

Humshaugh Churchyard Story

Name - Ellen and John Vass

Grave - In the area between the west end of the church and the vicarage garden wall.

Text on Grave - In loving memory of Ellen, the beloved wife of John Vass, who died at Humshaugh, June 8th 1894, aged 51 years.

Also the above John Vass who died at Humshaugh Oct 19th 1903, aged 72 years.

Also of Henry Vass, son of the above. killed in action in France Nov 7th 1916 aged 33 years.

Also of Henrietta Darrock, their daughter, who died at Tanfield, July 4th 1919.

Also of Eleanor, their daughter, who died Aug 15th 1935, aged 64.

John Vass was a coachman, born near Seahouses in Northumberland. He had worked at Earsdon and Park End and then at Humshaugh House for many years. He and his wife Ellen had six children, five of whom were born and baptised at Humshaugh. The couple lived close to Humshaugh House, possibly in The Square or Manor Cottages. Ellen died at the age of 51, when her youngest son was only 10. John was retired by the time he died in 1903.

Henry Vass was their youngest son, killed in the closing stages of The Battle of The Somme in November 1916. In January 1917, his name is listed amongst casualties in The Hexham Courant, the article confirming that he was killed on November 7th. There are no further reports providing details of his death. He has no known grave, so is remembered on the War Graves Memorial to the missing at Thiepval in France. Henry Vass is commemorated on our village war memorial and on the memorial plaque in the church. In 1901, Henry was living in The Square with his retired father and sister, Jane. He is described on the census document as a groom. By the time of his death, there was only Henry's unmarried sister, Jane, still living in Humshaugh.

Henrietta Vass, born 1881, had married John Thomas Darrock in 1908. Official records show their name ending in 'h' although the stone mason has given it a 'k'. They lived in Thomas' native County Durham, where Henrietta died, at Tanfield in 1919. They had a son, born in 1916. Henrietta was only 35 when she died.

Eleanor Vass, born at Earsdon, was the eldest child of John and Ellen. She did not marry, dying as Eleanor Vass, in Hexham, in 1935. She was 64 when she died. Eleanor is shown as a servant in Newcastle in 1891, but the 1901 and 1911 census both show her in a settled position as a cook at Summerrods House in Hexham. It is not known where she was living when she died.

