

‘Eastville’ Workhouse

Unmarked paupers’ graves at Rosemary Green



‘Eastville’ workhouse, 100 Fishponds Rd, c.1905

Introduction

- Who are Bristol Radical History Group?
- Why we became interested in Rosemary Green
- The Poor Laws and the Workhouse
- Life and death in Eastville Workhouse
- Are the graves still there?
- The BRO records and key statistics
- How should we remember these people?
- Other examples of memorials to pauper graveyards
- Our ideas and work in progress
- Discussion/questions

Rosemary Green in 1912



Rosemary Green today

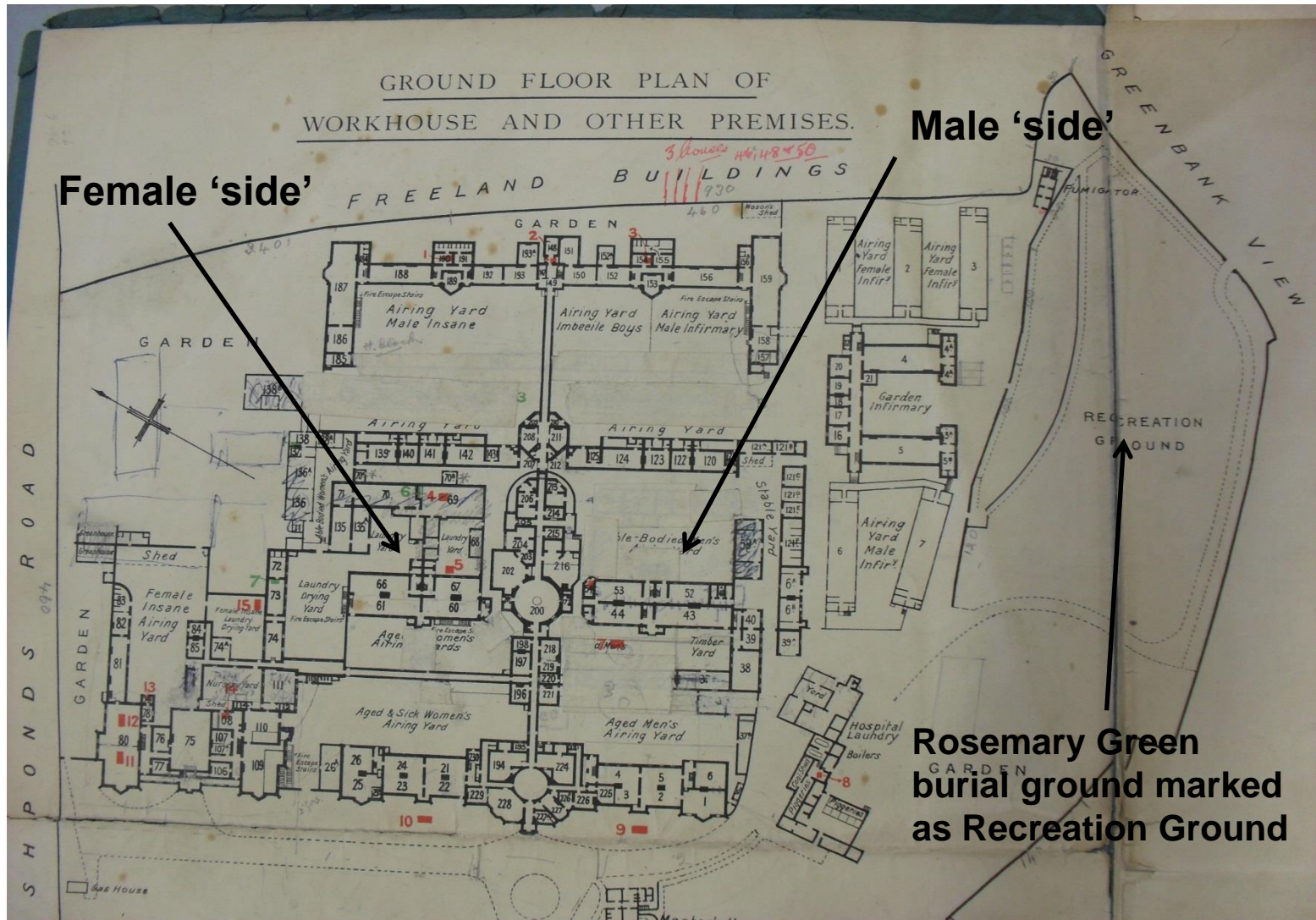


