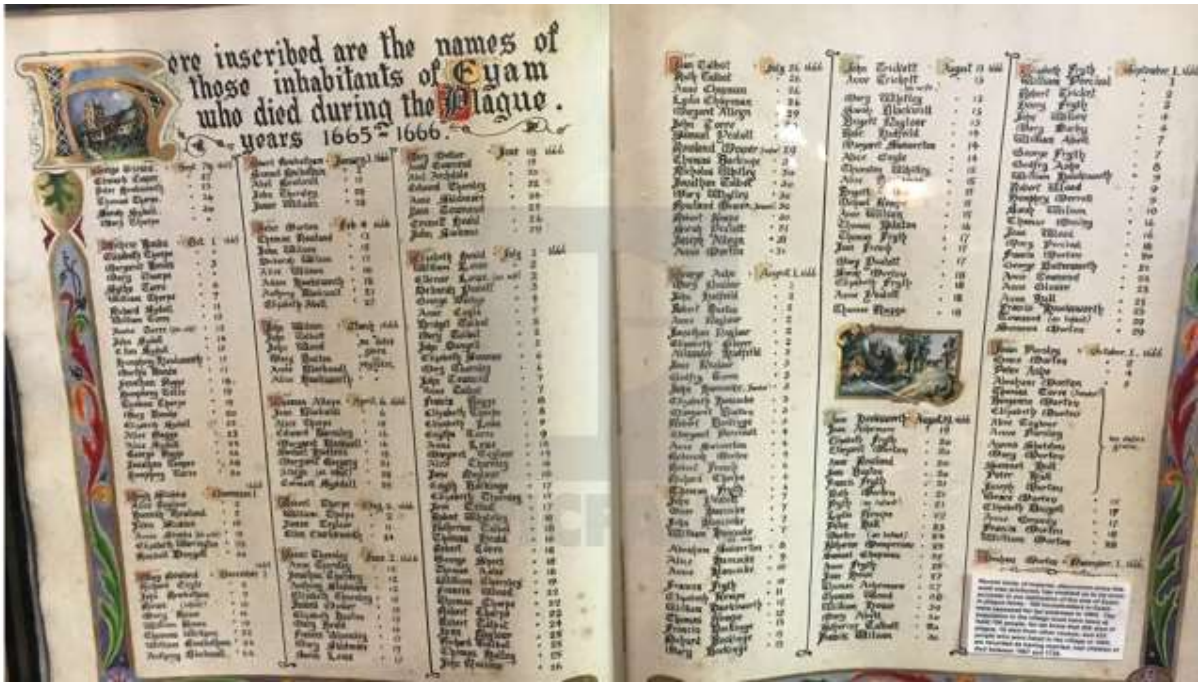
Isolating the village

A local pastor, William Mompesson intervened. It was a difficult decision to accept, but with their authority they managed to convince their fellow villagers that the best thing to do was to stay within the village.  In short, to self-isolate.

Therefore, they decided to shut off the village until the Plague was over. With the villagers convinced, the town cut off all communication with its neighbours: no one could leave and no one could enter. At the time of the outbreak, 350 people lived there. Stones were placed around the outskirts of the village to indicate that people should not go beyond that point.

Meanwhile, people inside the village died in high numbers. Food, water, and other basic necessities were sent from the countryside. The village received food and help from other neighbouring villagers who left parcels of meat, grains and other items on the outskirts of the town. In return, the residents of Eyam left coins in a bowl filled with vinegar and water as it was believed that vinegar acted as a disinfectant. The stones around the village still exist and can be viewed today.

Of the 350 original inhabitants, only 90 survived. 260 had perished. That year, no household was spared. Catherine, the wife of Mompesson the priest who asked everyone to stay, also died. Below is the Plague register, which can be viewed in the church




By the summer of 1666, a year on, Eyam's goals had been achieved and the plague had stopped spreading. They had agreed to self –isolate and because of that they saved thousands of lives. A familiar story? It was a long and painful journey but very much the right course of action. Today it is remembered for the heroic sacrifice made by its inhabitants.