

# The Henley Cemetery

The Henley Cemetery is situated at the north end of the Fair Mile (A4130). It stands on the boundary of Henley and the parish of Bix and Assendon.



The cemetery keeper's lodge at the entrance to Henley Cemetery



The Church of England chapel seen over the cemetery wall

The cemetery was opened in 1868. It has a wall running round its boundary that originally enclosed four acres of land. This area was extended to the north in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

A cemetery keeper's lodge stands at the main entrance. There is a second entrance onto the A4130 dual carriageway. At the north end of the lodge a water supply with buckets and basic tools was maintained for visitors tending the graves. Vehicles were only admitted to the site for funerals.

The lodge was sold as a private dwelling at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The site is now open for vehicles on its main roadways.

The cemetery was opened with two chapels. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century a service was held in one of these every Sunday at 3.00 pm.

The chapels are now Grade II listed buildings. They have not been in regular use for thirty years and had fallen into disrepair. Recently work has been undertaken to make them safe and available for use again.

The first chapel was for non-conformist use. It originally had a bell-cote, but this has been removed for safety.



The second chapel was for the Church of England. The belfry, spire and door arch have been rebuilt as part of essential safety refurbishment work.



Each chapel has a nave and short chancel, a gabled porch and is fitted with stained glass windows. The construction is of knapped flint with stone dressings. The interior was of a simple design with an altar, altar rail and wooden benches. There was no organ or piano, so services were generally held without hymns.

When they were in constant use and a cemetery keeper was employed, the chapels were open for visitors. Today they are kept locked.



View across the cemetery to the Anglican chapel



Some of the gravestones in the cemetery

The notes below are from the Henley Burial Board in 1869 and describe how it went about finding a suitable site for a new cemetery for Henley. The accounts for the creation of the new cemetery are also attached.



TO THE PARISHIONERS OF HENLEY-ON-THAMES.

The Report of the Burial Board,

Appointed by the Vestry held 28th March, 1866.

The first object of the Board was the purchase of a piece of ground near the Town, suitable for a Cemetery. The neighbourhood of the Reading Road was found too low, even if the Proprietors had been willing to sell. Then an offer of Land at Badgemore was made, and the ground was staked out, but after the loss of 3 months, the Trustees objected to the Sale.

The only Land then available was at the end of the Fair Mile, and Mr. Mackenzie having offered 4 acres at £600, the Board had no alternative but to accept the offer, and it being desirable to complete the purchase at once, the money was advanced by a Member of the Board.

The Board then advertised for Plans and Estimates, and having had 30 Drawings sent in, they were exhibited at the Town Hall, and the Design No. 27 was selected.

The Exhibitor of No. 27 having failed in his promise to find a Builder to carry out his Designs for his estimate, considerable delay and expense were occasioned, and the Board ultimately selected the Designs of Mr. BARRY of Leamington, which were estimated at a cost of £2185.

The Board then arranged with the Public Works Loan Commissioners for the Loan of £3000 at 5 per cent., repayable by Instalments of £100 a year in 30 years, and this is a charge on the Poor Rates of the Parish.

The Architect proposed, with a view of saving expense, to erect the Chapels under one Roof, but distinct, but the Bishop refused to consecrate an Episcopal Chapel so constructed, and two separate Chapels have therefore been erected, one for the use of those of the Established Church, and the other for Non-conformists.

On the 13th June 1867, the Tender of Mr. WILLIS of Nettlebed, was accepted for the execution of the Works at the following Sums:—

	£	s.	d.
Buildings .. ..	1670	13	9
Earth Works .. ..	180	0	0
	£1850	13	9

the whole to be completed by the 1st of January, 1868. The state of the weather and other circumstances delayed the completion, but the Architect having certified it in June last, the necessary steps were taken for the consecration of that part of the Cemetery allotted to the Established Church.

The Government having ordered the Church-yard to be closed on the 31st of November, (except for Burials in existing brick vaults) the Consecration took place on the 27th of that month, by the Bishop of the Diocese.

Two Books containing Plans of the Ground and of the Grave spaces, have been prepared by Mr. BARRY and are deposited, one with Mr. TOWSEY, Clerk to the Board, in Hart Street, and the other with the Curator at the Cemetery Lodge, where they may be inspected for the selection of ground and other purposes.

An application has lately been made to the Board for permission to have service in the Episcopal Chapel on the Sunday afternoons. The distance of the neighbourhood of Assendon from the Parish Church prevents many aged, infirm, and other people from attending Divine Service, and the Board therefore granted the required permission, and the Chapel has accordingly been filled for the last two months, the Rector and Curates dividing the duty among them.

Annexed is an account of the Monies already received and expended by the Board.

18th February, 1869,

# The Account of the Burial Board of the Parish of Henley-on-Thames.

Dr.

Cr.

		1867.			1868.			1869.			1870.		
		£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
1867.													
Feb.	27—Cash of J. S. Burn, Esq., to enable the Board to purchase 4 acres of Land	600	0	0									
Aug.	10— " of the Public Loan Commissioners, repayable in 30 years	3000	0	0									
1868.													
March 30—	" of the Overseers of the Poor of the Parish of Henley	150	0	0									
Aug.	26— " of Ditto	116	0	0									
1869.													
Jan.	11— " by sale of ground, and fees at the Cemetery	22	12	6									
Feb.	— " of the Overseers	150	0	0									
1870.													
Aug.	15—Paid one years Interest to Commissioners, less Income Tax	146	14	3									
	Ditto Instalment in repayment	100	0	0									
	Knight & Co. for Register Books, &c.	246	14	3									
	Mr. Cooper, for Work, &c. at the Chapel	17	1	6									
	Clements (advertising) 18s.; Chambers 22s. 6d.; Oxford Chronicle 11s.; Palmer 5s. 6d.	3	16	6									
	Balance of Cash	2	17	0									
		112	7	9									
		£4038	12	6									

Remaining unpaid.  
Wills £50