Bristol Radical History Group 2014

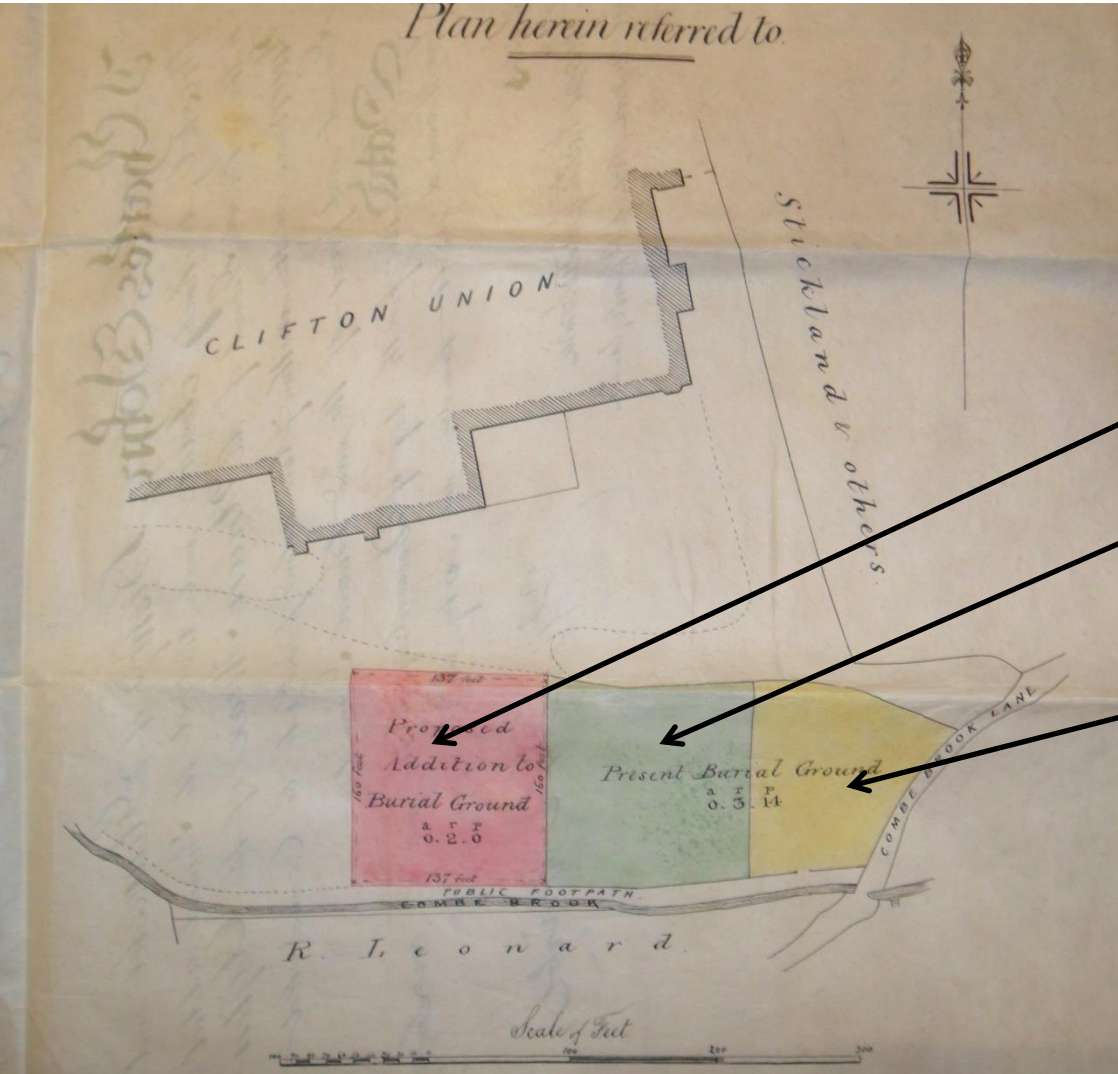
Rosemary Green Pauper Burial Ground

- How did we locate the burial ground?
 - 1902 Ordnance Survey (Ashley Down and Eastville)
 - BCC 'Know Your Place' website
 - BRO Plans of Eastville Workhouse
- Why was there no sign, no marker of the burials?
- Initial calculations suggested >2,500 graves
- BRO: records of burials at Eastville workhouse
- Record of consecration of ground in three phases
 - 1851 initial consecration
 - 1861 extension
 - 1868 extension

Eastville Workhouse: Ground Floor (1911?)



