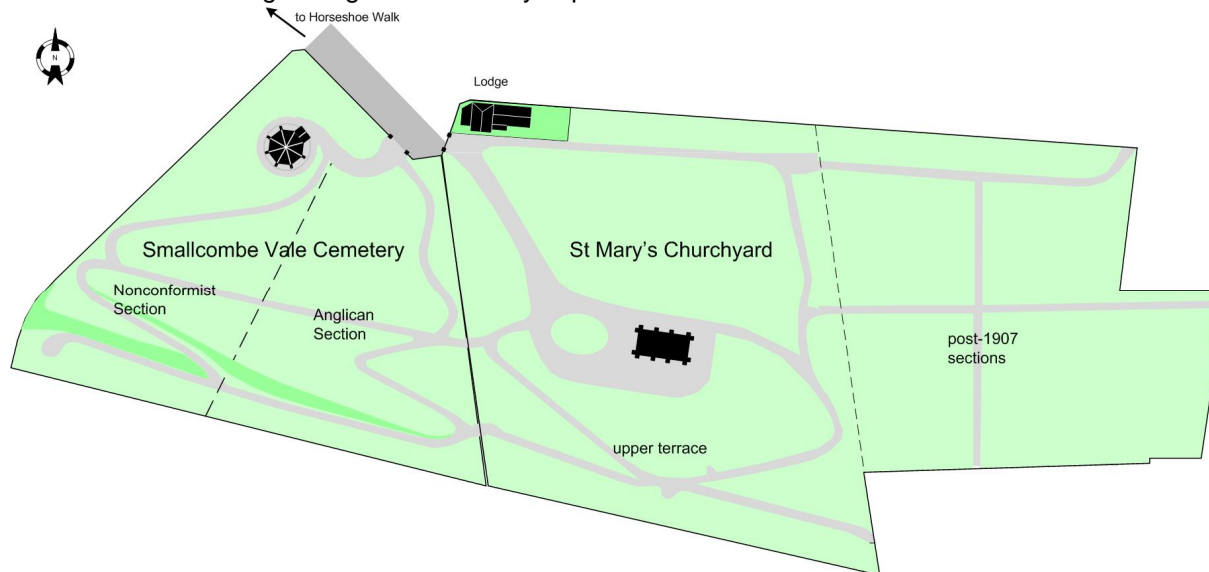


The cemeteries at Smallcombe Vale are relevant to Widcombe as, situated in the valley between Widcombe Hill and Bathwick Hill, they catered to those in the vicinity, and include inhabitants of Widcombe.

There are two cemeteries:

- an Anglican one which, in some accounts, is referred to as 'the rector's cemetery' but is 'St Mary's Churchyard'. It is owned by the church of St Mary the Virgin, Bathwick and maintained by the council.
- a cemetery that was administered by the Bathwick Burial Board and has separate sections for Anglicans and non-conformists with an octagonal, non-conformist mortuary chapel. A line of stones running through the cemetery separates the two areas.



Both cemeteries run from the bottom of the valley up the northern side of Widcombe Hill. The cemeteries, though separated by a wall, have two gaps that allow one to walk between them. They are reached by a private road of about 300m from Horseshoe Walk. A notice states that there is no parking except for those visiting graves.

### St Mary's Churchyard

The St Mary's Churchyard came about because the previous churchyard was full. In the 1850s there was increasing pressure to regulate cemeteries better by restricting the number of bodies per grave and defining the separation between graves. The land was donated by the Duke of Cleveland, owner of the Bathwick estate, but the preparation of the site required removal of numerous trees from the Smallcombe Wood. The design of the associated mortuary chapel was awarded to Thomas Fuller, son of a Bath mayor, and the builder was George Mann. The corner stone of the chapel was laid on 9 May 1855, using a silver trowel in accordance with the custom at that time, coins being placed under the stone. The dedication of the mortuary chapel was reported in the *Bath Chronicle* of 10 May 1855. The consecration of the land by the Bishop of Bath and Wells took place on 15 Feb 1856 and this was reported in the *Bath & Cheltenham Gazette* of 20 Feb 1856.

The social and age profiles of those buried in this cemetery is similar to those found at Bath Abbey Cemetery and Lansdown. Those buried include various people who were prominent in local and national society and, in addition to fundholders and clergy, include those with associations with the empire, serving in military or administrative roles.

The lodge at the entrance to the cemetery, formerly the residence of the superintendant who would have dug the graves and tended them, is now in private occupation.

The mortuary chapel has also been sold. The cemetery, though still owned by the Church of England, is maintained by the local council which currently carries out strimming of the whole area on an approximately monthly basis but does not tend the individual graves.



*Anglican Chapel*

### **Smallcombe Vale Cemetery**

The Smallcombe Vale cemetery opened in 1861 and was administered by the Bathwick Burial Board. Searches have yet to find a press report of its opening. The burial order books, which define who is buried where, include the 'rank or occupation'. In contrast to the adjacent cemetery, over 50% had labouring occupations. Only about 20% of the graves have memorials. About 20% of those buried were aged under 11, intermediate between St Mark's at 40% and the adjacent cemetery at 6%. The custom-printed volumes have separate columns for the location as 'consecrated' ie Anglican and 'unconsecrated'. A line of stones runs through the cemetery marking the division between Anglican and non-conformist sections.



*Non-conformist chapel*

Both cemeteries are 'closed' although those who already have plots are entitled to be buried there. The documentation of those buried in the two cemeteries is being undertaken by the Bathwick Local History Society.

### **Further Reading**

Smallcombe Vale Cemeteries in *Bathwick Echoes of the Past* – The Bathwick Local History Society, 2008 pp48-52

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