

# Saturday 4 July

## *North Devon Funerary Monuments, Clive Easter FSA*

Dr Clive Easter introduced us to some of the special features of Devon memorials, the factors influencing their development, and their wider influences.

With increasing wealth allowing artistic patronage from around 1500 and the availability of Somerset alabaster and Devon marble, Bideford and Barnstaple became centres of fashionable memorial production by the late 16th century. Exeter was central to the development of stone and woodwork in the region, and would have influenced North Devon designs, but there were also influences from and interactions with local pottery designs. In turn, North Devon with its west facing ports, trading with Ireland and North America, influenced those areas' artistic development too.

At one level the North Devon monuments broadly follow the fashions of the times – Jacobean roman arches framing praying couples; Baroque broken pediments on columns above tablets of memorial text; breakfront architraves supported by double pilasters; and by 1730 a plainer Greek architrave over Corinthian columns. All these reflect the contemporary architectural styles. Some monuments are in the form of cartouches with foliate or floriated scroll borders – one for a widow had an attractive lozenge shape reflecting heraldic traditions. By the early 18th century some have urns with flame finials and obelisks.

However some distinctive memorial features appear to be particularly popular in the area:

- 1 There are a number of examples dating from the first half of the 17th century of a 'Melancholy Young Man', resting his head on his hand by a pile of books.
- 2 Hour glasses and skulls are very widely represented – the skulls usually framed by a pair of bat or bird wings, sometimes both.

Two memorials have features unique in the area:

- 1 One 10 ft high Memorial in Braunton to a member of the Incedon family has a very early trophy of arms, with a date of 1699 – described by Pevsner as 'sumptuous'.
- 2 One in Great Torrington to a member of the Gooding family has caryatids.

Though many makers are unknown as most works are unsigned, it is clear that the local Jewell family produced a large number of local monuments. Sadly no pattern books have been found, and there are only limited records of

apprenticeships. While there is evidence of journeymen moving to London, no evidence, as yet, of any of them returning to Devon has been found.

*Jeremy and Rachel Rycroft*