Phases of Consecration at Rosemary Green



Addition in 1868

Addition in 1861

**Initial consecration
1851**

The Poor Law and the Workhouse

- The Poor laws
- Indoor and Outdoor relief
- Introduction of the workhouse
- The regime – the work, the diet
- How did you end up in the workhouse?
- The ‘fear’ of the workhouse and its uses

‘The ...workhouse system was less interested in alleviating suffering than in promoting behavioural change...Poverty is seen as a badge of moral turpitude. The task of the workhouse was to rehabilitate the afflicted by further afflicting them...making poverty so unendurable its victims would embrace the virtues of the saved: industry, selflessness and personal discipline’

- People preferred to starve than enter the workhouse
- Oral history in the 20th Century

'Eastville' Workhouse

- Confusing change of name from Clifton Union to Barton Regis workhouse (1877), but always at 100 Fishponds Rd
- New building opened 1847
- Extensions in:
 - 1858; to house 1180 'paupers'
 - 1867; two 'lunatic' wards added
 - 1868; a 'fever' hospital added
 - 1873; a 'tramps' ward added
 - 1880; lying in provision for the 'sick'
- Becomes part of single city Union in 1898
- Workhouse until 1920s, then old peoples' home
- Demolished in 1972 to make way for new housing estate

Life and Death in the Eastville Workhouse

- *'The poor were different from those who were better off, for they did not complain at the moment they were affected with illness and often were only a few hours away from the delirium that terminates in death before anyone knew they were really ill'*
- Health in Eastville Workhouse
 - Report in 1867 shows general unsanitary conditions
 - Up to 1877 no doctor
 - In Aug 1878 1/3 inmates were 'sick', 17 died that month
 - Lack of beds for the sick (~100, in 1878; 376 'sick')
 - Whooping cough, smallpox, enteric fever, respiratory and skin diseases, cancer, heart attacks, zymotic disease or just 'fever'
- Victorian attitudes to death and 'pauper funerals'

Are the graves still there?

- The workhouse paupers were buried in unmarked plots in:
 - Rosemary Green from 1855 until 1895
 - After 1895 in nearby Ridgeway and Greenbank cemeteries
- In 1902, seven years after burial ground was 'full', mining companies applied for deep workings under the site, which the Chancellor of the Diocese of Gloucester permitted despite the bodies still being present
- Children from May Park school discovered human bones on the site in the 1970s when the new estate was being built. Police and authorities were alerted
- The site was not developed before, during or after 1972
- We have found no record of the removal of the bodies
- To move the bodies would be a huge undertaking
- We think they are still there....

What we found at the BRO...

- Eastville Workhouse death records
 - Date of death
 - Full name
 - Gender (from name)
 - Age at death
 - Parish
 - Notes:
 - Grave Number
 - 'Buried in Old Ground', 'Taken out by friends' or 'Given to Medical school'
 - 'Lunatic', 'Imbecile', 'Foundling', 'Drowned in Frome'
 - Babies 'buried under wall'

Example of Eastville Workhouse Death Record

1880

Year	Month	Day	Surname	Forenames	Gender	Age at death	Parish	Grave No.	Notes
1880	Jul	30	U	U	M	60		1499	Man found drowned
1880	Aug	2	Marsh	Ada	F	3	Horfield	302	
1880	Aug	4	Read	Alice	F	81	Clifton	1484	
1880	Aug	16	Peel	John	M	U	Bristol lunatic asylum	1452	
1880	Aug	19	Pullen	Florence	F	0.5	St Phillip & Jacob	318	
1880	Aug	21	McCready	Edwin	M	78	Winterbourne	1453	
1880	Aug	27	Theobald	George	M	0.001	Clifton		Buried under the wall
1880	Aug	30	Willis	Mary-Ann	F	62	St Phillip & Jacob	1468	
1880	Aug	30	Rooney	Louisa	F	81	St Phillip & Jacob	1469	
1880	Aug	31	Ball	Elizabeth	F	74	St Phillip & Jacob	1500	
1880	Sep	1	Howell	Felix	M	0.25	St George	323	
1880	Sep	10	Burgess	Ellen	F	0.001	Clifton	1480	Buried with mother
1880	Sep	11	Gabbett	Mary	F	5	Clifton	1501	
1880	Sep	12	Burgess	Ellen	F	26	Clifton	1480	
1880	Sep	16	Button	William	M	49	St Phillip & Jacob	1488	
1880	Sep	19	Hyatt	Harriet	F	2	St Phillip & Jacob	1502	
1880	Sep	22	Cousins	Richard	M	0.001	St Phillip & Jacob	313	
1880	Sep	29	Hodges	George	M	54	St Phillip & Jacob	1470	
1880	Oct	25	Welsh	Margaret	F	54	Clifton	1457	
1880	Oct	27	Newcomb	John	M	57	St George	1455	

