

Top things to do!



Listen for the railway - it helped expand Basingstoke from a small market town into a thriving metropolis.



Admire the great achievements of ordinary local people.



Find the graves with several family members listed. Local trade flourished in Basingstoke and people worked family businesses for generations.



The empty cross on local brewer, John May's grave symbolises hope, reminding Christians of Christ's resurrection.

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 prominent local people 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 historic chapel ruins, discover cemetery stories through the trees and graves, or find out more about the Commonwealth War Graves at the Holy Ghost Cemetery?

The Holy Ghost Cemetery Basingstoke

Basingstoke Entrepreneurs

Discover some of our famous folk



the 
South View
conservation
group



Hampshire
County Council

Hampshire
Museums and
Galleries Trust



heritage
lottery fund
LOTTERY FUNDED



Image - Hampshire County Council Arts and Museums Service

A parade passes by Wallis and Steevens' workshop

Who are our famous folk?

Some of Basingstoke's famous past residents are buried in the Holy Ghost Cemetery. Discover local brewer, John May; steam roller manufacturer Arthur Wallis of Wallis and Steevens; and gun maker John Burgess Soper, amongst others.

Alternatively, you might like to visit Basingstoke's more widely recognised figures. Thomas Burberry of the global fashion house, Burberry and Alfred Milward, founder of Milwards Shoes, are also interred in the cemetery.



Image - Hampshire County Council Arts and Museums Service

Local brewer, John May's loaded dray

What did they do for Basingstoke?

Basingstoke is often mistaken as a new town, but what you see today is vastly different to its earliest days as a small market town. From its humble beginnings, some local residents saw opportunity in Basingstoke. With entrepreneurship and a vision for prosperity, these residents started businesses; expanding the town and helping it to grow into a centre for rural Hampshire. Some businesses became known internationally, whilst others operated more locally in England.

Thomas Burberry The start of a global fashion house

So how did a former draper's apprentice manage to invent a waterproof fabric that became synonymous with the Antarctic expeditions of Amundsen, Scott and Shackleton?



Replica of the gabardine clothing worn by the crew of Imperial Trans-Antarctic expedition 1914-1917

© National Maritime Museum Cornwall

Thomas Burberry moved to Basingstoke in 1856 and at 21 opened his own draper's shop. He noticed that the shepherds who came to town wore water-resistant garments; their clothing had become impregnated with oil from handling sheep. Learning from what he saw, in 1888 he patented Gabardine, a breathable wind and waterproof fabric that was dipped before and after it was woven.

So effective was this fabric in keeping people warm and dry, that explorers of the Arctic and South Pole used Burberry clothing and tents during their expeditions.

Thomas Burberry continued to make a name for himself. In 1901 he was commissioned to design a new uniform for British Army officers; it evolved into the WW1 trench coat. Burberry went on to open shops in London's Haymarket, New York and Paris.

Welcome

The last thing you'd expect to find in the heart of Basingstoke town is a quiet green space that invites you to meet some leading figures in modern history. Open to all, why not explore the cemetery and discover its rich tapestry of stories?

Why is there a cemetery on Chapel Hill?

The Holy Ghost Cemetery arose out of a fierce dispute between Pope Innocent III and King John. It led to 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 ground on Chapel Hill. When the Pope lifted the ban, the makeshift burial ground was consecrated and a chapel built. The cemetery was extended in 1858 to accommodate the growing town.



2. John Burgess Soper (1821 – 1895)

A gun maker, ironmonger and whitesmith, John Burgess Soper lived north of the cemetery. He supported the Salvation Army's attempts to rescue people from drink, but paid a price for his beliefs – rioters damaged his house in 1881 and protests were raised about his appointment as magistrate.

John Burgess Soper
A tall obelisk memorial. Obelisks became popular in the 1870s, when Cleopatra's needle was moved to London from Egypt.



1. John May (1837 – 1920)

Born into a family of brewers, John May was a great benefactor to Basingstoke. His generous donations include the construction of the Town Hall clock tower in 1887, the installation of the bells in All Saints' Church, and the establishment of the Bounty Road Cricket Club. He served as mayor six times and is buried with his brother Thomas.

John May
An upright headstone with three circular wreaths, symbolising eternity and achievement.



Did you know?
The different grave shapes, symbols and materials can reveal people's beliefs and how they lived?



2

Did you know?
Rioters attempted to set businessman, John Burgess Soper's house on fire in 1881?

1 **START**

FINISH

9. Robert Cottle (1788 – 1859)

Robert Cottle helped bring the post office to Basingstoke. He was also a stationer, printer and bookbinder and served five terms as Mayor.



Robert Cottle
A classic monument adorned simply with flowers.

Did you know?
Twenty five members of the Wallis family are buried in the Quaker section including eight children under 16.

8. Wallis and Steevens

Makers of road rollers, the Wallis family owned a brass and iron foundry and several barges on Basingstoke Canal. With the arrival of the railway in 1839, Richard Wallis changed his transport from the canal to a faster rail service. When Charles Steevens joined the firm in 1862, it operated as Wallis and Steevens until its closure in the 1960s.



Wallis Family
Low gravestone that reflects the Quaker belief in equality.

3. Mussellwhite Family

As a family of builders, the Mussellwhites are responsible for many of Basingstoke's buildings. Spanning four generations, the company thrived in the expanding town. You can still see one of their most impressive examples; the portico of the United Reformed Church in London Street.



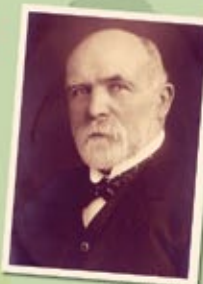
Mussellwhite Family
The size of this monument is a testament to the importance of the family.

3

Did you know?
The weather was so terrible at William Higg's funeral that the vicar struggled to be heard over the wind and rain?

4. William Higgs (1852 to 1936)

So esteemed was William Higgs that he worked as a J.P and the Town Council co-opted him as a charity trustee. In addition to his work as secretary and engineer of the gas works, Higgs served as honorary secretary of the Horticultural Society for eight years.



William Higgs
image: Sarah Faithful



William Higgs
A single curved headstone symbolising the human form.

4

Did you know?
Milwards Shoe Company used to x-ray customers' feet to check that their shoes fitted?

5. Smith and Forder Smith

Buried in the non-conformist section of the cemetery, the Smith and Forder Smith families were philanthropic millers and corn merchants.



Smith and Forder Smith
A simple unadorned stone obelisk.

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Thomas Burberry
A simple rustic stone marked with the name BURBERRY

7. Thomas Burberry (1835 – 1926)

Burberry's humble beginnings as a draper are a long way from the international fashion house that bears his name today. Remembered in the Holy Ghost Cemetery with a simple rustic grave marker, Burberry invented a waterproof fabric called Gabardine. His clothing was worn by prominent explorers, sportspeople and motorists, but was made particularly fashionable by Edward VII.

Alfred Milward
An upright headstone remembering Alfred and five other family members. Its shape symbolises the human head and shoulders.



6. Alfred Milward (1837 – 1926)

Are you old enough to remember Milward Shoes? Born in Henley on Thames, Alfred learnt his boot making skills in Canada and returned to England in 1857 to start his own business. Initially he sold shoes from a cart, visiting gentry and clergy in the countryside. Such was Alfred's success that by 1900 Milwards Shoes owned five shops and the company went on to celebrate its 125th anniversary in 1982. Clark's Shoes bought the business in 1994.