

## **Warstone Lane catacombs**

Recently, Shortie and Leslam investigated the Warstone Burial indices to try to identify certain grave numbers that do not appear on the grave plans. This was instigated by the fact that Celia had requested information on a grave in Section I Grave No 7.

It had been suggested by Shortie (who has considerable knowledge of Key Hill and some of Warstone Lane), that some of the public grave memorial stones above the catacombs may refer to burials that took place in the catacombs. We now have more evidence that this is correct.

The numbered memorial stones lie in a broken circle above the catacombs.

The stones in sections I and K are numbered:

11 – I to 15 – I

16 – K to 23 – K

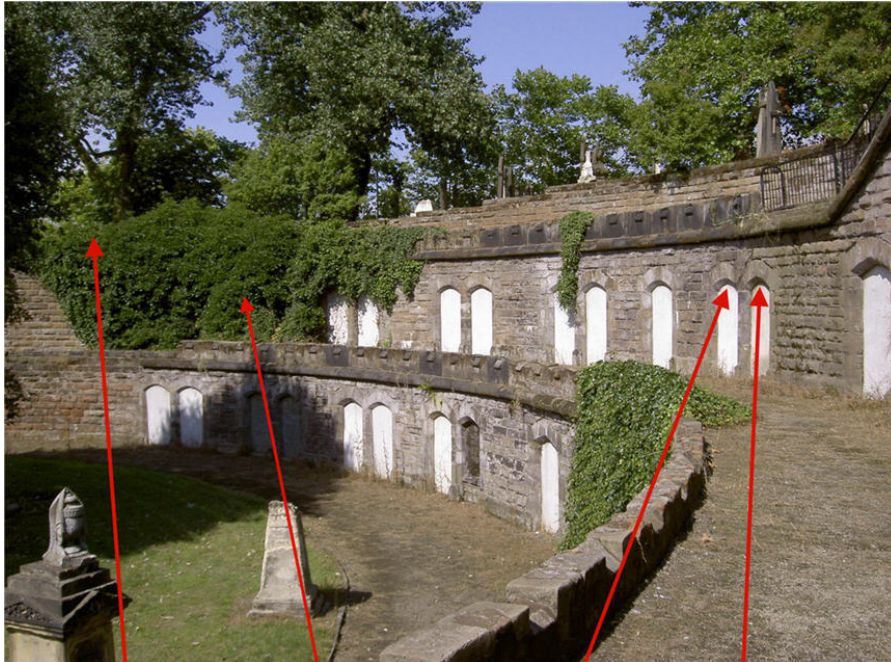
30 – K to 37 - K

The stones in section J are numbered 1 – J to 18 – J (there are no stones for 3 –J, 5 –J, 17 – J and 18 – J)

## Catacombs – top tier

Some of the catacomb arches on the top tier are clearly numbered.

**Section I:** Arches 1 & 2 are clearly marked, as are 6 & 7. The stones above the arches for 8, 9 and 10 are currently covered in ivy; indeed archway 10 has only recently been discovered beneath the ivy. The photo below shows the layout of the top tier in section I



Slabs at top level

10

**Section I**  
**Graves I -11 to I - 15**



So, whilst 11 -I to 15 - I are recorded on the slabs above the catacombs, I - 1 to I-10 seems to correspond to the top tier of catacombs, on the same side as the slabs. Unfortunately there are no plaques on the archways in section I, so it is not possible to do any accurate cross-referencing of interment and burial references.

**Section J:** Only archways 10 and 11 of the top tier of catacombs are numbered. However, the memorial to the Medlicott family has provided the evidence for the numbering in this section. Thomas Medlicott is recorded as being buried in “Grave 52 in Cat 2J.” in 1853. The memorial stone “V 2 – J” (above the catacombs), records the public burials in 1918- 1919. It would appear entirely possible that these burials were added to the catacomb vault 2 on the top tier in section J. Stones 12-J to 16-J have no direct equivalent number on the top tier of the catacombs, so it is not clear where these burials are. It is possible that they are related to the catacombs on the bottom tier, but currently there is no evidence for this

**Section K:** The memorial stones in section K have no direct equivalent number on the top tier of the catacombs. It is possible that they are related to the catacombs on the bottom tier, but currently there is no evidence for this

## Catacombs – bottom tier

There do not appear to be any numbers on the arches of the bottom tier. There are several plaques on the archways. Investigating these has provided information about the grave and funeral costs, but has not provided proof on the numbering of the bottom tier.



## Medlicott family

This plaque is mounted brickwork above the top row of the catacombs on the right-hand side as you face the catacomb archways.



There are four inscriptions:

*Thomas Medlicott*

*1794 – 1853*

*Mary Medlicott*

*1797 – 1872*

*Samuel Thomas Medlicott*

*1828 – 1887*

*Margaret Medlicott*

*1839 - 1902*

Using the microfilm index at Birmingham Central Library, the following burial references were obtained:

*Thomas Medlicott* 1099

*Mary Medlicott* 15499

*Samuel Thomas Medlicott* 37824

Using the interment registers, we used burial refs to give a ‘two-point’ fix on the Medlicott grave, as follows:

**1099 Thomas Medlicott** died March 29 age 59. Of Gt Charles St. Grave purchased by Mary Medlicott Grave 52 in Cat 2J [we didn’t note the cost of the burial]

**37824 Samuel Medlicott** age 59 of Albion Road, Handsworth. Record says “Medlicott 323-1” a record that it is the Medlicott grave. “Reop CV”, which presumably means reopen Catacomb vault. “4/5/6” is presumably the cost of opening the CV.

