

Salehurst Cemetery - History

The parish cemetery is situated in Beech House Lane, approximately six hundred yards North West of Salehurst Church. It covers just under an acre, with approximately six hundred grave spaces.

The land, formerly known as 'Stone Rock Croft' was originally freely given to the Vicar of Salehurst in 1933, in exercise of powers contained in the Consecration of Churchyards Act 1867. However, it was subject to a restriction on the use of foreign marble for curbs and headstones, and it was eventually decided that the Bishop would be unable to consecrate the land with this restriction in place. When the donor refused to lift it, the land was conveyed back to him and the conveyance endorsed as cancelled on 28th May 1949.

This left the Church with a serious problem. The churchyard was almost full, with only sufficient grave spaces for a few more years. Having already extended the churchyard in 1927 and again in 1931 they were unable to identify any other suitable piece of land in the vicinity to extend it further. When the churchyard was full, the responsibility for providing grave spaces would fall to the then 'Battle District Council'. The Church was reluctant for that happen, believing it preferable for the provision to remain within local control, so they approached the Parish Council to ask them to adopt the Burial Acts of 1852 to 1906.

Salehurst Parish Council was constituted as the Burial Authority, under the Local Government Act 1894 Section 7(1)(c), by resolution of a Parish Meeting held on 5th May 1950. It then fell to them to find a suitable piece of land within the parish for a burial ground. After much research and several possible sites being dismissed (there are strict rules relating to proximity of housing, distance from roads, direction of land drainage, liability to flooding etc) the only piece of land identified as suitable was... 'Stone Rock Croft' in Beech House Lane! The owner, presumably still unhappy about the prospect of foreign marble, refused to sell it, and the land was eventually acquired under 'The East Sussex (Salehurst Burial Ground) Compulsory Purchase Order 1951' and conveyed to Salehurst Parish Council on 7th October 1953 for £75.

Several years of preparations followed, including formation of plans, setting of fees and rules and regulations, home office approvals, planning applications and of course, ground preparation and boundary fences and gates etc. It was agreed that the Burial Ground should be of the 'Lawn Cemetery Type', meaning no grave mounds, no grave curbs or edgings and headstones limited in size and type.

Part of the Cemetery (Division B) was consecrated by the Bishop of Lewes at 3pm on Wednesday 10th September 1958, and the first interment took place on 28th July 1960, in grave number 1, Division B; Neville Sherwood died in an accident in the village, age 18 years. There have now been over 500 interments (burials and cremated remains), with approximately 200 grave spaces remaining. If interments continue at the same average rate as the last 56 years, and barring outbreaks of plague or other pandemics, this precious resource should last for another 35 years or so! A further section (in Division A) was consecrated by the Bishop on Saturday 14th December 2002.

Reverend John Lambourne, who was Vicar of Salehurst & Robertsbridge for 30 years, is buried at the top of the Cemetery, alongside many of the parishioners and friends whose funerals he conducted.