

**REGISTER OF BURIALS
AT THE TEMPLE
CHURCH, 1628-1853**

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Register of Burials at the Temple Church, 1628-1853 by H. G. Woods

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London. Temple Church.

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1628-1853



WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE

REV. H. G. WOODS, D.D.

MASTER OF THE TEMPLE

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INTRODUCTION



THE first portion of this Register, down to the end of the year 1714, has already appeared in print in Appendices to the second and third volumes (published in 1898 and 1901 respectively), of the 'Calendar of the Inner Temple Records,' edited by F. A. Inderwick, one of the Masters of the Bench. The type was kept standing, with the idea that it might afterwards be found desirable to print the complete Register. This has now been done by order of the Library Committee of the Inner Temple, with the consent and support of the Society of the Middle Temple.

The Register is contained in three volumes, and covers a period of 224 years, the earliest entry being dated February 19, 1628 [-29], and the latest, May 28, 1853. The entries from May 3, 1695 to January 2, 1704 [-05] have for some reason been copied into volume i, the originals being at the beginning of volume ii. In other places it seems as if several entries had been made at the same time, probably from memorandum slips. There are a few transpositions, and at least one serious omission. On the fly-leaf of volume ii. is a list of 'Fees due to the Buttlers for the Buriall of a Gent out of Middle Temple Hall,' dated April 19, 1726.¹

Dr. Micklethwaite, by whose order this 'Catalogue of Burialls' was begun, had a stormy Mastership; but in this matter he did good service. The use of the untechnical word 'Catalogue' (altered to 'Register' in 1639) probably implies that no previous Register existed in 1628. None at any rate has come down to us, and very little is known about earlier burials. Traditional names are assigned

¹ John Hiccock, whose monument is now against the wall of the Master's house, was buried on that day.

to some of the knightly effigies, and Dugdale¹ quotes some thirty-five epitaphs of dates prior to 1628, chiefly Elizabethan and Jacobean. The fine monuments of Edmund Plowden (d. 1585) and Richard Martin (d. 1618) are still to be found in the *triforium*, but early brasses had already disappeared when Dugdale wrote. For half the time over which its history extends the Temple Church is a shrine of unremembered dead.

The total number of interments recorded in the Register is not far short of 2,500, an average of eleven a year over the whole period. At first the Churchyard was only occasionally used as a burial place. An exception to this rule occurs in 1665, when 16 out of 22 entries record that interment took place in the Churchyard. Against 12 of these, running from August 8 to November 17, and all but consecutive, the words 'Of the plague' are added in another but apparently not much later hand. But in 1661, also a year of exceptional mortality, out of 33 burials all but 3 were in the Church. Altogether during the thirty-five years ending in 1662 some 60 burials had taken place in the Round, and 250 in the Oblong Church. From the scale of charges for the ground² we can infer the order of dignity attaching to different parts of the Church as burial sites. There were five grades: (1) the high chancel, (2) the choir, (3) the side aisles, (4) the long walk down the centre, (5) the round walk. Soon after 1680 it was clearly becoming impossible to find additional room for graves in the Oblong Church; earth was accordingly brought in for filling up the side and middle aisles, and a marble floor was laid down.³ As a temporary expedient, burial was resumed in the Round (or 'Rounds' as it began to be called), in which 63 interments took place during the six years ending in 1687. Meanwhile arrangements were being made for the construction of vaults, a mode of burial which up to this date is only once or twice mentioned in the Register. In 1684 the Inner Temple paid £60 'to Horne the bricklayer for making a burying vault.'⁴ The Middle Temple vault was probably made about the same time. The earliest entries of burials in the new vaults occur in 1689. From an order fixing the burial fee for the Inner Temple vault, we learn that 'the Master is debarred from

¹ 'Origines Juridicales' (1666). Second ed., pp. 173, foll.

² See the entry in the Clerk's book, quoted by Inderwick, ii., xci.

³ Inderwick, iii., 198, 212.

⁴ *Ibid.*, iii., 212.

burying anyone in the chancel or body of the Church.¹ Interments did not, however, entirely cease in the Church, though from the beginning of the eighteenth century onwards the vaults (which were enlarged about 1836) and the Churchyard became the regular burial places. On a plan of the Temple by John Ogilby, dated 1677, the only piece of ground marked as the Churchyard is on the north side of the Church. A fence is shown running across this, opposite the second buttress from the east end of the Church; the small piece thus inclosed to the west of the Master's house was doubtless the 'inner' or 'little' Churchyard, which is once or twice mentioned in the Register. The occasional occurrence² of the phrase, 'the north Churchyard,' shows that interments also took place on the south side of the Church, and there is other evidence of this.

At an Inner Temple Bench Table held on May 14, 1813, it was ordered 'that in future no corpse be interred in the Body or Rounds of the Temple Church.' A similar order was made by the Middle Temple on February 6, 1818. On November 20, 1840, a further order is made: 'No interments to take place in the Churchyard,' and thenceforward burials were restricted to the vaults of the two Societies. Burials finally ceased in accordance with the terms of the Act, 15 and 16 Vic., c. 85, 'An Act to amend the Laws concerning the Burial of the Dead in the Metropolis.' Under Schedule A the Inner and Middle Temples were made, for the purposes of this Act, part of the Metropolis. The ground on the north side of the Church was excavated in 1861.

The sum total of burials is increased by the large number of foundlings (198) who died in infancy.³ From 1700-1773 the entries are especially numerous, and on one occasion three infants were buried in one grave. The surname given was almost invariably Temple or Templer. The Register of Baptism shows that in all 251 foundlings were baptized. Baptism or the record of it may have been omitted in some cases, but even so the death rate is remarkable. At the Foundling Hospital, however, out of 15,000 children received between 1756 and 1760 only 4,400 survived to be apprenticed. If the incorporation of the Hospital in 1739 did not lessen the number of infants exposed in the Temple, this was due to the liberality of the two

¹ Inderwick, iii., 253.

² E.g. October 14, 1675.

³ See Index, under 'Foundlings.'