

### Map 3: The centre of town

#### Old churchyard, the Watch House and memorials to Black Friday

Now forming a unique garden area between the High Street and Albert Road with views out to the bay, this is the site of the town's old churchyard. Central to this space is a striking granite sculpture in the form of a broken ship's mast in memorial to the



189 fishermen who died at sea in the Eyemouth Disaster on 14th October 1881. Up on the elevated section to the rear of the churchyard, stands a newer memorial to Black Friday. These small, beautifully sculpted bronze figures, designed by local artist, Jill Watson, represent the women and children left behind after Black Friday as they desperately looked out into

the bay for their loved ones on that fateful night. Only one-fifth complete, the eventual sculpture is part of the group of memorials located in all the other coastal towns and villages which lost fishermen. Eventually, they will depict the exact number of women and children left husbandless and fatherless from the fishing communities along the coast.



Another feature of this old churchyard is the extraordinary building in its bottom corner. This building is the old cemetery's 'Watch House', which was used as a guard-house against 'resurrectionists' known as the 'body-snatchers' (there's more about them in Chapter 4). It was built almost entirely out of elaborately carved tombstones. The 1849 cholera epidemic claimed the

*'Round Eyemouth*

lives of about a hundred people and following their burials, this resulted in the level of the churchyard being raised by six feet. The flat gravestones were covered up by the new layer of earth, with some of the upright ones being preserved and laid vertical against the walls surrounding the cemetery.

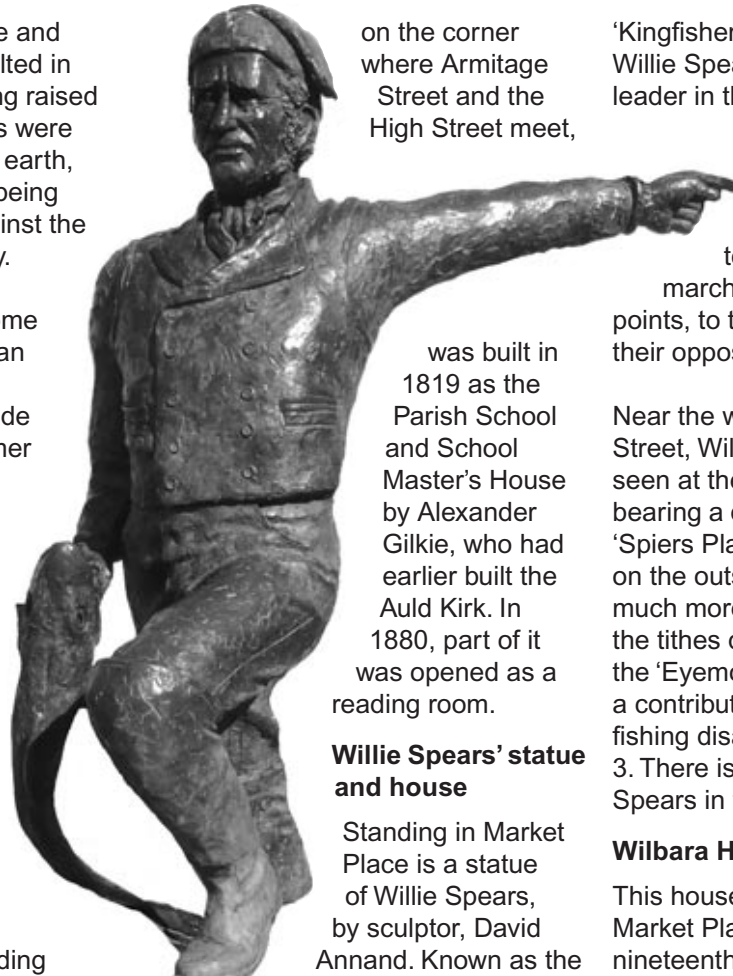
Further commemorations to some of the victims of Black Friday can still be deciphered on some of these gravestones, which provide a reminder of the garden's former use.

**Jewellers**

The plaque above this building, now a jewellers, tells us that this is, *'One of the oldest buildings in the town is thought to date back from 1640.'* At one time the building had been used as a brew kitchen, confectioners and barber's shop.

**Old Parish School and School Master's house**

Now a newsagent, this old building



on the corner where Armitage Street and the High Street meet,

was built in 1819 as the Parish School and School Master's House by Alexander Gilkie, who had earlier built the Auld Kirk. In 1880, part of it was opened as a reading room.

**Willie Spears' statue and house**

Standing in Market Place is a statue of Willie Spears, by sculptor, David Annand. Known as the

'Kingfisher', due to his fishing prowess, Willie Spears became the fishermen's leader in their disputes with the Church over 'tithes' imposed on the fishermen's catch. The Kingfisher faces the market area where 2,000 townspeople gathered before marching in the direction Spears points, to the court in Ayton, to show their opposition to the Kirk's tithes.

Near the war memorial in the High Street, Willie Spears' house can be seen at the end of the short street bearing a different spelling of his name, 'Spiers Place'. You can see a plaque on the outside. Chapter 4 contains much more about Willie Spears and the tithes dispute which culminated in the 'Eyemouth Riot', and was certainly a contributory factor to the Black Friday fishing disaster, described in Chapter 3. There is a colourful portrait of Willie Spears in the Eyemouth Museum.

**Wilbara House**

This house is situated on the edge of Market Place. It dates from the early nineteenth century. Old skeletons

have twice been discovered under the floorboards, when building works were being carried out in the east end of the building. This was originally close to the site of the Wilbara House Old Parish Church, which was condemned in 1810, and the Wilbara House was completely rebuilt in about 1812.

### **The smuggling house and old library**

As Market Place (see photos on right) leads into Church Street, the town's smuggling past is further illustrated by a plaque on the building which used to be the library. This states that:

*'This old house with cellars and underground passages leading to surrounding buildings is reputed to have been the centre for an extensive smuggling business in the 18th century.'*

Also of note is the marriage lintel above the adjacent door dated 1735.

