

## ADDRESS

Muslim Burial Ground, HORSELL COMMON, WOKING

Parish WOKING  
District WOKING  
County SURREY

Case UID: 167929

Date First Listed: 13-JAN-2010

Formerly Listed As: WALLS CORNER PAVILION AND ENTRANCE GATES AND GATE PIERS TO  
MOSLEM BURIAL GROUND, HORSELL COMMON, WOKING, WOKING,  
SURREY

## RECOMMENDATION

Outcome: Yes, amend

Recommended Grade: II

08-JUN-2009

## BACKGROUND:

After examining all the papers on this file and other relevant information and having carefully considered the architectural and historic interest of this case, an amendment should be issued.

## CONTEXT

We have been asked to amend the list description for the Grade II Muslim Burial Ground. It is not in a good state of repair and the Horsell Common Preservation Society, which owns the site, is in early stages of considering a repair strategy. The amendment is desired in part to help inform future works to stabilise and repair the structure, but also to impart recent research into the history of Muslim servicemen in World War I into the statutory document. This unusual and fascinating structure, which has been listed since 1984, has very little history explained in its short list description; this could affect future management of the site and it is inadequate in terms of explaining its special interest.

## HISTORY

Over one million troops from India, including what is now Pakistan, fought for Great Britain during World War I. Soldiers wounded in battle were brought to special hospitals on the south coast of England, in particular Brighton, and those who died received burial rites according to their religion. Hindu and Sikh soldiers were cremated in special crematoria at Patcham, Netley and Brockenhurst but there was not a special burial ground for Muslim soldiers until 1915. In this year, the War Office felt the need to respond to German propaganda that suggested Muslim soldiers were not being buried in a respectful way concordant with their religion. The propaganda, aimed at Indian Army troops serving on the Western Front, promoted the German alliance with Turkey as a holy war and tried to win over the support of Muslim soldiers. It was decided to build the burial ground in Woking because at that time it was home to the only purpose-built mosque in Britain (now listed Grade II\*; otherwise, there is not a direct relationship between these two buildings).

The burial ground was designed by T. Herbert Winney, India Office Surveyor, and built by the local firm of Ashby and Horner Ltd.; the landscapers were Messrs Neal of Wandsworth. A proposed waiting room and mortuary, and extensive landscaped grounds within the burial area seem not to have been carried out. The burial ground was completed by 1917 by when it had received 19 burials of soldiers who died between 16 July 1915 and 3 Feb 1916 (a further 25 Muslim soldiers were buried at Brookwood). Documentary sources from the time of its completion suggest that the Viceroy and the India Office were keen to reproduce images of the burial ground and publicise its opening, all with a view to counteracting the negative propaganda, which was shown to be so false

by the provision of this special consecrated place. The War Graves Commission took over the burial ground's upkeep in 1921. The cemetery was used again during World War II when a further five Muslim soldiers were interred at Woking. In 1968, due to vandalism, all the burials were moved to nearby Brookwood Cemetery (Grade I on the Parks and Gardens Register).

#### DESCRIPTION

The burial ground is set amongst the pine trees of Horsell Common. The entrance, to the west, is in the form of a chattri, a red brick pavilion of square plan with prominent Islamic ogee profile arch entrance, deep overhanging eaves, or chujja, on scrolled brackets and a central dome of carefully cut stone. Extending from the entrance are walls, approximately 8 feet (2.5m) high, that form the rectangular enclosure of the burial ground. These have a brick plinth and a cut-out arcade with ogee profile arches, and are divided into bays by brick piers about every 15 feet (4.5m). For one bay to the south of the entrance, and to the north of it, and much of the west stretch, the arcade has been lost to vandalism and deterioration in the late C20 and unsympathetically capped with concrete. The corners are marked by taller pillars with diamond shaped stone plaques embossed with flower to each face, and domed polygonal turrets above. Following the removal of the graves in 1968, the interior is now an open, grassy space, but it retains the original planting scheme of four plane trees, a traditional Islamic tree, in line with each corner pillar.

