



DUNFERMLINE ABBEY CHURCHYARD TREASURE TRAIL



Tick the box when you find a treasure. Turn over to find out more about their symbols.

Kirkgate

Dunfermline Abbey

St Margaret's Street

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Look out for this gravestone which is fragment of a reused medieval stone.



**Tombstones
and Tales**
at Dunfermline Abbey Churchyards

Gravestone symbols can tell us about what people believed, as well as what they did in the past.



Many symbols represent death, like skulls, bones, the grave digger's spade and the hourglass where the sands of time have run out (1,3,6 & 7). Other symbols such as winged souls (these look like faces with wings) tell us people believed in life in heaven after death (3,7 & 8).



The meaning of other carved faces may be less clear. Green men (3) were a pre-Christian symbol adopted by the Church and linked to ideas of the circle of life and renewal. The faces on Victorian gravestones like ancient Greek or Roman statues tell us that classical styles had become the height of fashion.



Other carvings give clues to how people made their living. A compass would be very useful to sailors at sea (5) and tradesmen might include their tools, like the stonemasons' hammer, chisel, compass and square (6). Look out for the tools of the weaver, butcher, tailor and farmer.



Even plants may have special meanings. Roses can represent earthly love or heavenly paradise. Thorn trees recall the crown of thorn's placed on Christ's head by Roman soldiers (4). Palm fronds are a Christian symbol of faith's triumph over death (9). Oak leaves can mean many things including strength, endurance, eternity, honour, faith and virtue (1).



Gravestone inscriptions often tell us about family relationships but heraldic carvings do this too and use shields containing special symbols.



The earliest date carved on a gravestone in Dunfermline Abbey Churchyard is 1587 (10). But this isn't the earliest carved stone in the graveyard. In 1787, someone reused part a medieval gravestone (originally made sometime during the 1200s) as their headstone!

