

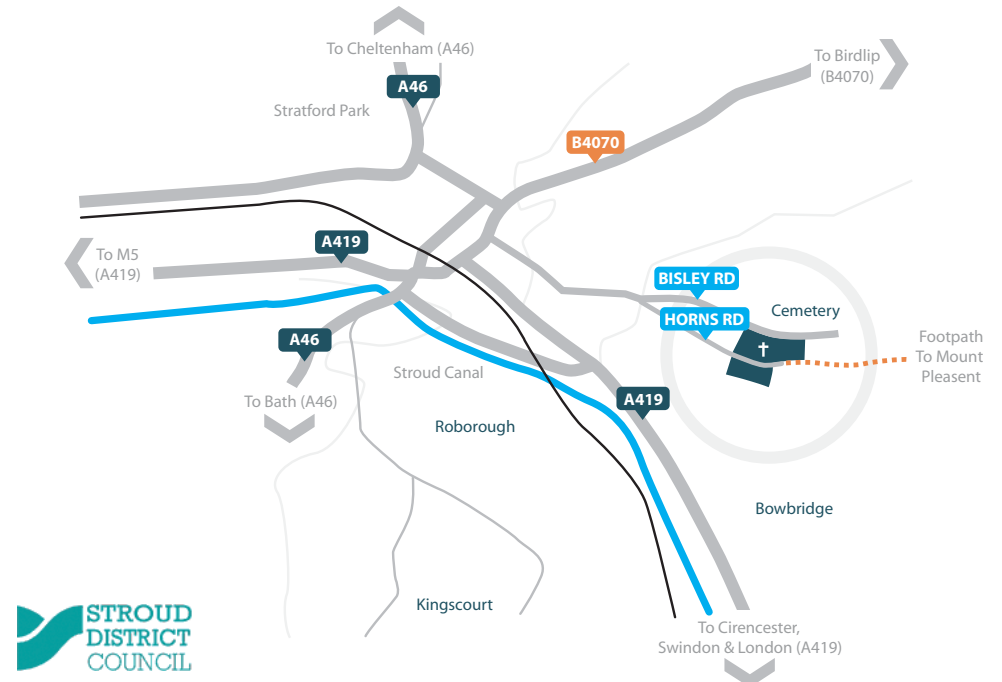


Stroud Cemetery

Social history and wildlife in a Victorian Cemetery



Stroud Cemetery is an amazing place to visit – a peaceful graveyard that's also full of wildlife. It gives a fascinating insight into life in Victorian Stroud, providing the final resting place for thousands of local residents who helped make Stroud the unique and characterful town it is today. The cemetery is also a Local Nature Reserve, home to some very special Cotswold wildlife including rare lichens, beetles, badgers and glow worms. This leaflet helps you discover some of the secrets of the cemetery.



Stroud Cemetery is Stroud's first Local Nature Reserve. Please respect the sanctity of the cemetery. Burials still take place here and the Garden of Remembrance commemorates those who have been cremated.

Dog walkers are welcome in the cemetery. Please keep your dog on a lead as the cemetery is visited on a regular basis. There is no parking at the cemetery.

Credits:

Stroud Town Council manages the cemetery on behalf of Stroud District Council. Stroud Town Council would like to thank Stroud Local History Society and Gloucestershire Wildlife Management for their invaluable help in the research and preparation of this leaflet.

Contacts:

Stroud Town Council, Thanet House,
58 London Road, Stroud GL5 2AA
Tel 01453 762817

Stroud Local History Society, The Secretary,
16 Barrowfield Road, Farmhill, Stroud GL5 4DF

Warning: Holes in the ground and snakes in the grass! Badgers and rabbits live in the cemetery and there are holes and uneven ground as a result of their digging and burrowing. It's best to stay on the paths as many of the holes are hidden by the dense undergrowth.

Adders live here and during warm weather often lie on the gravestones to bask in the sun. They may bite if disturbed.

GREAT & GOOD

OF STROUD

John Ferrabee and his sons, James and Henry, were prominent engineers who owned Phoenix Iron Works at Thrupp. They made machinery for Stroud's textile industry including steam engines and waterwheels as well as machinery for local farms. The world's first lawnmower was produced at their Works, invented by local mechanic Edwin Budding.



Joshua Wall was a sculptor who lived in King's Stanley. He carved over 100 monuments and tombstones, some of which are in this cemetery. Other examples of his superb craftsmanship can be seen in St Lawrence's Church in Stroud, including the figure of St Lawrence.



William Paine was a doctor at the United Hospital in George Street. It was his public health campaigns that led to the closing of the parish churchyard in Stroud and the subsequent creation of Stroud Cemetery.



David Williamson was a clothing manufacturer who built a large factory in Cheapside. The building was later occupied by the Hill Paul Company, the name by which it is known today. He was a committed Non Conformist and ran the Sunday School.



George Holloway ran a thriving clothing manufacturing business in Stroud. His business was the largest employer in Stroud and was famous for its use of innovative machinery such as steam powered sewing machines. A Conservative Member of Parliament for Stroud, he was a great benefactor to the town.



