

**LYNCOMBE & WIDCOMBE
AND ST JAMES'S
CEMETERY, BATH**

2022

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Date: 03-Dec-2022

Status: Issue 2

Contents

Introduction.....	1
History	1
Opening	2
The Registers	4
Bath Burial Index	4
Deceased Online	4
The Register Index.....	4
Layout	5
Chapels.....	6
Lodge	6
Paths	6
Maintenance	6
Occupants.....	6
Previous Survey.....	7
Current Survey.....	7
War Damage	7
Limitations	8

Introduction

This document gives a background to Bath's cemetery for the parishes of Lyncombe, Widcombe and St James. Associated with it is a series of documents which have transcriptions of the memorials.

History

The cemetery is Lyncombe & Widcombe's fourth burial ground. The first two are by and near St Thomas à Becket church and the third is next to St Mark's Church, although it antedates the church.

St James, Lower Borough Walls had a burial ground about 50m west of the church on the southern side of Lower Borough Walls. This small area is now a park and there are no surviving memorials there. St James also had a burial ground for its poor on Lyncombe Hill near its workhouse but this closed about 1850. In the 1850s St James had its poor buried in Lyncombe & Widcombe's third cemetery, this accounting for about 30% of burials there during the later 1850s. In addition, there was a burial ground in Old Orchard Street. *'The Old Orchard proper was a burial ground for the parishes of St. James and St. Peter and St. Paul, the two being rectorially and territorially united. For half a century it was the burying place for both parishes until was finally closed in 1848, when they again joined the Abbey parish in purchasing the extra strip of ground, which they used until it was closed in August, 1857.'* (*Bath Chronicle* Thu 3 Mar 1859).

A series of burial acts from 1852 to 1859 attempted to regulate the chaotic state of the management of burial grounds. In Bath it had been established that many of the church-based graveyards were either full or would become so within a few years (*Bath Chronicle* 3 Jun 1858 p3). The legislation empowered the parish-based vestries to appoint burial boards with powers to provide new burial grounds. The Home Secretary was given powers to close old burial grounds, to sanction and regulate new ones, and he could also license burials in closed grounds. There were also rules on the graveyard layout with the specification of the minimum separation and depth. In 1855 three inspectors of burial grounds were appointed under the Act of that year. Section 1 of the Burial Act 1853 provided for the Secretary of State to make representations to the Privy Council for an Order in Council¹ to discontinue burials in any burial ground, with or without exceptions. Section 8 of the Burial Act 1855 provided for the inspection of any burial ground by a person appointed for that purpose by the Secretary of State.

¹ Orders in Council are Orders that have been approved at a meeting of the Privy Council personally by the sovereign. Orders of Council are similar but are made by Privy Councillors and do not require the sovereign's approval. Such orders are published in *The London Gazette*.

In November 1857 an inspector was sent to Bath to inquire about compliance with the legislation. Complaints had been made that the Order in Council of July 1855 with respect to burials had not been observed. Those responsible were summoned to the Guildhall to state whether or not they were compliant (*Bath Chronicle* 26-Nov-1857 p3). Most stated that they were 'as far as possible'. The result was that a number of graveyards were ordered to close and others to close when full.

The situation had become so bad that a public meeting was convened in the Guildhall convened by the Mayor who presided over it. This meeting brought to the surface a number of complaints about the administration of burials including the near monopoly of the Anglican church and the arbitrary nature of the fees, non-parishioners being charged double. Examples are:

The charge for making a brick grave at Lansdown Cemetery was five guineas, and at Bathwick three guineas, while, at Maldon, without any question being asked whether the corpse was that of a parishioner or non-parishioner, the charge for making a brick grave was one guinea, and the other charges corresponded with it."

"Mr. M. Bartlett, a working man, said he was in favour of memorializing the Town Council to form a general cemetery, as he believed it would be the means of enabling the poor to be buried cheaply, and preventing the necessity of their having to bow and scrape to such gentlemen as Mr. Thompson, at Bathwick, or anyone else."

