

An introduction to Brandwood End Cemetery.

1. FRIENDS OF BRANDWOOD END NOTICE BOARD - MAIN ENTRANCE



Founded in 2005 the Friends of Brandwood End Cemetery (FBEC) are a Registered Charity Heritage Lottery funded organisation with a growing membership, a strong following on Facebook and a regularly refreshed Web site. We continue to work with Birmingham City Council (as owners of the Cemetery) to make the chapels a 'managed ruin' and to promote for the benefit of the local community and others the restoration, conservation and respectful enjoyment of Brandwood End Cemetery's very special beautiful green space in an increasingly busy urban area. **Our recently refurbished main entrance notice board**, funded in 2020 by a generous donation from one of our members, is regularly updated and gives information on events and activities.

2. LODGE (Formerly used as offices)

The Red Brick and Terracotta Jacobean style Lodge designed by Birmingham architect, John Boulton Brewin Holmes was originally built as the Cemetery Superintendent's office and family home in 1897. A flood in December 2010 due to burst pipes overnight caused severe internal damage and in 2012 the Bereavements Department Office (with the Cemetery Records) moved to new built accommodation at Kings Norton Cemetery. FBEC raised £76,000 through the LIB programme for refurbishment of the interior for use as a community asset and have occasional access for special events. In 2020 following ongoing valley and leaking tile issues the City Council undertook major roof and gutter repairs including extensive ceiling internal redecoration.



3. DIAMOND WOOD (Adjacent to our notice board)

This woodland setting, edged by cremated remains, was created on 14th November 2012, in celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth 11. Cemetery Staff and BCC Woodland Management team were joined by FBEC volunteers and children from St. Alban's RC Primary School to plant 23 native trees. In December 2015 to mark their 10th Anniversary FBEC volunteers planted a Golden Alder here.



4. HEDGEHOG PROJECT BOARD (Facing the Lodge)



Between September 2016 and July 2017 FBEC ran a very successful **Help for Hedgehogs Project**. In association with the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust, the Park Ranger Service, our two local schools (Woodthorpe and St. Albans) and a Community Film Maker we improved habitat and raised awareness of the needs of the endangered hedgehog. FBEC produced and installed this Interpretation Board to encourage visitors to explore the Cemetery and consider Hedgehog needs in their own gardens.

TAKE A STROLL ALONG THE DRIVE TOWARDS THE CHAPELS

5. ANGELS OF ALL SHAPES AND SIZES – Section A1 C/E

(To your right as you approach the chapels) While Brandwood End's late Victorian Cemetery was a cemetery for everyone, the most impressive funerary monuments are those grouped around the mortuary chapels. Here the local 'great and the good' purchased their grave plots. These illustrate a range of early twentieth century styles including some beautiful Edwardian Italian marble angels.



Guardian angels are almost always depicted pointing towards heaven; a gesture that suggests rejoicing while gazing down at the deceased's grave. Angels that are standing on rocks are usually depicted as offering comfort to the bereaved or placing flowers on the grave site of the deceased (to signify mourning). An angel ascending through clouds represents spiritual guidance during the soul's flight to heaven.

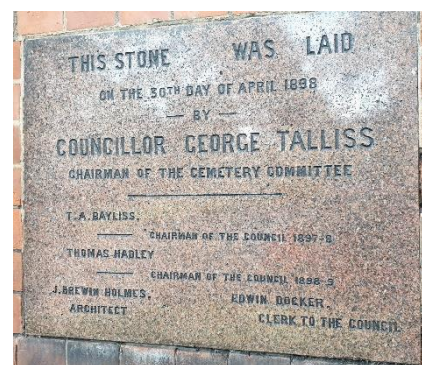
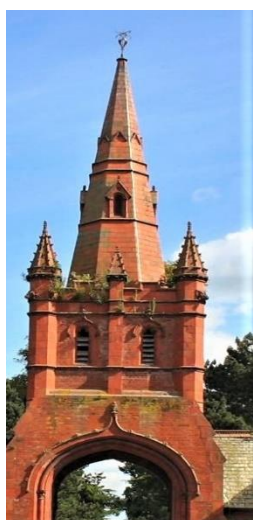
6. OUR MAGNIFICENT TWIN GRADE 2 LISTED MORTUARY CHAPELS

A Grade 2 listed building is defined as a UK building or structure that is "of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve it".

