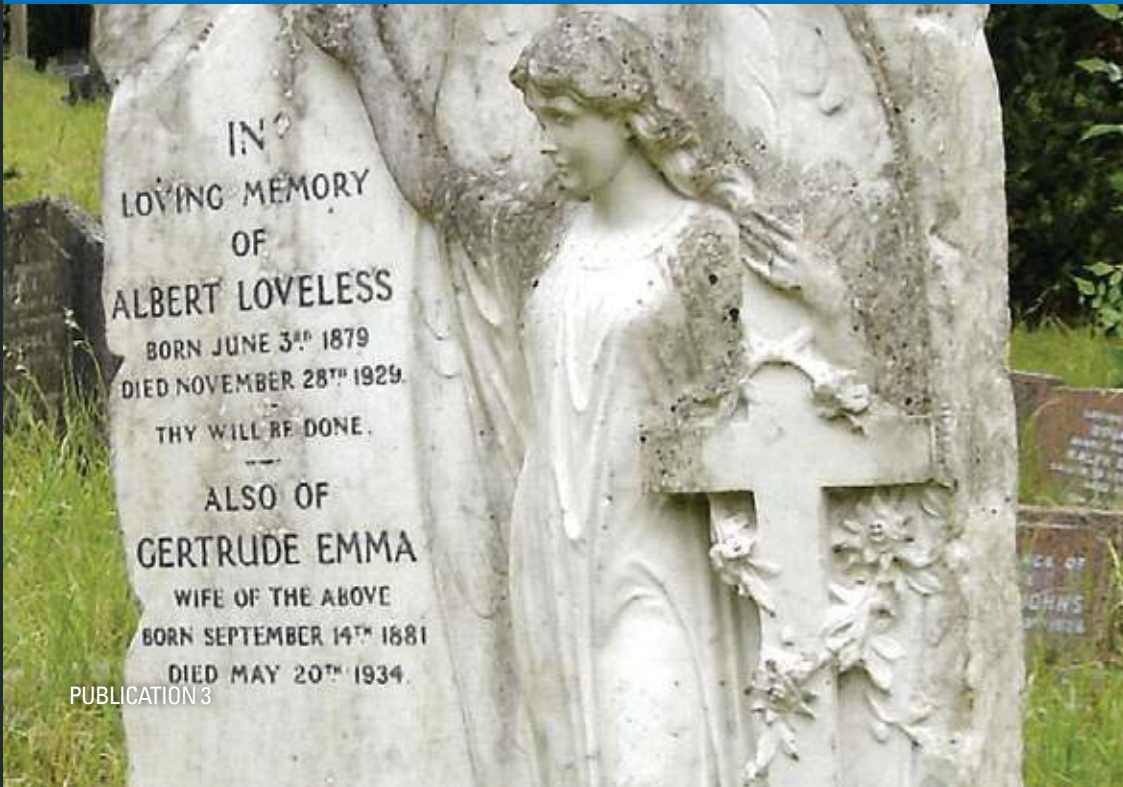




Memorial Symbolism

The Rectory Lane Cemetery Project

IN
LOVING MEMORY
OF
ALBERT LOVELESS
BORN JUNE 3RD 1879
DIED NOVEMBER 28TH 1929
THY WILL BE DONE.
—
ALSO OF
GERTRUDE EMMA
WIFE OF THE ABOVE
BORN SEPTEMBER 14TH 1881
DIED MAY 20TH 1934.





Introduction to symbolism on memorial stones

Memorial stones are fascinating to read – linking us to the person whose life we are remembering in words and images.

The Victorians shaped funerals in England and it is strongly echoed today in our culture. Of course the symbols used on gravestones can be fairly widely interpreted and their use throughout the world can vary slightly – but they are, nevertheless, telling a story of the life of the person interred in the grave.

Today, stones incorporate far less imagery and reflect social changes including the changing influence of the Church in society over the last two centuries.

Rectory Lane Cemetery also reflects the old truth that many want their loved one to have a ‘good view’ or a ‘nice quiet spot’ or conversely unmarked graves reflect the choice of some who do not want anyone to come and cry at a gravestone – but to remember them how they were in life.

As you take in the peace and quiet of the cemetery we hope this brief guide may help you to understand or enquire about the people of Berkhamsted resting here.



