

## Research into Burials at St Mary Magdalene, Boveney

By Bill Dax July 2018

### Background

- Extracts from Frank Bond article on the subject in the April 2018 edition of the Eton Wick Newsletter: [Frank Bond passed away in May 2018, aged 95]
- *I think of this period of nearly 1,000 years ago as one of seasonal mud, and thick woollen clothes to cope with the damp, cold surroundings. Let us refer to a letter sent from the Pope in 1511 with perhaps a slight reference to the mud along the Boveney Road. In a Papal letter dated August 15th, 1511; twenty-three years before 'The Act of Supremacy' abolished the Pope's authority in England; he instituted a cemetery at Boveney Church, "without prejudice to anyone; that the inhabitants of Boveney may be buried therein; this being in consideration that the village is about two miles from the Parish Church at Burnham and in wintertime the bodies of the dead cannot be conveniently brought to that Parish Church." [It is about 5 miles from Boveney to St Peter's Church, Burnham]*
- *It is difficult today to fully imagine a family procession having to wend its way along the muddy farm track we now know as the Boveney Road, on its way through Dorney to Burnham. With the Pope's authority for a local cemetery at Boveney, it seems inconceivable that nobody used it. Yet there is no visible evidence or memory of there ever having been a graveyard at the village church. Boveney was not a relatively small village, as we now consider it. In 1377 there were 165 inhabitants living in 28 dwellings. Comparing this with only the 23 families in the whole of the Manor of Eton with Hedgerley and Wexham 290 years earlier, leaves us to question the census return for King Williams' assessment.*

| Census Year | Population of Boveney                         |
|-------------|---|
|             |   |
| 1801        | 165   |
| 1811        | 150   |
| 1821        | 202   |
| 1831        | 207   |
| 1841        | 189   |
| 1851        | 159   |
| 1861        | 152   |
| 1871        | 102   |
| 1881        | 115   |
| 1891        | 402 (Boveney New Town – Eton Wick developing) |
| 1901        | 545   |

- *The mystery of a cemetery deepens when we look at the other recordings. In 1859 a Mr and Mrs S. Hall of London published a book titled 'The Book of The Thames'. They arrived by boat from Windsor, and wrote "Let us step ashore to visit yon wee church of Boveney, half hidden among lofty trees, it is the last of its class we shall ever encounter" etc., "After inspecting the interior, and wondering why so small a church was ever built, we returned to the churchyard and stood for some little time beneath the shadows of a glorious old tree, whose boughs and*

foliage formed a protection against the rain or sunshine. The old withered women who had opened the church door followed and regretted the gentry should be disappointed as there was nothing to see." We differed from her, saying there was a great deal that interested us, could anything be more picturesque or beautiful than the churchyard? She shook her head **"The churchyard was thick with graves, some with stones and some without, like any other place of the sort - a poor melancholy place it was."** "She thought it was so lonely and miserable, and yet sketchers were always making pictures of it Yes there were stories of those who lay there"... and so the narrative went on.

- Let us leave the book on the river, and glance at yet another reference to the cemetery; yes or no. Over 100 years later in 1997 a letter was posted from Brewton, U.S.A. to an authority in UK requesting information on the Boveney Chapel and graveyard where ancestors Montagues worshipped and were buried. The enquiry stated that an American family member had recently visited the church but found no signs of a graveyard and found it out of character with England's history of preservation that the graveyard was destroyed. The Montagues dated back to 1621 in the States, and it is recorded that William Montague in the latter part of Queen Elizabeth I reign (1558 -1603) purchased for Boveney two butts [small pieces] of land commonly called Church Butts; so the connection was authentic enough.
- With nothing to be seen, it is too easy to fall back on the old saying 'that seeing is believing' and dismiss what seems obvious. I have my own views about this, but with little more evidence I will leave it to the readers to form their own conclusion. There is so much more about 'yon wee' church that leaves perhaps more to be questioned. Have you noticed that it was built on an earth, two to three-foot, plinth? This is best seen from the Boveney/Conker Alley gate at a time of year with low or no crops. Obviously, this was on account of floods because at high water times this area is one of the first to flood. The church, or more correctly what is left of the original, is variously described as twelve or thirteenth century, meaning that Boveney village had a church six or seven centuries before Eton Wick (1866). Although Boveney church (St. Mary Magdalene) in the Parish of Burnham served that village, I feel quite sure many Eton Wick residents of centuries ago would have attended services at Boveney. Eton Wick's only church was the Eton Parish Church which between 1440 and 1875 was the Eton College Chapel and as the College itself grew, there became an apparent less inviting atmosphere for the local folk.
- We could go on, but I am sure space must be left for other contributions. Conviction or doubts, I am always ready to discuss these expressed views.

