

St John's Hospital

Cemetery



Aerial View of the cemetery. Source Google maps

Bracebridge Heath

1855 -1957

Revised November 2019

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St John's Hospital Cemetery 1855 - 1957

St John's Hospital Cemetery is situated to the south of the original St John's Hospital site on the east side of the A15. The public entrance to the cemetery is by foot off the A15 through an arch in the limestone wall. This limestone wall also runs part of the way along the southern cemetery boundary. The north and eastern cemetery boundaries are not walled and consist of hedges and fences of various ages.

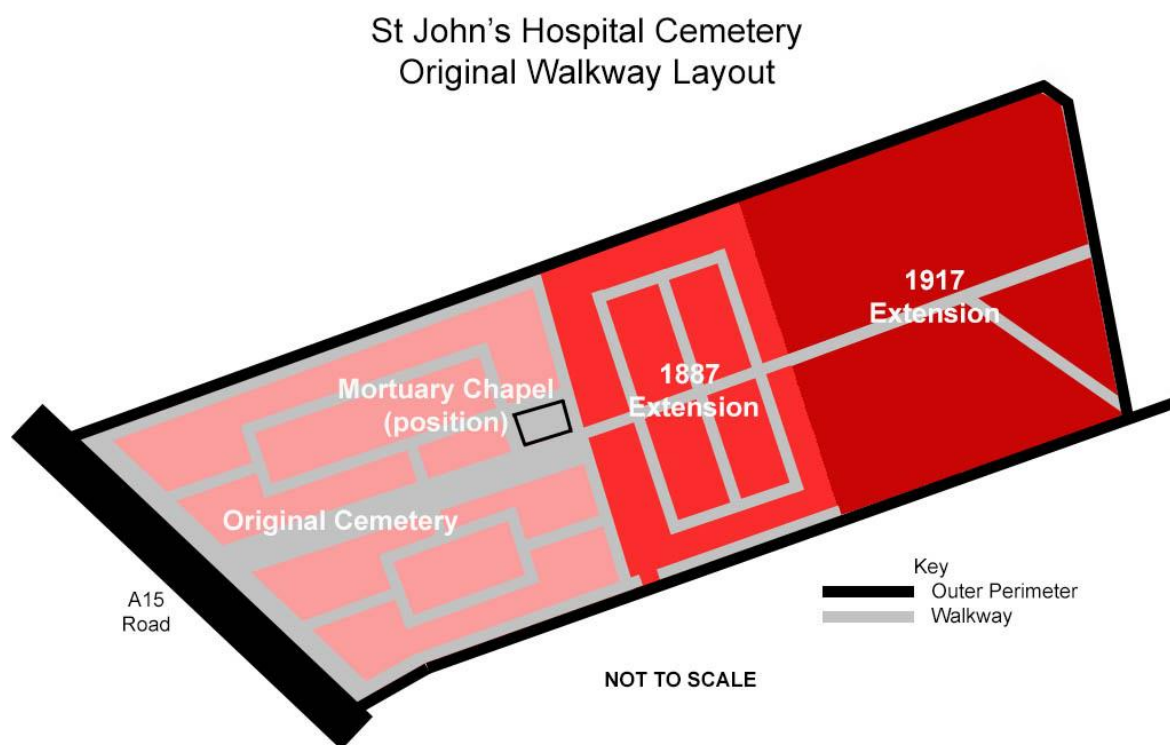


Picture 1 Entrance to the cemetery from the A15

The first burial in the cemetery was in May 1855 and the last was in November 1957. The cemetery is still consecrated ground¹³. Some relatives of those who are buried here still live within the village or surrounding area.

The plan of the cemetery held at Lincolnshire Archives shows that the cemetery was originally much smaller and was extended in 1887 and 1917. Each grave plot is nine feet by four feet six inches (In metric 2.74m x 1.37m). The majority of the grave plots

are aligned east to west but there are a significant number aligned north to south along the line of the original walkways. These walkways were used for burials as the cemetery became full.



