

## Top things to do!



**Explore** the different memorials.  
Which one is your favourite?



**Discover** the symbols on the graves. What do they mean?



Can you work out why all of the Commonwealth War Graves are the same size and style?

## 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](http://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?

# Interesting Memorials

Exploring symbols of life and death

WALK  
5



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 steeped in symbolism. 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.

## Creative carvings and craftsmanship

The monuments in the Holy Ghost Cemetery reflect both the changing social attitudes towards death as well as developments in artistic style and theory over the centuries. Artistic values can be found in monument styles, materials used and the quality of the craftsmanship. We are lucky enough to have a wide range of monuments in the cemetery, from the very simple to the most elaborately carved.

In the 18th Century, headstones were commonly carved with symbolic reminders of death including winged skulls and cherubs, both of which can be seen in the Holy Ghost Cemetery. By the 19th Century, styles had become more varied with a range of headstone shapes, styles, ornaments and carvings, each with their own special meaning. Inscriptions were often laden with religious sentiment, but WWI and WWII saw many people become disillusioned with religion. Inscriptions became more secular and the carvings that once held huge symbolism largely disappeared in the 20th Century.



*Angels: Messenger of God*



*Chains: The links of love*



*Dove: The Holy Spirit*

## What do the symbols on graves mean?

Apart from the inscription, headstones often include some form of symbolism. They can be purely decorative or hold great meaning to the family. Motifs may show the occupation or origin of the deceased, their religious belief, as well as family sentiments and values.

Here are some of the most common symbols:

Dove: The Holy Spirit

Draped Urn: Death and mourning

Hands: Heavenly welcome

Chains: The links of love

Weeping Willow: Sorrow

Heart: Piety, love or charity

Angels: Messenger of God

Broken flower: An early death



*Skull: Death*

Can you imagine what symbols you might choose for your grave? What images would represent your life?



### 1. John May (1837-1920), Local brewer and Mayor

The May family tombs reflect the Classical features often found in Greek and Roman architecture. The classical styling echoes the belief that ancient Greece and the Roman Empire represented civilisations built upon reason and the laws of nature. The large Christian crosses on the graves affirm the family's religious faith, whilst the evergreen laurel wreaths symbolise their trust in the eternal spirit's victory over death.

### 2. John Burgess Soper (1820 - 1895), Ironmonger

Burgess Soper's memorial stands as a tall four-sided monument, which is said to resemble a petrified ray of the sun - an ancient Egyptian symbol of fertility. Obelisks became popular in the 1870s, when Cleopatra's needle was moved to London from Egypt.

### 3. John Kearsley (1822 - 1881), Cattle and manure merchant

The broken column that marks Kearsley's grave symbolises a life cut short. This is a strong comment from his family that they felt he died too soon. Look also for the Freemasonry symbol (square and compasses) on the pedestal. It shows Kearsley's loyalty to Freemasonry and reminds members to 'square our actions' and the compasses, 'to circumscribe and keep us within bounds with all mankind'.

### 4. The War Graves

You cannot help but notice that the Commonwealth war graves are all the same shape and size. In 1918, Sir Frederic Kenyon said, 'it was ordained that what was done for one should be done for all, and that all, whatever their military rank or position in civil life, should have equal treatment in their graves'. Look for the emblems that depict the men's nationality or which military unit they fought with.

### 5. Howat Family

What do you think the classical figure on the Howat family grave symbolises? It is nothing simpler than grief and mourning. The woman stands with her head tilted slightly downwards and a look of sorrow expresses her grief for the deceased. In her right hand she holds a shrouded cross (the shroud of Christ) and a key, which symbolises the soul entering heaven.

### 6. Thomas & Ann Dudney (c.1814 - 1879), Watercress merchants

One of the more elaborate headstones in the Holy Ghost Cemetery, this fine white marble monument is a testament to the Dudneys. The large anchor (a symbol of hope) is adorned with flowers, each flower steeped in meaning: roses (immortal love), marigold (affection), morning glory (resurrection) and lily of the valley (the second coming of Christ).

### 7. Thomas Burberry (1835 - 1926), Draper

Why does such a remarkably successful man have such a simple rustic granite grave marker? Perhaps the stone on the Burberry family plot symbolises stability and firmness. Look carefully to see the initials of family members on the kerbing around the grave plot.

### 8. Quakers

We believe that many of the deceased in this area are related by birth or marriage. You will notice that most of the gravestones are in the sarcophagus shape, low to the ground with little or no adornment. This reflects the Quaker philosophy of equality and plain living. In some other UK cemeteries, headstones were not to be used for the very practical reason that 'they are of no benefit to the deceased'.

### 9. William de Brayboeuf (d.1284), Lord of the Manor of Eastport

Brayboeuf's tomb would have been originally located inside the Holy Ghost Chapel in a canopied niche against the wall. Brayboeuf's wealth and importance are demonstrated by the long surcoat over chain mail, shield and hand grasping the hilt of a sword. His crossed legs are said to depict his devotion to Christ.

### 10. Headless Alderman's tomb

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 to the 17th Century.



*Dowson's scroll: the open section symbolises his earthly life; the unrolled portion, his heavenly life.*



*The cap on Mercer's grave shows that he served with the Machine Gun Corps in WWI.*



3. John Kearsley (1822 - 1881)



2. John Burgess Soper (1820 - 1895)



4. The War Graves



5. Howat Family



1. John May (1837-1920)



6. Thomas & Ann Dudney (c.1814 - 1879)



*Can you find the halved Tudor rose in the chapel? Look for the sun's rays.*



7. Thomas Burberry (1835 - 1926)



**Did you know**  
Headstone symbols can tell you not only how someone died, but also how they lived?

**Did you know**  
The interlaced Celtic knot means resurrection and life everlasting?

**Did you know**  
Many early graves were never marked with a headstone?

**Did you know**  
The type of stone used for a grave can reflect the social position and wealth of the deceased?

**Did you know**  
Many old headstones also include the name of the stonemason?

**Did you know**  
Some families built vaults in the cemetery, but their access stairs have since been filled in?

START

FINISH