## Research Elements:

- The Church Registers of St Peter's Church, Burnham
  - The old parish of Burnham consisted of several districts or liberties which were enumerated at the ordination of the vicarage in 1266 as Boveney, Brittilthrup, Britwell, Burnham, East Burnham, Cippenham, Lient (Lent), Weston and Woodland. (fn. 1) By the 18th century the liberties assessed for the poor rate were Burnham Town, East Burnham, Boveney, Britwell, Cippenham and Wood, (fn. 2) and these, with the exception of Boveney, are the same at the present day.
  - Its [St Mary Magdalene] origins are obscure but it is first mentioned in 1266, when the offerings there were assigned to the vicarage of Burnham. No further reference to it has been found until 1508, when Robert Aldridge of that parish left 3/4d to it by his Will.
  - It was dependant on the mother church at Burnham, and a bull of Pope Leo, dated 1513, ordered the Vicar of Burnham to find a Chaplain to 'celebrate Mass there as heretofore'.
  - The Chapel was annexed to Burnham as a chapel of ease when the advowson of Burnham was given to Eton College. Lipscombe in his History of Bucks, Vol iii p214, says that William Glover was presented to the living of Burnham by John Hawtry in 1669 and, after his death in 1707 the presentation to the Vicarage of Burnham with Boveney Chapel has been on the nomination of Eton College.
  - An Act of Parliament in 1737 to make Boveney a separate living failed for want of sufficient endowment. The Vicar of Burnham and his curate held a service there on the first Sunday of each month, but in 1767 the chapelry demanded a service every Sunday and protested its independence except as regards burials.
  - It appointed its own churchwardens, looked after its own poor and repaired the highways.
  - I used the available transcribed Church Registers:
    - Baptisms – 1557/1901
    - Marriages – 1561/1901
    - Burials – 1561/1901
  - I also used the 1985 Gravestone/Memorials survey of the north and south graveyards
  - St Peter's, Burnham Burial Register
    - Includes 160 burial records (1565 – 1900 excluding 20 years missing – 1794 to 1814) of people who were stated to have lived in Boveney. See Appendix A.
    - Of the 160, only 5 had gravestone records in St Peter's Church graveyard records.
    - These five were:
      - 1739 John WESCOT, Farmer of Boveney
      - 1823 Montague GROVER Esq aged 65 of Boveney
      - 1874 Edward EVANS aged 80 of Boveney Court
      - 1883 Rebecca EVANS aged 76 of Boveney Court
      - 1883 Frances MILLER aged 81 of Boveney Court
    - All five appear to be people of status, which might imply that others were buried at St Mary Magdalene.