"Mr Edey proceeded to say that a person, who had been a resident in the parish of St. Peter and Paul, recently died in an adjacent parish, and when application was made to the authorities of the Abbey Cemetery for permission to bury her there, they required the payment of extra fees, merely because she happened to die out of the parish, although she had lived in it 40 years. (Shame, shame)."

"Admiral Saumarez again attempted to proceed with his address, but the meeting manifested such impatience that he was at length obliged to sit down."

"Mr. George Cox congratulated the meeting that the "robbery" which had been carried on for the last one hundred years was now about to come to an end. (Applause.) The poor man would now be carried to the grave without being overcharged, and he sincerely hoped they would all agree to an unanimous vote on the question."

"Mr Cotterell then replied—He said, it was a great relief to him to find that they were all agreed that the poor should be buried cheaply, and that the Nonconformists should be considered as well a Churchmen. The question was, therefore, narrowed to Walcot Parish v. the Five other Parishes. Look at the position of the poor families of Lyncombe and Widcombe, and St James's. Were they to be damaged and damnified for a century to come, in reference to their burial accommodation, because certain gentlemen in Walcot chose to have a burial board of their own. (Applause.)"

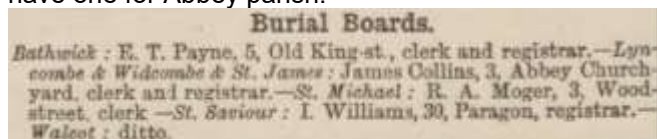
There was resentment that Walcot parish intended to form a new cemetery for its parish when some people wanted a single cemetery for the city administered by the council. In February 1859 there was much debate about whether there should be a single general cemetery or a number of parish-based ones, whether the town council could be trusted with the management of a general cemetery, and which parish should join with which. It was argued that, if there were a single cemetery, wherever it were placed it would be inconvenient for some in the city.

The *Bath Chronicle* of 3 Feb 1859 carried an extensive report on this meeting in a supplement.

A St James vestry meeting initially considered joining with Lyncombe & Widcombe and St Michael's but it was recommended to wait to see what Walcot parish and the City Act Committee would do (*Bath Chronicle* Thu 6 Jan 1859 p9). The St Michael's vestry also considered this option with the two parishes only, 'since the Abbey parish was provided for' (*Bath Chronicle* Thu 27 Jan 1859). In fact the Abbey Cemetery was exclusively Anglican and made no explicit provision for nonconformists as required by the legislation.

By May 1859 Walcot Burial Board had secured approval to borrow £7,000 and invited investors to lend this (*Bath Chronicle* Thu 5 May 1859 p4). St James parish asked to join with Lyncombe and Widcombe in setting up a burial board (*Bath Chronicle* Thu 19 May 1859 p5) and agreement was reached on the split of costs (St James 39%, Lyncombe and Widcombe 61%) (*Bath Chronicle* Thu 28 Jul 1859).

Only a week after the Guildhall meeting, the vestry of St Peter and St Paul (the Abbey) considered setting up an unconsecrated burial ground as required by the Burial Acts, The Rector proposed some land 'contiguous to the Lyncombe Cemetery' which was his leasehold property and would not require money from the Poor Rate. The opinion of one of the attendees was that the parish did not want 'to be tacked on to St James's, and Lyncombe and Widcombe' (*Bath Chronicle* Thu 10 Feb 1859 p8). While the resolution to set up a Burial Board was carried, the matter was not raised in subsequent vestry meetings and there are no references to expenditure on or appointments to a burial board (from 1859 to 1877) whereas vestry meeting for other parishes, such as St James, Bathwick, and Lyncombe & Widcombe, have references to such expenditure and appointments. Only in 1878 is there a reference to 'Contribution to Burial Board £100' (without specifying which one) and thereafter no further such references. A list of burial boards (*Bath Chronicle* Thu 22 Dec 1882 p9) does not have one for Abbey parish.