(Non-Conformist to the East Anglican to the West).

Designed by local Moseley architect John Boulton Brewin Holmes and with the £5,900 contract to build them awarded to Moseley builder Edward J Charles in July 1897, Brandwood End's semi-detached twin mortuary chapels stand at the highest point in the cemetery. They are the only mortuary chapels in Birmingham to include terracotta in their construction. They are joined by a carriage entrance archway (a porte-cochere) and were built to provide a religious final farewell for those about to be interred. **More details can be found on the 2019 Bereavements interpretation board for which FBEC were invited to provide the content.**

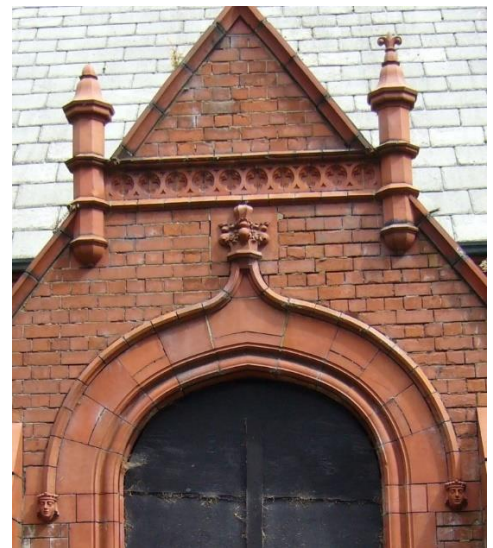
The pink granite foundation stone on the front of the Church of England Chapel (right) was laid on the 30th April 1898. A time capsule was incorporated behind it containing a print of the design, a seal of Kings Norton District Council and a copy of the Birmingham Weekly News. The Chapel work was completed early in 1899 and the Cemetery was formally opened on 13th April 1899 by the Chairman of the Kings Norton Parish Council Local Cemeteries Committee. To commemorate the 120th anniversary of the Cemetery's opening in October 2019, **Stoneset Memorial Masons** restored the foundation stone on behalf of FBEC.



In December 1898 a sum of £8 was paid for the design of the weather vane and the chapels were fitted with lightning conductors. The conductors have been recently removed, along with other lead items following attempted thefts. Such thefts have plagued other cemeteries and churches in the area.



7. THE MORTUARY CHAPELS HAVE SOME BEAUTIFUL TERRACOTTA DETAILS



CONTINUE THE WALK BEHIND THE CHAPELS ALONG THE MAIN DRIVE





8. ASHES PLOTS AND SECTION MARKERS (corner of Drive)

Since 2004 when the Cemetery reached burial capacity (over 86,000 graves) it has been closed to burials unless where possible in existing family plots. Ashes burial sites are available and these 2015 Lap Top Ashes Plots on the left of the main drive are an example.

On 26th October 2006 FBEC, with Wates Construction supplying the labour, installed the first of 50 black granite Section plaques with silver lettering (two per section) to enable visitors to more easily find their way and greatly improve the impact of the general appearance of the Cemetery. This project was generously supported by the Midlands Co-operative Funeral Service and a successful bid for Neighbourhood Renewal Funding from the Community Trust allocation.



9. CROSS OF SACRIFICE AND SCREEN WALLS.

Crosses of Sacrifice are present in Commonwealth War Cemeteries that contain 40 or more graves. Brandwood End Cemetery's magnificent Cross was installed in its key position on the main driveway by the City of Birmingham and is maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. At 3658 mm high and 1524 mm wide it is constructed in white Stancliffe sandstone to a 1918 design by Sir Reginald Blomfield. It was dedicated by Birmingham's Assistant Bishop Hamilton Baynes on Sunday 20th July 1930 in the presence of the Lord Mayor Alderman M Lancaster.



Either side of the Cross are **Screen Walls** (planted by FBEC with daffodils at their base) inscribed with names of The Fallen who are buried in the Cemetery in the nearby lawn areas but do not have marked graves.