## Other Considerations

- The Pope's decree in 1511
  - *[Frank Bond) Let us refer to a letter sent from the Pope in 1511 with perhaps a slight reference to the mud along the Boveney Road. In a Papal letter dated August 15th, 1511; twenty-three years before 'The Act of Supremacy' abolished the Pope's authority in England; he instituted a cemetery at Boveney Church, "without prejudice to anyone; that the inhabitants of Boveney may be buried therein; this being in consideration that the village is about two miles from the Parish Church at Burnham and in wintertime the bodies of the dead cannot be conveniently brought to that Parish Church."* [It is actually about 5 miles from Boveney to St Peter's Church, Burnham]
  - *It is difficult today to fully imagine a family procession having to wend its way along the muddy farm track we now know as the Boveney Road, on its way through Dorney to Burnham. With the Pope's authority for a local cemetery at Boveney, it seems inconceivable that nobody used it.*
- The distance from Boveney to St Peter's Church, Burnham
  - It is 5 miles. Up Boveney Road, through Dorney, up Court Lane and Marsh Lane (there was no Lake End Road at that time) across the Bath Road and up into Burnham.
  - These roads would have been cart tracks, in winter they would possibly be impassable cart tracks in some parts.
  - The journey by horse and cart, carrying the coffin, would have taken between two and three hours at best followed by the return journey.
- The cost of such a journey (in time and money) to poor people would have been high.
- Three people, including two children, died of smallpox. Would they have carried them through Dorney and Burnham?
- Two people (both unknown) drowned. Who would have paid for the journey to Burnham?
- 51 of the 160 were children 10 or younger. Many only a few weeks old. Would they have been transported to Burnham?
- Eight were described as Labourers or Servant. Who would have paid for the journey to Burnham?
- One was buried as the result of a Coroner's warrant. Who would have paid for the journey to Burnham?
- The Montagues (or Mountagues) who lived at Boveney Court
  - It appears that certain families of status did bury their dead at St Peter's Church, Burnham. Is that where the Montagues were buried? There are no memorials/gravestones recorded (1985) but there are Baptisms (30), Marriages (7) and Burials (10) between 1562 and 1852.
- The Book of The Thames description of 1859.
  - This states the following:
    - *[Frank Bond] "The churchyard was thick with graves, some with stones and some without, like any other place of the sort - a poor melancholy place it was." "She thought it was so lonely and miserable, and yet sketchers were always making pictures of it... Yes there were stories of those who lay there".*

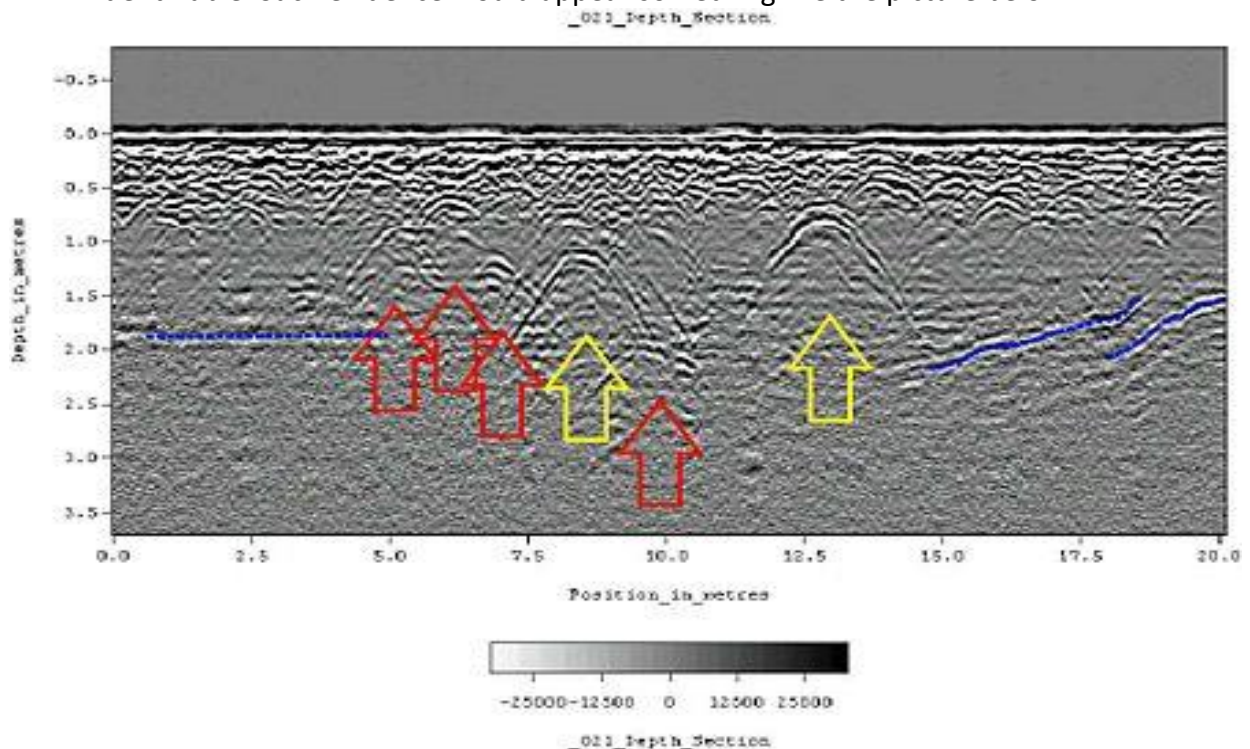
- [Book] ...At the instant a tall, venerable gentleman entered the lonely graveyard - 'Jane, my child - my darling,' he said, tenderly, 'here again! Come, my child, we can look for the grave to-morrow.' The old man's eyes were filled with tears; but she did not heed him, murmuring amid the grass. 'Forgive her,' he said, 'my poor child's mind wanders: her husband was killed at Inkerman [1854], and she fancies he is buried where they were married!' It required some little force to raise her from the sward, and then, after a little struggle, he raised her in his arms, her head resting quietly on his shoulder - the large tree the next moment hid them from our sight
  - There are eight recorded marriages of Boveney residents between 1824 and 1854 (Battle of Inkerman). There are no recorded marriages of Boveney residents between 1752 and 1824. Only one of the eight brides was named Jane (Jane Davis) and her husband (Henry Swabey, the son of a Labourer) was recorded as killed by an explosion at Hounslow Powder Mills 30 Mar 1859. There is no record in the dead of the Crimea War of any of the eight grooms being killed at Inkerman.

