

Compton Cemetery Records Project

Report #005 – March 2025

Summary:

Progress on the project during the past two months has again been significant. Three major steps forward have been achieved.

Firstly, the resolution, separation and renumbering of Section K - a mixture of grave plots and ashes plots (many with the same plot number – see Report #004), intermingled amongst those within Sections M and L.

Section K now exists as a strictly ashes-only section and within a well delineated and separate area adjacent the Cloister.

Secondly, the reallocation and renumbering of Sections M and L, such that the plots in those two areas of the cemetery, are now entirely separated from each other by the main Cloisters pathway.

In undertaking these two key activities, a significant number of omissions and anomalies have been resolved in the map, spreadsheet and associated documentation. This is especially true of section M where the apparent inaccuracy of grave-digging has resulted in a significant divergence from the planned site layout.

Thirdly, has been the completion of Section B – one of the oldest parts of the cemetery, where headstones are present on less than a third of occupied plots. Again, a full re-numbering has been completed, to better reflect what has now been put in place since the plot numbers were allocated 130 years ago.

In conclusion, the in-depth, per section analysis, recording, researching and diagramming of every individual interment plot across Sections K, L, M and B is now complete and has been added to the PDF map attached to this report.

A free version of the Cloud-based storage facility, Dropbox, has been used from the beginning to store and back-up diagramming and spreadsheet facilities and all the associated information and working documentation of the project. The number of photos and videos that have now been and continue to be produced, has exceeded the free threshold and were therefore being kept on a separate laptop. This was clearly contrary to the new regime of secure storage and back-up. Consequently, an upgraded subscription to Dropbox has been taken out to allow all photographs and videos to be held securely. At £8 per month, this seems a worthwhile investment.

Missing/Misleading Documents:

A map of the cemetery existed prior to the one drawn-up in 1993 by Chris Harvey. Apparently, "... Mr J Lake was instructed in 1897 to prepare a plan of the cemetery showing the number of grave spaces on the same scale as that of Shalford. In the spring of 1898 the sub-committee oversaw the forming of paths 'for the division of the grounds' ...".

It would be most useful to have a copy of that first schematic (even at this late stage of the project), but efforts to locate one have been unsuccessful.

Also, there must have been a written record kept of which plots had been sold, or reserved, but not yet occupied. Such record-keeping is now done using the spreadsheet, but there will have been a manual method used before such electronic facilities. Again, the absence of such a primary source has caused difficulties.

The official purchase deeds are only available for 1948 to 1959 and then from 1983 onward. The ledger record of actual interments ceases at 2002. All these missing documents make the establishment of what is actually in the ground very time-consuming and in some cases, impossible.

A particular case concerns plots L26 and L27 – containing Mr & Mrs Marks and Mrs Smith, respectively. There are clear ledger entries for both plots, together with comments in old notebooks. The location would certainly have been on the original pre-Harvey map, but there is now no diagrammatic indication of where those two plots are located. The previously confused delineation of L, M and K was obviously unhelpful, but the Harvey map contains no record of L26/L27 (stopping suddenly at L25). Sadly, there's no headstone either. Marks and Smith are almost certainly in the cemetery, but their location remains an absolute mystery.

Similarly, plot B170 (Mr & Mrs Howell) is also missing from the Harvey map, but would definitely have been shown on the original. Thankfully, there is a headstone in this case, so the new 2025 map will resolve that omission.

A similar anomaly concerns Mrs Edith Hodgson who was apparently placed in Plot B123 alongside Mr & Mrs Hogsden. The headstone makes no mention of Edith and there is evidence that the Hogsden family have visited the grave recently, leaving their written salutations only to the Hogsdens - No mention of Edith. However, Edith is almost certainly in the cemetery somewhere.

Remaining Work:

Only sections A, C and H remain to be surveyed and mapped. However, as previously identified, these are by far the most challenging parts of the entire estate (although K, L and M came fairly close) and the only guaranteed source of accurate information are the physical gravestones, or ashes plaques - sometimes, not even those can be relied upon.

No further work on 'Clickable Files' has been undertaken in this reporting period – preference being given at this time to surveying and anomaly resolution. However, as

and when any relevant information is uncovered, details are entered into the spreadsheet for future inclusion in these files. It is planned that access will eventually be via the new map and also via the spreadsheet.

It has been suggested that a subset of certain files be consolidated and potentially included on the Cemetery website.

The Excel spreadsheet continues to be constantly updated with corrections and new information, together with all the changes to numbering and sectional allocations. Of vital importance of course is the ability to correlate the original numbering with the new numbering on a plot by plot basis – and great care has been taken to ensure this facility is in place.

Planting:

Section B contains a significant area of shrubbery and ground cover plants near the Lych Gate. This is very attractive and was probably intended to utilise unused grave space, but seems to have expanded and now covers ten graves.

As no other occupied grave in the cemetery is under planting, it does seem rather unusual that these plots at the cemetery entrance have been covered. Might the committee give consideration to returning this area to grass?

Ancestry.com:

This online name-tracing facility was acquired in the previous reporting period and, as expected, has proved to be an invaluable (but not infallible) resource, during the research aspects of this project.

Attachments:

Supplied electronically along with this report is:

- the current datafile (*[cemetery – 3 March 2025.vsd](#)*) in Visio format, together with the following images in pdf format:
 - The entire map, showing the completed sections:
B, D, E, F, G, J, K, L, M, N, O, P and Q
 - An enlarged view of section B
 - An enlarged view of sections K, L and M

May I also take this opportunity of thanking the Clerk for her indefatigable assistance, advice and pure hard work in the surveying of the estate, identifying grave occupants and providing the soup. I do not believe the project would have been anywhere near as advanced without her in-depth knowledge and guidance.

David Herbert

March 2025