

GRAVE OF THE MONTH

Mary Ann Simmons (1859-1924)



Mary Ann Simmons lived just across the road from the cemetery and just a few minutes' walk from St John's Church.

Her father died when she was just six years old and all three of her siblings died at a young age. By the time she was 19 there was just Mary and her mother.

The grand-daughter of Mr Thomas Simmons, a Mayor of Newbury, Mary never married, but devoted her life to service within the church community.

She worked tirelessly for six different vicars and was referred to as their "right hand". She taught in Sunday School, organised bazaars and visited parishioners. She devoted her whole life to the church and was held in very high regard by all who knew her.

She died on 6th July 1924 following a short illness and unsuccessful operation, aged 65. Her funeral was largely attended by women who filled the church and lined the route. After the service her coffin, followed by numerous relatives and friends, was brought to the cemetery on a hand bier covered in flowers.

In her memory a Hanging Rood in the form of an elaborately carved crucifix was installed in St John's church above the chancel arch. The Archdeacon, leading a memorial service, blessed the Rood saying that Mary's life had been one of "sacrifice and service, unstinting and ungrudging".

Mary is buried with her parents, Thomas and Sophia, her two brothers, Thomas and John, and her little sister, Elizabeth.

More information is available on our website:

fnrcnewbury.org.uk/persondetails.asp?PersonID=326

and in the Newbury Weekly News archive dated Feb 1927

Carol Brindley July 2025 – Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery