



Brief Lives-Remembered

Tracing a Baby's Grave Guidelines

“BRIEF LIVES - REMEMBERED”

Tel: 07807 531084

Email: brieflivesremembered@hotmail.co.uk

Website: www.brieflives-remembered.co.uk

Friends of Aldershot Military Cemetery

Useful Contacts

The institute for
Burials and Cremations
www.ibca.uk.com

Obtaining a Certificate

England & Wales
General Register Office
Po Box, Southport
Merseyside, PR8 2JD
Tel: 0170 456 9824

Scotland
General Register Office
New Register House
Edinburgh, EN1 3YT
Tel: 0131 334 0380

Northern Ireland
General Register Office
Oxford House
49-55 Chichester Street
Belfast, BT1 4HL
Tel: 0289 025 2000

Support for You

Sands
Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity
Helpline Tel: 0207 436 5881

Tracing a Baby's Grave Guidelines

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At the time of going to print the information in this booklet
is correct to the best of our knowledge.

“If tears could build a stairway and memories a lane,
I’d walk up to heaven and bring you home again”

Author unknown

About “Brief Lives - Remembered”

“Brief Lives - Remembered” was established in 2004 by Paula Jackson and Joe Fairbairn the former Sergeant Major of Aldershot Garrison. We are a non-profit making organization. Our core aim is to support families who have been bereaved of a baby or child whether locally or around the world.

One of the things we at “Brief Lives - Remembered” do; is to assist families to trace their baby’s grave. We have had much success in the time that we introduced this as part of our work.

In 2009 the book “Finding Zoe” was published. It is story about how Paula Jackson traced Zoe Gentle’s burial place over forty years after her birth and subsequent death. It also includes; families testimonies on how they traced their baby’s grave, guidelines for tracing a baby’s grave and ideas of ways to acknowledge and remember your baby. The book was funded by and is available from the National Sands website at: www.uk-sands.org/



“My own search led me up many blind alleys, and I was going to be unsuccessful, until I tried the “Brief Lives - Remembered” website, and in no time we had the information we needed. We are going to visit the grave very soon, and we will have closure at last after 45 years of wondering”.

Ann & Bill Mellows

Memorial Gardens

As the result of the circumstances of your baby's burial it may not be possible to place any memorialization at your baby's resting place. However, it may be possible to organise that a memorial plaque be placed in one of the many baby memorial gardens that have been created throughout the country over recent years.

"Brief Lives - Remembered" are currently fundraising to establish a children's memorial and garden that will be homed at Aldershot Military cemetery in Hampshire. The memorial will act as a special place for families to visit.

The UK Sands Garden is at the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire and was established in 2000. There are also many Sands gardens throughout the country. Contact Sands for more information.



Support for you

We at "Brief Lives - Remembered" understand fully that your decision to trace your baby's burial place is something that you may have thought off and wanted to do for many years. Now you are about to or have embarked on this journey we want you to feel as supported as is possible. If you need either practical or emotional support we are here for you.

If you or someone you know would like to trace a baby's grave, we would be happy to assist you.

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In the early 19th century right up until the 1960's and even in the 70's when a baby was stillborn or died shortly after birth many were usually buried in a communal grave with other babies or in a grave with a female adult. Because the hospital took care of the burial at that time, parents didn't know where their baby was buried.

Fathers were certainly not present in the delivery room, and mothers didn't even have a choice to see or hold their baby. In those days when stillborn babies were delivered, they were whisked away before their mothers could see them in what became known as the rugby pass.

Parents were sent home being told to "go and have another one" they were not encouraged to grieve or acknowledge their baby in any way. Many babies were unnamed.

Many bereaved parents who have traced their baby's grave have said that they feel relieved, and more at peace. They feel they are finally able to grieve and say goodbye to their baby.

Paula Jackson



○ **A stillborn baby whose body was cremated.**

A baby's cremated remains interred into the Lawns of Remembrance would have no marker on the individual plot. No flowers or memorials can be placed on the lawn of remembrance. However floral tributes can be placed in the family room or chapel. Crematoriums usually have a Babies Book of Remembrance.

○ **A baby buried with an unknown adult in an un-bought grave.**

It would be acceptable to leave floral tributes at the grave. You would be able to purchase a regulation vase, however you would not be able to include the baby's name or date of stillbirth on it. A simple inscription can be inscribed for example "In Loving Memory".

It may be possible to purchase the grave and therefore a memorial of your choosing.



"Finding the final resting place of a baby is one of the most Important requests we receive. In our experience a mother's grief does not go away and when we receive that first tentative enquiry sometimes from quite elderly ladies, we recognise the importance of finding something tangible to link to the baby's existence. Providing written evidence and an exact location with the prospect of placing a lasting memorial gives a sense of closure for what may have been as long as fifty years of grieving".

Audrey Ellis

Bereavement Services, Dartford Cemeteries

Part 2 - Memorial Regulations

Now that you have traced where your baby's resting place is you will need to know about memorials and what memorialization you can place at your baby's resting place.



Regulations on what memorials can be placed at the burial place of a baby can vary throughout the different authorities across the country. You will need to contact the person in charge of the cemeteries in your area, they will advise you on their regulations. Regulations may also differ with circumstances in which your baby died and was buried. Some of examples of those are:

- **A baby who was stillborn and who is buried with other babies in a shared grave.**

Some cemeteries will allow flowers laid on the surface of the grave to mark a visit.

Other cemeteries may allow memorial plaques or similar to be placed on a grave.

- **A baby born live then died who is buried in their own plot.**

All forms of memorialisation and trinkets would be allowed, however you would need to contact the cemeteries as to what their guidelines are. Some cemeteries will not allow wind chimes and candles etc.

- **A baby buried in a grave with an unknown adult, where the plot was bought by the adult's family**

As the family of the adult own the plot, it is unlikely that any memorialisation would be allowed at the grave. However it may be possible to lay some flowers on the grave, if the other family have no objections. You would need to contact the cemetery for advice.

Babies born before the legal age of viability

The term "Stillbirth" refers to babies born dead after 24 weeks completed gestation. Until 1992 the age was 28 weeks. There is no legal requirement to certify or register a baby born dead before this "legal age of viability". Despite this, it is still possible that records may exist about the disposal of the body in these circumstances. Over the years it has been left to hospitals to formulate their own policy. This has obviously varied widely, with some hospitals keeping records and others not. Therefore it is true it may prove to be more difficult to find records for pre 24 (or pre 28 week) old babies.

*"It means everything to me to find out where my
Daughter's resting place is"*

Linda Dardis

Cemeteries and Crematoria

Hospital records are rarely kept for more than ten years, so this avenue may not produce the information you want. The next place to try is the local council Cemetery and Crematoria Department, which keeps a register of stillbirths and deaths for the area. The Superintendent Registrar usually heads the department where a search can be done on your behalf.

The public are legally permitted to inspect burial registers, but are not automatically allowed to see the cremation register. However a search can be done on your behalf.

You will need to know:

- The baby's surname
- Date of death or stillbirth

Babies were buried in a shared grave or sometimes with an adult. Graves are often unmarked, though they do have a plot number.

Churchyards

Some babies may have been buried in local churchyards close to the hospital or the family home at the time. Most churches still keep records on the premises. Other Diocese may keep the records for all the churches in the area. The clergy or parish secretary at the local church will know their details.

"Finding my stillborn sister's resting place was a source of sadness and joy for me, sadness because she was not here with me.

Joy that I know where she is now."

Jenny Willis

The Hospital Records

If you decide you want to trace your baby's grave the first place to try is the hospital where the baby was delivered. You should contact the hospital Administrator who will need to know:

- The full name of the mother
- The date of delivery
- The address at the time
- Any other details about the birth or funeral

They may have a record of where the baby is buried and details of the funeral directors involved, who would be able to tell you the cemetery or crematorium used. You can then ask to see the relevant register of burials or cremation.

If the baby died after birth, and was transferred to another hospital because they were ill, they are likely to have been laid to rest in the cemetery closest to that hospital.

Local History Centres

If you are unsuccessful with contacting the local cemeteries direct. Most towns and cities hold archives of cemetery, church and baptism records for the area. The history centre may be based in your local library, if not the library would know where they are based and who to speak to.



Undertakers/Funeral Companies

Some undertakers still keep records going back a number of years. The record of the burial or cremation may lead to information of the date and place of the baby's resting place.



Obtaining Certificates

If the Stillbirth, or birth and death of your baby were registered at the time you should be able to obtain a certificate for your baby. You would need to contact the General Register Office, for your area.

You will need to provide:

- Date of Stillbirth, or birth and death
- Names of the parents
- Place of Stillbirth, or birth and death
- The baby's sex

"I feel as if a missing piece of the jigsaw puzzle has been found".

Beverley Beaumont