This seems to indicate that the Medlicott grave is grave 52, located in catacomb 2 in J-section. The plaque is mounted to the left of this

## Lucas family

The plaque to the Lucas family is on the bottom tier of the catacombs (side to be confirmed)



### Commemorating:

*Samuel Wilfred Lucas*, died Nov 21<sup>st</sup> 1885

*Amelia* (his wife), died March 20 1855      burial ref: 3715 (23 March)

*Mary Ann Lucas* (his second wife), died Feb 6<sup>th</sup> 1872      burial ref: 15210 (13 Feb)

*Amelia Lucas* (his niece), died June 16<sup>th</sup> 1856      burial ref: 3715A. This is an odd ref  
when considered with the ref for the first wife (above)

Using the interment registers, we found the following:

***Mary Anne Lucas*** (15210) lived Hagley Road, £30 10s Reopen 3 Catacomb (she is the third in this grave, presumably it does literally mean reopen the catacomb 3. Need to check the layout to see if this assumption could be correct). Bell 2/6

***Amelia Lucas*** (3715) age 54 lived Hagley Road. Grave 61, south catacombs. £6 +2/6 + 2/6 + 2/6 + 21s (minister Christ Ch) (total was £7 8s 6d)

## Cutler family



The dedications that were used are:

**Gertrude Bertha Cutler** d 24 Aug 1966 burial ref 105798, but no interment record, although the burial record records the date of interment as 2/9/1966. Looking at the stone, it's possible that it refers to ashes? Certainly the entry above does.

**Harry Samuel Cutler** d July 6<sup>th</sup> 1932 burial ref 91987, buried 8/7/1932 age 57

The interment register shows that Harry Samuel Cutler of 1369 Bristol Road South was interred in Cat 4. Fee payable was "£1 10s. – no further fees payable" The reason for this is unclear, it may have been a private arrangement where additional fees were paid in advance to cover all eventualities. The entry has R R against it, which probably indicates that it is the third burial in this grave – the earlier interments are not recorded. So, it's possible that the small fee means that all costs were covered by the initial purchase of the grave.

There are additional plaques for investigation as appropriate:

### Guest family



*Thomas Guest, Snr* d Dec 18<sup>th</sup> 1902, buried 23/12, burial ref 59095  
*Rebecca Guest,*  
*Thomas Guest, architect of this city,* died 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 1906  
*Thomas Guest,* died May 17<sup>th</sup> 1933

## Patrick / Kimberley family



Commemorating:

*James Patrick* died ?? June ???

*Emily Charlotte Patrick* (wife) d. Jun 2<sup>nd</sup> 1935

*Louisa Jane Kimberley* (wife's sister) d Jan 8<sup>th</sup> 1947

*Sarah Elizabeth Salt* (maid), d July 23<sup>rd</sup> 1945



## Harrison / Cox family



Commemorating:

*Martha (wife of Thomas Harrison)*

*Thomas Harrison (relic), Jan 2<sup>nd</sup> 1867*

*Thomas Harrison Cox (grandson) d Mar??*

*Edward Cox (father of Thomas Harrison Cox) d Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> 1876, aged 52*

*Harriet Harrison (wife of Albert Harrison)*

*Albert Harrison*

***There is an additional plaque on the next entrance that has not been photographed.***

## Pattie Adams



This plaque is on the top section, directly above the Harrison plaque. It would be interesting to look at the two entries to spot any commonalities.

Commemorating:

*Pattie Adams (wife of William Frederick Adams) d Jun 23 1921, aged 53*

### **Example costs of public graves and catacomb costs:**

It is thought that the catacombs were not as popular as originally anticipated. One explanation might be that people interred in catacombs had no way of displaying their wealth, so an earth grave (sometimes bricked to make a vault rather than a grave) would be chosen where the family could display their wealth with a showy headstone and kerbs.

In addition, the catacombs apparently acquired quite a reputation for the stench that used to come from them, until the Birmingham Cemeteries Act required that non-interred coffins should be sealed in pitch or lead. It is possible that this requirement to seal the coffins was unpopular and contributed to the seeming lack of popularity.

The figures below are costs that were extracted for the registers.

1849	6/6 (2-I or 2-F)
1853	7/6 (didn't record which section/grave). Catacomb + fees was about £30 (for example, Samuel Oughton in grave I-7)
1872	Catacomb burial £30 10s (Mary Anne Lucas)
1885	£1 in section D
1887	£1/5/0 for C-1234 or 10/- for D-1222

The large memorial stones above the catacombs commemorate burials in public graves post-1900. Each of the 39 memorial stones displays 30+ names; names would only have been included for those whose families could afford to contribute, so there are likely to be many, many more who are also interred. If, as we suspect, all the burials that are recorded on the memorial stones were interred in the catacombs, this represents a minimum of 1200 public burials in the catacombs. Since the catacombs are bricked up, we will probably never have absolute proof that our theory is correct.