

Monumental Inscriptions

In

Purley on Thames Berkshire

Part 6

Burials and Cremations at
Goosecroft

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The Goosecroft Burial Ground

By the mid 1990s the new churchyard was getting full and attempts were made to purchase land in the Marina area to extend the old churchyard southwards. This was resisted vigorously by a large number of parishioners but it was the Environment Agency who decreed that the site was too close to the River Thames and the decaying bodies were likely to pollute the river water.

The 1892 Parishes Act which had separated out local powers into those to be administered by the Church and those to be administered by the newly created Civil Parish Councils. Burials were made a service to be provided by Civil Parishes although churches could continue to bury until they became full, at which time they could apply for a closure order and then the responsibility fell to the Civil Parish.

In Purley's case the church has been loth to seek such an order so the churchyard has remained open although it is used nowadays only for second burials in existing plots. The Parish Council were thus faced with a problem and attempted to purchase land adjacent to their existing recreation land at Goosecroft.

Negotiations were successful but the Chairman of the Parish Council flatly refused to sanction a payment higher than 'agricultural value' whereas Sulham Estate wanted a bit more. The matter was finally resolved by a parishioner who wished to ensure she could be buried in the parish and donated the £000 needed to make up the difference. Jeanette Jones was a member of Project Purley but had been diagnosed with cancer. However when she died she had the very last burial plot in the New Churchyard which The Revd David Evans had discovered had been allocated but never used.

Two acres of land were purchased to the west of the Barn and it was decided to split it into two areas, one to be used for immediate burials and the other to be used for informal recreation until it was needed, estimated as in around 2060.

The burial area was divided into six zones labelled A to F. Zone A is used for the interment of cremation remains and zone B for burials. Zones C and D were reserved for future burials. Zone E which is in the west end of zone B was designated for the burial of children but has never been used for that purpose. Zone F which is to the west of Zone D was left unconsecrated for burials of Muslims whose graves need to be oriented towards Mecca. That zone 2 has not yet been used.

A small car park was built on the southern part of the land which gave access to the recreation area and was funded by Sports England. A wall was built along the southern boundary of the burial area with a central gate and railings above. Yew was planted in front of the wall to grow into a hedge and a small pergola was constructed above the entrance. The area was divided by two paths at right angles which defined the zones and two small areas were reserved either side of the entrance, one to facilitate storage and one as a quiet area.

The burial ground was designated as a lawn cemetery and so only a small plinth to support a headstone is allowed. About five years are allowed for subsidence owing to settling before the plot is grassed over.

The burial ground was opened by the Right Reverend Dominic, Bishop of Reading and the majority consecrated by him on 1999.

The Registers are maintained by the Parish Clerk.

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