Key statistics

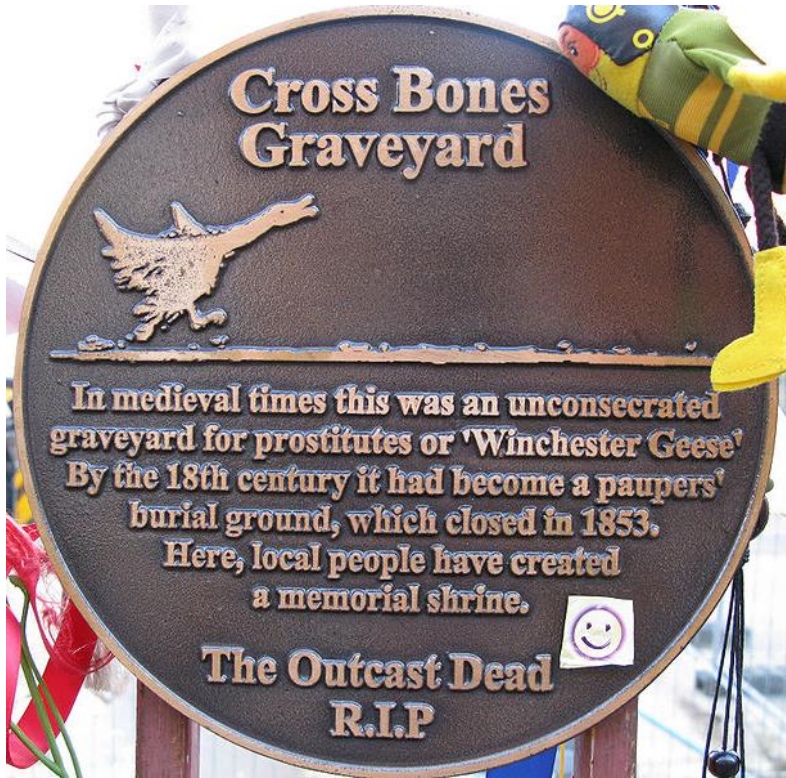
- Over **41** years between **June 1855** and **Nov 1895.....**
- Suspected number of burials at Rosemary Green: **3507**
- Males **1934** Females **1471** Unknown **102**
- **743** burials of children of 10 years of age or less (>20%)
- Of these at least **103** were babies that passed away within a few hours of birth.
- These unfortunates may have been '*buried under wall*' as they were not yet 'christened' and the burial area was consecrated ground
- We are unclear as to where this exactly was on the site
- We collected names, ages and parishes of all these people

Pauper Burial Grounds

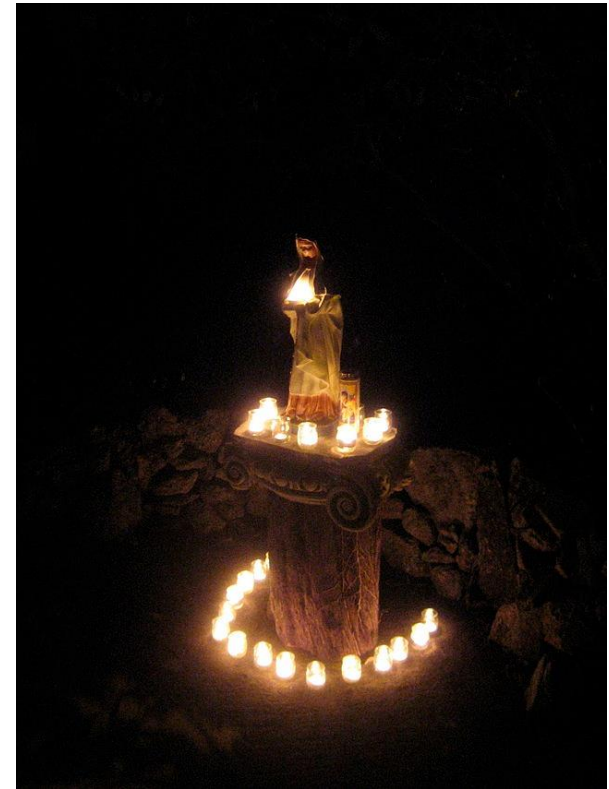
- Recent incidents & projects:
 - The Galway Babies, Ireland (June 2014)
 - Cross Bones Graveyard, Southwark, London
 - West Bromwich Union Workhouse Pauper graveyard, West Midlands



