St John the Baptist, Moordown, Bournemouth

Graveyard Guide Project

This project has been prepared by volunteers from the Moordown Local History Society and is based on a document, referred to as the Main Index authored by Church official David Godden. Without this document progress would have been impossible as it contains detailed descriptions of the graves no longer discernible to the human eye. As the project progressed further information was also obtained from a 2004 survey done by the Dorset Family History Society for churches in Bournemouth

The initial concept from Roger Shore was to compile an online collection of photographs of each grave accompanied by a list of those buried within it

My brief was to simply to ensure that there was photograph of every grave and match the data from the main Index to each photograph. This turned out to be less simple than I had imagined. I soon found I needed some common ground rules which were

1. Focus on the headstone. This means that smaller headstones fill the same size picture as larger headstones and kerbs on larger graves may cropped out

2. Straighten the image as much as possible, this means that the horizon is often badly askew! Headstones leaning forward or backward have not been digitally corrected and may look a little odd. These rules should be borne in mind when using a photo to find a grave

3. Respect the graves. My wife and I were always extremely aware of where we stood to take pictures. We touched as little as possible, removing only litter and moving grass or branches to aid in identification of a grave or plaque. This does mean that many grave pictures have dead flowers, leaves and broken or missing masonry in the image – no disrespect is intended, it is purely as seen

We have ended up with almost 3000 photographs for 950 graves with about 2000 individual sets of data (about 30Gb of data) with more to come

To make this huge pile of data as accessible as possible all the surnames are listed alphabetically together with their relevant photos and data because nearly all enquiries would start with a surname.

Photos and data from the Main Index has been split into twenty-three folders. Each folder contains pictures of the graves with a surname from one or several letters of the alphabet i.e. A or W-Z. It is in .pdf format and fully searchable. Beneath the picture of each grave is a full name, date of birth, death and age (where known) for each person with that surname in that grave. Further information is listed in brackets (kinship, titles, war graves etc) but not the grave inscriptions which are available from the Main Index. Assumed or uncertain text is given in red

At the foot of each box there is a reference taken from the Main Index to assist in finding the grave. This consists of a *ROW number* then a *GRAVE number* so 12/345 will be grave number 345 in row 12. There is a sketch plan on the website to assist searchers

The finished Project contains

1. A fully searchable (text only) document (Main Index) containing all the information we have been able to find to date on graves and memorials (both lost and found) within the churchyard

2. A set of alphabetically arranged folders containing one or more pictures of each grave and basic details of those within that grave with that surname

3. A spreadsheet (Master Data)using data taken from the source which was used to determine statistics such as; the oldest and youngest burials, average ages, most popular names and expanded details of the war graves within the cemetery. This will also simplify tracing family names for genealogical purposes

4. A site map to assist searches

When searching a surname we would advise consultation of the Main Index mentioned above to confirm if other surnames are interred in a grave you are interested in i.e. married sisters will probably not have used their maiden name

Where graves and especially kerbsets without headstones have become worn or overgrown we may be able to offer additional photographs not held online due to space restrictions. These and all the photos online can be made available in high resolution data format on request to the website

Some of the graves have disappeared and are referred to in the folders as "Lost".

Some forty graves have no no surname and are classified as "Unknown" of which some do have forenames. Some of these graves are still looked after – Can you help identify them?

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