

Self-led tour of Haslar Royal Naval Cemetery, Clayhall Road, Gosport, Hampshire

Welcome to Haslar Royal Naval Cemetery.

The Royal Hospital Haslar opened in October 1753 and from that date all those who died, either at Haslar, on board ship in Portsmouth Harbour or at Spithead/Solent or further afield were interred in the grounds of the Hospital (the bottom end abutting Clayhall Road was and still is known as The Paddock).

In 1827 a small area was enclosed and consecrated and this became the main burial plot, but in 1859 it had become full, so it was imperative that a new site was found. The site chosen was here in Clayhall Road, an area of fourteen acres, part of which was previously owned by Robert Cruickshank. Haslar Hospital Cemetery, Clayhall Road was opened in 1859 and it was Consecrated by the Bishop of Winchester. The name was quickly changed to what it is today - Haslar Royal Naval Cemetery, Clayhall Road.

Within a few years more space was needed, so in 1904 the cemetery was enlarged by another three acres, making a total of seventeen acres.

Here in these peaceful surroundings you will find the last resting place of over 4,000 Sailors, Merchantmen, Submariners, Royal Flying Corp, Marines, Wrens and in a corner of Plot M you will find a small number of Children's graves.

Spread throughout the cemetery are large numbers of War Graves, about 1,500 in total, these men and women lost their lives during two world wars and other conflicts.

One small plot in this cemetery, a 'foreign field' is forever Turkish (Ottoman) containing the graves of 26 sailors.

Service personnel are buried in Plots denoting their Rank.

Plots A and B are for Catholic burials.

The Turkish Cemetery is also located on Plot A

Plot K Able seamen to CPO

Plot L Commanders / Lieutenant Commanders

Plot M Medical Personnel (Surgeons, Doctors etc.)

HMS BOADICEA (Zulu War Memorial) Boer Wars
(Grade 2 listed)

Children's graves

Plot H Admirals, Rear Admirals and 'like' ranks

Submariners
A1 3 5 8 Obelisk (Grade 2 listed)
L 55 Mass Grave (Screen Wall Grade 2 listed)

Captains

Plot	G	Commanders / Lieutenant Commanders
Plot	N	Retired Naval Personnel (and spouses) Ashes Plot
Plots	F and E	WW1 and WW2 Graves and earlier
Plots	C and D	This large plot was mainly cleared of headers and curbs in the early 1960s HMS Eurydice Memorial (Grade 2* listed) HMS Thunderer Memorial (Grade 2 listed) HMS Archer Memorial

DEAD MAN'S MILE or LANE

Funeral processions left from the Hospital for the cemetery with bands, drums, files and marching crewmen along with the mourners, but due to the large numbers and frequency of funerals taking place and the mental impact these large numbers were having on hospital patients a ruling came into place that the band(s) was/were not permitted to start the funeral march and other music until entering Clayhall Road for fear of upsetting patients.

The road running the length of Haslar Hospital from the old gate was called 'Dead Man's Lane' or 'Mile' because of the number of processions which travelled from the Hospital to Clayhall.

The following are specific areas of interest, a brief description follows.

Plot A - GRAVES OF TURKISH (OTTOMAN) SAILORS

In November 1850 two ships of the Turkish Navy, the Mirat-i-Zafer and the Sirag-i-Bahri anchored off The Hardway, Gosport. The visit lasted several months and during the time many crew members contracted Cholera and Typhus and required hospitalisation. The men were admitted into Haslar Hospital for treatment, from those who were admitted 26 died and were laid to rest in the grounds of Haslar Hospital.

In 1900 the bodies were exhumed to make way for the erection of the new zygotic (isolation) block and the remains were transferred here where they lie in peace.

Gosport people have for many, many years been known as 'Turks' and the town is known by many as 'Turk Town', but it is difficult to discover just how this nickname came about. There are some that think it is because of this small cemetery.

Plot C - HMS THUNDERER OBELISK

On 14th July 1876 a steam boiler explosion killed more than 40 officers and sailors including the Commanding Officer on board HMS Thunderer at Stokes Bay. The Thunderer had been supplied with a new type of boiler, 8 rectangular box boilers by Humphreys Tennant Co.. An enquiry conducted by eminent engineers quickly discovered that the boilers did not cause the accident, unreported faulty pressure gauges and corroded stop valves were chief causes. The Thunderer, which was launched in 1872 was completed in 1876, was the first and last Capital Ship in the navy to have rectangular boilers. She was repaired and re-commissioned and unfortunately suffered another bad accident, this time involving a new type of gun, this resulted in the deaths of 12 more seamen. Fortunately both catastrophes meant the powers that be had to re-think and things were corrected. She went on to have a long and happy life and the majority who sailed in her enjoyed being part of her 'family'.

