

HERITAGE TRAIL



THE GRAVEYARD



Swithland Slate Headstone



Private Shakespeare

Following the opening of the [Methodist Chapel](#) in 1778, the need for a graveyard soon became apparent. In 1789 a decision was made to purchase the remainder of the one acre close upon which the Chapel was built for £80.10s. The land was later added to by an award made under the 1806 Enclosure Act.

The older part of Griffydam Wesleyan Methodist Chapel Cemetery is of significant historical importance. Burials took place here from a wide area, such as Coleorton, Peggs Green, Breedon, Lount, Swannington, Worthington, Stordon Grange and Newbold as well as Griffydam.

Amongst the buried lie well known local Methodists including John Massey, hired by local squire George Beaumont to disrupt John Wesley's preaching nearby but instead was converted by him. Other burials remind us of the coal mining past and the loss of life that occurred such as that of John Lakin and his sons William and George whilst attempting to re-open [Staunton Harold colliery](#) in 1886. Also William Davies who tragically lost his life in the Whitwick Colliery fire of 1898 aged 29. There is also a reminder of the death of so many young men in the First World War in the war grave of Private Shakespeare who died in 1917 aged 22.



John Massey



William Davies

A feature of all old graveyards in Leicestershire is the Swithland Slate headstones. One distinctive feature of the gravestones is that the front of the stone is completely smoothed, whilst, unlike Welsh slate, the reverse is left rough. This may have something to do with the way Swithland slate was split with a hand saw. The last quarry closed around 1887, competition from cheaper Welsh slate caused the demise of the local material. The headstone carvings are examples of the excellent artistic work of local carvers, and the fine detail of Swithland slate headstones is testament to the skill of both Leicestershire craftsmen. The intricate calligraphy with whirls and flourishes became very extravagant. Note the double headstones for husband and wife, where one space blank indicates no one willing to pay for the final name to be carved.

Click [here](#) for further information on the graveyard and audit of the graves.