

The first of 19,000 churchyards will be surveyed as part of a Church of England project to create a free digital map of every grave and feature in every churchyard in the country.



The ancient church of St Bega on the shores of lake Bassenthwaite in the Diocese of Carlisle is the first churchyard to be scanned by surveyors using sophisticated laser equipment, as part of the national programme.

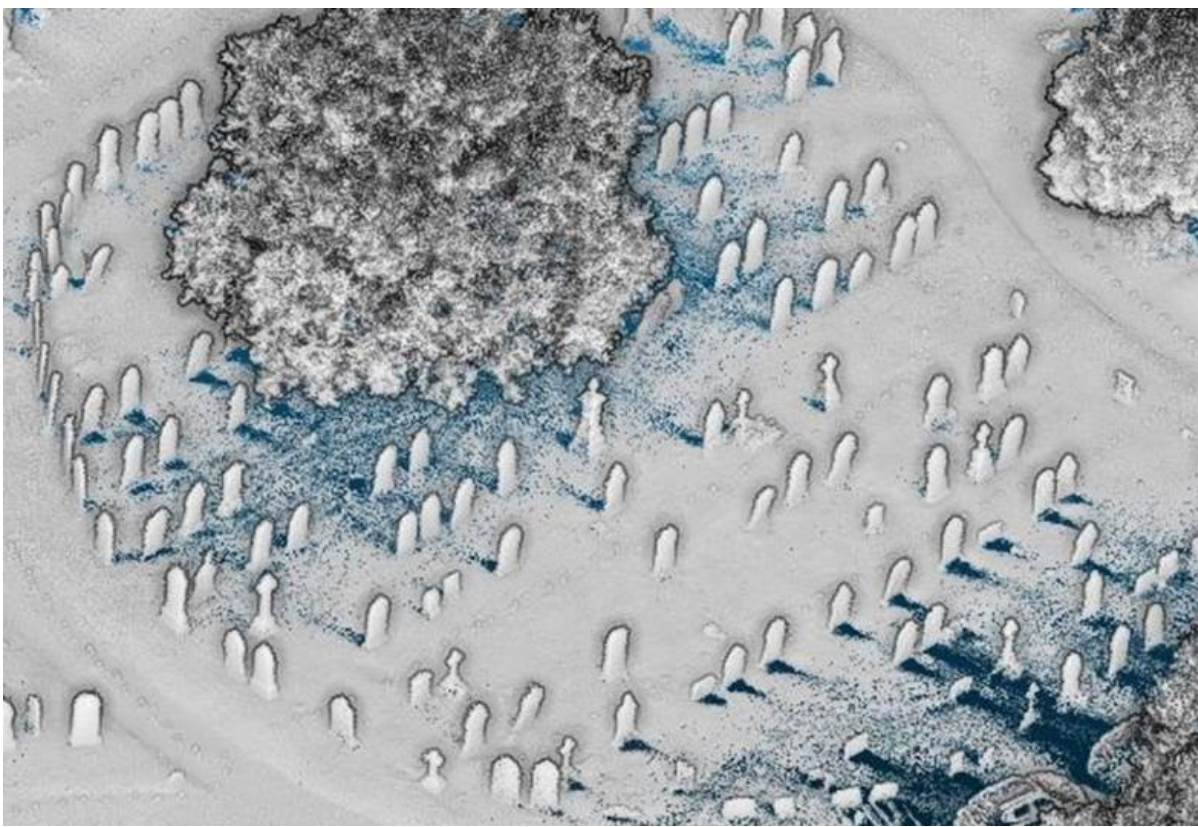
A new website will go online next year giving free access to the map which is expected to be of special interest to local community groups, conservationists, and those researching family history. The website will also enable the charting of biodiversity and green technology.

The Church of England has partnered with Cumbrian-based surveying company Atlantic Geomatics who will use back-pack mounted laser scanners to quickly and accurately map churchyards. They will also photograph all the visible headstones.

There are around 19,000 Anglican burial grounds in England, and the ambitious scheme will aim to digitally survey the majority over the coming seven years. Data on burials will be combined with other information, such as the National Biodiversity Network Atlas, to present the most complete picture of churchyards to date.

The project will come at no cost to parishes or dioceses in the Church of England and parishes will have free access to the map through a new web-based record system which is set to launch in Spring 2022. There will also be the option to subscribe to additional services.

Substantial funding for the programme has been given by Historic England, with the National Lottery Heritage Fund and *Caring for God's Acre* supporting the pilot phase, as well as support from genealogy research websites, all of which has allowed the basic service to be made available to parishes free of charge.



Use of the latest surveying equipment and bespoke software built by Atlantic Geomatics has made the national-scale survey a possibility for the first time. Operatives will aim to survey around nine or ten sites a day using back-pack mounted laser scanning equipment, GPS and cameras. Taking tens of thousands measurements every second the surveyors will then process the data to create accurate maps of each churchyard.

Bishop Andrew Rumsey, who is a lead Bishop for church buildings said: "This impressive national project will make a huge difference to those researching family history, as well as easing the administrative burden on parishes.

"It will improve management of burial grounds, and make information more fully accessible than ever before, supported by additional services by subscription for those wishing to go further.

"It will soon be possible to visit almost any Anglican burial ground in the country and see in real time the location of burial plots. For those researching at distance in the UK or overseas, the digital records will place detailed information from churchyards at their fingertips."

Church by church, and diocese by diocese, it is hoped that the all Anglican churchyards will be surveyed over the next seven years. As well as capturing details of burials, the online interactive map will detail biodiversity in churchyards, including ancient trees and plant-life, as well as green technology such as solar panels.

More information

- [National Graveyard Mapping Project](#)



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