

# NATIONAL FEDERATION OF CEMETERY FRIENDS

NEWSLETTER No. 32

Autumn 2013

Editor: Ann Wilkinson

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## Friends of York Cemetery host record attendance at AGM

The 2013 AGM hosted by the Friends of York Cemetery was held in June in their splendidly renovated, Grade II\* listed cemetery chapel built in the neo-classical style designed by the architect James Piggot Pritchett. There was a record attendance of over eighty members, representing twenty nine cemetery friends groups and associates.



*Photograph courtesy of Robert Stephenson*

The twenty four acres which comprises York cemetery was opened in 1837 but sadly, after the cemetery company went into voluntary liquidation in 1966, the site and its buildings became derelict. When the roof of the cemetery chapel finally collapsed in 1984, a group of concerned local people came together to form the Friends group. This was followed by the formation of the York

Cemetery Trust who purchased the site in 1987. Restoration began with the aid of donations and grants and today volunteers, Friends, the Trust and its employees maintain the cemetery, which is open for burials and is a beautiful haven for wildlife.

*Continued over*

The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the NCF. All material by the editor unless otherwise attributed.

The Chairman of York Cemetery Trust, Dr Richard Keesing, gave an account of the work involved in installing the new heating system and the beautiful Italian marble floor in the chapel, and Dr Julie Rugg of the Cemetery Research Group, University of York presented some of the findings from her research into burial in rural North Yorkshire. Attendees were then able to take part in tours of the cemetery and the chapel catacombs and find out more about the cemetery database which is of great benefit to family historians. Many people took advantage of the warm June sunshine to enjoy their lunch outside prior to the start of formal AGM business.

Thank you to the Friends of York Cemetery and York Cemetery Trust for their wonderful hospitality on the day. The next NCF AGM will be hosted by the Friends of Glasgow Necropolis on Saturday, 14th June 2014.

Any members who have not received the minutes by post or who would also like an electronic copy, please contact the Secretary: [gwyneth1@btinternet.com](mailto:gwyneth1@btinternet.com)

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## **Understanding the First World War**

The 4th of August 2014 marks the Centenary of the start of the First World War. The Heritage Lottery Fund are offering grants to help groups, communities and organizations engage in projects which focus on any heritage related to the First World War. Projects can range from exploring places and buildings associated with the war; to objects, photographs, documents, newspapers etc., which tell the stories of individuals and communities involved in or affected by the war through to the long-term impacts of the war including commemorations, memorials, films and artworks. There are three levels of grant available. For more information and how to apply:

[www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/whatwefund/FirstWorldWar/Pages/FirstWorldWar.aspx#.UnNfqrBFD5ox#.UnNfR7BFD5o](http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/whatwefund/FirstWorldWar/Pages/FirstWorldWar.aspx#.UnNfqrBFD5ox#.UnNfR7BFD5o)

## **New scrap metal law aims to reduce theft**

Cemetery friends and owners will welcome the new laws affecting scrap metal merchants. All scrap dealers in England and Wales must now apply for a licence from their local authority and keep records on who they buy them from.

The Scrap Metal Dealers Act is aimed at thefts which have blighted the rail and power industries and seen churches and cemeteries targeted. The Act also extends a ban on cash payments to mobile collectors.

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### **OBITUARY**

#### **Mr C E John Aston**

We send our sympathy to the family and cemetery friends of John Aston who died on 9th July. John was a founder member and officer of the Friends of Welford Road Cemetery, Leicester, and a supporter and familiar figure at the annual meeting of the NCF for many years.

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### **1914: First World War commemorative events: NCF website**

Please send dates and details of any events you will be marking in your cemeteries to the webmaster: [john@avery7710.freemove.co.uk](mailto:john@avery7710.freemove.co.uk) (See the WW1 Commemorative Events page on the NCF website: [www.cemeteryfriends.org.uk/WWI-Commemorative-Events.php](http://www.cemeteryfriends.org.uk/WWI-Commemorative-Events.php))

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### **Correction**

In the item about Surrey Cemeteries on page 14 of Newsletter 31, we quoted that 'This gazetteer will be donated to the Surrey History Centre with copies sent to the West Sussex and East Sussex Family History Societies.' The last part should have been the West Surrey and East Surrey Family History Societies. Thank you to John Ash (Friends of Woodgrange Park Cemetery) for pointing out this error.

## **First Members' Day and bench survey at Lawnswood Cemetery**

From Ann Lightman

### **Members' Day**

The Friends of Lawnswood Cemetery, Leeds held their first Members' Day on 20th July. It was decided to have a summer event as the AGM falls at the end of November – a dark cold evening is not the most enticing date!

