FACT SHEET 11

The Grimsley Family of Memorial Sculptors



PATENTED TERRA-COTTA 30s. MEMORIALS (Stone Colour). Acknowledged, after 25 years, to be more durable than stone or iron. Height about 4 ft., alike both sides. Christian artistic designs. Illustrated sheets and testimonials free. The Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Oxford, after visiting the Works, writes—"There are many persons who are unable to erect Monuments in stone to whom your Memorials will be of great service. In most respects they appear to me to be very good, &c." HENRY GRIMSLEY, Sculptor, Designer, & Supervisor of Marble, &c., Department. F. GRIMSLEY, Sculptor, ditto of Terra Cotta Branch. Orders, &c., to WINDETT WOODS, Managing Director, Oxford Artistic, &c., Co., Limited, Walton-street, Oxford.

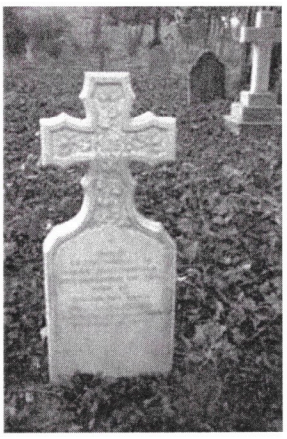
Advert for Grimsley Patented Terra-cotta memorials 1886
Jackson's Journal

Thomas Grimsley, an Oxfordshire man, trained as a sculptor and terracotta maker in London. Married with a young family he moved to Oxford in the late 1830's and settled in St Giles', at first in St Mary Magdalen parish and later in St Giles' parish. He was a competent but not inspired sculptor, able to work in marble, stone or clay. He also understood the firing technology of converting clay casting into hard ceramic terracotta. In addition to creating quality church monuments and memorial tablets he had interests in fireproof construction, the supply of terracotta building materials, garden ornaments and grave markers. Working with his sons, Grimsley developed his business after 1850 as a major Oxford supplier of masonry memorial sculpture and grave markers. The opening of the three Church of England cemeteries at Jericho, Osney and Holywell in 1848 created a new demand for memorials which could be met from the Grimsley's yard in St Giles. Grimsley's sons Henry and Frederick continued the business into the 1890's after their father's death in 1875.



Grimsley Patented Memorial before and after restoration





Grimsley Patented Memorials
after restoration

At the bottom of Grimsley's memorial price range were terracotta grave markers in a wide range of designs and made since the 1840's. These were sold to purchasers situated all over Southern middle England, from the River Severn to Kent, and between Birmingham and Southampton. The majority were produced in the 1870's and were products of Henry and Frederick's workshop. Distinctively the terracotta markers can have an impressed potter's mark on the side near the base. Generally reading GRIMSLEY OXFORD, the sons often added H + F in front or used the words GRIMSLEYS PATENT alone or with OXFORD below. Terracotta is a coarse heavy fired ceramic with a smooth external surface, generally a buff to pink colour. The grave markers are cast in moulds, sometimes made in two parts and bonded together. Dedication inscriptions are cut into the terracotta or placed on an applied stone tablet or more rarely painted. The appearance of the markers reflects the character and symbolism of the Christian tradition developed in the nineteenth Century Gothic Revival. The use of the IHS monogram for the name of Jesus and the representation of Jesus as the Good Shepherd are typical.

Three of these terracotta grave markers can be found in Ss Mary & John Churchyard. All have the impressed GRIMSLEY PATENT potter's mark. The marker (D19) erected in memory of Mary Shillingford who died in 1879 has an inscription of cut letters (her daughter's name being added in 1914). Being broken and damaged it was reconstructed and reset by the conservator Michael Eastham in 2006. A second marker (D192) records Annie Gordon, who died in 1886, where the dedication is added in black painted lettering. The third marker (D205) is blank, possibly having lost its painted lettering, as no trace can be seen of an applied tablet. Mary Shillingford's marker records "HER END WAS PEACE" and Annie Gordon's dedication ends with a quotation from 2 Corinthians 4.17: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory".

Grimsley Terracotta markers may also be found in Jericho and Holywell cemeteries and other Oxford churchyards. Ceramic grave markers are not common in England and the Grimsley series is the largest. The only comparable but smaller series is made up of grave markers made at the Compton Pottery in Surrey in the first half of the twentieth Century.