### Possible Conclusions:

- **All Boveney residents' burials took place at St Peter's Church, Burnham**
  - This appears unlikely given the Papal decree of 1511, the practicalities of transport and the lack of gravestone/memorials records at St Peter's.
- **Only Boveney "people of status" were buried at St Peter's Church, Burnham**
  - This appears likely given the gravestone/memorials records at St Peter's. Not necessarily for all "people of status", some of whom might have stated a preference to be buried in Boveney.
- **All others were buried at Boveney from 1511 (Papal decree) to 1900 (current digitised records)**
  - **In the Churchyard of St Mary Magdalene**
    - Most likely given the Papal decree of 1511, the practicalities of transport and the lack of gravestone/memorials records at St Peter's.
    - If the Book of The Thames 1859 record is to be believed, it appears that there were gravestones in the churchyard in the 1800s.
  - **In a separate Cemetery in Boveney**
    - Unlikely, there is no record of a separate consecrated parcel of land in Boveney.

### Next Steps:

- Review the actual Burial (and Baptisms & Marriages) Registers for St Peter's Burnham at Aylesbury Record Office on 31AUG18. These may show details that were not collected through digitisation regarding the burial place.
- Approach Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society to seek their advice on conducting a Ground Penetrating Radar study of the Churchyard to see whether any graves might be identifiable. Such evidence would appear something like the picture below:



## Appendix A

### St Peter's Church Burnham

#### Burials of persons of Boveney

Place of burial not stated except Rebecca Burgess 14NOV1740

Gravestone records at St Peter's Church, Burnham record those in bold as being buried at St Peter's

