

## A Brief History Tour of Spital Cemetery in 10 Stops.

Enter the cemetery by the Bottom Entrance on Hady Hill.

(1) Notice the gatepiers, the stone arch, the high stone wall that runs alongside Hady Hill and the Lodge House. These were built in 1857 and behind them a Garden Cemetery was laid out, the first public cemetery in Chesterfield. The old places for burials around St Mary and All Saints, Elder Yard Unitarian Chapel and the now demolished Friends (Quaker) Meeting House were full and Chesterfield and districts around needed a new burial ground for everyone in consecrated (for Church of England burials) and unconsecrated (or the burials of Quakers, Unitarians, Methodists, and others) ground and land for Roman Catholic burials. The site they chose was at Spital a district outside the boundary of Chesterfield which had got its name because there had been a leper hospital at the bottom of Hady Hill opposite the cemetery in the late 12th early 13th century.

(2) You will see the stone which marks the place where in 2001 the remains of what is believed to be a priest from the hospital were reinterred. The skeleton had been found during building work in a house nearby.

(3) Take the road uphill along Pinewood Walk. F. C. Gillet, a local mining engineer, won the competition to design the cemetery and will have followed the fashion of the times and laid it out with winding paths and trees, a beautiful place (like Eden) so that the mourners coming to visit their departed relatives would feel comforted. You will start to notice the headstones are becoming more elaborate; there are a lot of flower carvings and angels as well as crosses and urns, all with symbolic meaning that the Victorians would have understood well. Many of the names on these headstones and monuments I'm sure will not be familiar to you, but some are still household names in Chesterfield.

(4) On the right, set in a large plot, is the memorial to many members of the Eyre family. Isaac Eyre started the family furniture business in 1875 and Eyres is still doing business in Chesterfield. When the cemetery opened in 1857 Chesterfield was a busy, thriving, market town and many of the people buried in the cemetery were shopkeepers, like Issac. You will also see his son Noel is mentioned on the memorial. Noel lost his life on the Somme in 1918 and like other war dead is only remembered on the family grave but is buried where he fell. Continue up Pinewood Walk and it takes you directly to the mortuary chapels

(5) There are two chapels, the one with the tower was for Anglican burials and the one on the north side was for Nonconformists our Dissenters. They are conjoined (under the same roof) but there is no connection between the two buildings inside. Architects George Bidlake and Henry Lovatt from Wolverhampton won the competition to design the chapels and the other built features in the cemetery. At some time between 1960 and 1980 the chapels stopped being used for burial services and have since suffered considerable neglect. However, in 1977, Historic England gave the buildings a Grade 11 listing which should have afforded them some protection from change and deterioration but sadly has not done, especially in the case of the chapels. Stand at the front of the Anglican Chapel (under the squat broach spire) and face west. On your left on the ground between a massive ash tree which must be 160 years old, severely pruned a few years ago, and a Gothic Spire Monument with a cross on the top to the Marsden family is a ledger, a stone lying flat on the ground, partially buried, which is the very first stone that was laid in the cemetery.

(6) 23 days after the cemetery and chapels were opened, John Holland, a young surgeon who was on the Burial Board died. On the bottom right corner of the stone there is the name of the first stone carver who worked in the cemetery, W. Wright. You may see other stones 'signed' by him or his son J.T. Wright.