The cemetery opened in 1861. the first burial occurring on 27 Nov 1861. It was consecrated on 6 Jan 1862 (see below). There were about 200 burials per year until its closure in 1937, being superseded by Haycombe cemetery, the numbers buried then falling rapidly. Even in the late 1920s it was recognised that the existing cemeteries were becoming full. The Council Minutes of 21 Jan 1929 (p109) has "New Cemetery. The sub-Committee discussed the question of the acquisition of land for a new cemetery and, in view of the small number of unused grave spaces now available, consider this question has become a matter of urgency."

Opening

From the *Bath Chronicle* of Thu 9 Jan 1862:

CONSECRATION OF LYNCOMBE, WIDCOMBE AND ST. JAMES'S CEMETERY

This new Cemetery was consecrated by the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells on Monday last. It is situated on the Bristol Road, and occupies a fine plot of ground, eight acres in extent, about five acres of which was consecrated, the remaining three acres being set apart for Nonconformist burials. There is an entrance lodge at the gates, and the two chapels in the centre of the ground present a beautiful appearance. These chapels are precisely similar externally, and are connected by a cloister, forming a distinct *porte cochere* to each entrance, between which is an arch supporting the bell-turret common to each building. Half only of the foundations of this turret rests on consecrated ground. The belfry forms a very effective centre, as it is surmounted by an elegant tapering spire, rising to something like 100 feet, crowned at its apex by a metal cross, the beautiful emblem of Christianity. Each chapel is built in the form of a cross, representing that however different the sects to be assembled therein there is presumed to be the same hope. The unconsecrated chapel is fitted up with a tribune at the extreme end for the minister, with handsome fittings on either side, with a robing-room in one transept, and special seats for the chief mourners in the other, both spots being railed off from the chapel by beautiful carved screens. The consecrated chapel, of the same plan, is divided into a chancel and nave by a marble step; the east end, or apse, is paved with encaustic tiles, the liberal gift, together with the cross on the spire, of Mr. John Rainey. At the extreme end is a simple communion table, and on the north and south sides are lecterns for the officiating clergymen. The remainder of the building is arranged as the other chapel. The style of the edifice is that which prevailed during the reign of Edward III.

Mr. C. E. Davis is the architect, and Mr. D. Aust, the builder. The handsome structure certainly reflects great credit upon the artistic tastes of the former, and the workmanship of the latter. The carving of the stone work has been skilfully executed by Mr. G. Porter, of this city. The ground has been laid out by Mr. Butler, of Widcombe, nurseryman.

Lord Auckland arrived at the Cemetery at two o'clock, and a petition was at once presented to him, praying that he would consecrate a portion of the Burial Ground. On his Lordship signifying his consent, a procession, formed in the following order:—

Children of the Parochial Schools of Lyncombe & Widcombe and St, James.

Architect and Clerk.

The contractors.

Members of the Burial Board.

Churchwardens of the Three Parishes.

Clergy in Gowns.

The Lord Bishop and Officers—

proceeded from the gates to the chapel. The clergy present were the Revds. G. E. Tate, J. Wood, J. M. Dixon, H. T. Cavell, J. W. Sproule, F. Pocock, E. C. Osborne, J. Colwill. A. Medland, J. Buttanshaw, and — Phelps. In the chapel, the ordinary form of service was read, and the Bishop and Clergy, followed by the other persons present, afterwards repaired to the ground to be consecrated, and walked round the same, repeating alternately the 49th Psalm. On returning to the chapel, the Bishop stood underneath the bell-turret, and the Registrar (Mr. Davies) then read the sentence of consecration, which was, thereupon, signed by his Lordship. The Bishop next repeated the following appropriate prayer:—