William Cowle was a public-spirited businessman who died without any children or close relatives. He left £4000 for the creation of a museum for Stroud, the equivalent of several million pounds today. The original museum was part of the School of Art and Science in Lansdown, Stroud and the Cowle Trust is still involved in Stroud's Museum in the Park.

NATURALLY WILD



Stroud Cemetery is home to an amazing variety of lichens, with 86 different kinds recorded here. The gravel chippings in some of the kerbed graves are the best habitat as they are made from many types of stone including marble, limestone, granite and sandstone, each type offering a different surface for lichens to grow upon.



Large patches of yellow-flowered kidney vetch are found on the steep slopes below the chapels. The flowerheads are closely packed together and the leaves are hairy. In the past they were used to stop wounds bleeding. It's the food plant of the Small Blue – Britain's smallest butterfly.

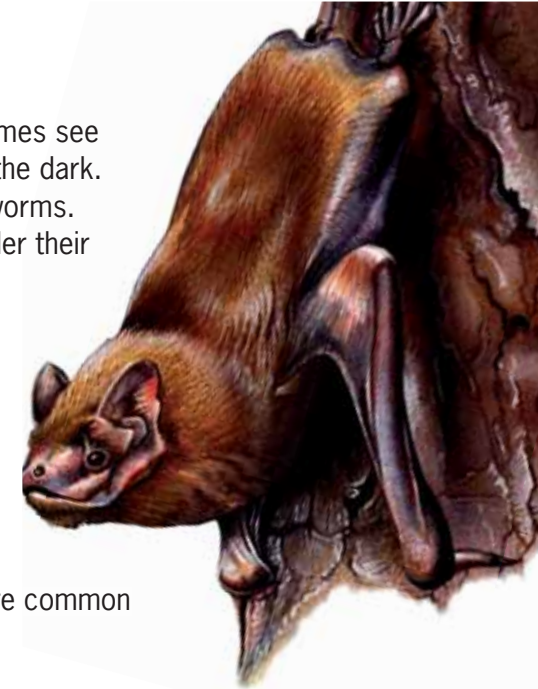
Sheets of creamy white ox-eye daisies cover some of the grassy slopes of the cemetery in summer. The large flowers are the food of a very rare kind of insect – the oxeye lacebug. It's only known at a handful of sites in Gloucestershire.



On still summer nights you can sometimes see mysterious luminous spots glowing in the dark. Don't worry – it's not ghosts but glow-worms. The females have luminous organs under their tails to attract males in the dark.

As well as glow-worms and badgers, there are other night-time visitors to the cemetery – bats! They fly over the cemetery, hunting for insects around the trees and graves. Three different kinds of bat are found here: brown long-eared, noctule and the more common pipistrelle bats.

Rufous grasshoppers are one of the more unusual insects found here. They're amazing creatures that can jump up to 20 times the length of their body. You can often see these brown grasshoppers in late summer, basking in the sunshine on the sunny grassy slopes around the chapels.



A memorial to life and death in Victorian England

In 1854 Stroud's burial grounds were seriously overcrowded and dangerous to health. It wasn't just a local problem, the rapidly growing population of Victorian England meant many of the nation's churchyards were full to bursting and officials were concerned by the health threats posed by unsanitary conditions in urban churchyards. The Secretary of State issued a notice to the parish to close Stroud's burial grounds and a new cemetery had to be found.

Stroud Burial Board purchased a six acre site at the edge of town and commissioned two Chapels of Rest and an entrance lodge to be built in Cotswold stone. The cemetery was divided into three sections: one for Conformists, one for Non-Conformists and the third for paupers of the Parish.

It quickly became a much-visited site, offering peaceful, contemplative space for relatives and friends of those buried here and a place where local people could enjoy Sunday promenades with splendid views.

Stroud Cemetery, like all cemeteries, records the unique social history of the town and the lives of its inhabitants. There are memorials to MPs, doctors and solicitors, clergymen and business people who contributed to Stroud's civic life as well as thousands of graves, many unmarked, of the men, women and children who helped develop Stroud's special character.



A sanctuary for wildlife

The old section of the cemetery is managed as a cemetery and as a Local Nature Reserve. It's an important county wildlife site, famous for its lichens and insects. In all, over 270 different kinds of plants and animals are found here, thriving in the grassland and woodland on the sunny, south facing slopes.

It's a delicate balancing act, keeping the sanctity of the cemetery while also encouraging the special wildlife that lives here. The grassy areas are full of colourful wildflowers typical of the Cotswolds. There are blue harebells, pink cranes' bills and ox-eye daisies as well as several different kinds of orchids.

In spring the woodland is full of primroses and bluebells, visited by woodpigeons, jackdaws and woodpeckers. On summer days the paths and gravestones are used by warmth-loving lizards and adders that like to sunbathe on the sunny surfaces

The cemetery was originally planted by a local nurseryman in the 1850s. He created an elaborate garden with exotic trees and shrubs such as Lawson Cypress, Chinese Thuja and Portugal Laurel. His careful planting has been maintained for over 150 years, creating a peaceful sanctuary for both people and wildlife.