Anchors



Anchors feature regularly on headstones and are often chosen as a Masonic symbol of well-grounded hope. They are also used for members of the naval forces. There is a memorial stone to William Emund Costin with a prominent anchor displayed. He was not a seaman as such but built the highly successful Berkhamsted barges – as a boat

builder on the Grand Union Canal for many years.

There are many other symbols regularly used and most images can easily be researched on the internet.

I do hope this information widens your experience of this beautiful and tranquil area and, the next time you visit a churchyard or a cemetery, it helps you to understand the people whose lives are remembered there.

Malcolm Jones & Metcalfe

Funeral Directors and Memorial Consultants

Angels



Angels intercede between God and Man and act as guides for the soul. An angel offering their open hand downwards or upwards is seeking God's compassion and mercy on the soul.

An angel pointing a finger upwards is telling us that the soul has most definitely gone up to heaven. This usually indicates

that the soul is that of someone ordained (and certainly the case if a saint).

There is an example of an angel flying holding what appears to be a box – which again represents the soul being taken to heaven.

Styles

The styles have changed over the centuries and Rectory Lane Cemetery reflects some of the styles from 1842 when the land was consecrated for burials up until 1945. These include Arts and Crafts c.1860 – 1910, Art Nouveau c. 1890 – 1910 and Art Deco c.1920 – 1950.

In family graves it may not have been until the second or third interment that a stone was erected – which could be decades later as it was quite common for disease to cause death in those aged in their 30's or 40's, leaving a widow many years alone or to re-marry.



Art deco



Arts and crafts

Books



Immediately to the left of the entrance against the wall is a book memorial to Alfred Ward.

An open book indicates knowledge (and particularly scripture) but also symbolises someone's

role or page in the life of the community.

Embracing Hands



There are several examples of hands holding or greeting.

To the right of the main gate, see the stone remembering William Coote. It is the hand of a previously deceased spouse greeting their newly departed husband or wife

and welcoming them to heaven.

Dove



This illustrates the Holy Spirit and also innocence. This example, the dove on a cross entwined with ivy, shows a good Christian who has received the Holy Spirit.

Sunflower



Along the west wall in the middle section of the cemetery are two highly ornate crosses with sunflowers climbing them. The Sunflower represents adoration and entwined around a cross, therefore, means that the person who lies there was a devout Christian.

Sarcophagi



More correctly, False Sarcophagi – the deceased is interred in a vault – usually built of brick – beneath the monument. It was a statement of wealth to have a sarcophagus memorial echoing the grander versions you find in some cathedrals and churches where the deceased lies within.

They also acted as a security device in the late 19th century when surgeons would pay money for cadavers.

IHS

Generally accepted as being the first three letters in Greek for Jesus. The logo is sometimes quite artistically presented.



Ivy

Friendship and immortality are represented by Ivy and you can see many examples decorating stones or crosses throughout the cemetery.

Celtic Crosses



Originally these crosses were found at very early Christian burials in Cornwall, Scotland, Ireland and Brittany. They became fashionable at the end of the 19th century and would be important to those with heritage from celtic lands. There are many fine examples here and the symbolism is straightforwardly Christian.

Facing West

Rev. Harry Delevingne, 88yrs is buried to the left of the main entrance. His stone faces the other way – to the west. In the ground, he is interred facing west. Christian burials face east looking for the Second Coming, and as Harry did so in church, he is facing his flock to help them on that day.



You will find stones against an east wall or next to a path or old tree facing west – so they can be seen or read; however, unless the person at rest was ordained, they too will be buried facing east. If you attend the funeral of someone who has ever been ordained, the coffin will, as always, be brought in ‘feet first’ but will be placed on the trestles or catafalque the other way around.

Lillies

Probably the most common symbol associated with Christian death, the Lily represents the resurrection of the soul and innocence. They also have a very powerful scent which used to serve a practical purpose when the deceased rested at home until the funeral.

Lily of the Valley

Similar to the Lily but with more emphasis on purity and happiness. They tend to appear on the graves of women rather than men.



Columns

These represent a respectable upright life. A broken column symbolizes a life cut short. Complete columns topped with an archway represent the gateway to heaven – as can be seen on Rev. Delevingne’s stone (see above, ‘West’).



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If you would like to be involved in this exciting project, please visit our website at www.stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk

This booklet is written and produced by
Malcolm Jones & Metcalfe Funeral Directors

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