“O God, who has taught us in Thy holy word that there is a difference between the spirit of a beast that goeth downwards to the earth, and the spirit of man which ascendeth up to God who gave it; and likewise by the example of Thy holy servants, in all ages, has taught us to assign peculiar places where the bodies on Thy servants may rest in peace, and be preserved from all indignities, whilst their souls are safely kept in the hands of their faithful Redeemer; Accept we beseech Thee, this charitable work of ours in separating this portion of land to that good purpose; and give us grace, that by the frequent instances of mortality which we behold, we may learn, and seriously consider, how frail and uncertain our condition here on earth is, and so number our days, as to apply our hearts unto wisdom. That in the midst of life thinking upon death, and daily preparing ourselves for the judgment which is to follow, we may have our part in the resurrection to eternal life with Him who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and now liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end.”

Four verses of the 39th Psalm were sung, and the proceedings terminated with the Bishop's benediction.

Before leaving the ground, the Bishop expressed his approval of the eligibility of the site selected for the Cemetery.

The Registers

Bath & North East Somerset Council's Bereavement Services Department has inherited the burial registers of the ward-based Burial Boards including those of Lyncombe & Widcombe and St James's Cemetery.

Bath Burial Index

A request by Bath & North East Somerset Council's Bath Record Office to have summary information on those buried in cemeteries administered by the council was refused. On asking for a justification of this decision, the Bereavement Services' manager stated that records could be made available under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act but:

- it would be limited to some, not all, cemeteries under the Council's management,
- would not include ages, as this would require looking them up in the register and would take more than the maximum of 18 hours set by the Act for provision of information
- it would not be possible for volunteers to visit the office to photograph the volumes; instead it would be necessary to pay for the pages to be scanned.

The scanned images provided have been transcribed. These images were for the index and not the actual burial registers. The transcription took in excess of 1,000 hours. The missing ages have been added where this is possible. This is only possible where there is an unequivocal match. Where there are two people of the same name who died in the same quarter of a year it is not possible to determine the age. As the cemetery was for the two parishes and charges for non-parishioners were significantly higher than for parishioners, the majority of those buried have burial registrations in the Bath registration district. The records have been merged with a list of names that appear on the memorials collected by other volunteers. This reconciliation has highlighted that some entries in list of names on the memorials have been misinterpreted. For example, some married daughters appear with the maiden name possibly because of being referred to as 'daughter of' without giving a surname.

The presence of a name on a memorial does not necessarily mean that the individual was buried in the cemetery. In some cases, this is obvious where the inscription states that someone was buried elsewhere. The absence of a burial register number indicates that the person was not buried in the cemetery, even though the date of death may appear on the inscription, and the records have been adjusted accordingly.

Deceased Online

In 2016 it was announced that B&NES Bereavement Services had provided the burial information for a series of cemeteries to Deceased Online Ltd who

were making these available at a pay-per-view website. This includes scanned images of the register. The initial launch was for four cemeteries including *St James Cemetery (formerly Lyncombe, Widcombe and St James)*, 24,400 records, 1861 to 2011. A further four cemeteries were to follow but by late 2022 these had not been added.

In the light of the provision of burial registers to a third-party, a Freedom of Information request asked whether or not the contract precluded the provision of the same information to other organisations and, if so, for how long. The response was that there was no contract.

The Register Index

As noted above, the burial records are held in a series of burial register volumes held by Bath & NE Somerset Bereavement Services. There are over 24,000 entries for the cemetery. These registers are not accessible to the public and access to the index was only granted under provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. Scanned images of the index were provided by the council on payments of a fee for scanning. It was not possible to photograph the index. The index volumes have the name, date of burial and burial location. It does not have the ages. To determine the age the corresponding death registration has been used; where an unequivocal match can be made the age has been added.

The checking against the death registration has the benefit of reducing transcription errors. Such errors can occur when transcribing from the scanned images but it has been found that in some index entries the original is in error. Nonetheless in some cases a corresponding death registration has not been found.

