



Highfield House - junction of Park Road & Cannard's Grave Road, Shepton Mallet

A Grade II listed house built around 1800, this house was acquired by the Allen family after the death of James Allen's father. His wife and three sons sold the family house and mill at Windsor Hill and moved to the Townsend district of Shepton Mallet.

James and his older brother, John, married two sisters, Ellen and Emily Burt. Both couples lived in Highfield House at different times. John and Emily lived here first, together with his brother Joseph. After John died in 1894, James and Ellen moved from Park House across the road, where James undertook his pioneering work in snowdrop hybridisation, and he would have planted more here. They lived at Highfield House for about 12 years and saw it was here that they saw in the 20th century.

In the last four years of his life, James was ill and probably confined to the house for most of this time. He died here on 8th March 1906 a couple of months before his 76th birthday.

After Mrs Allen's death ten years later in 1916, their son, John Richard Allen, lived at Highfield House until he died in 1934. Subsequently another two of James' children, Dr Frank James Allen and Edith Emily Allen, were known to be living here in 1939.

Although nicknamed the 'Snowdrop King', James Allen was also well known in other fields within horticulture. Two of his creations, Anemone nemorosa 'Allenii' and Chionoscilla allenii are still commercially available today.

Flowers and plants were a continuing theme for James Allen in death, as well as in life. James is buried in the family plot situated in front of the first chapel in Shepton Mallet Cemetery. It is recorded that the site was lined with moss and planted with a wide variety of daffodils, anemones, snowdrops and other spring flowers, including some very rare specimens. On top of the memorial on the family grave was a stone obelisk, featuring carvings of the same flowers for which he had become famous in life. Sadly, over the years, the stone obelisk succumbed to the weather and began to break apart until it had to be removed in the 1980s for the sake and now sits in pieces behind the chapel building.

If you walk up to the cemetery you will see the weathered base of the memorial surrounded by more than 1,000 snowdrops planted by Shepton Mallet Snowdrop Festival volunteers.

A founding aim of the Shepton Mallet Snowdrop Festival is to secure donations and grant funding to restore the Allen Family Memorial and commission a new obelisk from more durable stone to be erected on the site. This will ensure that James Allen is once more honoured in his home town of Shepton Mallet.

Opening Times

Grounds accessible at any time.

Admission

Admission is free but we would encourage a donation towards the Festival funds at the Marquee.

Parking

There is plenty of car parking available around the town near this location, and some time limited parking on Park Road.

The Address

Highfield House, at the junction Park Road and Cannard's Grave Road Shepton Mallet
Somerset BA4 5BT

Finding the Property

Highfield House is a reasonably short walk from any of the town centre car parks – public or retail. Park Road adjoins the top of the High Street, close to the Tourist Information Centre, Cenotaph and Mendip District Council offices at SHAPE.