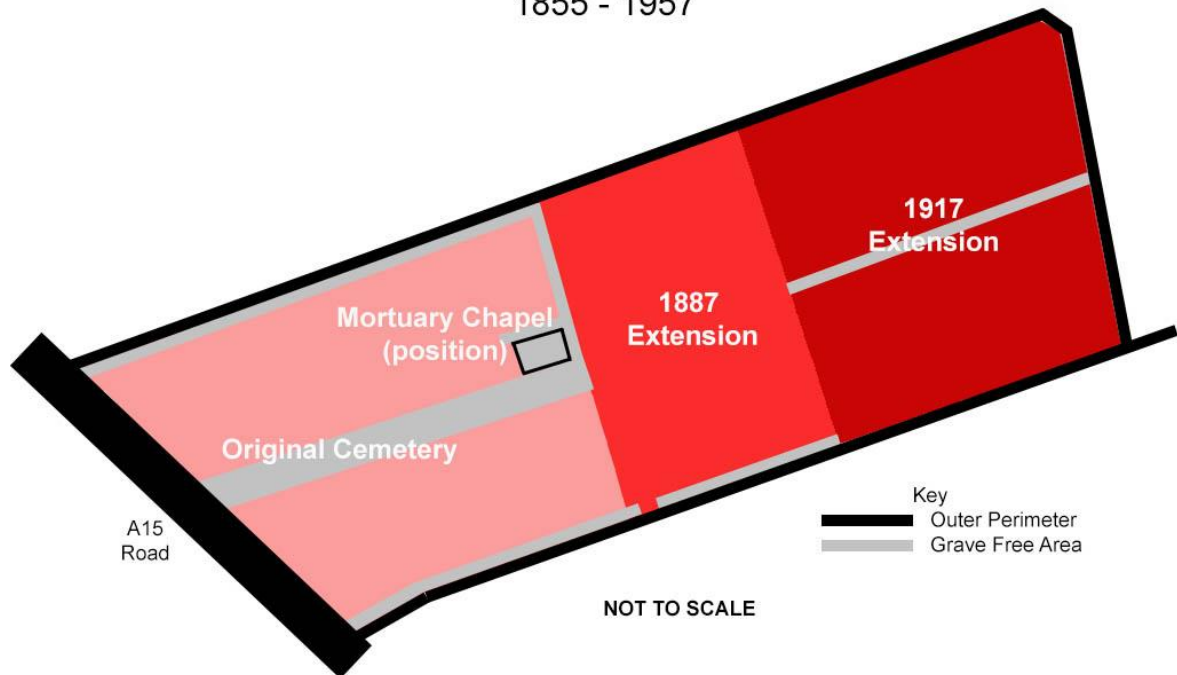
Drawing 1. Showing the original walkways within the cemetery

The information on Drawing 1 above is taken from old Ordnance Survey maps^{1,2,3} and the 1917 plan of grave plots^{4,5}. It shows the three phases of development and the layout of the original walkways. The Mortuary Chapel has since been demolished and removed and there is no easily visible evidence of its position in the cemetery.

The table below shows the length of time each part of the cemetery was used.

Length of time each part of the cemetery was used^{4,6,7}	
Original Cemetery	32 years
1887 extension	30 years
1917 extension	38 years

St John's Hospital Cemetery
1855 - 1957



Drawing 2. Showing the 3 phases of development and the grave free areas

Drawing 2 above shows the extensions to the cemetery and the grave-free areas. By comparing the two drawings it can be seen that the majority of the walkways are no longer in existence as they were used for burials. The walkway that runs across the cemetery today goes over at least fourteen grave plots (probably numbers 539 - 552) which were used between 1887 and 1917.

Record Book 1⁶ and the plan⁴ indicate that there are marker stones placed at intervals in the cemetery so that they can be used with a builder's tape to accurately find the position of each grave. At the present time it is not known if these marker stones are still there as they are not visible on the surface.

There are two record books of burials in the Lincolnshire Archives which cover the periods 1855 - 1888⁶ and 1920 -1957⁷ when the cemetery was closed to new burials. The record book/s which covers the 1887 extension and a few burials in the 1917 extension is missing, therefore it is not possible to know for certain how many times the grave plots were used. However, this extension was in use for a similar

time period as the original cemetery and the presence of a handwritten note in the first record book suggests that most grave plots were used at least once if not twice.

The record books show that the age of those buried in the cemetery ranges from young children to those in their nineties. The majority of burials appear to be of people over the age of thirty. Two examples showing the difference in ages are shown below

Grave	Registered Patient Number	Name	Age	Date
267	13153	Stanley White	7yrs	October 30 th 1922
354	4295	Ann Newton	91yrs	April 24 th 1926

The record books also show that many of the grave plots contain mixed burials as no attempt was made to ensure that only men or women were buried in each grave plot or were related to each other. Neither of the two record books show any burials apart from the hospital patients.

