

## The Church

The original church for Widcombe and Lyncombe is St Thomas à Becket. In response to the growing population in the Lyncombe area a first meeting was held in 1826 to consider the building of a new church for the parish. It was not until 1830 that the funds for the building of the church were available, with financial support from His Majesty's Commissioners for Building New Churches. Of the estimate of £5777, one third of the amount had to be raised by the parish. The architect was George Phillips Manners (1786-1866) of Bath who was the Bath City Architect during the period 1823-1862. The foundation stone for St Mark's church was laid on 16 Apr 1830 and it was consecrated on 27 Apr 1832 by the Bishop of Bath & Wells. A report on this can be found in *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* Vol XX No. 1,021 of Tue 1 May 1832. It was intended that there be 1,200 seats, although in practice it could only accommodate about 800 people. Initially the church came under the direct authority of Bath Abbey and curates were appointed rather than it having its own vicar. The first curate was Rev William Chave. At the dinner after the consecration, the press report of his speech suggests that he did not have a high opinion of his parishioners "that he rejoiced with trembling — the dense population of the parish exhibited so many instances of gross degeneracy, that the task of correcting the errors of ignorance and the defilements of vice presented no very cheering prospect of success". The parishes of Widcombe and Lyncombe were formally separated in 1856. The church was closed in 1974 and it now serves as a community centre with some rooms being used for a pre-school and activities by local groups taking place in the main part of the church.



*St Mark's from the east.*



*St Mark's from Holloway*

For further information see *History of St Mark's Church, Bath* by Arthur George Cole, 1910 a transcript of which appears in *St Mark's Cemetery, Lyncombe, Bath – Memorial Inscriptions* by P J Bendall, Widcombe Association 2009.

## The Cemetery

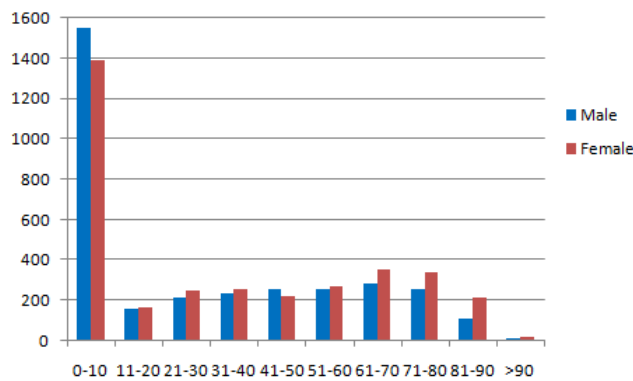
The cemetery at St Mark's, Lyncombe is the third cemetery for the parish of Widcombe & Lyncombe. The first cemetery is by St Thomas à Becket church and the second (the 'Bowling Green') is in Church Lane. This third cemetery opened in 1825 on land which was formerly the garden of the Luder's house in Claverton Street, the house itself becoming the parish's second Poor House until 1838 when the Union Workhouse at Odd Down took over this role. The land was bought from John Allen and a complex indenture was drawn up (Bath Record Office BC/153/1388/1). This pre-dates the church of St Mark's which was consecrated in 1832. When the land for the church was bought, part of the land to the north of the church was used to expand the cemetery. Burials in the period 1825-1843 are in the registers for St Thomas à Becket and it is only in 1843 that St Mark's had its own registers. The opening of the fourth Widcombe & Lyncombe cemetery on the Lower Bristol Road in 1861 led to a marked decrease in the burials occurring at St Mark's.

The number of burials in the cemetery (from both registers) is over 6,000 and exceeds the number in Bath Abbey cemetery despite being a much smaller site. There are 2579 burials in the St Thomas à Becket registers for the period 1825-1842. From the expected number of plots of about 1,000 this

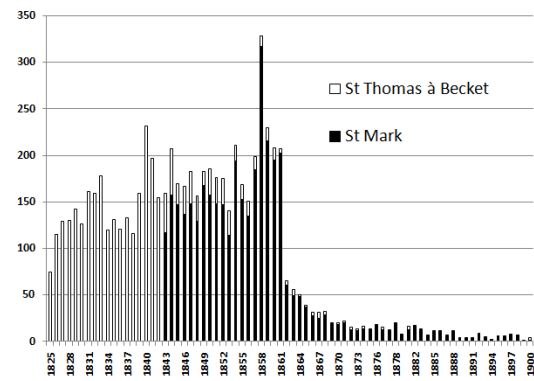
implies that there are over 6 burials per grave. For those buried at St Mark's about 43% were aged under 11 and the age profile differs markedly from those for Bath Abbey and Lansdown cemeteries. The cemetery was for the locality and the entries in the register show addresses such as: Holloway, Lower Bristol Road, Claverton Street and Dolemeads. However in 1857 when a commissioner was sent to check that parishes in Bath were adhering to the new regulations on burials a complaint was made that the parish of St James was too frequently availing itself of the opportunity of having its poor buried at St Mark's for a nominal fee. The complaint had no effect and the proportion from St James was between 20 and 30% in the 1850s. The cemetery was closed in 1857 although the rate did not diminish until 1861 and, thereafter, a small number of burials occurred annually up until 1931.

No Burial Order Book specifying who is buried where has been found and, because most of the about 150 remaining memorials have been moved to the edges of the site, it is only in a few cases that it is possible to determine where individuals were buried.

Surveys of the cemetery have been carried out 1) in 1973 by the Bath Heraldic Society 2) this refined in 2000 by Alistair Durie by the addition of locations and 3) in 2009 by Widcombe Association which included pictures of the memorials and research into the individuals for which there are memorials. The latter documentation of the burial register entries and descriptions of the memorials in the cemetery and inside the church can be found at Bath Record Office, Bath Central Library and the Society of Genealogists, London.



Age Profile for burials in St Mark's cemetery



Numbers of burials by year

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