#### ASSESSMENT

The Muslim Burial Ground is already listed at Grade II and rightly so, for it has special interest in a national context; this exercise is purely about enhancing its statutory list description. It has special historic interest as a rare purpose-built structure for the Muslim community in England at this early date (another early example is the Shah Jahan Mosque of 1889, also in Woking and listed Grade II\*), and as an architectural witness to the Muslim sacrifice in the First World War. It also has special architectural interest for its interpretation of Islamic architecture in Britain, inspired by the Mughal style so successfully employed by Sir Edwin Lutyens in New Delhi. There are few comparators with this special burial ground, although an architectural connection can be made with the Grade II Chattri at Patcham, Sussex of 1921, dedicated to Sikh and Hindu soldiers who were cremated nearby after dying in hospital in Brighton. There are also some formal similarities with Herbert Baker's remarkable WWI memorial to Indian soldiers who died in France, at Neuve Chapelle, near Arras, erected in 1927. This takes the form of a circular stone enclosure, with a 15 metre tall column with Lotus Capital, the Star of India and the Imperial Crown, flanked by two tigers and inscribed with the word 'India' and '1914-1918 at the base; the other side lists the battle honours of Indian Units which served on the Western Front and the wall on the far side is engraved with the names of 4743 soldiers of the Indian Army who have no known grave. While more modest architecturally, the Muslim Burial Ground has its own special qualities and is laden with historic interest, all for which it merits listing at Grade II.

#### ASSESSMENT:

The list description for the Muslim Burial Ground should be amended to more fully reflect its special historic interest and to help inform future management.

#### REASONS FOR DESIGNATION DECISION:

The list description for the Muslim Burial Ground in Woking has been amended for the following principal reasons:

- \* Special historic interest as a rare purpose-built structure for the Muslim community in England at this early date (another early example is the Shah Jahan Mosque of 1889, also in Woking and listed Grade II\*),
- \* An commemorative architectural witness to the Muslim sacrifice in the First World War.
- \* Special architectural interest for its interpretation of Islamic architecture in early C20 Britain,

inspired by the Mughal style so successfully employed by Sir Edwin Lutyens in New Delhi.

### VISITS

28-APR-2009 Full inspection

Visit with Paul Rimmer and Elizabeth Cuttle of the Horsell Common Preservation Trust, and the Surrey Wildlife Trust.

### COUNTERSIGNING

Countersigning Comments: Agreed: a most interesting military burial ground, reflecting the importance of the Indian Army to the British war effort in WWI. 25.6.09

Second Countersigning Comments:

HP Director Comments:

Proposed List Entry

WOKING

HORSELL COMMON

## Muslim Burial Ground

13-JAN-2010

(Formerly Listed as:  
HORSELL COMMON  
WALLS CORNER PAVILION AND  
ENTRANCE GATES AND GATE PIERS TO  
MOSLEM BURIAL GROUND)

II

Case UID: 167929

Proposed LBS UID:

Walls, corner pavilions and entrance gate of Muslim burial ground. 1915-17 by T Herbert Winney, India Office Surveyor. Red brick in Flemish bond with Portland stone dressings and domes. The burial ground is rectangular in plan and measures approximately 100 by 120 feet (30.5 by 36.5m).

**ENTRANCE:** The burial ground is set amongst the pine trees of Horsell Common. The entrance, to the west, is in the form of a chattri, a red brick pavilion of square plan with prominent Islamic ogee profile arch entrance, deep overhanging eave, or chujja, on scrolled brackets and a central dome. The corner piers have stone bases. A circular flower motif marks the spandrels of the entrance arch, and a simpler circle motif is continuous in the circumferential band below the stone dome. The dome is designed in a beehive fashion with carefully cut stone blocks, set on an 8-sided stone ring supported by brick pendentives. The north and south sides have blind brick panels with moulded brick frames to the inside and the outside. A stone near the base of the north west side is inscribed: T.H. WINNY, A.R.I.B.A / ASHBY AND HORNER BUILDERS. Originally there were wooden gates with latticed pattern and finial growing out of a floral base, but these did not survive at the time of inspection (2009).

**WALLS:** Extending from the entrance are the walls approximately 8 feet (2.5m) high that form the rectangular enclose of the burial ground. These have a brick plinth and a cut-out arcade with ogee profile arches. The walls are divided into bays by brick piers stone capitals and bases about every 15 feet (4.5m). For one bay to the south of the entrance, and to the north of it, and much of the western stretch, the arcade has been lost to vandalism and deterioration in the late C20 and unsympathetically capped with concrete. The corners are marked by taller pillars with diamond shaped stone plaques embossed with flower to each face, and domed polygonal turrets above.

**INTERIOR:** Following the removal of the graves in 1968, the interior is now an open, grassy space, no longer consecrated ground but an evocative place nonetheless. Part of the original planting scheme survives: four plane trees, a traditional tree in Islamic garden design, in a rectangular formation in line with the corner pavilions.