Patient records⁸ and the Visitor Minute Book⁹ (Appendix 3 and 4) show that ex-military personnel were patients at the hospital during WW1. All were ex-military as they had been discharged from the military before being admitted to the hospital. Many moved on to other hospitals or were discharged. The records show twelve ex-military and one Belgium soldier died while at the hospital. This number may increase as the 100 year rule means that not all WW1 records have been publically released.

The four married men who died were buried elsewhere^{10,11} but the burials for the remaining eight single men have not been found. There is circumstantial evidence that the single men may be buried in St John's Hospital Cemetery, but at the present time this cannot be proved as the Record Book/s of Burials is missing.

The Belgium Soldier (see Appendix 4) was originally buried in the cemetery but in 1985 after nearly seventy years he was moved to a Belgium War cemetery in Surrey^{10, 12}.

The available patient records do not show any other nationalities being patients at the hospital during World War One. There is no evidence in the second record book of burials⁷ covering the Second World War of any forces personnel or of any prisoners of war being buried in the cemetery. There is evidence of burials after the World War Two of patients whose names suggest that their families may originally have lived in Europe probably Poland.

The Original Cemetery 1855 to 1887^{4,6}



Picture 2. Showing a view across the original cemetery from the arched entrance on the A15

The original cemetery has 771 grave plots labelled 1 to 747 and 1 to 24 in Roman numerals.

The majority of the graves plots are aligned east to west. The grave plots aligned north-south are shown on the table below

Original Cemetery: Grave plots aligned north - south
Positioned next to the western limestone wall 246, 287, 324, 348 503 543, 661-667
Positioned on the edge of walkways 184, 187, 214, 235, 261, 270, 276, 299, 568, 747 X, LX

At first the grave plots are set out in blocks separated by the walkways. Grave plot 1 is positioned in the south east corner of this part of the cemetery. The last block is in the north-west corner with the last grave plot numbered 568.

The grave plots numbered from 568 to 747 are located along the walkways starting with the walkways located south of the public entrance walkway.

The Roman numeral grave plots are positioned in three separate areas. There are two blocks of four. One block is south of the entrance walkway in the centre of that area. The other block is in a corresponding position north of the entrance walkway. The rest of the Roman numeral plots are spaced among the other grave plots on the northern boundary to the cemetery.

There is no information in the record book regarding the twenty-four Roman numeral grave plots. They may be a later addition and may be recorded in the missing record book/s.

Today the only areas in this part of the cemetery that do not have grave plots are:

- A strip of land, approximately four feet wide along the northern boundary of the cemetery.
- A strip of land, approximately four feet wide along the southern boundary of the cemetery
- The central walkway, approximately twelve feet wide leading from the public entrance to the cemetery on Sleaford Road to the position of mortuary chapel. The walkway is approximately 210 feet in length.
- A strip of land, approximately four feet wide from the north eastern end of the mortuary chapel to the northern boundary
- The mortuary chapel plot and the walkway around it. (Approximately forty–five feet long by thirty-six feet wide.)

The record book for this part of the cemetery shows that the each grave plot (1 - 747) was used twice and grave plots 1 to 51 were used three times.

Original cemetery: Dates grave plot number 1 used for burials.
20 th May 1855
27 th February 1874
April 11 th 1887

The last date that this cemetery was used was for grave plot number 51 on 18th August 1888.

The 1887 Extension

This 1887 extension has 552 grave plots numbered 1 to 552 the majority are aligned east to west. Grave plots aligned north to south are shown in the table below.

1887 extension: Grave plots aligned north - south
Positioned one grave plot length in from the 1887 cemetery extension's western boundary 350 – 369
Positioned on the eastern boundary of the 1887 cemetery extension 531 – 539, 437 – 445

The layout of the walkways in this extension are shown in Diagram 1. At the centre of each of the four rectangles made by the walkways are nine feet square plots which do not have graves. Presumably these are for the planting of trees or shrubs.