It took the form of a walk "Legal Lawnswood" led by solicitor and committee member, Andrea Hetherington. This was followed by afternoon tea in a community venue just opposite one of the cemetery entrances. The tea (mostly home-made) had been prepared by others on the committee and was a good social occasion. Andrea repeated her entertaining walk the next month for those unable to attend on the day – 31 came and a couple of new members resulted.



*Photograph: Kate Vernon*

### **Lichen-covered benches identified for preservation**

Last year two committee members, Alan Mann and Stewart Shaw undertook a bench survey at the 65 acre Lawnswood Cemetery, Leeds. This involved locating and marking the benches on a plan, noting the names on any attached plaque (several have been the victims of metal theft) and rating them according to their condition – quite some task for 250 benches! Also last year a local expert on lichens – Professor Mark Seaward of Bradford University – led a walk around the cemetery showing the diversity of lichens to be found - some on benches. He described the cemetery as 'an oasis' in a suburban setting and has since written an article for our website

([www.friendsoflawnswoodcemetery.co.uk](http://www.friendsoflawnswoodcemetery.co.uk)) listing the lichens he has found there.

The staff of the cemetery are now working through the benches in the worst condition category – some being scrapped, others set aside for repair and for cleaning. The September Friends Action Day, weather permitting, will see some varnished ready for repositioning. Notices on the benches to be left with the lichens they host will soon be appearing.



*Photograph: Kate Vernon*

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## **Book Review**

### **31 London cemeteries to visit before you die** by Terry Philpot

It is pleasing to think that it could be the work of the cemetery friends that has made recreational visits to cemeteries acceptable and popular and publishers are not slow to spot a market. The London cemeteries are well served in this respects and the latest on the scene is Terry Philpot's '31 London cemeteries to visit before you die'. This comes in a size and scope between the Meller/Parsons illustrated guide and gazetteer 'London cemeteries' and Darren Beach's neat pocket book 'London's Cemeteries'. It provides a middle way with lengthy but readable chapters on the main cemeteries and the A5 size could just be carried, fulfilling the author's intention as a book for 'practical use as a companion'. But larger type and some guiding headings could have made it friendlier. The sections appear to cover all aspects so it is a puzzle why an unlinked 'Who's buried where' chapter appears at the end. All chapters are beautifully illustrated in colour.

**Gwyneth Stokes**

*The publishers Step Beach Press are offering NCF members 20% off the retail price of £12.95.*

Tel: 07771 785152 or [hayley.lee@stepbeachpress.co.uk](mailto:hayley.lee@stepbeachpress.co.uk)

## **How cemetery friends beat the rain in Bridgewater on their first tour**

By Bernice Lashbrook, Secretary, Friends of Wembdon Road Cemetery

Our hearts were sinking at the same time as our fingers were crossed as we got up on Sunday morning 16th June for our very first guided tour. The Weather Forecast was for rain so we were prepared, on safety grounds, to cancel. Sure enough by the start of the tour at 11.00 am down came the rain. But how could we cancel when 30 people had arrived undaunted and raring to go, even though it was Father's Day!

Chairman, Miles Peterson, took us on a complete tour of the cemetery highlighting fascinating facts which had been discovered about many of those interred. Since the Friends' began the clearance work some two years ago, to date they have discovered 50 new graves and cleared and tidied 150 recorded graves.

It is incredible that a relatively small cemetery could reveal so much about the citizens buried there and how so many of them had played an important role, not only in shaping Bridgewater, but also having an influence on a national basis. Astonishingly in the Paupers' area alone, now only a flat expanse of grass, it is estimated that some 15,000 souls rest. The stories of the interred whether they were great, good or not so good paint a vivid picture of Victorian life.

What was also pleasing was that instead of beating a retreat to get away from the rain which chose to stop at the same time as the tour, visitors continued to walk around the cemetery. Rita and Alan Jones, our Cemetery Work Co-ordinators were kept busy helping some who were interested in locating relatives' graves. We were also asked on which days the clearance work was carried out, with many expressions of interest to come along to help.

Despite our nervousness about the weather it was heart-warming to see such a wonderful response. So much so that along the line a bit, when even more improvements have been made and more stories have been discovered, we would like to organise further tours.

## **St Mary's Churchyard Action Group**

Chairman, Bill Cottam, records the groups impressive development

When the Rev. Canon Birch retired as the tutor of the future Edward VII in 1852 he chose St Mary's in Prestwich, Manchester as his reward. Grave markers date back to 1641; historic records for the church date back to the 11th century and other evidence suggests a wooden church as earlier as the 9th century.