HMS EURYDICE MEMORIAL

On return from Bermuda with 319 personnel on board HMS Eurydice sank on 24th March 1878 during a freak blizzard sweeping down Luccomb Chine into Sandown Bay, Isle of Wight. With all sails still set and gun ports open the ships sank in minutes, five members of the crew were plucked out of the water but only 2 survived, Ordinary Seaman Sydney Fletcher and Able Seaman Cuddiford. The loss of the Eurydice caused the navy to abandon sail training and the day of the sailing Man of Wars was over.

HMS Eurydice is reputed to still sail on as a 'ghost ship', with regular sightings in the area in which she sank. In the 1930's a captain of a Gosport bound submarine had to take evasive action in order to avoid striking a fully-rigged ship, which promptly disappeared.

HMS ARCHER

In memory of the Officers, Seamen and Marines who died of Yellow Fever on the West Coast of Africa between 1864 - 1866.

Plot H - SUBMARINE PLOT

The Obelisk Monument commemorates the A1, A3, A5 and A8.

The A1 sank after a collision with SS Berwick Castle on Friday 18th March 1904 while taking part in an exercise off the Isle of Wight. HM Submarine A1 was tasked with 'attacking' HMS Juno. The mock attack began in the early afternoon. HMS Juno had been sighted heading towards Portsmouth Harbour. First to attack were the Holland Boats, after which came A1's turn. As A1 closed in for the kill she was struck on the starboard side. Unaware of the submarines in the area the Master of the Berwick Castel reported he believed a practice torpedo had struck him and continued his journey. It was not until A1 failed to return to harbour that the full scale of the disaster was known.

The A3 - slightly bigger than the A1 was commissioned on the 13th July 1904. She was accidentally rammed while surfacing by the tender HMS Hazzard off the Isle of Wight on 2nd February 1912 and sunk with the loss of all on board. The wreck was salvaged and subsequently sunk as a gunnery target near Portland Bill on 12th May 1912 where she remains today.

HMS A5 - she was a member of Group 2 of the first British A class of submarines. Immediately following her commissioning she left with her tender HMS Hazzard to travel to Queensland (now Cobh) in Ireland. On 16th February 1905 at 10.05 hours whilst tied up alongside Hazzard an explosion occurred on board. 6 of the crew were killed by the explosion or died shortly afterwards. The Captain and the other 4 crew members survived. The enquiry concluded that the first explosion was caused by the ignition of mixture of petrol vapour and air which had accumulated towards the stern of the boat. It had been triggered by a spark from the electric switch when the submarine's main propulsion motor was turned on.

A second explosion, underneath the conning tower was triggered by either clothing or electrical insulation which was smoldering following the first explosion. She was returned to Barrow-in-Furness for repairs and returned to service in the Home Fleet. She was used for training until she was paid off for disposal in December 1915 and was finally broken up in Portsmouth in 1920.

The A 8 - suffered an explosion whilst running on the surface in Plymouth Sound on 8th May 1905 and sank with the loss of her crew of 15. A sudden dip in the bow caused the boat to be swamped through the hatch in the conning tower. She was salvaged 4 days after the accident at which point a loose rivet was found in the bow plating. She was repaired, re-commissioned and used for training during WW1. Along with A9 as part of the First Submarine Flotilla operating near Devonport through early 1916. She was scrapped in October 1920 at Dartmouth.

E 13 Submarine

British E Class Submarine. Commissioned on 9th December 1914. On 14th August 1915 she was dispatched from Harwich with orders to sail to the Baltic Sea to interdict German shipping. On 18th August she ran aground in shallow water near Salt Holm Island in the Oresund between Malmo and Copenhagen because of a defective gyrocompass. The Danes ordered her Commander (Layton) to re-float and leave as Danish neutrality was being violated, the Boat's Commander was unable to comply with this request as the submarine had run aground in 10 feet of water. The First Lieutenant went ashore to arrange a tow or, if this was impracticable to negotiate terms for internment, he was unable to contact the Admiralty as the Germans were jamming radio frequencies. At 10.28 the Germans torpedo boat G132 arrived but quickly withdrew when Danish torpedo ships approached. The Commander of G132 informed his Rear Admiral by radio about the grounding and received orders that he and another torpedo ship should destroy the submarine.