Cross Bones Graveyard



Crossbones Graveyard



- Permanent memorial garden
- Halloween procession, candles and songs
- Graveyard gates permanently decorated
- Memorial vigil ceremonies

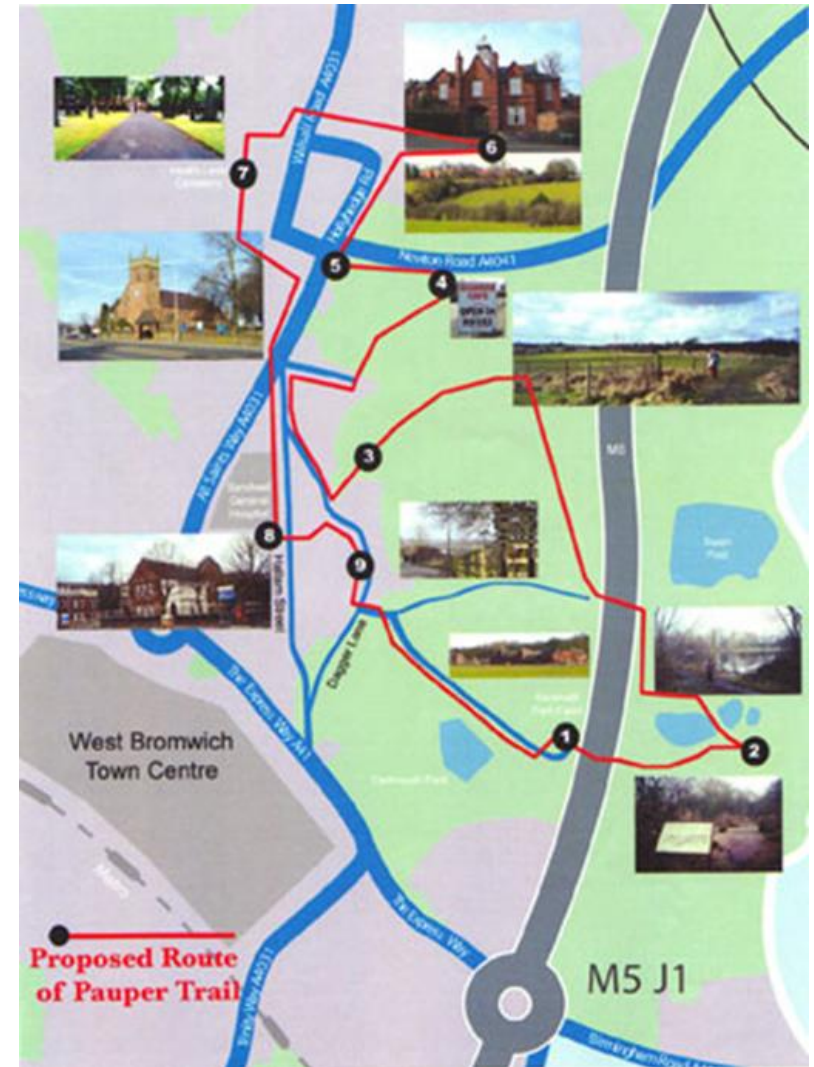
West Bromwich Pauper Memorial



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West Bromwich Union Pauper Graveyard

