

Havant Cemetery - New Lane/Eastern Road

The original St Faith's church was built about 1150 on what could have been the site of an earlier Saxon church and its adjoining graveyard provided Havant's main burial ground.

The parish records covering the period of 1653 to 1851 record that some 6,000 departed souls were buried there and from this figure it has been estimated that the graveyard could contain the remains of over 20,000 people. Most of these would not have been in individual coffins but be placed side by side or on top of each other.

As the graveyard became full it would have become necessary to bring in further earth that resulted in its original level being raised to what we see today. (The 1853 drawing of the crossroads shows the church wall to be much higher).

However by 1851 further burials became difficult without disturbing those already there or the tombstones that it had become the practice to erect. It was therefore decided that a new burial ground (cemetery) was required and this was achieved through the generosity of Sir George Staunton of Leigh Park who was '*Lord of the Manor of Havant and Flood*'.

The following record of its establishment is taken from Charles Longcroft's "*Topographical Account of the Hundred of Bosmere*" published in 1856:

The site was presented to the parish [of Havant] by Sir George Staunton, and the subsoil is flint gravel. The mortuary chapel and necessary walling have been erected by subscription. One statute acre has been inclosed for the members of the Church of England, and one quarter of a statute acre for the dissenters. The inclosure walls are of flint and brick. The entrance gateway and the chapel are built of flint, with Caen stone dressings. The style of the work is Gothic, and the chapel will accommodate about fifty persons. The windows are of stained glass, the floor of red and black tiles six inches square, and there is an outer iron gate which is closed during the day, the inner door being left open to secure proper ventilation. A small turret

and bell complete the whole, and the total sum expended did not exceed £416, of which the chapel cost £200.

The first Church of England burial was that of Merinda Fearn, aged 28, which took place on 29 August 1851. As by now everyone had a separate grave space the cemetery filled up much more quickly than the old graveyard and by 1895 it had become full so more land was required.

Fortunately alongside the cemetery was the Stone's allotment site. This was an area of land given by Sir George Staunton's successor at Leigh Park, William Stone, to be held in trust for the establishment of allotments for '*the labouring classes of the Parish of Havant*'.

On 25 March 1895 the Urban District Council of Havant entered into an agreement with the trustees to exchange 1 acre 3 roods 8 poles (0.73 hectare) of the allotment site for a similar area of land to the north to enable the cemetery to be extended. An enclosing wall that matched the original was constructed which was topped with metal railings. These railings were removed to help the 1939-45 war effort. Whether they did or not is debatable as I have seen it recorded that much of the metal that was collected was not suitable for further use and was dumped. Fortunately the fine entrance gates survived.

The first burial took place on 31 July 1896 and was that of Edward Till. Edward was a council road foreman and had died of cancer at the early age of 45. Like so many council workmen he was also a volunteer fireman so he was accorded the honour of having his body conveyed to the cemetery on the fire engine that was drawn by two black horses.

It can be seen from the 1897 Ordnance Survey map that a '*nonconformist*' mortuary chapel had been built but by 1940 the reference to it had been changed to '*general*' mortuary chapel. It was still in use in the early 1950's when the service for my grandmother was held there but at some time later it fell into disuse or disrepair and was demolished. It is not known when the original chapel was demolished.

Laurie Booth has, by means of '*dowsing*', located

the foundations of both of these chapels. In addition he has found clear evidence of a third, previously unknown chapel to the south of the second chapel. This chapel was smaller than the other two but appears to have had an altar and an aisle with three pews on either side. Two footpaths lead off from its west door, the one going towards Leigh Park and the other towards Havant.

This 'new' cemetery, which contains approximately 6,000 burials, provided sufficient space until about 1976 when it was closed for new burials. However burials are still taking place in those graves where there is an adequate depth and with the permission of the grave owner. There are about 600 'common', that is 'unpurchased', graves that could be reused in the future if legislation permits.

Ralph Cousins, Chairman of "Friends of Havant Borough Council Cemeteries"

