

The Monument to Cholera Epidemics of 1832 & 1849



Most people, who enter the cemetery, do not realise why they are confronted by this remarkable memorial. How many are puzzled by the way in which the hedge detours around a rectangle?

The Monument is significant because it commemorates the death of **76 inhabitants** in the **Cholera Epidemic of 1832**, followed by another **54** in **1849** – **130** in total.

It also overlooks the **Cholera Burial Pit** of **108** of them.

Before 1832 it was accepted that people could be buried in the graveyard attached to their place of worship but, such was the increase in population, that these burial grounds were reaching full capacity.

Arrival of **Cholera** added to that demand but injected a real ingredient of fear.

Printer James Bennett acted as the unofficial chronicler of the pestilence: *“22nd August. It having been recommended by government, that burial places should be specially provided for the interment of bodies of those persons who died of cholera, the Directors of the Poor, at the request of the Board of Health, allowed a portion of the garden belonging to the house of industry (workhouse) to be used for that purpose. At night, seven corpses were accordingly conveyed there, and graves having been previously made, the funeral service was performed over the remains of the unfortunate persons, at mid-night by the Rev. Robert Hepworth, to whom the highest credit is due for the very proper manner in which he regularly fulfilled the arduous duties which this distressing occasion so frequently devolved upon him.”*



Shepherd Mead

Retirement Complex was the **Workhouse** from 1796 to 1948 when it became a hospital until 1980.



The Mythe Water Works

Built by Cheltenham, it provided clean water after 1864

Fear caused the despised **House of Industry [Workhouse]** to be the most suitable location for the graves and their burial at night.

The **1849** epidemic called for more desperate measures recorded by Bennett: *“as it now appeared probable that a larger piece of ground would be required for the interment of bodies of those who died of cholera, than could conveniently be spared from the garden of the union workhouse,....., it was ordered, that a large hole of great depth, should be sunk there; and from that time the corpses, and in some cases the bedding and wearing apparel of the deceased, were buried therein.”*

The last Cholera burial was 8 October 1849. In both epidemics the tax payers set up a *Board of Health* to tackle the crises: *“The afflicted and destitute poor were gratuitously supplied with meat, twice every week”*. By 1850 it was permanent and in 1854, it being declared that *“Tewkesbury was the dirtiest town in the kingdom”*, it was accepted that *“Mr T.W. Rammell be applied to make proper surveys and plans for the sewerage and water supply of the Town”*. There was no more **‘cholera morbus’** in Tewkesbury.

The Monument's Own History

This Monument is notable because the stone base once supported the **Russian Gun**, a trophy of the **Crimean War** [see **Victoria Pleasure Grounds**], and the distinctive iron shaft was made by **James Savory** of the High Street.

In 1855 it was erected at the Cross.



However, the Burial Board quickly offered the present site. Thomas Collins' offer to erect it for £10 was accepted.

In 1983 the Cholera Burial Pit became part of the Cemetery, watched over by its unique memorial.

For more information please read **Tewkesbury Municipal Cemetery** by **A. Skelsey** (2nd Edition 2012) + **CD Rom** with Cholera Burial **Register** or visit www.ths.freeuk.com © Tewkesbury Historical Society