**HISTORY:** Over one million troops from India, including what is now Pakistan, fought for Great Britain during World War I. Soldiers wounded in battle were brought to special hospitals on the south coast of England, in particular Brighton, and those who died received burial rites according to their religion. Hindu and Sikh soldiers were cremated in special crematoria at Patcham, Netley and Brockenhurst but there was not a special burial ground for Muslim soldiers until 1915. In this year, the War Office felt the need to respond to German propoganda that suggested Muslim soldiers were not being buried in a respectful way concordant with their religion. The propoganda, aimed at Indian Army troops serving on the Western Front, promoted the German alliance with Turkey as a holy war and tried to win over the support of Muslim soldiers. It was decided to build the burial ground in Woking because, at that time, it was home to the only purpose-built mosque in Britain (now listed Grade II\*; there is not, otherwise, a

direct relationship between these two buildings).

The burial ground was designed by T Herbert Winney, India Office Surveyor, and built by the local firm of Ashby and Horner Ltd.; the landscapers were Messrs Neal of Wandsworth. A proposed waiting room and mortuary seem not to have been carried out. Photographs from 1917 show extensive plantings (such as cypressus in four varieties) around the inner and outer perimeter walls, as well marking 4 squares of lawn at the centre of which were 4 plane trees. The burial ground was completed by 1917 by when it had received 19 burials of soldiers who died between 16 July 1915 and 3 Feb 1916 (a further 25 Muslim soldiers were buried at Brookwood). The gravestones were simple Portland stone, with round arched heads facing west, according to Islamic tradition. Documentary sources from the time of its completion suggest that the Viceroy and the India Office were keen to reproduce images of the burial ground and publicise its opening, all with a view to counteracting the negative propaganda, which was shown to be so false by the provision of this special consecrated place. The War Graves Commission took over the burial ground's upkeep in 1921. The cemetery was used again during World War II when a further five Muslim soldiers were interred at Woking. In 1968, due to vandalism, all the burials were moved to nearby Brookwood Cemetery (Grade I on the Parks and Gardens Register). There are few comparators with this special structure, although a connection can be made with The Chattri (q.v.) at Patcham, Sussex of 1921, dedicated to Sikh and Hindu soldiers who were cremated nearby after dying in hospital in Brighton.

The First World War soldiers buried here include: Abdullah and Babu, Followers; Alla Ditta Kahn of the 15th Lancers; Ash Gar Ali, Hanza and Shaikh Mohiuddin of the Army Hospital Corps; Bagh ALi Khan and Sher Gul of the 82nd Punjabis; Bostan of the 9th Mule Corps; Fazal Khan of the 93rd Burma Infantry; Kala Khan of the Mountain Bty; Khan Muhammad of the 108th Infantry; Mahrup Shah and Zarif Khan of the 129th Duke of Connaught's Own Baluchis; Mehr Khan of the 19th Lancers; Mirze Iqbal Ali Beg of the Royal Military College; Sarmast fo the 57th Wilde's Rifle Frontier Force; and Shaikh Abdul Wahab of the 29th Lancers. The Second World War burials include Jan Muhammad of the 16th Punjab Regiment; Karam Khan of the Royal Indian Artillery; Khawaja Din of the Indian Pioneer Corps; Muhammad Masalachi of the Indian General Hospital; and Ali L.A.C. Yousef of the Royal Air Force.

SOURCES: Woking Galleries leaflet, 'The Muslim Burial Ground, Horsell Common, Woking'  
All archival information provided by Richard Christophers of the Lightbox, Woking:  
British Library India Office and Oriental Collections IOL/L/SUR/5/8/8, file on Muslim Cemetery, Woking, in India Office Surveyor's records, 1915-1917;  
National Archives at WO32/18578, 18579;  
British Library IOL MSS Eur/F147/80.  
Photographs from 1917 of the 'Mohammedan Cemetery' taken by Bedford Lemere

#### REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

The Muslim Burial Ground is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- \* Special historic interest as a rare purpose-built structure for the Muslim community in England at this early date (another early example, the Shah Jahan Mosque of 1889 and listed Grade II\* is also in Woking);
- \* A commemorative architectural witness to the Muslim sacrifice in the First World War;
- \* Special architectural interest for its interpretation of Islamic architecture in early C20 Britain, inspired by the Mughal style so successfully employed by Sir Edwin Lutyens in New Delhi.