

Kibes Lane Burial Ground

"In Kibes Lane, sandwiched between the car parking areas, there is a quiet, tranquil area laid down to lawn and surrounded by trees and shrubs. Very few people know that this is all that is left of Ware's Quaker Meeting house and burial ground" - extract from Ware On Line information.

History

In 1864 the Meeting House closed but the burial ground continued to be used. A report from 1876 found the building to be dilapidated and it was eventually demolished in 1881. The materials from the demolition were sold for £20.

The site and burial ground remained in the Friend's possession until 1935 when it was sold to the Ware Urban District Council.

When the Society of Friends sold the burial ground, it did so for a very low sum in return for certain promises. Minutes from the Hertford and Hitchin Monthly Meeting in November 1934 record. "We are willing to sell the land at a low price on the understanding that it is reserved for use as an open space or recreation ground."

Ware District Council acknowledged that they bought the land on the understanding that the character of the ground would be preserved and respected.

Today the burial ground contains over 200 graves though the grave stones are now long gone. Memorial grave stones have been erected to mark the significance of the site – see photo below:



Development of the site

East Herts Council are now responsible for the site and have worked in partnership with The Ware Society, The Society of Friends (Quakers), Ware Town Council and Ware in Bloom to improve the site as an attractive and welcoming open space.

Over many years the space has gradually lost its identity. Shrubs have reached their natural shelf life and whilst they had been maintained regularly, the space has generally deteriorated. It has been in need of a landscape makeover!

Many of the existing trees on the site had "self-set" over the years and were not planted as part of any agreed scheme. Some were even growing on top of graves. We have now therefore removed these trees to make way for a more formal planting scheme that recognises the position of the graves.

Works were completed in July 2011 to reflect the historical importance of this area as a burial ground and to create a more welcoming and attractive open space.

New Design

The space was redesigned in the tradition of a more formal planting scheme that recognises the position of the graves. It forms a quiet and pleasant area to sit and enjoy.

This new design is in the style of an 'Open' Knot Garden. The first knot garden known to us was a royal one - at Richmond in Surrey. There in Henry VII's new palace, completed in 1501 there were "most fair and pleasant gardens with royal knots alleyed and herbed". By the end of the 16th century, knots were a prominent feature in landscape design. They were planted in thyme, hyssop, thrift, germander, savory, marjoram and box. 'Open knots' left interior planting space to frame the commonest flowers to dramatic effect. It is a style of garden that would have been familiar when the Quakers originally bought the land in 1728.



Most knot gardens are planted with low Box (*Buxus sempervirens*) hedging to create formal shapes inside which are planted aromatic plants and culinary herbs. This one is no exception but instead of creating a very intricate pattern (which gave rise to the term knot garden), the hedges follow, as far as can be reasonably ascertained, the lines of the graves. This is an important part of the design as it is intended to respect the significance of the site. There is some symmetry across the design but not in the traditional form.



The fine gravel areas are also a traditional feature in knot gardens and in this particular design they provide a sharp and clear boundary to the site by providing a dramatic contrast to the softer planted areas.

New seats have been installed with contributions from the Ware Society. These were the same design as seats in the town centre that proved to be an ideal match for the historical theme – see adjacent photo.