The two vessels returned and opened fire on E13 with torpedoes, machine guns and shell fire from a range of 300 yards. The submarine was hit repeatedly and

set on fire. The Crew of the E13 were given orders to abandon the submarine but the firing continued while men were in the water. The engagement only ended when the Danish torpedo ship Soulven placed herself between the submarine and the two German ships, which withdrew. 14 of the E13's crew were killed in the attack and one was missing presumed dead. The surviving 15 crew members were interned at the Copenhagen Navy Yard by the Danes for the rest of the war. The Commander and First Officer escaped and returned to England to continue the war.

Bodies were transported back to Hull accompanied by the Danish torpedo ships Springerren and Storen.

8 crew members lie here side by side.

THE MASS GRAVE OF THE CREW OF HMS L55

The L55 was part of the Baltic Battle Squadron engaged in an operation in support of the White Russians. Whilst in action against 2 Bolshevik Destroyers on 4th June 1919 she struck a British moored mine. Bolshevik propaganda insisted that she was sunk by one of their Destroyers. Given the capabilities of their navy at that time this is unlikely. On 11th August 1928 she was raised by the Soviets. The Admiralty via the Swedish government requested that the bodies of the crew be returned. The Soviets insisted that no British warship would be allowed to enter any of the Ports. The British Merchantman Truro took the 38 coffins on at Kronstadt and they were transferred to HMS Champion at Raval in Estonia on 30th August.

The crew were buried here in this communal grave on 7th September 1928.

Plot M - HMS BOADICEA MEMORIAL

The Obelisk was constructed to commemorate the fallen who sailed with HMS Boadicea between 1879 and 1882 during her commission to the Cape of Good Hope and West Africa.

The Boadicea delivered 16 Officers and 378 men un Commodore Francis Romilly to supplement the Navy Brigade at the Battle of Ginginhlovo, one of the bloodiest clashes of the Zulu Wars. The ship then assisted in the first Boer War.

The memorial is to those 'Officers, Seamen, Marines and Crewmen' who were killed in action or died of diseases during or following the campaigns.

During WW2 a German bomb landed in the cemetery, many stones and the following monuments were damaged by shrapnel:-

- A1 3 5 8 Submarine Obelisk
- HMS Archer
- HMS Boadicea Obelisk

- Plot E

- A night raid on 23rd November 1940 sent bombs raining down on large populated areas. One bomb landed on Wrens (WRNS) accommodation billet at Mansfield House Lee on the Solent killing 10.

- War Graves are found throughout the Cemetery and come under the care of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

- WW1 headstones are in the style of THE ADMIRALTY CROSS.

- The Cemetery contains: -

- 772 WW1 graves, 2 of which are unidentified

- 611 WW2 graves, 36 of them are unidentified.

- These graves are found on different Plots denoting the Rank of the deceased.

- There are also Commonwealth and other Foreign National war burials.

- Haslar Royal Naval Cemetery, Clayhall Road has been designated SSSI (Special Site Scientific Interest) mainly due to the two types of Orchid found on the site.

- Green Wing - May / June

- Autumn Lady's Tresses - September / October

- Bird life - many species, local, migratory, land and estuary

- Mammals - foxes, badgers, squirrels and occasionally deer

- Insects - butterflies, dragon flies, bees, wasps, and many More.

- Trees - many species and size (some vintage)

- Wild flowers - wide variety throughout the year (DO NOT PICK)

- Fungi - great diversity (DO NOT PICK)

- Mosses and lichens

- Visitors are asked to take great care of the environment and are strongly discouraged from picking any of the flowers or other plant life.

- Bee Hives have been installed at the bottom end of cemetery Plot E left hand side. Please do not disturb.

- Visiting Information: The Cemetery is open every day. The large main gates is locked at weekends or at other times when it is necessary to restrict vehicle access. But the small wooden gate next to the Lodge is always open. Times are displayed.

- Cemetery Office Telephone Number: 023 9276 5385 (during normal working hours only).

- I hope this has provided a small 'snapshot' and perhaps established a desire to visit and see for yourself.