John Ashdown MBE. Hon MA Oxon. FSA. IHBC

formerly Conservation Officer with Oxford City Council Town Planning Office

August 2006

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FACT SHEET 12

The Trinity Labyrinth

The labyrinth, composed of a pathway of ceramic tiles set into cobbles, is the centre piece of a small landscaped area between the north side of the Church and the Cowley Road. It forms part of the welcome into the churchyard. Installed in 2003, it is the result of a community-led public arts programme called **Insite**, spearheaded by **fusion** - Oxford's community arts agency. As part of their commission, the artists Emily Fuller and Helen MacKeith ran a series of participatory art workshops in which the design was conceived and the individual ceramic tiles made. Participants came from a variety of Mental Health Services (The Learning Centre, Oxford Survivors, Gemini, Acorn, The Third Monday Group, Oasis and the Warneford Hospital) as well as from the Church congregation.



The design of the pathway, with its three equal and connected lobes, is based on the Christian Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). It is set into a circle, which symbolises unity, universality and eternity. It is reminiscent of designs found in Celtic art. The central circular feature has polished pebbles and gemstones with floral relief impressions that recall the famous labyrinth in Chartres Cathedral and patterns in Ss Mary & John's stained glass windows. Individual tiles in the pathway include personal symbols and labyrinths, flora and fauna from the churchyard, historical references and original poems.

The predominant colours are green and gold, which have significance in the Anglican Church year: green reflecting the majority of the year with gold for high festivals such as Easter and Christmas. Green also is in keeping with this area being the "green lung" of East Oxford, with gold representing the sun, source of light and energy.

In 2005, three benches or "sitting walls" were built on an outer circle round the labyrinth. These too were the result of consultations between the artists, the congregation and the community, together with a couple of workshops learning the art of making mosaics. The mosaic inscriptions on the benches are "Source of all being", "Eternal Word" and "Holy Spirit". Visitors can rest here, within sight and sound of the busy Cowley Road, in relative peace, and let their minds and spirits explore the intricacy and simplicity of the labyrinth. Children too find it intriguing and love playing on the stepping stones leading into it.

Website:

http://www.fusion-arts.org/

FACT SHEET 13

Pented timber crosses and cast iron crosses



Graves of Cowley Fathers, now replaced by a stone celtic Cross

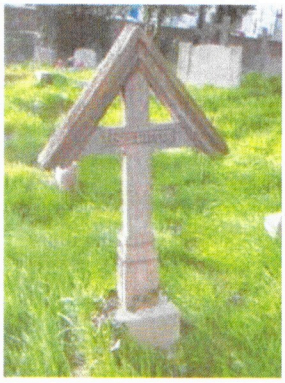
A characteristic feature of the gravemarkers in the churchyard is the pented (roofed) timber crosses, dating from the 1890s to the 1930s. They are constructed of oak, each has a roof (cap), originally covered with lead, which extends beyond the arms, and some have an inscription such as *Jesu Mercy* carved on the cross bar. Two have a small moulded metal crucifix and there is evidence that others did also. Many are badly decayed and some have collapsed completely.

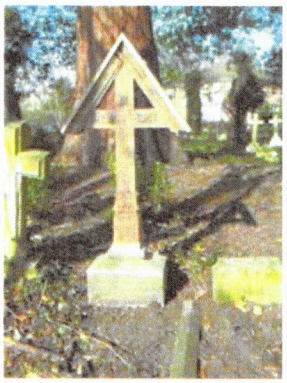
A number of explanations for their relatively high number have been put forward:

1. Timber was less expensive than the stone used for many of the memorials.
2. There was a simplicity about a timber cross that made it the preferred gravemarker for the graves of members of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist (see fact sheet 6 Religious Orders). Maybe this encouraged the association of pented timber crosses with the Anglo-Catholic tradition within the Church of England.
3. Wood decays at a similar rate to the human body, making it a suitable material for marking a grave.

Despite the third suggestion, since the crosses have clearly been a feature of the Ss Mary & John churchyard but are now in a very dilapidated state, it was decided to commission a series of repairs and replacements that would preserve a representative sample of the timber cross types. This has been undertaken by Paul Simons of McCurdy & Co., historic timber consultants and conservators, who began the restoration work by surveying the existing timber crosses and the surviving plinth stones where the cross itself has disappeared. He also removed two of the broken crosses to their workshops in order to study them in detail.

