

Pauper Burials in All Saints churchyard, Beulah Hill, London SE19 3LS

This analysis of the paupers buried in All Saints churchyard has been carried for the Norwood Society by Stephen Oxford.

I have examined the burial registers available for the All Saints churchyard between 1830 and 1863, by which time there had been 2,400 burials. The registers show that between the 22 October 1830 and 29 January 1858 there were eight hundred and eighty nine pauper children aged between just a few months and sixteen years of age interred in the church yard.

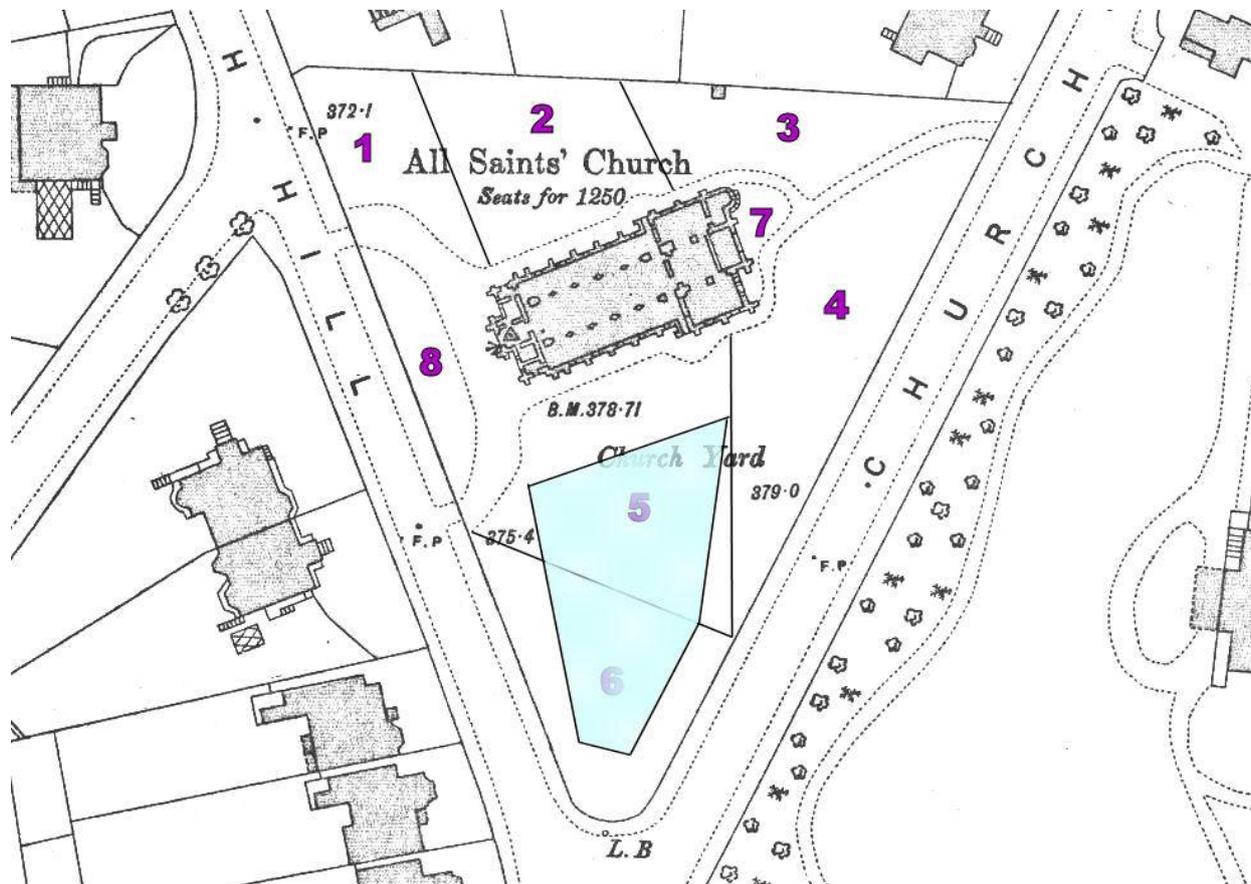
The children are identified in the register as having come from the Infant Poor House at Norwood and, after 1849, from the Central London District School. These establishments were run by Mr Frederick Aubin to serve inner London parishes such as Whitechapel and Southwark. These parishes paid Mr Aubin to house, clothe, feed and educate pauper children who came into their own poor or workhouse establishments.

It was widely thought, at the time, that children would be badly influenced if they remained with adults in a workhouse environment and this led to the practice of so called 'Baby Farming'! Establishments were paid a weekly fee by the children's parish to look after their pauper children rather than leave them in a workhouse.

These establishments varied greatly in quality, some being seen as little more than a money making machine. However, the Infant Norwood Poor House was widely held in high esteem and put forward by many, including those speaking in Parliamentary debates about them, as model institutions. They were regularly inspected and in fact Charles Dickens visited Mr Aubin's establishment and published a positive report about what he saw there.

Unfortunately many of the children arrived in a very poor state of health, having been raised in situations of extreme poverty and deprivation. The Norwood Infant Poor House had a 'hospital' wing staffed by a resident, highly qualified surgeon and a number of nurses.

Poor nutrition and poor housing in early childhood resulted in weak constitutions. Not surprisingly, many of these 'farmed out' pauper children fell victim to frequent outbreaks of cholera, scarlet fever and whooping cough. Many died soon after arrival but many more survived and flourished and, thanks to the training they received under the auspices of Mr Aubin, were able to return to society and to lead useful lives.



The probable burial location of the pauper children is shaded blue.

It is likely that the children were buried in open trenches, i.e. some form of 'mass grave' marked, at the time, by just a simple wooden cross. Families did not have the wherewithal to do more nor did Mr Aubin have the funds from the source parishes.

The burial records are all signed by the minister, vicar or curate of the day. It is not clear whether a graveside service of any form was carried out. Over several months of the thirty three year period pauper children were buried on numerous consecutive days. The burials ceased with the move of Mr Aubin's establishment out of Norwood.

There is no record of exactly where the burials took place but an examination of the church yard would suggest an area to the south of the church between the building and the Church Road wall to the north west of the newer memorial garden.

Download the burial records...

- All Saints paupers by date of burial
- All Saints paupers by surname

