

Top things to do!



Follow the paths and observe the variety of burial patterns. Why are they different?



Explore the Quaker burial ground. Why does it look different?



Can you locate the levelled area where two Victorian mortuary chapels once stood?



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 interpreting the cemetery landscape can be found on our website at www.holyghostcemetery-basingstoke.org.uk
Feel free to take a look at our other cemetery trails. Why not explore the historic chapel ruins, discover the cemetery's stories through our Commonwealth War Graves and other remarkable monuments or find out more about famous Basingstoke citizens buried at Holy Ghost Cemetery?

The Holy Ghost Cemetery Basingstoke

Decoding the landscape

A trail of meaning and memories



the 
South View
conservation
group

Welcome

The last thing you'd expect to find in the heart of Basingstoke town is a quiet green space that invites you to learn about local life through a landscape of death. Open to all, this special cemetery holds a rich tapestry of stories for you to explore.

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.

A landscape of memories

From its earliest beginnings to the predominantly Victorian landscape we see today, the Holy Ghost Cemetery has witnessed over 800 years of history. The arrival of the railway to Basingstoke in the 1840s brought opportunity, wealth and a rapidly increasing population; the town almost tripled in size between 1851 and 1911.

Similarly, the cemetery expanded to accommodate the townspeople's needs. A cemetery lodge and two mortuary chapels were built in 1857-8, more land was made available, roads and paths were laid and the cemetery was enclosed by a fine brick and flint wall.

Today, the cemetery is managed for its biodiversity as much as for its historical value.



Dissenters' Chapel

Why are Victorian cemeteries designed the way they are?

Created out of a need to deal with unsanitary conditions in full churchyards, Victorian cemeteries offered attractive, airy spaces for the whole community. They were a new type of burial place.

As the Holy Ghost cemetery shows, the design allowed all denominations to be buried together. Although divided into religious sections and separated socially by grave prices, Victorian cemeteries were great levellers of society. All classes of people would meet regularly when they visited deceased family and friends. The Holy Ghost Cemetery remains a special place for the people of Basingstoke.

Evergreen trees provided structure, especially against the starkness of winter. The focus on weeping species with dark foliage offered comfort to mourners; these trees symbolised grief, weeping sorrow and eternal life. Chapels and other cemetery buildings were common, as were elaborate monuments. Carved with stylised flowers, religious symbols and professional associations, these monuments reflected the deceased's social standing. Such was the Victorian language of death that today we can interpret not just how someone died, but also how they lived.

1. Cemetery Lodge

Can you imagine living here? Built in 1857, it was the home of the cemetery superintendent. The lodge was also the administrative centre of the cemetery, where the superintendent controlled visitor access. According to J.C. Loudon (1783 – 1843), a good superintendent was a ‘man of intelligence and cultivated feelings, with a taste for and some knowledge of gardening’. Now a private residence, this cemetery lodge still exhibits its original iron gates and ornate bridge.

2. ‘Dead house’

This ‘dead house’ was probably used as a mortuary. The deceased would have been held here until their funeral took place in one of the cemetery’s chapels.

3. First cemetery

As you head up the driveway, you will see the ruined chapels of the Holy Ghost (c.1220) and Holy Trinity (1524) to your right. Both buildings are located in the middle of the original burial ground established in 1208. Known as the Liten, this area was once more like a churchyard in character with open areas, a few trees and views to Basingstoke.

4. Episcopalian chapel

Victorian cemetery chapels were built in prominent positions in order to be seen clearly. It is easy to appreciate why a chapel once stood in this area. The tall and ornate gothic style building was created to overlook the old market town of Basingstoke in the valley below. After the cemetery closed to new burials in 1912, the chapel fell into disuse and was demolished in the 1960s.

5. A landscape for reflection and mourning

The area in which you are now located is part of the 1858 extension of the cemetery. Laid out in the picturesque style that was popular at the time, the meandering paths and parkland character encouraged people to wander through the cemetery. Yew trees and other evergreen species symbolised eternal life and offered solace to mourners.

6. A new boundary

As you head along the path, you will have crossed the original boundary of the Victorian cemetery, once marked by an ornate brick wall. As a response to prevailing social and sanitary needs, cemetery enclosure became important to the Victorians. Gates were closed at night and high walls deterred theft and vandalism.

7. Orchards make way for 1880s expansion

The area along the boundary fence was once an orchard belonging to Basingstoke entrepreneur, John Burgess Soper. The grid-like pattern of burials before you hints at the pressure of an expanding market town. Although less picturesque, the rigid layout meant that graves could be found more easily and greater numbers of people accommodated.

8. Dissenters’ chapel

Originally located between the main path and boundary wall, the Dissenters’ chapel was another impressive building constructed in stone and flint chequers. The 1880s push by local authorities to open municipal cemeteries allowed different denominations to be buried in the same cemetery. Separated into different sections, each denomination had their own chapel. In Holy Ghost cemetery the Dissenters or Non-Conformists joined together to use the same building.

9. Quaker burial ground

Why does this area look different to other parts of the cemetery? Quakers believed strongly in the idea of equality, as shown through their burials; all graves are low to the ground and uniform in shape. The low railing and hedge that once enclosed this area are now gone, but the area retains its distinctive character.

10. Over 800 years of change

As you head towards the ruined chapels imagine this area full of burials. It was once covered in memorial stones, but in the 1960s these were removed and laid as a path. Look beneath your feet as you approach the chapel ruins and take time to think about the lives gone before.



Image: R. Lutener

1. Cemetery lodge, now a private residence.

Did you know?
Cricketer commentator, John Arlott OBE (1914 – 1991) was born in the cemetery lodge?



Image: R. Lutener

2. The original ‘dead house’, as marked on the 1873 ordnance survey map.



Image: D.Wren

10. Can you imagine the cemetery before the headstones were removed?

6. A new boundary. The original wall would have looked like this one (still visible in the east of the cemetery).



Image: R. Lutener

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4. Episcopalian mortuary chapel, built 1857-8 in the gothic style.

Image: Hampshire County Council Arts & Museums Service

4



10. Can you imagine using the footpath in 1772, when this drawing of the cemetery was created?

START

FINISH

5

2

3



Image: Jean Manco and the British Library Department of Documents

The cemetery on Chapel Hill has always held grand views down to Basingstoke (image commissioned in 1669 by Cosimo de Medici III, copied by T.H. Shepherd).

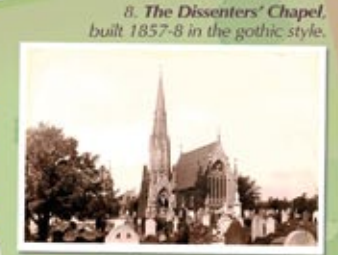


Image: Hampshire Library & Information Service

8. The Dissenters’ Chapel, built 1857-8 in the gothic style.



Image: R. Lutener

9. Quaker graves

9

Did you know?
The Cemetery Lodge is Grade II listed?

Did you know?
This is the oldest part of the cemetery, used by people for over 800 years?

Did you know?
Thomas Hardy gave Basingstoke the pseudonym, Stoke-Barehills when he wrote about the cemetery in his novel, Jude the Obscure?