REMEMBRANCE AND 'A POPPY FOR EVERY GRAVE'

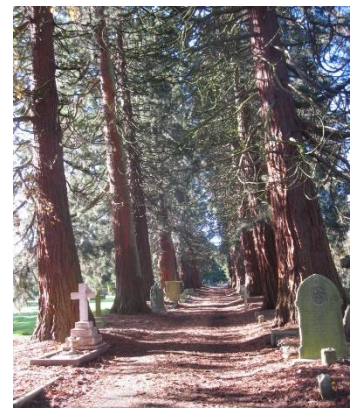


Since their founding in 2005, the Cross has been the focal point of FBEC's well attended Annual November Remembrance Day Service. Each year two weeks prior to the November Act of Remembrance, FBEC visit and mark with a Royal British Legion Poppy Cross, all Brandwood's known individual War Graves (from all conflicts) scattered throughout the Cemetery, totaling over 350 at this time.

10. WELLINGTONIA AVENUE

Either side of the Cross of Sacrifice is one of the finest avenues of Redwoods in the area. They stand over 30 meters tall and are 5 metres wide. Wellingtonia date back 240 million years and were around before flowers, birds and spiders. They recycle more CO₂ than any other tree. FBEC are very proud of them.

CONTINUE, PAST THE REMEMBRANCE PLAQUE WALL, TO THE AREA OF LAWN ON BOTH SIDES OF THE DRIVE



11. PUBLIC GRAVE MARKING

Many of the cemetery visitors do not realise that these grassed areas contain many hundreds of graves. A very generous donation from Alexander Patrick and the Trustees of the Patrick Trust enabled FBEC to install two boulders to mark two of the lawned public grave burial areas on either side of the Main Drive in 2009.



The bodies of the soldiers listed on the screen walls and many other remains are buried beneath this grassy area. It is also the resting place of many stillborn babies from local hospitals and nursing homes. Their mothers have only recently been able to access information to locate their children's graves.

12. 'OAK TREE ISLAND' WW1 MEMORIALS

The Oak Tree, a well-loved cemetery feature on the main drive, succumbed to white rot and had to be felled 2014. In its place Bereavements developed the site as a memorial area to mark the 100th anniversary of WW1 and added an interpretation board 'Birmingham's War Effort'. A bench memorial to the Fallen of the 1916 Battle of the Somme has been moved here from the main drive.



WALK TOWARDS THE BROAD LANE GATE AND YOU WILL SEE A HEDGED AREA TO YOUR LEFT WITH BRICK GATE PILLARS.

13. CIVILIAN GARDEN – Section 33 (WROUGHT IRON ENTRY GATE)



The 1952 Civilian Garden of Remembrance was created by the local authority to honour civilians who died in the Blitz in WW2. The Book of Remembrance is held at the Bereavement Service office at Kings Norton.



FBEC rescued this garden in 2006 and with Heritage Lottery funding and assistance from the Birmingham Air Raids Remembrance Association renovated and re-dedicated it in 2007. In 2011, 250 hawthorn bushes were planted as part of a Heritage Lottery Environmental Project by pupils from St. Alban's Catholic Primary School. In 2017 FEBC totally refurbished and refreshed the Garden and we continue to maintain it to the present day and welcome volunteer help.

IF YOU WALK STRAIGHT THROUGH THE CIVILIAN GARDEN YOU WILL SEE A SMALL MEMORIAL HEDGED AREA IN FRONT OF YOU

14. COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION. (CWGC)

Lawn Graves in Section 33 and throughout the Cemetery

Adjacent to the Civilian Garden there is a separate WW2 CWGC 8-grave lawn area that includes the graves of two Polish aircrew. We have no idea why these 8 stand alone ! In 2011 the Friends and pupils from St. Albans RC School planted the low Hawthorne hedge that surrounds it.



Brandwood End Cemetery currently has 214 graves maintained directly by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission including the graves of 2 Poles, 3 Australians and 2 Canadians. There are burials from WW1, amongst whom were many local young men from the Royal Warwickshire Regiment who would have signed up for the 'Birmingham Pals' battalions. Those who died in WW2 include a WAAF servicewoman.