The original index was completed by a series of people from its opening in 1861. The handwriting is very variable. In particular in the late 19th century records it can be difficult to distinguish between 'I' and 'J'. In practice, the survey of the cemetery has established that I and J are used interchangeably with only a single section between H and K.

Between 1894 and 1904 the register was maintained by George Cox. His characteristic handwriting appears in the 1891 census where his name is given as an enumerator.

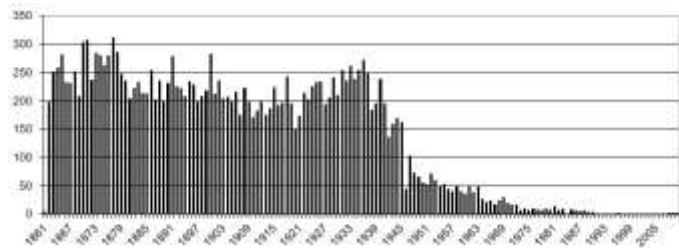


Examples of idiosyncratic letters in 1890s' records

LYN—WID. & ST. JAMES CEMETERY
INDEX TO BURIAL REGISTER

NAME	DATE OF BURIAL	NUMBER OF ENTRY IN BURIAL REGISTER	LETTER AND NUMBER OF GRAVE SPACE	
			USUAL	ORIGINAL
Brown, Ellen Caroline	1st Dec 1852	23849		PD 51
Beaton, Lydia	1st Dec -	23852		ID 36
Brookman, James	26/12/52	23859	TE 60	above
Burger, Frederick James	21/1/53	23868	VE 14	
Burwell, Charlotte Mary	20/2/53	23875	ED 47	
Burton, Alice Mary	21/2/53	23880	HS 28	
Beer, Rowland Johnson	18th April 1853	23888	XB 41	(66)
Dryght, William James	20th April -	23893	LA 19	
Blair, Charles Stephen Paul	25th October -	23917	LD 2	
Brown, Millie Ann Leah	18th Nov. -	23920	GF 17	
Burge, Daisy Helen	18th January 1854	23920	HS 31	
Burge, Edith Annie	1st April -	23922	YF 3	
Burrows, Ellen Elizabeth	31st Aug. -	23947	ZK 26	above
Burton, Eric Ellen	2nd June -	23948		H. B. 80.
Baile, Mabel Blanche	22nd July -	23957	KA 17	
Baker, Esther Jane	26th August -	23963	JD 45	
Bach, Kate Constantine	1st October -	23968	HS 22	
Beecher, Emily	2nd January 1855	23982	DA 24	
Brewer, David	1st April -	24002		O. G. 51
Brown, Jerry	27th May -	24007		O. G. 50
Bull, Emma Elizabeth	30th June -	24011	TE 60	
Dyrell, George Richard	1st August -	24018		H. F. 49
Brooke, Cecile Mary	1st September -	24019		PB 53
Burly, Ada	1st September -	24021		YD 61
Burly, Percy Arthur	25th October -	24027		OF 10
Burt, Daisy Isabel Kate	1st November -	24029		FM 52
Burton, Frederick Edward	1st November -	24032		RG 25
Booth, Mary Elizabeth	1st November -	24034		AD 42
Burgess, Robert Nathaniel	1st December -	24036		EA 20