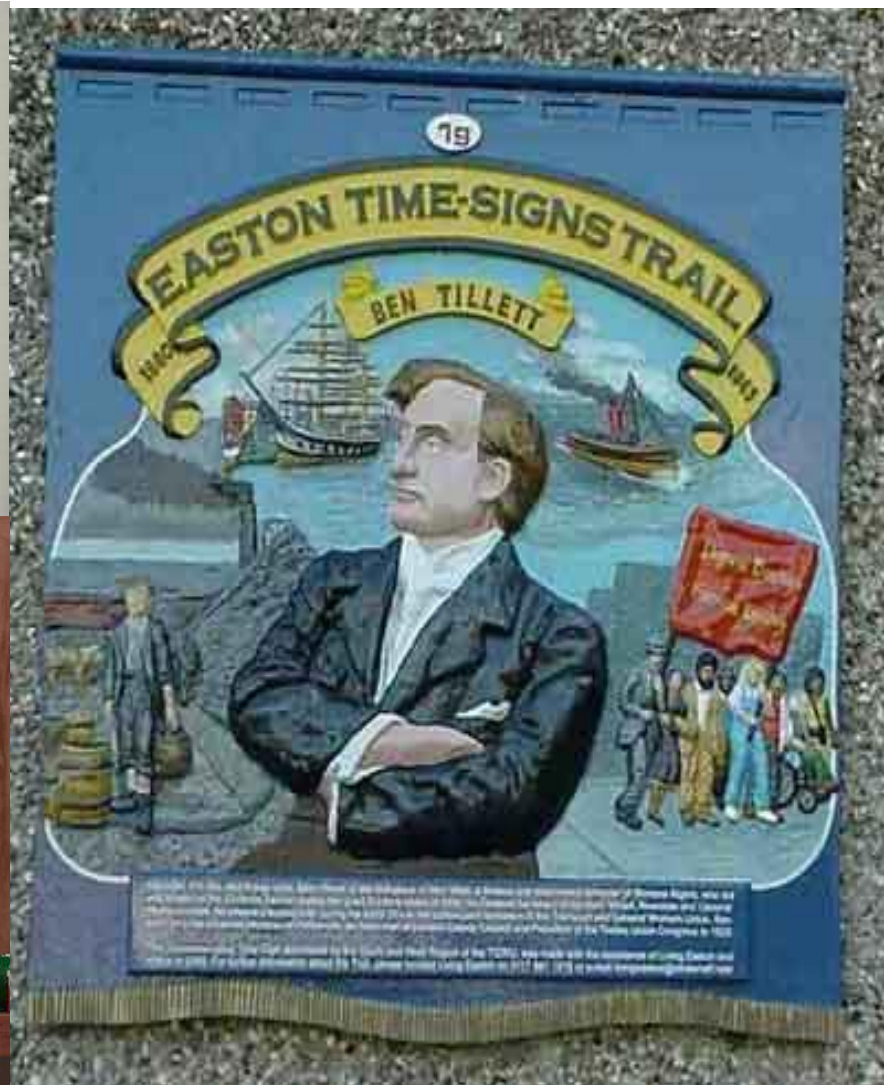
- Memorial statue
- Blue plaque
- The 'pauper trail'
- Pamphlet



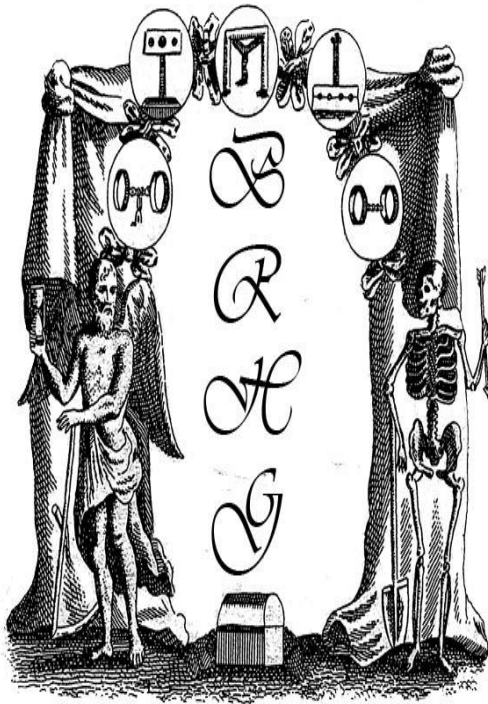
What do you think?

- Do you think there should be a memorial to the paupers of Rosemary Green?
- Living Easton (2004-5)
 - Clearance, tree planting and totems
 - Rosemary Green Fairs
 - Greenbank & Eastville history walk and map
- Some of our ideas and work in progress:
 - A pamphlet telling the story of Eastville Workhouse and the Rosemary Green burial ground (WIP)
 - A CD with all the research data (WIP)
 - Articles in the local media (BP June & Aug)
 - A plaque based on designs by Living Easton (PTO)?
 - Involvement of local schools (projects about the workhouse)?
 - An event on Rosemary Green: names of the paupers are read out?

Some existing plaque designs



Our Contact Details



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