



North Berwick

**Rev. John Blackadder  
Covenanter**

**Grave and tombstone  
Old St Andrew's kirkyard**

North Berwick Environment and Heritage Trust  
Heritage Guide

‘In the parish churchyard a handsome altar tomb, supported by ornamental pillars, commemorates the Rev. John Blackadder, an eminent sufferer in the cause of Presbyterianism. He was born in 1623. Having studied at the University of Glasgow, he was ordained minister of Troqueer in April, 1653. He was deprived of his living in 1662, when he retired to the parish of Glencairn. He preached frequently in the fields; and having attracted the notice of the Privy Council, he, in 1666, withdrew under hiding to Edinburgh. In 1674, his apprehension at Edinburgh was ordered; he escaped to Rotterdam. Returning to Scotland in 1679, he resumed preaching. In April, 1681, he was apprehended at Edinburgh and sentenced to imprisonment on the Bass Rock. There he was confined upwards of four years. As his health became seriously affected the Privy Council ordered his liberation. He was unable to avail himself of the privilege, and died on the Bass in January, 1685, aged sixty-three.’  
*Monuments and Monumental Inscriptions in Scotland, Vol. 1, 1871*



The end panels of the table tombstone show, on the east panel, a skull and crossed thigh bones, the symbol for death, with the partly obliterated inscription *Memento Mori*. On the west panel there is a winged cherub together with an open book, representing the soul of the deceased and the Bible.

The inscription on the tombstone reads: 'Here lies the body of Mr John Blackadder, minister of the gospel at Troqueer, in Galloway, who died on the Bass, after five years' imprisonment. Anno Dom: 1685, and of his age 63.'

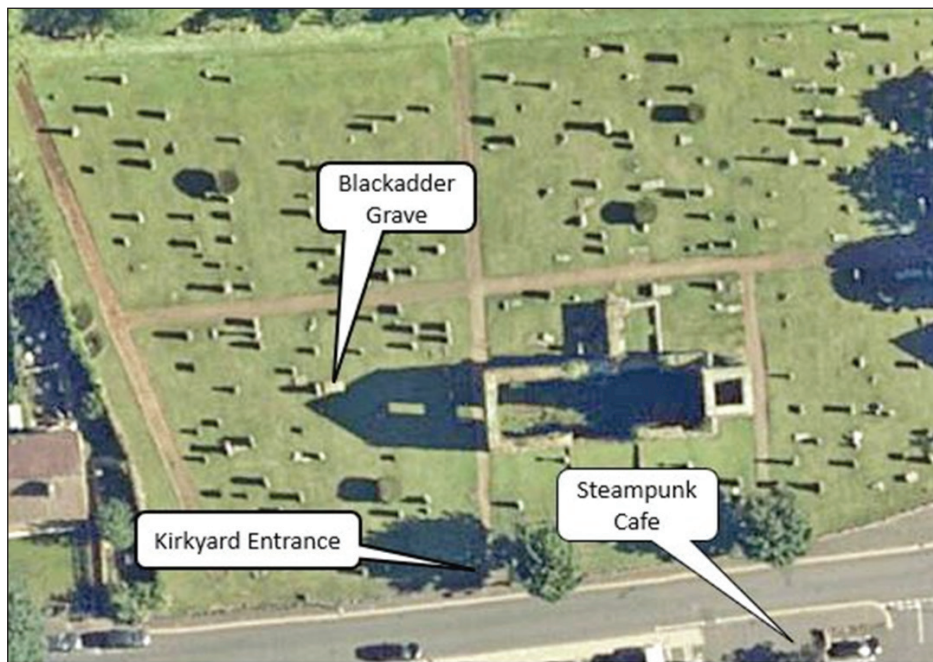
The tombstone was restored in the mid-Victorian era and this was inscribed on it:

Blest John, for Jesus' sake, in Patmos bound.  
His prison Bethel, Patmos Pisgah found.  
So the bless'd John, on yonder rock confined,  
His body suffer'd, but no chains could bind  
His heaven-aspiring soul ; while day by day.  
As from Mount Pisgah's top, he did survey  
The promised land, and view'd the crown by faith,  
Laid up for those who faithful are till death.  
Grace formed him in the Christian Hero's mould  
Meek in his own concerns in's Master's bold ;  
Passions to Reason chained, Prudence did lead  
Zeal warmed his breast, and Reason cool'd his head.  
Five years on the lone rock, yet sweet abode.  
He Enoch-like enjoyed, and walk'd with God ;  
Till, by long living on this heavenly food,  
His soul by love grew up too great, too good  
To be confined to jail, or flesh and blood.  
Death broke his fetters off, then swift he fled  
From sin and sorrow, and by angels led,  
Enter'd the mansions of eternal joy ;  
Blest soul, thy warfare's done, praise, love, enjoy.  
His dust here rests, till Jesus come again,  
Even so, blest Jesus, come come, Lord Amen.

## Covenanters

The Covenanters were people in Scotland who signed the National Covenant in 1638 at Greyfriars Kirk Edinburgh, to confirm their opposition to interference by the King in the affairs of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The Stuart kings believed in the Divine Right of Kings. They believed they were chosen by God to be the infallible rulers of their kingdom – they also believed they were the spiritual heads of the Church in Scotland. The Scots could not accept this latter belief. No man could be spiritual head of their church.

There followed a period of very severe repression. Ministers with Covenanting sympathies were 'outed' from their churches by the authorities and had to leave their parishes. Many continued to preach at 'conventicles' in the open air. This became an offence punishable by death.



*Old St Andrew Blackadder kirkyard,  
Kirk Ports*