31-Jan 1565 PIRAMONS daughter of Boveney  
25-Mar 1594 Goodman LUTMAN of Boveney  
11-Mar 1658 Mary APLBE wife of John of Boveney  
22-Oct 1661 John APLBE of Boveney  
9-Jun 1676 Richard LAWRENCE of Boveney  
22-Aug1709 Mr William FELLOW of Boveney  
4-Apr 1722 Richard CURTIS of Boveney  
12-Apr 1731 Edward WEBB son of Henry, Labourer of Boveney  
26-Oct 1731 Elizabeth APPLEBY wife of Elmes of Boveney  
12-Nov1731 George SPIRE, a Servant of Boveney  
13-Jan 1732 John PRIEST, Labourer of Boveney  
27-Sep 1732 Richard FELLOW, Butcher of Boveney  
4-Oct 1732 Elmes APPLEBY, Blacksmith of Boveney  
10-May 1733 John APPLEBY, Blacksmith of Boveney  
04-Jun 1735 Mary GROVER wife of Mr William of Boveney  
21-Jan 1736 Elizabeth BOVENEY, a foundling child dropt at Boveney  
13-Oct 1736 Sarah GROVER daughter of Mr Grover of Boveney  
18-Jan 1739 Mary LEE widow of New Windsor, relict of Thomas, Farmer late of Boveney Court  
**16-Mar 1739 John WESCOT, Farmer of Boveney**  
14-Nov1740 Rebecca BURGESS wife of Thomas Esq of Boveney, was buried in the body of the Church  
11-Jul 1741 Ann WEB wife of Edward of Boveney  
17-Jun 1743 Mary BUTLER widow of Boveney  
01-Jan 1746 William GROVER, Gentleman of Boveney  
30-Apr 1747 Elizabeth WILLIAMS wife of Robert of Boveney  
14-Jan 1748 Richard BUTLER, Labourer of Boveney  
04-Nov1748 William WILMOT, a Shepherd of Boveney  
16-Jul 1750 George DEANE son of John of Boveney  
09-Dec 1750 Henry PRIEST, Labourer of Boveney  
27-Oct 1751 Sarah WATSON wife of John of Boveney  
14-Jul 1756 A youth drowned at Boveney  
23-Oct 1757 Henry WEBB, Clark of Boveney  
14-Mar 1760 Mrs Ann GROVER wife of Willm of Boveney  
05-Mar 1762 Mary ALLEN wife of John, Blacksmith of Boveney  
07-May 1762 John WESTON, Basket Maker of Boveney  
13-May 1762 John ALLEN son of John, Blacksmith of Boveney  
04-Apr 1763 A traveller drowned at Boveney, name unknown  
14-Dec 1763 John NORMAN. Labourer of Boveney  
26-Dec 1765 Ann TACKET infant daughter of Joseph & Ruth of Boveney

