

# Victorian Monument Symbolism on Woodland Cemetery's Grounds

As a classic example of a Victorian park-style cemetery, Woodland is home to a large number of monuments with unique and intricate carvings and symbolism. Keep an eye out for these monuments as you walk the grounds - you will find many of them in our older sections (sections Q, R, S, and U) at the back of the cemetery.



**HANDS CLASPED** represent the married or unified relationship between the deceased and surviving loved ones, or a final farewell. Whomever dies first leads the other to heaven. A frilled sleeve cuff represents a woman, while a simple cuff represents a man. Commonly found on Methodist graves.

**HEARTS** represent love, passion, mortality, and suffering if they are encircled with thorns or bleeding. They also represent the Virgin Mary.

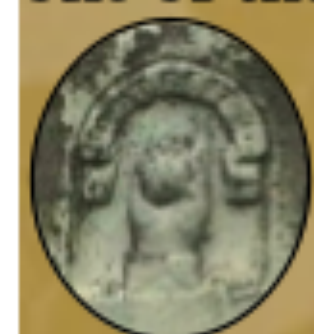


**PORTRAITURE** on monuments is often a depiction of the likeness of the deceased, especially if they died early in life.

The **SCROLL** is a symbol of life and time unfolding, suggesting honor and commemoration. Scrolls can also represent Biblical scripture or the ancient texts of the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans.



**HANDS POINTING UPWARD** symbolize the deceased's reward or ascension into heaven as a confirmation of life after death. They are one of the most popular symbols depicted on monuments. Along with clasping and pointing, praying and blessing hands are also included on stones.



**ROSES** usually adorn the graves of young women, representing heavenly perfection as well as earthly passion. If broken, the rose indicates the deceased's age: a broken rose or bud represents 12 years or under, a partial bloom is a teenager, and a full bloom is someone in the prime of life. Joined rosebuds means a strong bond between a deceased mother and child.



**LILIES** represent purity, Baptism, the resurrection of Christ, and virginity. They were also traditionally used in Victorian funerals.

**SHAMROCKS and THISTLES** indicate someone with origins in Ireland or Scotland.



**WREATHS** are borrowed from ancient Greek and Roman culture, and represent victory, redemption, memory, and eternal life.

**STONE BALLS** are usually a decorative feature, but can symbolize the sun, moon, or the endlessness of time.



**LAMBS** mark the grave of a small child. The ancient Egyptians first connected the lamb with purity and innocence, but this symbol is also linked to the figure of Jesus Christ as a shepherd. Sleeping children and cherubs are also commonly found on children's graves.



**EAGLES** often commemorate military careers, and they can also represent courage and St. John the Evangelist.



**DOVES** symbolize the Holy Spirit, baptism, purity, and devotion between married couples. They are neo-classical symbols and are often copied from Roman mosaic work. Many also associate the dove with peace. If the dove is flying, it is thought to be carrying the deceased's soul to heaven.



**SHIPS** can be representative of seamen, fishermen, and others who devoted their lives to the waters. Ships also feature on the graves of those who died in shipwrecks or from drowning. The stone shown here belongs to Mary Jane, Henry, and William Hayman, who drowned in the Thames River in the Victoria Day Disaster of 1881.



**CROSSES, CHALICES, STARS OF DAVID, MENORAHS and CRESCENTS**, among others, represent the faith of the deceased, whether Christian, Jewish, or Islamic. Rosaries may be included on Catholic graves as a symbol of constant prayer and devotion.



**THE EYE OF GOD** is a symbol of the belief that God is all-knowing and ever-present.

**ANGELS** represent guides to heaven as God's agents. They may guard or watch over the deceased, carry the departed as a child in their arms, or weep in sorrow. Some may be identified via the objects they carry (Gabriel, for instance, carries the harp).



**OPEN BOOKS** can represent scholastic knowledge or the openness of the heart and mind to the word of God. Closed books may represent a completed life. The book may also symbolize the Bible and be used on the graves of the devout or clergy members. This symbol is also connected with good deeds being recorded in the "book of life".



## The Influence of the Ancients

The Victorians were fascinated by ancient cultures, particularly those of Rome, Greece, and Egypt. Most Victorians believed that these cultures represented greatness and glory; thus, it is no surprise that ancient symbolism is represented on Victorian gravestones.



The SHROUDED URN is a reference to the Roman practice of cremation, which was often used in lieu of traditional burial. The word "urn" is derived from the Latin *uro*, meaning "to burn". The shroud that covers the urn may represent the "veil" between the world of the living and the world of the dead.

The BROKEN COLUMN symbolizes a life cut short, usually the life of the head or "support" of the family. These columns are also a nod to ancient Greek architecture. The columns can be broken at the top, as pictured, or lying on their side in two pieces.



## Fraternal Monument Symbolism

Victorian monuments were designed to express the identity of the person they memorialized, and often contained references to the person's social status, religious beliefs, profession, age at death, affiliations within the community, and much more. Many individuals who were members of fraternities (such as the Stone Masons or the Orangemen) would reflect their proud membership at their final resting place.



MASONIC SYMBOLS represent freemasonry, an organization of stone masons which has its origins in the late 14th century or earlier. The symbols depicted on freemason monuments have been borrowed from ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Persia, and have also been used in jewellery, art, and regalia.

WOODSMEN OF THE WORLD was a brotherhood and insurance company for men who worked dangerous jobs, such as lumberjacks and fishermen. When insured men died, the company paid for a monument in the shape of a tree trunk, representing equality and craftsmanship. Other symbols included are tools, the WMotW crest, and the motto *dum tacet clamet*, meaning "though silent, he speaks".



## Victorian Monument Symbolism



Explore Victorian Mourning Culture through Monument Symbolism at Woodland



## The Victorians



The Victorians (1837 - 1901) seemed to have been obsessed with death. From extravagant funeral processions, to mourning attire, to *memento mori*, the Victorian process of mourning a death held great importance. Mourning rituals were strictly observed, following the example set by Queen Victoria, who mourned the death of her husband Prince Albert in 1861 for the rest of her life.

A population boom between 1800 and 1850 meant that burial space in cities was limited, prompting the creation of the park-style cemetery that allowed Victorians to purchase family lots and furnish them with elaborate monuments for their deceased loved ones. Woodland, opened in 1879, is one of these cemeteries.

Victorians saw ownership of a grave as an extension of their family's property, and thus spared no expense on elaborate headstones complete with hand-carved symbols.

This brochure will take you through the symbolism that the Victorians portrayed on their monuments, all of which you will find in Woodland's beautiful historical sections.