The numbering of the grave plots starts approximately 13 feet in from the centre of western end of this extension and increases in a southward direction. After which the numbering goes in blocks between the walkways starting with the most southerly block. Graves numbered 389 to 552 are not in these blocks but on the walkways shown on Drawing 1.

Drawing 2 shows that very little is left of the original walkways and that there is no clear route from the original cemetery to the 1917 extension. To go from the mortuary chapel to the 1917 extension walkways means that you have to traverse thirteen graves (539 - 552)

Today the only areas in this part of the cemetery that do not have grave plots are:

- A strip of land, approximately four feet wide along the southern boundary of the cemetery.
- The four nine feet square plots at the centre of each rectangle formed by the original walkways.

The record book/s for this part of the cemetery is missing but a handwritten note in the first record book suggests that all the grave plots were used once and numbers 1 to 529 were used twice

1887 Extension: Dates grave plot number 1 used for burials. (according to handwritten note)
January 1888
July 1908

NOTE

If anyone knows of the location of this missing record book/s please get in touch with Lincolnshire Archives or the author through the Clerk to Bracebridge Heath Parish Council.

The 1917 Extension ^{4,5,7}



Picture 2 View of the cemetery (2016) taken from the Hump looking westward

The 1917 extension is shown on two maps. The 1917⁴ addition has 754 grave plots and a later map⁵ which shows 759 grave plots. The record book shows that there are indeed 759 grave plots. The additional plots were achieved by the removal of two nine feet squares and three grave plots (numbers 294, 295, 296) being placed in the area that should have contained two graves plots. Only a few graves in this section are aligned north to south, the rest are east to west.

1917 extension: Grave plots aligned north – south
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Positioned on the eastern boundary of the 1917 cemetery extension 744 - 748 and 749 - 753
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Unlike the other two sections of this cemetery the grave plots were not set out in blocks. They are in rows starting in the north western corner. Each row has forty grave plots, and the numbering follows an up and down pattern (i.e. grave plot

number 41 is next to number 40) The exception to the number of grave plots in a row is the row with grave plots 294 to 296 which has 41 graves and grave plots above 718, as the eastern cemetery boundary line means the last two rows are much shorter.

The layout of the walkways in this extension are shown on Diagram 1. There were only two walkways:

- a central east-west walkway from the 1887 extension to the former quarry, which is now known locally as The Hump.
- a walkway which veered off the central walkway to the southern edge of the quarry. This walkway, although shown on the Ordnance Survey map³, was not shown on either of the two plans of 1917 cemetery extension.

Today the only areas of this extension not covered by grave plots is the central walkway which is approximately four and a half feet wide and two nine feet square plots situated between grave plots 209 - 210 and 227 – 228.

The record book that covers the 1917 extension starts at grave plot number 125 on 2nd January 1920. The records for numbers 1 to 174 are presumed to be in the missing record book/s covering 1888 to 1920.

All the grave plots were used once and graves number 2 to 285 were used twice. The records indicate that grave plot number 1 was only used once but no reason is given as to why it was not reused. The date of the original burial will have been around 1917

1917 Extension: Dates grave plot number 2 used for burials.
1917 (assumed)
Sept 1940

The record book finishes on page 80 with the last recorded burial in St John's Hospital Cemetery. After this date the cemetery was no longer used. The record of the last burial is shown below.

Grave	Registered Patient Number	Name	Age	Date
285	2339/16199	Alice Flint	70yrs	November 27 th 1957

Footnote

The Cemetery remains consecrated ground, but was not used after November 1957. When the hospital was closed in December 1989 it gradually fell into disrepair. The cemetery was meant to be kept in good order and regularly mowed by the various St John's Hospital owners, but this was not always done.

The Cemetery is now looked after by Bracebridge Heath Parish Council on behalf of the village. It was transferred to Parish Council ownership on the 8th February 2016 as part of the conditions of development by MABEC of the surviving St John's Hospital Buildings and grounds.

Appendix 1

Total number of grave plots and burials in St John's Hospital Cemetery

Cemetery section	Grave Plots	Burials
Original Cemetery	747 + 24*	1545 + 24*
1887 Extension	552	1081**
1917 Extension	759	1044
TOTAL	2082	3694

* These 24 grave plots are labelled in Roman numerals. There is no record of how many times each grave plot was used.

** The record book/s is missing for the 1887 extension but a note included in the original cemetery record book suggests that this is the minimum number of burials.