These broken crosses represented the two most prevalent designs, one referred to as 'Complex' due to the nature of the mouldings on the two sloping capping pieces and on the plinth of the upright post. The other is referred to as 'Simple' because it has plain mouldings and detail. Some, but not all, of both types carry a carved inscription. Two McCurdy trainees, David Fortey and Peter Surrey, produced measured survey drawings showing the condition of each and also workshop drawings that would assist the repair and replication work (see timber cross drawings)

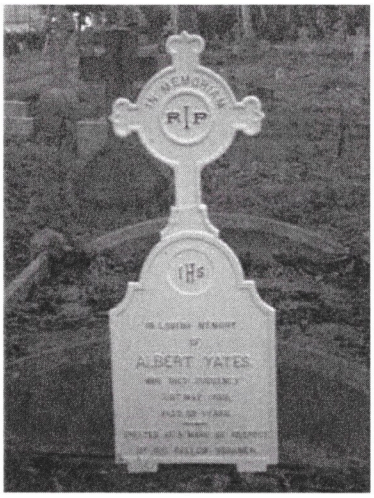




Timber crosses

The restoration work has resulted in one completely new cross of each type, three repaired complex crosses, two new 'markers' (upright posts only) of each type to mark graves where the plinth stone still survives but where the timber is very decayed or missing, and two repaired crosses from the 1930s which were rotting badly having been fixed directly into the ground. One grave had the remains of a complete timber surround and this has been replaced in new timber. A number of minor repairs have been carried out to wedge decaying bases or provide sacrificial cappings. This is well illustrated in the 'before' and 'after' photos, but what is even more important is the impact on the overall character of the churchyard and its power to convey something of the history of east Oxford and its people.

Iron crosses



Albert Yates memorial

There are also a few gravemarkers in cast iron, of the circle cross type (a collection of photos of cast iron gravemarkers is on the Churchmouse Website, now kept as a memorial to its founder, Peter Fairweather, who died in 2006). Peter Fairweather reckoned that the significance of the cast iron crosses was:

1. They were cheap.
2. They could be ordered by mail order and delivered by Rail.
3. The churchwarden could order one for you.
4. They could be ordered complete with inscription or plain for painting details on.
5. They have lasted the ravages of time.

The last is not wholly true: the ones in Ss Mary & John churchyard are very rusty.

One that is definitely not covered by the generalisations, and that has been expertly restored, is a memorial (B155) to Albert Yates, who died in1899. It is set at the foot of the family grave in which he is buried, and includes the inscription 'erected as a mark of respect by his fellow workmen'. This suggests that he was himself a blacksmith, probably working in the neighbourhood.

Website:

www.churchmousewebsite.co.uk

www.mccurdyco.com

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FACT SHEET 14

The Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry in the First World War

The First World War (1914-18) claimed the lives of 1,146,982 British and Commonwealth men and women. Twenty-nine are buried (or commemorated) in the Churchyard. In addition, there are 185 named on the Roll of Honour - rather a lot from a small parish. Most fought with the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and would have been volunteers as there was no conscription before 1916.

The Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (Ox and Bucks, for short, or O.B.L.I) had a busy time of it in World War One. They fought in many areas of battle, from the Western Front in France and Belgium to Mesopotamia (where Iraq is today). They won many gallantry honours, including two Victoria Crosses, but sustained terrible casualties, especially on the Somme in 1916 and at Ypres in 1917.

The Ox and Bucks arrived on the **Western Front** in 1914 and were one of the first divisions of the British Expeditionary Force **(BEF)** to arrive in France. The Battalion took part in the first British Battle of the War at **Mons**, where they defeated the German forces they met on August 23rd. They also halted the German advance at the **First Battle of the Marne** on the 5th/9th of September. These were significant victories, but after this, things took a turn for the worse as the 2nd OX and Bucks took part in the First Battle of Ypres (Wipers to the troops) between October 19th and November 22nd. That saw the heart ripped out of the regular army, with 54,000 casualties. However the Ox and Bucks helped prevent the Germans from capturing Ypres in Belgium and the 2nd Battalion defeated the elite Prussian Guard, well-known as brave and ruthless fighters, at **Nonne Bosschen Wood**. They prevented their advance then went on to rout them.

Perhaps **Private Frederick Dawson**, who fought with the 2nd Battalion and is commemorated in the Churchyard (CO67) was there. It's more likely, however, that he was a volunteer and would still have been in training in 1914. The First Battle of Ypres was the last major battle of 1914.

In 1915, things got worse. At the **Battle of Festubert**, launched to support the French, the Ox and Bucks suffered 400 casualties in **May 1915**, their largest number so far. They also saw action in the terrible **Battle of Loos** (in which Rudyard Kipling's son, Christopher, was killed) in **September 1915**. Perhaps **Private Lynn**, commemorated at CO65 was there.