(7) From the front of the chapels you are in a perfect position to see a lot of the graves laid out during the Victorian period and early c20. There are over 26K burials in Spital Cemetery so only a fraction are in marked graves as only the well off could afford to erect stones and you had to be very well off to erect memorials like the tomb to T. Carrington, partner in the Wingerworth Iron Works, immediately on your right as you walk onto Dissenters' Terrace. When Spital Cemetery opened in 1857, the Midland Railway had been in operation just 17 years and Chesterfield was growing into an important industrial centre. In 1892 the thriving market town expanded and now covered areas where there was industry and the burials around here reflect the mix that Chesterfield had become. You will see names that will be familiar to you if you know about the recent history of Chesterfield: J. K. Swallow (founder of Swallows Department Store), S. E. Short (Borough auditor and Mayor), W. H. Edmunds (Derbyshire Times owner and Mayor), T. P. Wood (Spirit Merchant and Mayor), C. Nadin (photographer), W. Rooth (founder of Allen and Ore Timber Merchants), J. B. Robinson (founder of the Brampton packaging firm), J. Haslam and W. E. Harvey (both MPs and founders of the Derbyshire Miners Association), F. Swanwick (Stephenson's Chief Engineer) and his daughter Mary (Education) and E. Eastwood (founder of Eastwood Wagon Works) and his niece Blanche who worked tirelessly on committees of welfare and as a magistrate and benefactor. There are of course many who have not made it into the history books, like that first stone carver, William Wright (on the east side of Dissenters' Terrace, before you reach the impressive monument to the Eastwood family) and on the west side of Dissenters' Terrace, behind a large lime tree is the beautiful monument to his widow Amy, also a stone mason. I've already mentioned the inscription to Noel Eyre but, as you walk about the cemetery, you will see many graves that we have marked with a red ribbon or wooden poppy crosses to recognise the war dead in the main from WW1 and WW2. There are many others who fought and some lost their lives in other conflicts. Major Hart was in the Peninsular War.

(8) In the segment between Chapel Hill and The Crescent and uphill from Yew Tree Passage you will find a selection of graves to the war dead. Charles Miles fought in the Boer War and in WW1 where he was wounded and returned to this country but died 11 months later. He was awarded the second highest honour for bravery, the Distinguished Conduct Medal. You will find others here, remembered only on a gravestone in Spital, such as Oliver Byard who fell in action at Dickebusch June 1917 (32 years) but he lies in Belgium. We also have a grave to a Victoria Cross holder.

(9) To find this go east from the chapels along Lime Avenue, but when you come to the avenue of lime trees turn right. This was a path but it is now no longer marked. Turn left when you get to the end of the lime trees and head for the second pine tree, below a line of some relatively recent graves. Under the pine, on its own, you will find the headstone to William Coffey, veteran of the Crimea and the Indian Mutiny. He was an early recipient of the VC. Nearby, in an unmarked grave is a person you will most likely not have heard of but the Borough perhaps owe its excellent library service to Dennis Gorman who worked tirelessly with little money to start up this service in 1879. Retrace your steps back onto Lime Avenue and head for the Top Entrance onto Hady Hill. Before you get to the entrance turn left onto Elm Way.

(10) Along this route back downhill, parallel to Hady Hill, you will find a wonderful collection of trees. This is the best place now, as all the trees have grown since the cemetery was founded, to get a good view of the centre of town and the twisted spire which reinforced that strong connection between the cemetery and St Mary and All Saints. There are pines and limes you have seen before but also a Turkey Oak, Silver Birch, European Larch, Willow Leaf Pear, Beech, Elm, Holly, Bird Cherry, Elder and a Variegated Sycamore. Some will have been from the original planting 160 years ago and are now magnificent mature specimens. This walk takes you back to the Bottom Entrance and St Leonard's Well. It is believed there was a well here and the 13th century leper hospital was dedicated to God in honour of St. Leonard, the patron of prisoners and sick people. A ten minute walk from here and you are at Chesterfield Railway Station (and St Pancras 1 hour 40 minutes on from there) or in 15 minutes you can walk into the centre of Chesterfield, the market square or St Mary and All Saints.

Thank you for coming to visit Spital Cemetery. Please spread the word and look for us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofSpitalCemetery> Donations to support the work of the Friends of Spital Cemetery (we are all volunteers) can be made online by visiting our website <http://friendsofspitalcemetery.co.uk> and/or become a member, follow what we are doing and support us in that way.

Over the years perhaps past gardeners will have named the paths in the cemetery to help identify where they were working but none of these names are still in use, so, in order to make it easier to follow our trails, the Friends have given the paths names.

key to the initials

EE/BE E. & B. Eastwood

WW W. Wright

TC T. Carrington

FS/MS F. & M. Swanwick

AW A. Wright

JH/WEH J. Haslam and W.E. Harvey

JBR J. B. Robinson

CM C. Miles

OB O. Byard

WHE W. H. Edmunds

JKS J. K. Swallow

SES S. E. Short

CN C. Nadin

TPW T. P. Wood

WR W. Rooth

JM J. Marsden

FHH F.H. Hart

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Hady Hill  
Chesterfield  
S41 0EZ