If anyone know of the whereabouts of the missing Record Book/s of Burials for 1888 to 1920, please inform Lincolnshire Archives or the author through the Parish Council Clerk

Appendix 2

Transcript from the front pages of the Record Book of Burials 1855 -1888

Home Office Regulations as to internments

1. The area of the burial ground should be under drained to such depth and to such effective manner as shall prevent the accumulation of water in any vault or grave therein.
2. There shall be a sufficiency of roads and pathways within the burial ground to afford access to the graves, and such roads and pathways are to be constructed of hard materials and to be properly guttered and drained in such manner that the surface water shall be carried away.
3. The whole area of the burial ground which may from time to time be used for interments, is to be divided into grave spaces, in such manner that the position of every grave space may be readily distinguished.
4. A plan of the burial ground is to be made, on which every grave space is to be marked.
5. A register of graves is to be kept, in which shall be registered every grave space in the burial ground, together with the name, age and date of interment of every occupant of such grave.
6. Every grave space in the burial ground is to be designated by letter or numerals, or by some other convenient marks, which shall tally with similar marks designating such grave space on the plan of the burial ground and the register of graves.
7. The grave space set aside for each person of the age of 16 years and upwards shall be, at the least nine feet long and four feet wide.
8. Applies to young persons
9. Applies to children
10. Each grave shall be dug as near as may be in the middle of the grave space.
11. No more than one body shall be buried in any vault or grave, except in a vault or grave purchased for the exclusive use of a family.
12. Applies to vaults
13. Applies to family graves.
14. No interment shall take place in the grave of any person of the age of sixteen and upwards without a covering of earth four feet in thickness, at the least, measuring from the upper surface of the coffin to the ordinary level of the ground.

15. Applies to young persons

16. Applies to children

17. No grave in which an interment has taken place, except if it is a vault or grave purchased for the use of a family, shall be reopened for another interment until after the expiration of stated periods of time, that is today,

No grave in which a person of the age of sixteen years and upwards has been buried shall be reopened for another interment until after fourteen years from the time when such person shall have been buried.

(Regulations applying to young persons and children follow)

But if, on opening any grave, the corpse last interned therein shall be found undecayed, the remains shall not be disturbed, but such grave shall be filled in again with earth, and shall not be used for another interment until the complete decay of such corpse shall have taken place.

18. Wherever a burial has taken place (except in a private vault) the grave shall be forthwith filled up with earth, and the surface shall be covered with fresh turf, or be planted with shrubs, or other suitable vegetation, unless a monument is to be erected on it, but in no case shall the bare earth be left exposed.

19. Care shall be taken that the grave spaces, monuments, roads, pathways, buildings etc., and the whole surface of the burial ground, be kept in a proper state of neatness, and that nothing offensive to the public decency be permitted within the ground

The plan of the Cemetery is drawn on the scale of 1/16th of an inch to a foot

The grave spaces are 9 feet long and 4 feet 6 inches wide

The small black squares on the plan correspond with the measuring stones sunk to the surface of the burial ground, by means of which and a builders tape measure the exact position of every grave may be readily determined

The internments are to follow in the same order as the numbers on the plan.

Memorandum

A flat stone only, level with the ground, not larger than 3 feet long by 2 feet wide, having simply the Name, Age and Date of Death inserted on it, and without either headstone or footstone, allowed to be placed over any grave in the Asylum cemetery.

Appendix 3

Transcript of Minutes from St John's Hospital – with reference to Military patients. Taken from Visitors Minute Book 1911 -1917. Showing that the Military Personnel were treated at St John's but had been discharged from the Army/Navy before being committed.

Joint meeting House and Contract and Finance committees held at the asylum Bracebridge 4th March 2015 (Page 2022)

That the visitors approve the resolution of the conference held at Wakefield on 15th February 1915, relative to the requirements of the War Office for Asylum Accommodation and that the Chairman and Medical Superintendent and Clerk make the necessary arrangements for the provision and accommodation required.

Joint meeting House and Contract and Finance committees held at the asylum Bracebridge 14th Sept 1916 (Page 2211)

Read a letter from the Board of Control of 23rd August, relative to the cases of soldiers and sailors whose mental condition is due to the war and who the board suggests should be received and treated as a distinctive class of patient.

Resolved that the committee do not approve the resolutions passed on the subject by the Birmingham Asylum Committee.