16-Sep 1767 William FIELD, Innkeeper in the Liberty of Boveney  
 15-Apr 1768 Ann WESTON aged 80 widow of Boveney  
 02-Aug1768 Elizabeth STEVENS daughter of John of Boveney, small pox  
 04-Oct 1768 Robert JEFFERIES, Labourer of Boveney, small pox  
 18-Mar 1769 John BUTLER son of John & Sarah of Boveney  
 11-Apr 1769 Richard TALBOT aged 81, Bricklayer of Boveney  
 24-Jun 1769 John GRATE, Labourer of Boveney  
 02-Feb 1770 John TILL son of William & Mary of Boveney  
 20-Apr 1770 John ALLEN aged 71, Blacksmith of Boveney  
 26-Mar 1771 Hannah CAULTRIDGE infant daughter of Wm & Elizth of Boveney  
 05-Apr 1771 Susanna COLTRIDGE infant daughter of William & Elizth of Boveney  
 27-Aug1771 George RATBOURN, Labourer of Boveney  
 04-Jan 1772 Elizabeth BROWN wife of Richard of Boveney  
 04-Jun 1773 Mary HUTCHINS daughter of William & Mary of Boveney  
 11-Jul 1773 Stephen DORRELL aged 73 of Boveney  
 01-Apr 1774 Martha SMITH wife of Edward of Boveney  
 26-Jan 1794 Mary TILL from Boveney  
 15-Sep 1794 ... JOHNSON from Boveney  
 05-Jul 1814 Elizabeth CLEMENTS. infant of Boveney  
 07-Aug1814 Marianne HAWKINS aged 20m of Boveney  
 22-Sep 1816 Seba? BUDDING aged 51 of Boveney  
 10-Jul 1817 Elizabeth AYLESFORD aged 1 of Boveney  
 27-Aug1818 Robert STEVENS aged 17 of Boveney  
 08-Sep 1818 John BEVIS aged 19 of Boveney  
 26-Nov1818 Ann NEALE aged 39 of Boveney  
 01-Jan 1819 Thomas DENTON, infant of Boveney  
 14-Feb 1819 William MOSLEY aged 12 of Boveney  
 16-Mar 1819 Sarah STEVENS aged 4 of Boveney  
 18-Mar 1819 James CLARKE, infant of Boveney  
 18-Jun 1820 Sarah BERRY aged 60 of Boveney  
 30-Sep 1820 Ann COX, infant of Boveney  
 12-Jul 1822 Robert COX aged 44 of Boveney  
**15-Nov1823 Montague GROVER Esq aged 65 of Boveney**  
 06-Oct 1824 Henrietta DENTON aged 1 year 3 months of Boveney  
 08-Dec 1824 Sarah DAWSON aged 75 of Boveney  
 17-Oct 1825 Elizabeth FARRANT aged 1 of Boveney  
 28-Jan 1826 William DANCER aged 72 of Boveney Farm, Wedmore Common  
 16-Apr 1826 Hannah COX aged 20 of Boveney  
 13-Jul 1828 Francis SEYMOUR aged 77 of Boveney  
 10-Jul 1829 William COX aged 41 of Boveney  
 20-Dec 1829 Charles COX aged 70 of Boveney  
 14-Jan 1830 Thomas NEAL aged 75 of Boveney  
 14-Jan 1830 Robert COX aged 7 of Boveney  
 26-Jan 1830 George COX aged 11 of Boveney  
 26-Jan 1830 Henry COX aged 4 of Boveney  
 26-Jan 1830 James COX aged 2 of Boveney  
 21-Feb 1830 Joseph DARK aged 14 of Boveney



14-Sep 1831 Elizabeth BLAKE aged 63 of Boveney  
 16-Oct 1831 Richard BLAKE aged 71 of Boveney  
 11-Mar 1833 Eliza WALKER, infant of Boveney  
 15-May 1833 Job TARRANT aged 2 of Boveney  
 07-Nov1833 Anne TUGWOOD aged 1 of Boveney  
 25-Jan 1835 Charlotte MILES, infant of Boveney  
 10-Jul 1836 William CLEMENT, infant of Boveney  
 10-Apr 1837 Charlotte TARRANT aged 5 months of Boveney  
 21-May 1837 James MILES aged 1 years 5 months of Boveney  
 08-Dec 1837 Sarah CLEMENTS aged 39 of Boveney  
 25-May 1838 Charles CLEMENTS aged 11 of Boveney  
 16-Dec 1838 John BENNETT aged 10 of Boveney  
 03-May 1839 John BEAUCHAMP aged 38 of Boveney  
 11-Aug1839 Honour MILES aged 5 months of Boveney small pox  
 29-Sep 1839 Susan DORRELL aged 31 of Boveney  
 30-Aug1840 Sarah DORRELL aged 91 of Boveney  
 13-May 1841 William CLEMENTS aged 8m of Boveney  
 08-Oct 1841 Charlotte TARRANT aged 3m of Coventry  
 20-Jan 1843 James TARRANT. infant of Boveney  
 13-Apr 1845 Elizabeth COX aged 96 of Boveney  
 07-May 1845 Thomas GIBBONS aged 81 of Boveney  
 04-Apr 1847 William CHAPMAN aged 57 of Boveney  
 27-Jun 1847 Mary MIDDLETON aged 62 of Boveney  
 27-Jun 1847 Henry STONE aged 3 of Boveney Lock  
 11-Nov1849 John Hewitt STONE aged 66 of Boveney Lock  
 13-Oct 1850 Sarah DAVIS aged 66 of Beverley  
 16-Mar 1851 John GILDER aged 75 of Boveney  
 26-Mar 1851 Jane CURNO aged 45 of Boveney  
 02-Aug1854 James HOLDEN aged 4 of Boveney  
 19-Nov1854 Elizabeth CURTIS aged 9 of Boveney  
 11-Feb 1855 Charles COX aged 60 of Boveney  
 25-Mar 1855 William SAUNDERS aged 45 of Boveney  
 04-Apr 1860 Thomas STEVENS aged 80 of Boveney  
 22-Apr 1860 Robert CURTIS aged 16 of Boveney, by Coroner's warrant  
 12-Mar 1862 Sophia PICK aged 2y 4m of Boveney  
 19-Feb 1863 John COX aged 77 of Boveney  
 08-Dec 1863 Joseph Henry ROSE aged 35 of Boveney  
 14-Jun 1866 Henry Albert WILLIS aged 2 of Boveney  
 05-Jul 1866 Alice Mary WILLIS aged 4 of Boveney  
 27-Dec 1866 William TUGWOOD aged 30 of Boveney  
 07-Feb 1867 William Henry HALL aged 6 of Boveney  
 22-Jun 1870 Joseph WILLIS aged 37 of Boveney  
 15-Aug1871 John MARTIN aged 11 of Boveney of Burnham  
 07-Jun 1873 Arthur Joseph WILLIS aged 9 of Boveney  
**19-Oct 1874 Edward EVANS aged 80 of Boveney Court**  
 03-Jan 1881 Rhoda BEAMS aged 70 of Boveney  
 20-Nov1881 Alfred James BATCHELOR aged 15m of Boveney