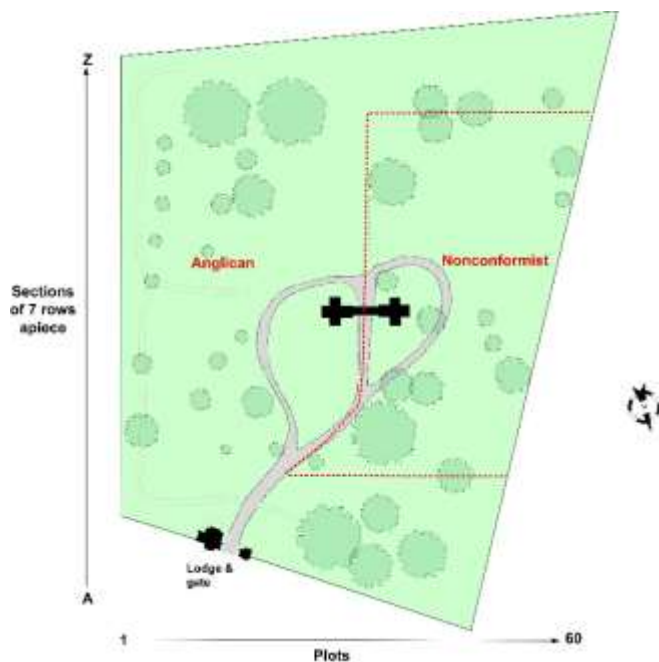
Example of a page in the index to the burial register.



Numbers of burials by year

From its opening in 1861 until its closure the average number of burials per year was about 200. The cemetery was formally closed in 1937, Haycombe taking on the role as the sole municipal cemetery for Bath. Burials still took place after 1937 for those with an existing family grave. Nonetheless a burial occurred in June 2013.

Layout



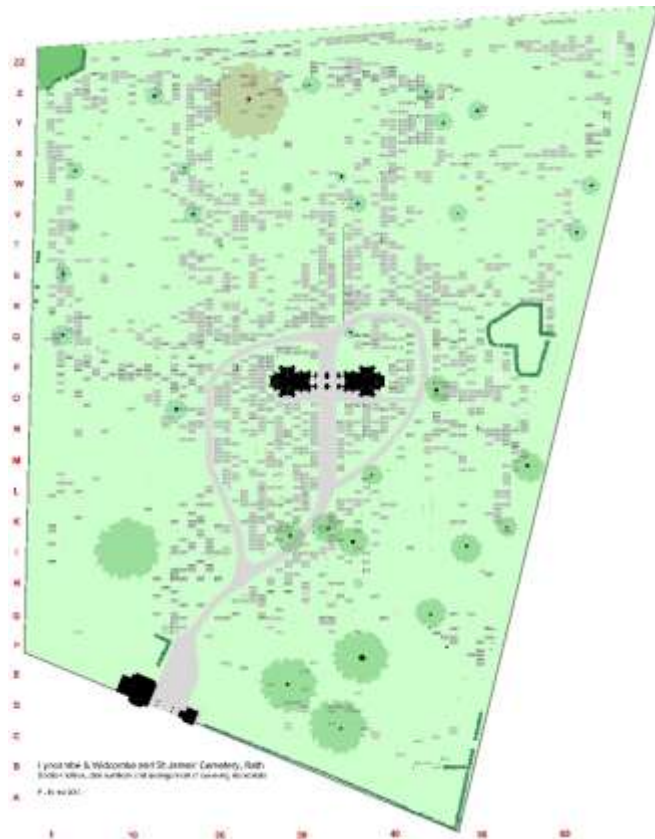
Sections, rows and plots

The area of the cemetery is a rhomboid with, near its centre, Anglican and non-conformist chapels joined by a cloister. Its area is about 3.2 ha (7.8 acres). The ground is almost flat, rising only by only about 10 metres going from north (the entrance) to south (the railway line).

The cemetery is divided into sections labelled A to Z with A starting by the gate and Z by the railway line to the south. Each 'section' comprises 7 rows labelled A to G. The numbering of the plots within each row starts at 1 on the eastern side of cemetery. The rows are at right-angles to the eastern wall, as is the orientation of long axis of the chapels.

The cemetery is divided into consecrated and unconsecrated parts. In general terms, the plots 1 to about 30 in each row are consecrated and 30 to about 60 unconsecrated. There are exceptions to this general scheme. All plots in sections A to D and T to Z are considered to be consecrated.