Joint meeting House and Contract and Finance committees held at the asylum Bracebridge 12th October 1916 (Page 2215)

Resolved that the following resolution be sent to the Board of Control. That the visitors of Bracebridge Heath Asylum are of the opinion that the ordinary pauper asylum is not the best place for dealing with discharged soldiers, suffering under mental derangement, but that other provision should be made for their reception and treatment.

Appendix 4

1. The only Foreign Soldier found in the Male Patients Record Book⁸ is shown below. (Only records that could be seen were up to September 1917 due to the 100 year Rule)

Jules Vandamma, Belgium Soldier. (Patient Number 11364)

The Later evidence shows that his name was actually Henri Jules Van Damme not Jules Vandamme as shown in his patient files.

Jules was born in West Flanders on 13th July 1892¹². He was 22 years old and single when he was admitted to St John's Hospital on the 4th November 1914 from the 4th Northern Hospital Lincoln. He had been wounded during fighting in Antwerp and evacuated to England. His medical notes stated that he had become insane through the shock and horror of war.

Jules died of Pneumonia on 15th April 1916.

Jules was buried in the hospital cemetery and was not repatriated to Belgium. It is suggested in a newspaper article from 1985 that he was buried with full military honours. Older residents who played in the cemetery remember a grave stone to a Belgium Soldier. This is where Jules would have stayed but for the proposed closure of St John's Hospital. The hospital administrators wrote to the War Graves Commission who contacted the Belgium Embassy.

In January 1985 the Lincolnshire Echo¹³ reported that with the permission of the Home Secretary Jules' body was exhumed from St John's Cemetery in the presence of various officials and reinterred at Brookfield Military Cemetery in Surrey¹² among other Belgium soldiers. His grave is marked with a war grave's headstone which bears his name, the date he died and 'Gestorvan voor Belgie'. (Died for Belgium)

2. The male patient record book showed that twelve ex-military men had died from 1914 to 1917, four were married and eight were single. It has been possible to trace the burial records of all four married men. Three are buried in Grimsby and one in Lincoln. The burial records of all eight single men have not been found using the on line web-sites and archive records available to the researcher.

3. Extracts from one of the eight single ex-military personnel's Army Record¹⁰ and St John's Hospital Patient Record⁸, whose burial site at the time of writing is unknown.

Joseph Moss Army number 5234, 5th Lancers was committed to St John's Hospital (Bracebridge Pauper Asylum at that time) on 7th June 1915. He was 36 years old and army records show he was single. The hospital had his marital status down as unknown. His mother lived in Grimsby. Medical notes state that he was suffering from battle shock and had delusions about being killed.

Joseph's army and hospital records (Patient 11517) state:

- 9th December 1899 Joined the army - Corps of Lancers of the Line
- 1901 -1902 served in South Africa (Boer War) in the Lancers. Awarded the Queen's South African Medal and King's South African Medal
- 24th August 1903 transferred to the 5th Lancers
- 3rd October 1911 reengaged for a further four years, in the Lancers
- 23rd February 1915 4th Northern Hospital Lincoln. Joseph was invalided here from the Expeditionary Force in France
- 29th May 1915 Discharged from the service having served 15years 240days. (Discharge confirmed 29th July 1915)
- 7th June 1915 Admitted St John's Hospital (Confirmed by his army record)
- 29th July 1915 Classified as insane (UK Army Register of effects 1901–1929)
- 2nd April 1917 Joseph died from General Paralysis at St John's Hospital

Throughout his army career he was a Private and his Military Character was good.

Appendix 5

Over the years St John's Hospital has been known by different names, some of which have been interchangeable as is shown in the table below.

Different names of St John's Hospital ²⁷

1852 -1893	Lincolnshire County Lunatic Asylum or Lincolnshire County Pauper Lunatic Asylum
1894 - 1915	Lincolnshire Lunatic Asylum
1897-1898	Lindsey, Holland, Lincoln and Grimsby District Pauper Lunatic Asylum
1903-1920	Lincolnshire Asylum
1898-1902	Bracebridge Pauper Lunatic Asylum
1902-1919	Bracebridge District Lunatic Asylum
1919-1948	Bracebridge Mental Hospital
1930-1938	Lincolnshire Mental Hospital
1939-1960	Bracebridge Heath Hospital
1961-1989	St John's Hospital, Bracebridge Heath
The hospital was also used as a wartime Emergency Hospital in the period 1940-1943, and a few records of this function survive with the asylum records at Lincolnshire Archives.	

