

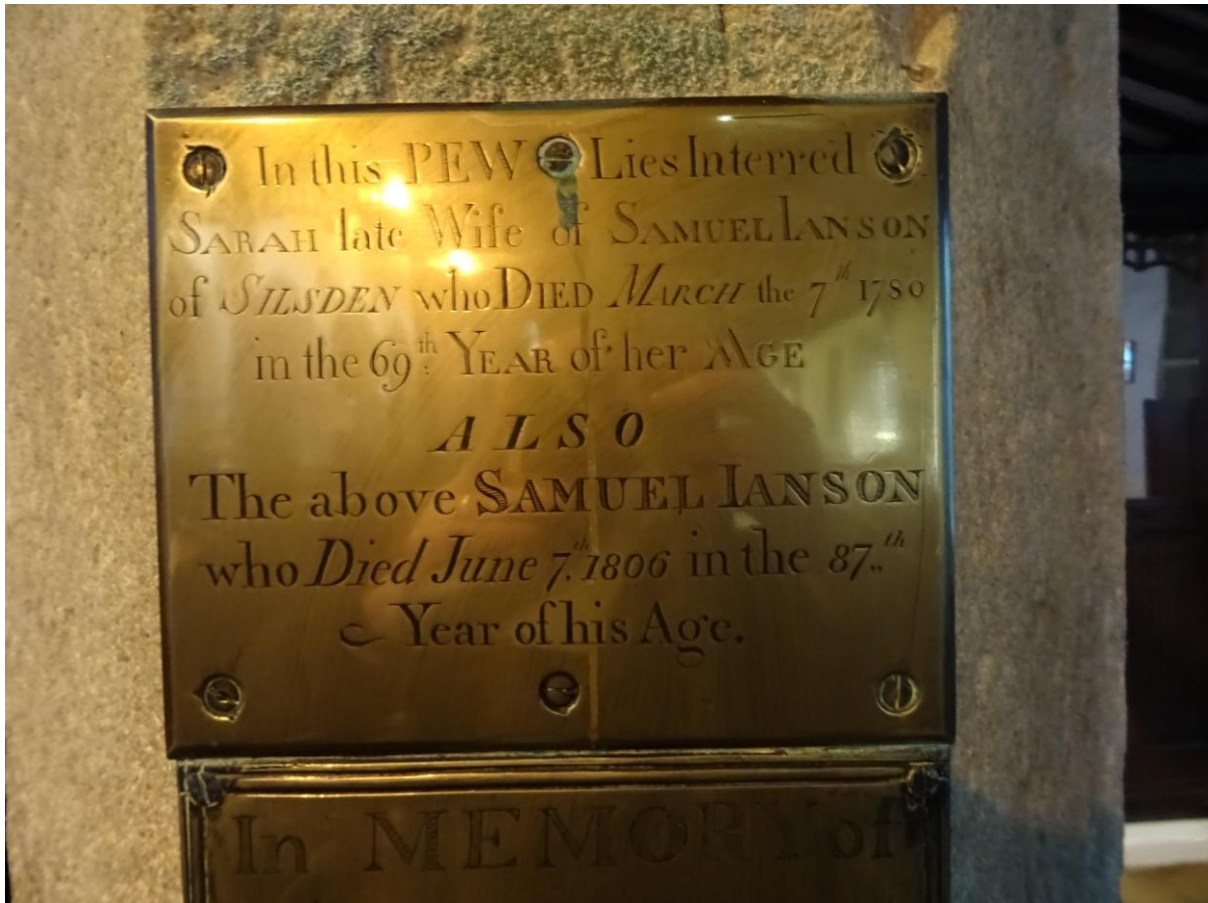
An interesting grave inside Kildwick Church

Burials inside a church are not unusual. The great and the good often have family vaults or individual graves below the floor of the building. Generally speaking, the more important the family – that is the more money they had – the closer the burial was to the altar.

There are a number of burials below the floor of Kildwick Church, often with memorials on a wall close-by. One of the strangest of these memorials is a pair of small brass plaques attached to one of the pillars.



What is unusual about this memorial is that it suggests that the people commemorated have been buried in a very odd place.



In this PEW Lies Interred ... Really ? Sarah, Samuel and (according to the lower plaque) their son John lanson are all buried in a pew ?

Well, maybe not.

From the 17th to the 19th century, one way for the rich of the parish to give money to the church and yet still parade their position in life was to pay an annual subscription for a private pew – a bit like having your own box at the opera or a sporting event (a debenture for [Wimbledon](#), for example). These pews would typically be near pulpit but often out of direct line-of-sight of the vicar, so that a quick nap might be taken during a particularly long sermon.

It seems that the lanson family combined the idea of a private pew with that of a family vault and were buried within the confines of their pew, below where they had sat in life.

The lanson family were comfortably off, although not spectacularly rich; belong to what was referred to as the Husbandman or Yeoman class. (A Husbandman was someone who had his own farm; a Yeoman typically had a larger land-holding or more than one farm. Both might be referred to as Farmers as the family worked on the farm(s) themselves.)

The family was originally from Addingham, where Samuel lanson married Sarah Booth in 1742. Their first appearance in the Kildwick parish records the baptism of a daughter in 1742:

27/12/1742: Sarah, daughter of Samuel and Sarah lanson of Silsden Moor, a Yeoman

Entries then appear regularly, recording baptisms, marriages and burials, for almost the next 100 years.

The last of these was the record of the death of Samuel and Sarah's son, John Ianson, in 1837:

9/2/1837: John Ianson, of Silsden, aged 88

John is commemorated in the lower of the two plaques.

