



Eastville Workhouse Burial Ground

Memorial Unveiling Ceremony

**Rosemary Green, Eastville
Monday 16 November 2015
11.00am**

Eastville Workhouse Burial Ground (1851-95)

Today's unveiling ceremony is a significant milestone in a project which began several years ago when local historians were studying some old maps of Eastville. The discovery of the hitherto anonymous burial ground at Rosemary Green led to a huge volume of historical research with the objective of naming the people who were buried there. This painstaking investigation, carried out by a team of local researchers, has now established that for over forty years from 1851-95 more than 4,000 men, women and children, inmates of Eastville Workhouse, were buried in unmarked graves at Rosemary Green. It was also discovered that another 118 inmate's bodies were 'given to the medical school' for dissection from 1872-94.

Eastville Workhouse, constructed by Clifton Poor Law Union in 1847, was the largest workhouse in the Bristol area. Housing over a thousand inmates, it was an institution produced by the New Poor Law of 1834. Over nearly a century tens of thousands of Bristolians were forced, against their will and by circumstance, to enter the harsh regime of this and other workhouses; through unemployment, underemployment, pregnancy, sickness, injury, infirmity, age, mental health and learning difficulties or by being deserted or orphaned as a child. In 1948 the institution at 100 Fishponds Road became a home for the aged as part of the new welfare state and was demolished in 1972 to make way for East Park estate.

For members of Bristol Radical History Group (BRHG) capturing the history was not the only objective of the Eastville Workhouse project. We felt that this was not just a story to be researched or written about, but something which related to the people of Eastville and Bristol. The formation of Eastville Workhouse Memorial Group (EWMG) from a public meeting last summer not only demonstrated interest in the history of this neighbourhood, but also the wish to permanently memorialise the forgotten people of Rosemary Green.

In January this year a list of those interred at Rosemary Green was released on the BRHG website in tandem with a BBC TV programme about the forgotten graves in Eastville. There was a massive public reaction with several thousand people downloading the data to undertake family history research. Since then numerous people have discovered that their ancestors were buried in unmarked graves at the site and we have received many messages of support for the memorial project.

Today we will permanently mark the burial ground at Rosemary Green. It has been inspiring to work together as neighbours to put things right.

Memorial Unveiling Ceremony

Programme

11.00am Rosemary Green

Steve Mills (EWMG & BRHG)

Roger Ball (EWMG & BRHG)

Matthew Billington

Headteacher Paul Bull and pupils (May Park Primary School)

Mike Payne (GMB)

John James Bristol Foundation

Tina Goede (St Anne's Church, Greenbank)

Wendy Bull (EWMG)

Hazel Durn (EWMG)

Unveiling

Minute's silence

From 11.45am Refreshments and light buffet

At the Scout Resource Centre, Gadshill Rd, BS5 6PU
Up Greenbank View, second left.

Video and images of the project, bookstall and artefacts
will be on display.

Acknowledgements

Funding for the standing stone memorial came from the John James Bristol Foundation, to whom we owe many thanks. Important contributions to other aspects of the project have been received from Greater Fishponds Neighbourhood Partnership, Living Easton, National Union of Journalists, GMB Union, Bristol Radical History Group and the Hannah Purbrick memorial fund.

Stone mason and sculptor, Matthew Billington, has produced a poignant memorial which we hope will mark the site for centuries. Special thanks go to the pupils of May Park Primary School for creating designs for the standing stone. Their efforts were coordinated and encouraged by teachers Paul Bull, Francis Fey and Matt Ford.

Simon Peck and the 58th Bristol Scout Group deserve special thanks for allowing Eastville Workhouse Memorial Group to use the Scout Resource Centre for free over 2014-15. Thanks also go to Bristol City Council officers Georgie Bryant, Abdulrazak Dahir, Richard Fletcher, Richard Stransom, Adrian Murdoch and Teija Ahjokoski. The BCC Landscapes team, Mark, Paul and Terry also did an excellent job in installing the memorial at short notice.

Historical research into Eastville Workhouse and the burial ground at Rosemary Green was undertaken by Di Parkin, Roger Ball, Steve Mills, Alan Brown, Gloria Davey, Mike Davey, Trish Mensah, Mike Richardson, Helen Wheeler and Peter Box. Richard Grove, Mike Baker, Maureen Ball, Moira Martin, Jim McNeill, John Clevely, Stephen Dowle, Victor Thame, Pauline Hendy and Les Moore also made important contributions. The research was greatly assisted by Dawn Dyer and her colleagues at Bristol Central Reference Library and by Julian Warren, Allie Dillon, Malcolm Boyns and David Emeney of the Bristol Record Office.

This project has been realised by Eastville residents and supported by many others. Thanks go in particular to Hazel Durn, Trish Mensah, Steve Mills, Gloria Davey, Mike Jempson, Roger Ball, Wendy Bull, Alan Brown, Samuel Kelly, Claire Tidman, Pauline Hendy, Shanthie Wild, Keiron Farrow, Peter Box, Hugh Workman and Ruth Hecht.

The memorial is dedicated to all those who lived and died in Eastville Workhouse. Never Forgotten.

Eastville Workhouse Memorial Group, November 2015