

Exploring Comberton Churchyard

Trail for Families

Introduction

You need a copy of the map labelled “Comberton Churchyard Explorer”, which shows a set of numbered points. With this, you can explore the churchyard surrounding Comberton St Mary’s church – the numbered activities below suggest what to do at each point.

Activities

1. Look for a big box tomb where Joshua Mann is buried. What is odd about how he died?
2. Look at the wall of the church tower here – what strange thing can you see? Draw it?
3. This lamp post looks as if it has come from a famous children’s story about a magical land – what is the land called?
4. This really big grave is also for the Mann family (like number 1). How might they have been rich enough to afford such big tombs?
5. This gravestone has writing on both sides – why?
6. These two trees are yew trees, which are found in almost all English churchyards. The red berries are poisonous. A weapon was traditionally made from yew wood – what?
7. This grave is of a family with a name that has a Comberton road named after them – what? Can you find any other such families?
8. There are three graves like this one that are official war graves – can you find the other two?
9. This gravestone is in an unusual shape. What is it and why?
10. This one is in the shape of an open book. I don’t think there are any more like it – are there?
11. This tall gravestone is a ‘Celtic’ cross, with a circle around it. There are a few others – can you see them? Where might the family have come from that used it?
12. This grave has a bird on it – a dove. What does that symbolize?
13. This stone also has a bird on, but you need to look around – what is it and why?
14. This grave has the name of Oliver Cromwell who was the ruler of England for a while when we had no king or queen. This one is not really the famous person, but someone local with the same name. Look around – can you see someone named after a herb?
15. This grave has a picture of a sport – what?
16. This is the ‘Bug Basecamp’ – why is it here? Are there other things in the churchyards to help nature?
17. This grave has the statue of an angel – Which TV series had some much more frightening angel statues?
18. These stones are much smaller than most graves – why?
19. This triangle-shaped stone marks the burial of someone who was a drummer at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 – who lost then?
20. This path is called ‘The Causeway’. What do we call the round stones that make the hard surface? Why bother to put them here?

Note: The authors live in the village, walked this trail in August 2022 and provide this description as a best-efforts contribution to the community. We cannot accept responsibility for any inaccuracies. Please notify any such to paul@paulhardy.net. When following it you are entirely responsible for your own safety and that of any accompanying children and/or pets. Always exercise common sense, judgement and caution.

Clues and Answers

1. He was trying to jump over a gate, at midnight on his birthday!
2. There is a face carving.
3. Narnia.
4. The Mann family were farmers owning big farms.
5. A man married a second wife after the first died.
6. The English Longbow – a big bow firing arrows.
7. Woottens Close.
8. Look on the map for red crosses. One was of a woman.
9. A heart. The person who bought it loved their parents.
10. I don't think there are any more open book graves.
11. Celtic crosses are particularly used in Ireland, so the family might be Irish?
12. Doves symbolise peace, but also discovery - in the story of the Ark, a dove brought back the first green leaves.
13. A robin on a spade – the person buried was probably a keen gardener.
14. Parsley.
15. Cricket - bat and stumps.
16. It's to help the insects that nature needs – to pollinate plants, and eat rubbish. There are also two bird boxes, and two sources of water in the churchyard – find them on the map.
17. Dr Who had “Weeping Angels” that were very frightening as they could creep up on you unless you were looking at them.
18. These stones mark the ashes of people who were cremated (burned), rather than buried whole.
19. Battle of Waterloo the English beat the French – Napoleon Bonaparte lost.
20. It is paved with cobbles. In the days before cars, it was the main route from the village to the church, so it would have been used a lot – even for carrying coffins to be buried, so a hard surface was good.

[Paul Hardy, 17 August 2022]