



## CHESTERFIELD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY HISTORY BITES

*Chesterfield and District Local History Society's 'History Bites' are an occasional series of website published articles about Chesterfield and district's history.*

### **Lychgates**

#### **Les Garlic**

Many churchyards are entered beneath a roofed structure known as lychgate: There are now nowhere near as many as there were in medieval times, and most of the older ones have been structurally altered.

The term 'corpes-gate' was in common usage until recent times, the name is derived from the German 'leiche' or Anglo-Saxon 'Lich' meaning corpse or body.

The type of lychgate, nor their pattern, show marked local characteristics except that within a given area they are likely to be built of similar materials, those being the most convenient to hand.

In some parts of the country you may come across many that have hipped roofs covered with red tiles, in others there is not much in the way of decoration, some have weather-worn timbers giving them a rustic appearance, more modern ones are likely to be just wooden posts provided with weather boards at the sides and timber roofs, at the entrance one or two wicker-gates, some have seats, may be wooden or stone inside provided for the weary bearers and a stone slab to rest the coffin on, should they have to wait for the priest to arrive.

The prayer book of 1549 required the priest to meet the deceased at the entrance of the churchyard, and later in 1662 defined the meeting as at the 'churchstyle' and there to conduct the beginning of the burial service.

Not all parishes could afford a covered entrance, and very often the possession of a lychgate depended on the generosity of a kind benefactor or as memorial to a local worthy.

A word can be added as to the shape of some lychgates, there is the plain passage type known as the longitudinal' or 'porch' where the roof runs across the line of the passage beneath this is said to be 'latitudinal', or 'shed type'.

It is rare to find a lychgate where two roof ridges meet at right angles, this is clearly a symbolic cross shape, or to find one that is square with pyramidal roof.

The Lychgate is the most ignored element in church architecture.

Worshippers, who over a period of time get to know much about their church just by being there even if they do not actually study it, are not similarly made aware of the lychgate.

Visitors rarely pause on the way through to the church or on a visit to the churchyard.

When it is raining they may be thankful of the shelter whilst they struggle with an umbrella, or while they wait during the inclement weather for a car to be brought round.

Lychgates where they exist, add to the visual scene of the churchyard. They are worth a decent study.

The Lychgate at the entrance to Hasland Parish churchyard was erected in 1947, it is known as the longitudinal type and is dedicated to the memory of Miss Hollingworth, a benefactress to Hasland Parish. Mr. T.Cope, a well known local shop manager in the village was instrumental in raising the money for the lychgate to be built.

The Lych-gate at the entrance to Temple Normanton Churchyard is the Latitudinal type.

Contributed by: the late Les Garlic

Published by Chesterfield and District Local History Society, 22 March 2022.

Downloaded from their website at [www.cadlhs.org.uk](http://www.cadlhs.org.uk).