

DEVON EPITAPHS

Michael Weller

Nowadays many people think it is un-healthy to think about death even in middle age, such is our expectation of living beyond the *three score and ten years* that the Bible allots to us! But before the twentieth century death was an ever present spectre with life expectancy for some people barely more than twenty years.

Devon Epitaphs is an anthology collected from headstones and memorial plaques recorded in the county's graveyards and churches. Epitaphs range from hyperbole extolling the attributes of the deceased, individually composed, to more poignant lines describing the virtues of those who suffered long, and date from the seventeenth century to the first half of the twentieth. Many others are examples of the ready-made poetry suggested to the bereaved by Victorian undertakers whilst some are from yet other sources.

Amusing and heartrending by turn, these epitaphs tell fascinating stories in themselves, often works of literature and historical documents all in one, and unique testaments in the story of Devon's past.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A chance encounter with a book on family history, brought home by his wife in 1977, sparked an interest in historical research which led Michael Weller first to reading for a degree in History and Religious Studies. He was for many years a regular contributor to the monthly journal *Bygone Kent* and has also had a number of articles published in *Family Tree Magazine*. His work has appeared in both *Descent* and in *Ancestor* in Australia. Since moving to Devon in 2001 his research has been published in *Devon Historian* and *The Regional Historian*. His main research has been within the field of eighteenth and nineteenth century social history especially with reference to the Church of England. Forthcoming projects are focussing on the lives of Anglican clergy in Georgian and Victorian Devon.

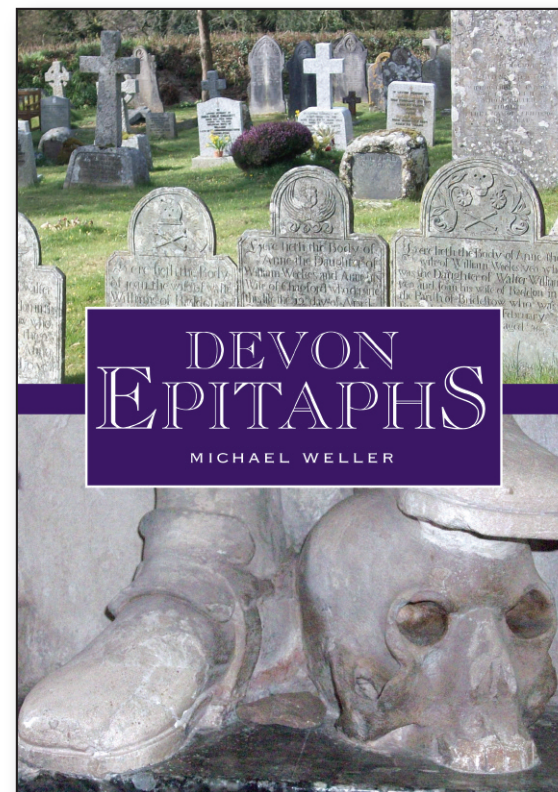
Michael Weller currently teaches history and religion part-time at a Devon school.

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