For section Z many of the entries are qualified by 'above' or 'below'. This arises because the sequence ZA-ZG was used twice, presumably due to an expansion of the cemetery southwards. For the Bath Burial Index, these two 'Z' sections are designated as 'Z' and 'ZZ' with the latter being by the southern boundary.



Arrangement of surviving memorials

Chapels

There are two chapels, one Anglican, the other nonconformist. There are identical in layout and are joined by a roof with two arches. Originally, at the centre, was a large spire. This is reported to have been taken down because of concerns about its stability and now rests in one of the chapels.



Chapels

Lodge

On the eastern side of the entrance gate is the lodge for the cemetery's superintendent. This two-story building has a door by the gate. This is believed to

have been unoccupied for some time and it was sold in 2013.

In the 1881 census at the Cemetery Lodge: Joseph Flagg, aged 45, superintendent of cemetery, wife Elizabeth A, aged 43, and nine children.



Lodge

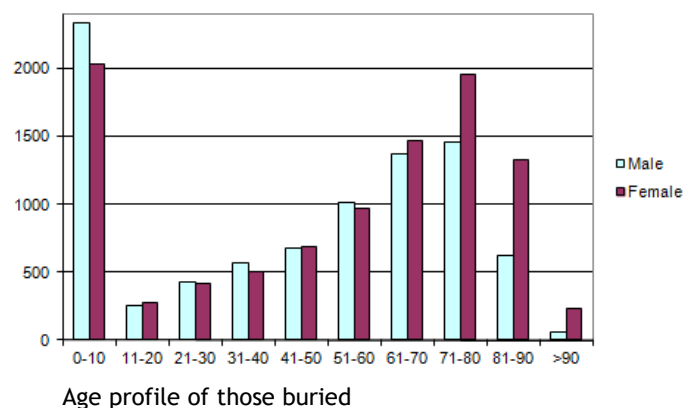
Paths

It is possible to drive into and around the roadway that leads to and around the two chapels. There are some paths that lead off this. Some of these are evident from the maps of the sections. These paths, which once would have been gravel, are generally now covered by turf.

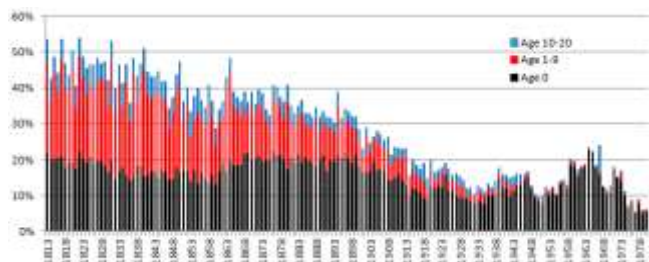
Maintenance

The maintenance of the graveyard is carried out by Bath & North East Somerset Council's Bereavement Services department. This involves strimming at about monthly intervals during the summer. During 2013 the Council employed some of those sentenced to carry out community work as part of a 'community payback' scheme to clear undergrowth and remove saplings, particularly in the southernmost area by the railway.

Occupants

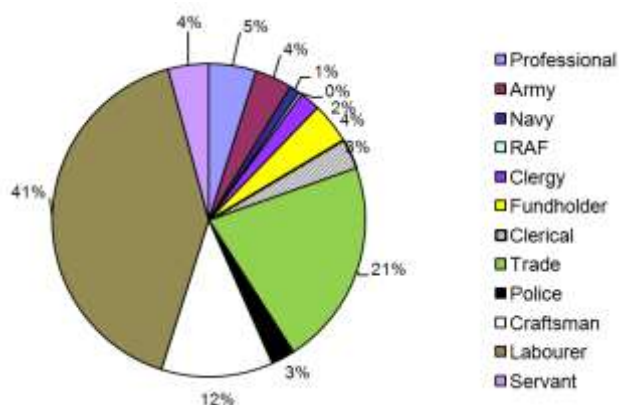


The age profile of those buried show that about 25% were aged under 11 and 29% aged over 70. This is different from Widcombe parish's earlier cemetery at St Mark's where over 40% were aged under 11. Using the agglomeration of about 200,000 burial records for most of Bath cemeteries, the figure for this cemetery is broadly in line with the rest of the city.