**03-Mar 1883 Frances MILLER aged 81 of Boveney Court**  
**12-Sep 1883 Rebecca EVANS aged 76 of Boveney Court**  
 09-Feb 1885 Henry CRIPPS aged 52 of Boveney Court Gardens  
 23-Aug 1885 Elizabeth STEVENS aged 89 of Boveney  
 02-Jan 1886 Francis William DANIEL aged 8m of New Town Boveney  
 27-Jan 1886 Sarah Ann DAVIS aged 69 of New Town Boveney  
 05-Feb 1886 Annie Louise CUTLER aged 4 of New Town Boveney  
 24-Apr 1886 John Thompson FITZADAM aged 60 of Boveney Court  
 30-Jan 1887 Ann NEWELL aged 79 of Boveney  
 05-Nov 1887 Reginald FORD aged 16m of New Town Boveney  
 24-Jul 1888 William Leonard CLARKE aged 4 of New Town Boveney  
 18-Sep 1888 William CLARKE aged 37 of New Town Boveney  
 17-Feb 1890 Harriett BOWYER aged 74 of Boveney  
 20-Feb 1890 William BAYLIS aged 50 of Boveney  
 03-Jun 1890 Catheine BLAKE aged 80 of Boveney  
 29-Sep 1890 Ada Sarah NORTH aged 13 of New Town Boveney  
 12-Sep 1891 Ernes Alfred WHITE aged 8m of New Town Boveney  
 06-Oct 1891 Emma HANN aged 55 of New Town Boveney  
 22-Jan 1892 Ethel FORD aged 17m of New Town Boveney  
 06-Jul 1893 George Hyde NORMAN aged 7w of Boveney New Town  
 20-Jan 1894 Percy Albert MOORE aged 20m of New Town Boveney  
 26-Jan 1894 Winifred Nellie HUGHES aged 9m of New Town Boveney  
 13-May 1896 John IRVINE aged 11m of Boveney  
 28-Oct 1897 Alfred Robert HAWKINS aged 10w of Boveney  
 15-Apr 1898 Daisy IRVINE aged 5 of Boveney  
 07-Sep 1898 Annie PICTON aged 6w of Boveney New Town  
 07-Sep 1898 Laura PICTON aged 6w of Boveney New Town  
 01-Sep 1900 James Charles COX aged 2 years 6 months of Boveney