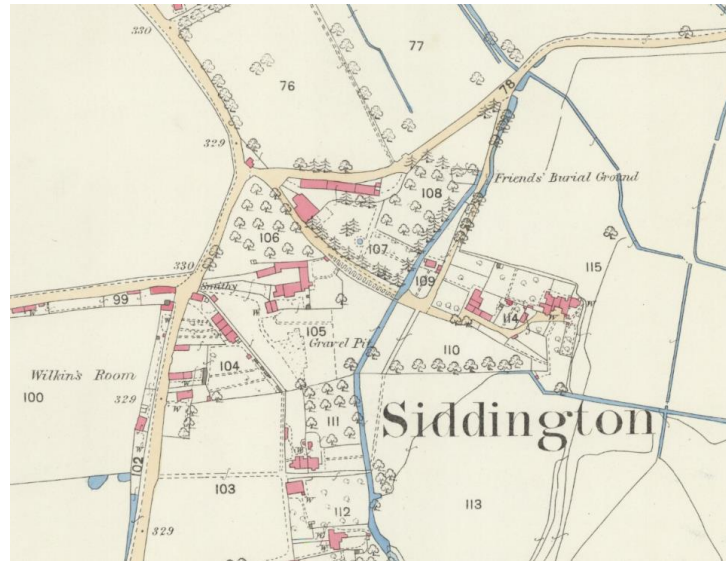


Quaker Friends Meeting House.
53 Thomas Street, Cirencester. GL7 2BA
Siddington Burial Ground, GL7 6EY

Quaker meetings for worship were being held in or around Cirencester by 1660. Land at Siddington was then given by John Roberts for a burial ground.



In 1673 a lease of the present site in Thomas Street, formerly land belonging to Cirencester Abbey, was obtained from the Crown. It is likely that the present building was started at this time, there is a date of 1673, over the rear door, to the burial ground in what is now the back garden.

The burial ground behind the meeting house was re-landscaped as a garden after the First World War by six German prisoners of war, when the headstones (mainly late nineteenth century) were moved to the perimeter wall. The earliest interment was in 1673 of Thomas Barnfield. Others buried here include Giles Fettiplace, son of the Civil Governor of the Parliamentary garrison, who led the unsuccessful defence of Cirencester against Prince Rupert's Royalists on 2 February 1643 and members of the Bowly family, prominent in local affairs over many generations. The garden is still used for the scattering of ashes. Regular meetings ceased in 1922 or 1923, and the building was used as a labour exchange from 1926 to 1947. Quaker meetings resumed in 1949, and major repairs were undertaken in 1979 and 1996.

The records of burials input to the database are from various sources. There is the copy of a plan of burials hanging in the Meeting House and this has been used with the grave references from the plan with a 'Q' prefix. The headstones that surround the garden have been recorded and cross-referenced with the recorded graves. Unfortunately there are a couple that are too weathered to read the inscription. Another source is from the County Records Office, R96/1432 641, is a record of the 'Laying down' of the body of friends and their children and their burials at Siddington in a parcel of ground bought off John Roberts for that use and it's near adjoining his house in the County of Gloucestershire, 1659-1707'. A further document from the Friends was also used 'Friends Buried in the Meeting House Garden from 1764 to 1922'. Both these record not only Cirencester burials, but also those laid to rest at Siddington. Recorded with the reference aligned to the right with the reference as used in the original documents.

Interestingly, local historian, Charles H Savory published in 1858 a 'History of the Town of Cirencester'. Under the section dedicated to the Friends Meeting House, he states 'Behind the meeting house is the burial ground, where the absence of grave stones is more than compensated, by- the simplicity and neatness with which each grave is denoted by an accurately shaped mound of turf.'

Lastly the record of ashes laid in the garden have been added to the plan and database from a plan by Peter Freke dated 2020. These are recorded with a '-C' suffix at the end of their reference.

With regards to the records of burials for the original burial ground in Siddington, these are input from database information from Michael Gardner based on transcription by Joyce Barker and records burials from 1659 to 1707. Burial references from the database have a 'QS' prefix.

John and Lydia Roberts determined that she would not be buried in the churchyard of Siddington St Peter. Friends' groups around the country broke with the practices of the Established Church, and plots of land were purchased or orchards used for the purpose. Consequently Lydia was buried on 12 August 1659 with a simple ceremony in the orchard at the end of their garden, in Siddington. A deed was drawn up to put the matter on a legal footing. Dated 3 April 1660, the deed conveyed the burial ground to Friends in consideration of £12 of good and lawful money of England. (Hawkins 1998, 105 fn. 63 and 64; GRO, R96/1432 6401) The first party to the conveyance were John Roberts Hayward, yeoman of Siddington, and his mother Mary, now a widow. The other party were four Friends: Rober Sparkes, Richard Townsend, Thomas Knight and Walter Hewlings/Hewlands. The conveyance was to last 1,000 years, with the rent of one peppercorn payable, 'only if the same should be lawfully demanded', on 20th March. The burial ground, no longer open for burials, measures some 76 feet long and 40 feet wide (23m x 12m) access to the ground being from the east across a brook running north to south. A headstone marks the burial ground with a cast plaque stating 'Friends Burial Ground 1660'.

As far as I am aware that is complete a list of those buried or their ashes laid in the garden and Siddington as I can find. I am sure there are still gaps but I have endeavoured to reconcile all the entries and also resolve any duplicate and mis-represented entries as far as I can.

I am quite willing to amend the records or plan if there are any points that I might of missed.

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To access the complete database of graveyards in Cirencester the QR code will enable you to view all the records as best as can be reconciled as of early 2024. <https://www.sitechsurveying.co.uk/graveyards/index.html>

