

Watts Cemetery Records Project

Report #007 – July 2025

Summary:

Progress on the project during the past two months has not been as extensive as hoped. This has been due to commitments and unexpected diversions elsewhere. While elapsed time to complete the project has therefore been extended, the overall expenditure remains in line with the estimate given in the *Cost Report and Estimate* delivered to the Clerk in May.

However, three significant steps forward have been achieved in this reporting period.

Firstly, the surveying, identification and complete renumbering of Section A has now been completed. A great deal of research into Plot occupants was necessary in this reporting period, to resolve the many issues in this final Section.

This means the in-depth analysis, recording, researching and diagramming of every individual interment plot across the entire estate, is now complete and the Cemetery Map attached to this report is now as correct and up to date as we believe it possible to be.

Secondly, the spreadsheet continued to be tidied, updated and corrected to a position where only 3 or 4 serious anomalies remain unresolved across the estate. It is thought that the Sheet now represents a very accurate reflection of what exists within the Cemetery.

Finally, the digitization and storage online, of available documentation is complete (apart from 7 Lever-Arch Files). Those paper records have consequently been returned to the Clerk for off-site, archive storage. The digitization of selected documents within the Lever Arch Files, is now underway.

No further work on 'Clickable Files' has been undertaken in this reporting period – preference being given to the final surveying, anomaly resolution and occupant research.

Section A:

It was perhaps the trickiest Section so far and had been purposely kept to the end of the Project due to its unique challenges of layout, elevation change, age, stone condition (or lack thereof) and paucity of documentation. The actual surveying of the Section, eventually showed the problems to be even greater than first thought.

Researching the occupants via web resources (Google and particularly Ancestry.com) has been challenging, but most anomalies have now been resolved.

With so many unmarked graves, the exact location of known occupants in certain areas of Section A does remain unresolved. A Geophysical survey (most often using GPR - Ground Penetrating Radar), could assist with exact location finding and it's understood that this is being considered by the Council. NB: According to 'KB Surveys' of Eastleigh: *"The average cost of an entire GPR survey service package is between £10,000 and £35,000"*

This would obviously be dependent on size and complexity of plot, but does include an expert interpretation of the results – which seems to be the majority cost.

If the unmarked interment areas of Section A could be more accurately mapped, there is scope for maybe 5 additional burial opportunities.

Spreadsheet:

The amount of correcting and adjusting of the spreadsheet throughout this project, has been unexpectedly high. The sheet was clearly developed using data taken from the documentation and diagrams available at the time, which were (as has been pointed out many times) significantly flawed.

It is thought that the Spreadsheet is now clear, correct and unequivocal. It's a firm foundation of data, to be used alongside the Cemetery Map.

Document Digitisation:

A copy of the following documentation is now held online:

- Burial Grant Book 1 (1948-1963)
- Burial Grant Book 2 (1983 – 1988)
- Burial Grant Book 3 (1988 – July 2015)
- Modern Burial Grants (in MS-Word Format from July 2015 to date)
- Ledger Book 1 (interments in Plot Order from Section A thru' H)
- Ledger Book 2 (interments in Plot Order from Section J thru' K)
- Ledger Book A (interments in Chronologic Order from 1896 to 1971)
- Ledger Book B (interments in Chronologic Order from 1971 to 2002)
- Red Notebook (list of occupants in every Plot from Section A thru' O)
- Brown Notebook (interments in Chronologic Order from 1973 to 2011)

Remaining Work:

- Lever Arch Files:

The Clerk holds Seven Lever Arch Files, each containing between 70 and 100 separate folders in alphabetic order of the proposed, or current plot occupant, containing the *Notices*

of *Burial* along with additional data on personnel, plots, stonemasonry, burial activities, payments and all associated correspondence.

Not every page will be stored electronically – work on deciding which pages will be stored, has already started.

- Clickable Files

Sections D, E, F and G have been completed (some time ago), but work on this aspect is expected to restart and accelerate in the next reporting period. Any relevant papers in the Lever Arch Files, will also need introducing to those already ‘completed’ Clickable Files.

This online name-tracing facility of Ancestry.com has already proved to be an invaluable (but not infallible) resource during the research aspects of this project and has now been renewed as the Clickable Files begin to be prepared.

- Operations:

An amount of day-to-day operational recording, such as Plot selection, Grant administration, new burial photos, existing permissions, new plot sales etc, has already begun (under the strict auspices of the Clerk) and has been completed as part of this project work. From now on, however, this type of operational work will be separately billed.

- Allocation of new Plots across remainder of current estate:

The Cemetery Committee has requested that the as-yet undefined or ‘un-mapped’ areas of Sections M, P, Q and R, are fully populated with individual burial locations, allowing them to be numbered properly and allocated to new purchasers as and when required.

On-site aspects such as trees, hedges, planting, pathing, fencing and other obstacles, will be taken fully into account and as before, the activity would be undertaken under the strict and crucial auspices and management of the Clerk.

A cost estimate of how long this activity might take has been requested and will be supplied as soon as possible.

Attachments:

Supplied electronically alongside this report are:

- the current datafile in Visio format, together with the following images in pdf format:
 - The entire map, with all sections complete
 - An enlarged view of section A

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