1683

Elizabeth in 1684

Mary in 1686

John in 1688

Sarah in 1689

William in 1692 and Samuel in 1695

Burial records show that John only lived to the age of 9, Samuel died aged 20 and William died aged 25, all of them before their parents.

All three daughters survived to adulthood, married and had children of their own, as well as their only surviving son George.

John leaves a guinea (money) to each of his 3 grandsons - can you find out about what a guinea was?



He leaves his daughter Sarah, who isn't married £420, a lot of money in 1729, but to his daughters who are married he leaves nothing. Why do you think he did that?

He leaves 20 shillings for the poor of Stoney Stanton and 10 shillings for the poor of Leire. What was a shilling? Can you find out?



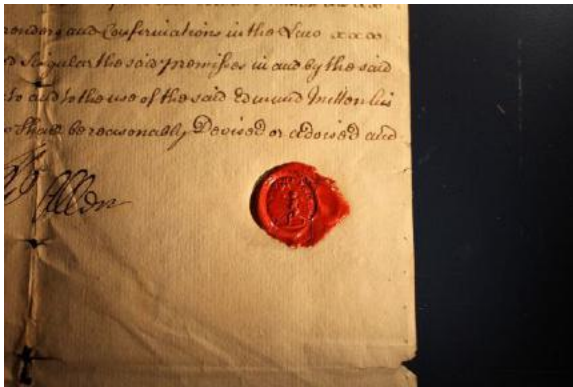
Because his wife Elizabeth had died before him, he left everything else to his only surviving son George.

George became a churchwarden at St. Michael's church when he grew up, his name appears in the accounts from 1714 until 1736, and he married Alice but died himself aged just 57 in 1740.

Right at the bottom of the Will, John signs the document himself next to that black splodge.

We know he signed because when someone couldn't read or write, someone else would write it for them and they would just put a mark on the document (usually a cross).

The black splodge was actually a red wax seal on the original Will, similar to this.



It was made using a stamp and hot, liquid red wax like this.



At the very bottom of the Will are the signatures of the witnesses, they signed to prove that John had written the Will freely and that no-one had made him do it.

His daughter is Mary Barfoot (now married and not receiving any money in his Will).

Nicholas Higginson and John Smith may have been friends or churchwardens who quite often witnessed documents as they were trusted villagers.

So, from a single slate headstone, a baptism register and a Will, we know quite a lot about John Garret.

We know that he was born in about 1655, we know what he did for work; we know he married Elizabeth and they had at least 7 children, although sadly, some of them didn't live long lives. We also know that they lived in Stoney Stanton, probably all of their lives because of the information about baptisms and burials.

We know he left what was quite a lot of money to his unmarried daughter and we know he had 3 grandsons. He cared about poor people because he left money for them. We know he would have worshiped in St. Michael's church because we know he believed in God and Heaven.

Maybe, you could draw a picture of how you imagine John Garret might have looked; maybe with his whole family.