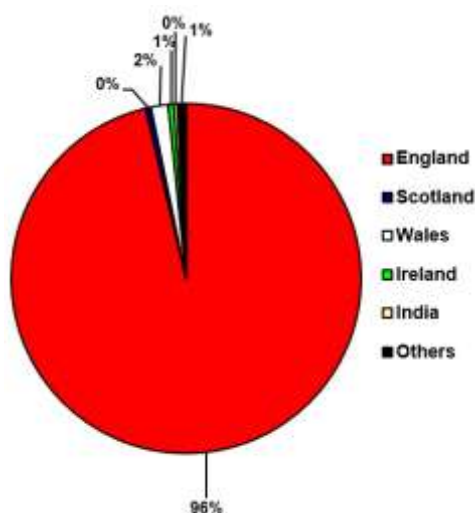
Percentage by age band for most of Bath's cemeteries.

Occupations for only a small percentage of those buried have been determined. The profile is in contrast to expensive cemeteries such as Lansdown, St Mary's Churchyard and Abbey where there is, as one might expect, a much higher percentage of: professional, Army, Navy, clergy and fundholders.



Occupations

The country of birth has been determined for about 20% of those buried and is about 96% England with 1.6% Wales, 0.5% Ireland, 0.3% India and 0.5% Scotland.



Country of birth

It is evident from the location index and the small number of memorials, the cemetery contains many common graves. Even some family graves have been placed on what were common graves.

Previous Survey

A survey was carried out circa 1982. It was one of a number carried out by the Bristol & Avon Family History Society. While not providing a layout with the location of memorials, it listed the names appearing on memorials, grouping these together for each memorial. This paper list was used with the transcription of the index entries as the basis for searching for memorials, producing maps and highlighting where memorials would be expected.

Current Survey

The index entries give the location of graves but there was no information as to the meaning of the sections, rows and plots. The numbering scheme had to be deduced by obtaining a sample of names and, from the declared locations of these, inferring the ordering. Maps could then be produced giving the template on which the shapes of memorials that were found could be added.

In total there are 1,993 memorials, 4,243 names on memorials and 24,753 burials. Thus only 17.4% of those buried have their name on a memorial.

War Damage



Bombs and bomb damage

Four high-explosive bombs fell on the north-western section of the cemetery during the 1942 bombing of Bath. The map of the locations of bombs show that these fell on the northern part of the nonconformist section of the cemetery and this area now has very few memorials.

Limitations

In the index there are the following limitations:

1 Ages

The index does not have ages and these have had to be obtained from the corresponding death registration. For some entries it has not been possible to find an unequivocal match.

2 Missing Memorials

The results of a survey carried out circa 1982 have been used to indicate whether or not there is a memorial. As the survey progressed this was refined.

False positives: The original survey identified various memorials which cannot now be found. It is possible that some of these were small memorials such as vases which may have been moved and lost in the undergrowth. Others may be slabs which have become overgrown with turf and whose presence is not apparent. One slab was found under 10cm of turf.

False negatives: Some memorials have been found which are not on the original list.

3 Suspect Locations

Some grave locations are at positions that do not conform to the layout. Unfortunately, as the registers are unavailable, it is not possible to check against these.

A small number memorials have been found at locations which differ from that specified in the index.

The sequential numbers assigned to memorials in the 1980s survey suggest that, in a few cases, a location is suspect because two memorials occur at the same location.

4 Incomplete inscriptions

Some inscriptions are incomplete, chiefly because of the growth of turf over kerbstones. Also some inscriptions evident 30 years ago have now become illegible due to weathering or delamination. Names from the previous survey have been added where this is the case.