

Top things to do!



Follow the headstone path to the Chapel ruins



Admire the tomb effigy of the knightly figure with crossed legs.



Enjoy the serenity of the cemetery chapels right in the heart of Basingstoke.



Look for the weathered symbol of the winged goat.



Photo - M. Rice

How do I get there?



How to find us:

Chapel Hill
Basingstoke
RG21 5TB



By Train:

The cemetery is a short walk north of Basingstoke railway station and town centre. Head up Chapel Hill and you will find the cemetery on your right.



By Car:

The main entrance is on Chapel Hill by the cemetery lodge, RG21 5TB. There is parking space for 3 cars.



On Foot:

Pedestrians can access the cemetery from town by following Chapel Hill or via the Burgess Road public footpath at the top of the cemetery.



Opening Times

Free access at all times

Want to find out more?

Extra information about the chapel ruins can be found on our website at www.holyghostcemetery-basingstoke.org.uk. Feel free to take a look at our other trails. Why not explore the cemetery stories through the trees and graves, or find out quirky facts about Basingstoke citizens buried at the Holy Ghost cemetery.

The Holy Ghost Cemetery Basingstoke

The Chapel Ruins

A short stroll into Tudor times



the 
South View
conservation
group



Chapel of the Holy Ghost present day

Welcome

The last thing you'd expect to find in the heart of Basingstoke town is a quiet green space with majestic Tudor ruins. Open to all, this special cemetery holds a rich tapestry of stories for you to explore.

Why were the chapels built?

The Chapel of the Holy Ghost arose out of a fierce dispute between Pope Innocent III and King John. It led to the the Pope banning religious services in England for six years from 1208 and the King's excommunication in 1209. Basingstoke people were unable to bury their dead in the town's churchyard, so instead they used unconsecrated land on Chapel Hill (the area that now lies between the chapels and the railway).

When the Pope lifted the ban, the makeshift burial ground was consecrated and the Chapel of the Holy Ghost built. The chapel became an important place for religious practices – in 1309 over 130 people were ordained there into a variety of orders.



Chapel of the Holy Trinity during the 1960s

A new chapel

Such was the prominence of this building that in 1524 Lord Sandys (Lord Chamberlain to Henry VIII) chose to add the Chapel of the Holy Trinity as a private burial place for the Sandys' family. The vaulted roof was richly decorated with painted religious scenes, and the nine Flemish stained glass windows were said to be as magnificent as those at Canterbury Cathedral.

Queen Mary's School

The Holy Ghost Chapel was supported by a voluntary Guild that undertook religious, educational and benevolent work for many years. Both chapels were badly damaged during the English Civil war, but in line with the Guild's interest in education, a school was built around the foundations of the Holy Ghost Chapel's tower. The school flourished but by 1831 only 12 boys were left.

Students played in the cemetery. Their mischief is said to have caused 'premature decay' to the chapels. In 1855, the school moved to another location. Over a hundred years later the Chapel of the Holy Trinity was extensively cleared, as were many headstones.



The Olde Chapel Times

Mrs Blunden buried alive!

A story to send a shiver down your spine...

When her husband was away, one night in 1674, Mrs Blunden of Basingstoke felt unwell. Her maid went to the apothecary and brought her some poppy-water (an opiate). Mrs Blunden drank a glass, then promptly fell into a deep sleep – from which she couldn't be roused. The apothecary pronounced her dead, and she was buried in the cemetery.

Three days later, school boys heard the words 'take me out of my grave' floating over the cemetery. Terrified, they ran for help, but the school master thought they were making it up. The next day they heard the voice again, and this time they were believed.

But by the time Mrs Blunden was exhumed it was too late. They found her body scratched and bleeding from her attempts to escape the coffin.

They reburied her, but made a grisly discovery the next day. Overnight, she had torn her coffin shroud. She had been buried alive not once, but twice!



Before the headstones were removed.

1. Headstone path

In the 1950s-60s headstones from around the chapels were removed and laid as a path. As you follow the path, read some of the names of the deceased and look out for carvings of skulls, a classic symbol of death.

1

3. School masters

Just like the board of head teachers at your school, this stone plaque names some of the Masters of the Holy Ghost School, dating back to 1639. The school building was built around the foundation of the Chapel of the Holy Ghost tower, part of which can still be seen today.



Holy Ghost school, mid 1840s - 1899

Did you know
In the mid 1600s, the school was used to house people sick with the plague.

2. Headless effigy

The gown and long sleeves worn by this civilian man show that he is probably an Alderman of the Guild of the Holy Ghost. The headless figure dates from the 17th Century.

2

Did you know
Pope Innocent III banned religious services for 6 years from 1208 and the people of Basingstoke were forced to bury in unconsecrated ground.



Can you imagine what it would have been like?

4. Ruins of the Chapel of the Holy Trinity

Built as a private burial place for the Sandys family in 1524, the ruins now hint at what was once a richly decorated chapel with large Flemish stained glass windows.

4

7. 16th Century tomb slabs

If you look carefully, you will see heraldic symbols on the tomb slabs reserved for the Sandys family. Most prominent is the halved Tudor rose with sun rays coming out. The ragged cross (Sandys' emblem) and the winged goat (part of the family's coat of arms) are less obvious.

6

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6. Memorial to Robert Cottle

Who was the man behind this simple monument? None other than Robert Cottle, who helped bring the post office to Basingstoke. He was also a stationer, painter and bookbinder and served five terms as Mayor.

Did you know
According to local legend, Cromwell's men used the lead from the chapel roof to make musket balls for the siege of Basing House.



12. Holy Trinity Tower

Inside the tower try to locate where the staircase led up to the roof loft. Fireplaces also indicate that there may also have been a few small rooms used by the Guild.

12

11. Winged goat

Look up to find a weathered symbol of a winged goat, which forms part of the Sandys' coat of arms. Further around the tower you spot the initials MS and WS for William Sandys and his wife Marjorie (Bray).

11

Did you know
Someone's watching you from above. Look up to find our last gargoyle.

10. The Bray badge

At the top of the tower you will find the symbol of a hemp bray, a tool used by weavers to crush hemp. The bray was also an important symbol that showed Sandys' connection to Sir Reginald Bray, principal minister to Henry VII for 18 years.

10

8. Carved stonework

Look along the wall and you will gain a sense of the richly carved decoration the chapel once displayed. Spot the moulded bases and octagonal pedestals that would have supported important religious statues.

8



Tudor rose with rays

Did you know
Chapel wardens used to make ales to raise money. They made big profits!



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Painting by Windover Workman 1884

9. Views to Basingstoke

Today's views are very different to what you would have seen. After the Chapel of the Holy Ghost was built and the burial ground consecrated, the unimpeded views between the town and chapel reminded local people about the Pope's dispute with the King and the governing power of the church.



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View over Basingstoke from Chapel Hill, 1840s



Did you know
Both chapels are Grade II listed and scheduled ancient monuments.

YOU ARE HERE



Badge of Sir Reginald Bray at Windsor Castle