Meeting of the Building Committee 13th July 1852

The meeting resolved the Asylum (hospital) will be opened on the 3rd August 1852 for 266 patients. To be filled progressively starting with 100 patients

Quote from the minutes

"A letter from the vicar of Bracebridge concerning the size of the churchyard having been read (the meeting) ordered that the Clerk do write to the vicar and inform him that the visitors would in due time take into consideration the expediency of a cemetery on the asylum ground"

The minute book for the time between 1852 and the opening of the hospital cemetery in May 1855 is not available and would probably make good reading as the vicar of Bracebridge was correct in being worried about the number of burials that may arise from the hospital.

Between September 30th 1852 and May 25th 1855 there were 67 burials of hospital patients in the Bracebridge Cemetery. The vicar recorded every instant when the person to be buried had been a patient at the hospital.

Appendix 6 Number of burials per year

Year	Grave Plot numbers	Number of burials		Year	Grave Plot numbers	Number of burials
1855	1-15	15		1920	175-207	33
1856	16-31	16		1921	208-239	32
1857	32-51	20		1922	240-271	32
1858	52-90	39		1923	272-296	25
1859	91-112	22		1924	297-317	21
1860	113-171	59		1925	318-347	30
1861	172-207	36		1926	348-368	21
1862	208-237	30		1927	369-398	30
1863	238-277	40		1928	399-424	26
1864	298-311	14		1929	425-458	34
1865	312-344	33		1930	459-499	41
1866	345-393	49		1931	500-534	35
1867	394-444	51		1932	535-575	41
1868	445-510	66		1933	576-600	25
1869	511-557	47		1934	601-627	27
1870	558-600	43		1935	628-645	18
1871	601-650	50		1936	646-669	24
1872	651-695	45		1937	670-694	25
1873	696-739	44		1938	695-711	17
1874	740-747 / 1-45	54		1939	712-739	28
1875	46-113	68		1940	740-759 / 2-4	23
1876	114-167	54		1941	5-19	15
1877	168-219	52		1942	20-34	15
1878	220-273	54		1943	35-43	9
1879	274-335	62		1944	44-53	10
1880	336-386	51		1945	54-67	14
1881	387-433	47		1946	68-94	27
1882	434-476	43		1947	95-110	16
1883	477-535	59		1948	111-126	16
1884	536-608	73		1949	127-143	17
1885	609-666	58		1950	144-161	18
1886	667-727	61		1951	162-185	24
1887	728-747 / 1-51	72		1952	186-201	16
				1953	202-217	16
Record book missing from 1888-1920				1954	218-234	17
				1955	235-246	12
				1956	247-262	16
				1957	263-285	23

References

Ordnance survey maps covering Bracebridge Heath

1. 1887 - 1889 Scale 1:2,500
2. 1905 - 1907 Scale 1:2,500
3. 1932 Scale 1:2,500

The following reference materials are in the Lincolnshire Archives

4. HOSP/ST JOHN'S 1/16/1 Plan of cemetery, showing plot numbers but no names (blue linen) 1917
5. HOSP/ST JOHN'S 1/16/2 Plan of Cemetery, showing plot numbers but no names (print) 1917
6. Record Book 1: HOSP/ST JOHN'S 1/15/1 Register of graves 1855 -1888
7. Record Book 2: HOSP/ST JOHN'S 1/15/2 Register of graves (The cemetery was closed in 1957) 1920 -1957
8. Male Patients records: HOSP/ST JOHN'S 2/13/13 Male case book 1914 - 1917
9. Visitor Minute Book HOSP/ST JOHN'S 1/1/10 1911 -1917

Websites

10. Ancestry – Military Records
11. Deceased online
12. Findagrave.com

Other

13. Lincolnshire Echo Monday January 14th 1985 –Soldier's body is exhumed.
14. Parish Council minutes

Acknowledgements

This document has been produced for Bracebridge Heath Parish Council
Woodland and Cemetery Development Sub Committee

The author has endeavoured to check all the information but if there are errors or omissions, the author would appreciate you letting the Parish Clerk know so that the document can be corrected and improved.

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