The Ox and Bucks were alone when they attacked the Hohenzollern Redoubt in October 1915 and fought bravely, again sustaining casualties. Yet worse was still to come, on the First Day of the **Battle of the Somme** on July 1st 1916. This was the worst day in British military history in which the army suffered 60,000 casualties in one day, and over two hundred thousand by the time the battle ended (check figures).

The Ox and Bucks served throughout the Battle of the Somme from July to November 18th, suffered very heavy losses and enduring unimaginable horrors, especially at **Mametz Wood** (commemorated in a famous poem by Robert Graves) and **Pozieres.** They also suffered at **Ancre**, the next battle, and at the **Arras** Offensive from **April to May 1917**.

A further test of endurance came during the **Battle of Passchendaele** (Third Ypres) between **July 31st and November 6th 1917**. Despite heavy rain, the Commanders wouldn't call off the attack and as the ground turned to liquid mud, the men had to fight on, and die in their tens of thousands, many having **no known grave** because of the conditions. These men, whose bodies were never found, are commemorated at **Tyne Cot** Cemetery and at the **Menin Gate** Memorial in Ypres, Belgium where the local fire brigade still play the Last Post today every evening. One of these missing men, also commemorated at CH31, is Private **Cedric Horace Veary**, aged 23. Perhaps he was killed at **Polygon Wood,** or on the **Menin Road**, which was where the Ox and Bucks fought at this time. His name is also mentioned on the Menin Gate Memorial.

Later that autumn, the Ox and Bucks took part in the first battle of the war where tanks were used: **Cambrai**. It was the last major battle of 1917. And it was still stalemate. And it remained so until the Germans launched their almost successful counter-attack on **March 21st 1918** - their attempt to defeat the British before the Americans arrived. This was the **Ludendorff Offensive**, and involved the most enormous casualties. Tragically, the British Army was practically pushed right back to where they started from, causing the Ox and Bucks to suffer yet more heavy casualties as they desperately tried to defend the Somme (which had cost so many of their comrades their lives in 1916). Those who were killed or missing in these battles to gain then defend the Somme are commemorated at the **Thiepval Memorial** in France. One of them is Raph Spencer Beddin who was killed at the age of 25 and who is also commemorated at this family grave (E114)

They fought hard to hold the lines against this onslaught throughout the Spring of 1918, in the Somme area and at the Battle of the Lys. This wasn't easy and it took until August before the Germans were pushed back again: their Offensive had failed.

Between August and November, when the War finally ended, the Ox and Bucks were engaged in pushing the German retreat in a counter-offensive (fighting back) at the **Second Battle of Albert** and the **Second Battle of Bapaume**. They also followed the advance through Flanders (Belgium) and fought bravely to the bitter end of the war on the Western Front.

Meanwhile, they were also fighting in **Mesopotamia** (modern day Iraq) against the Turks where after the **Battle for Kut** they were **under siege** from the 7th of December 1916 to April 29th 1917 when they surrendered. We can't imagine the conditions they suffered in the intense heat as water and supplies ran out and among the survivors there were 300 men of the Ox and Bucks who were taken prisoner. Many of them, tragically, did not survive the war, and suffered maltreatment and sickness. One of the reasons that losses were so heavy here was that their comrades kept launching abortive attacks to try and get them out - attacks which failed.

As well as fighting against Germany and Turkey, the Ox and Bucks were also engaged in action against the Austro-Hungarians and Italians, fighting in Italy and Macedonia. But even after helping defeat Austria at the Battle of Asiago, they still had work to do: the War ended, and they were on occupation duty in Bulgaria.



But for many men of the Ox and Bucks, the War didn't end: there was no return home. Or, like **Private John Edward Dawson**, they were wounded in action and returned home only to die of their wounds a short time later. He is buried in the Churchyard (CO75) along with his mother, who died soon afterwards, having lost her two sons. Their father lived on for many years, lived on with his memories, like so many ordinary people whose lives were utterly devastated by the First World War. It's impossible for me to relate all their stories. Of course, you could always find out for yourself! Or you could research one of your own family members using the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website at www.cwgc.org.

References:

Article in Wikipedia at http://tinyurl.com/yurc4z

'The First World War,' by Martin Gilbert (Harper Collins Publishers, 1995) is well worth reading.

The Western Front Association also have a branch relating to the Ox and Bucks and they make regular pilgrimages to the Battlefields: http://www.wfaoxandbucks.org.uk

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