(Lt.) Private William Shakespeare

(Rt.) Corporal Mary Emily Stevens



We have over 350 casualties of conflicts, service personnel & civilians, buried or remembered in this cemetery. FBEC mark each one annually in November with a Poppy Cross. We welcome volunteer help with this project.

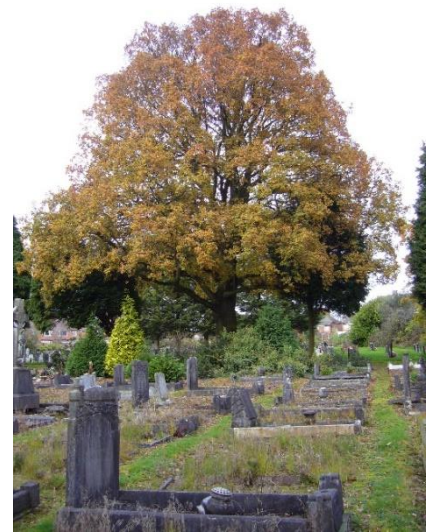
PLEASE NOW RETRACE YOUR STEPS BACK ALONG THE MAIN DRIVE



15. THE CEMETERY'S LANDSCAPE AND ITS TREES

The landscape was a very important aspect in the design of a Victorian cemetery – a place to be visited and enjoyed, somewhere to come and walk dressed in 'Sunday Best' amongst beautifully planned and landscaped grounds.

Brandwood End has over 1750 trees and was planted with a mixture of evergreen and deciduous trees which were popular in that period. The dark green foliage was deliberately planted to present a striking contrast to the red terracotta chapels. Evergreens are concentrated within the original area of farmland obtained in 1895, and consist of avenues of Scots pines, Cypress trees and Wellingtonia (Redwood). The deciduous planting included Horse-Chestnut, Beech, Hornbeam and Poplar, which were added to the existing Oak trees.



FBEC have organised replacement tree planting events from 2012 to the present day involving St. Albans Catholic Primary School pupils. We produced a Cemetery Tree Walk leaflet and are now working on an exciting new project to create an updated digitalized version.



Much of our Tree planting work in the cemetery has been supported by **Birmingham Trees for Life** as part of their schools engagement work. (btfl.org.uk)



16. A MOVING HEAD STONE

Section B24 Grave No. 943 (left side facing the Chapels -15 paces in a straight line from the Birmingham's War Effort Board).

Sidney Charles Tropman of Catherine de Barnes, Solihull.

In the early hours of 28 July 1942 a severe bombing raid on the west and south of the city resulted in the destruction of part of the Docker's paint factory on Rotton Park Street. Four National Fire Service firefighters were killed when a wall collapsed on them as they were working in the ruins of the bombed works. The factory was essential to the War

effort as it was a key manufacturer of camouflage paint.

17. BRANDWOOD END'S FIRST GRAVE

Section C1 C/E Grave No. 1 (behind the Screen Wall – left as you face the Chapels)

Brandwood End Cemetery's first burial took place on the 15th April 1899, two days after it was officially opened. Charles Downes was the 5 year old son of Ada Louisa (nee McKenzie) and Walter William Downes, a Carpenter. He died, from Diphtheria, at 47 Runcorn Road, Balsall Heath on Tuesday 11th April 1899. The minister who conducted the burial service was Revd Charles William Barnard, Vicar of St. Nicolas' Kings Norton (1893-1909) in whose parish the Cemetery then lay.

To mark the 120th anniversaries of both the opening of the Cemetery and of its first burial, on the 15th April 2019 FBEC arranged for Charles' unmarked grave to be identified by a simple wooden stake in the communal grave area adjacent to the Cross of Sacrifice and close to the Redwood Avenue. A floral tribute was also placed on it, and in October 2020 the Bereavements Department arranged for a more permanent marker to be put in place.



OUR WALK ENDS HERE – RETRACE YOUR STEPS AND CONTINUE BACK TO THE LODGE. THANK YOU FOR VISITING BRANDWOOD END CEMETERY. PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING THE FRIENDS- INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON OUR NOTICE BOARD & WEB SITE www.fbec.org.uk



If you would like to repeat this walk or share it with a friend it will be available as a downloadable PDF on our above web site.