The churchyard covers 3 ha. and has a wide range of architectural styles and includes listed monuments and others as being of historical significance. Local aristocrats and several nationally notable people are buried within the churchyard including Sir William Fairburn. There are graves from both World Wars, and only a few people are aware of this long and diverse history.

In 2003, a few volunteers set up the Churchyard Action Group to look after the churchyard which had become extremely overgrown. With funding from HLF we were able to compile a conservation management plan which was published in March 2008.

### **HLF grant for community involvement**

In 2012, we received a further grant from HLF to enable the group to improve accessibility, promote interpretation of the social, architectural and natural significance of the site, involve local schools and participate in events to build community involvement. Currently, we are part of a project to tell the story of the Artisan Naturalists of South Lancashire, including John Horsefield, Richard Buxton and James Percival who are buried in our churchyard. They were working people of "humble origin" who recorded the natural environment of this area as the industrial revolution took hold all around.

Our volunteers meet every Tuesday morning and hold Action Days on the second Saturday of the month.

## **Music and bats in sixth anniversary celebrations of Friends of Brockley and Ladywell Cemeteries, London**

By Geoffrey Thurley, Chair and Secretary

Our sixth Anniversary event in July was a great success, with more than the 200 or so people who passed through last year. Visitors enjoyed the guided walks and the homemade cakes. Several people became members. Membership now stands at 94.

The work session on Sunday 18th August continued the sycamore shoot cutback around two of the plots in Ladywell Cemetery. Five members attended and made a good impression on the growths.

In the afternoon, FoBLC Vice-chairman Mike Guilfoyle led a Guided Walk of the Brockley and Ladywell Cemeteries. Over a dozen people attended the themed walk, entitled 'Convicts, Conmen and Calamities'. The "calamities" included maritime disasters.

A bat walk was held under the auspices of London Wildlife Trust and Lewisham Bat Group in the evening of 28th August. Forty-five adults and ten children attended. Fortunately the bats co-operated with two species of pipistrelles detected.

Local contemporary composer and musician (and FoBLC member) Hugh Shrapnel, his wife Ruth, and fellow composer/musician John Lewis, performed their own compositions, as well as pieces by classical composers on a keyboard specially brought into the Chapel, on Saturday 28th September.

The picture shows (left to right) John, Ruth and Hugh. The Chapel was nearly full for the first ever music event organised by the Friends.





## How Hartlepool spent Big Lottery's grant

The Friends of North Cemetery tell their 'good news' restoration story

North Cemetery is a Victorian cemetery originally surrounded by farmland and supporting two mortuary chapels and a caretaker's house. It was opened in 1856 and as the town grew, the cemetery grew: expanding twice by 1890 to cover an area of 12.6 hectares. It is now encompassed by terraced street housing and has in excess of 53,000 burials.

Closed to burials now except for those with spaces in family plots, it is an unmanned site and the council has had it identified as an Open Green Space.

During the 1970s the Council removed 100s of headstones and demolished the remaining buildings from the upper area of the site, using some of these headstones and building stones to line the central footpath, and in some parts of the cemetery it can be said to look like park land with its tree lined paths.

In addition to the removing of the history of the people who came to the north-east and helped build West Hartlepool to what it has become today, they also removed the war memorial stone, replacing it with a substitute in another cemetery.

Since the formation of The Friends of North Cemetery in 2007 as a response to the growing concerns over the state of site, the group work in close partnership with the council and others to find a balance between open space and cemetery, working on a number of projects to improve the site. Our biggest achievement was to receive approx £99k from the Big Lottery's Community Space Grant pot to replace all four entrance gates, with some ground works and planting, as well enabling a Partnership agreement with the council to be formed.



*Gates, Hart Lane*

*Hartlepool continued*

### **Gates inspired by children's ideas**

The grant enabled the commissioning of two metal artists to work with children from two local schools on what the cemetery was about through art. Their art work was then interpreted by the artists to achieve the designs we have today - cemetery gates which are representative of the area, and each gate being a representation of one of the four seasons, which were recently recognised at our Civic Society Annual Awards for Conservation.



*Above: Gates, Chester Road*

*Left: Gates, Raby Road*

We have since received a further two grants of approx £20k which will see the development and launch of our much awaited web site, research & workshop activities including photography of headstones and the publication of our book of interment and history and biodiversity of the site.

Finally the Commonwealth War Graves Commission are looking to replace the headstones of some of our 81 war dead and a memorial stone which has the support of our Council and our MP Iain Wright. We will keep you updated.

For further information please contact: Irene Cross HBC Community Development Offer on Hartlepool 01429 855560 or email: [irene.cross@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:irene.cross@hartlepool.gov.uk)

## **Notes from the Burial and Cremation Advisory Group (BCAG) meeting**

Geoffrey Seamark attended the June 2013 meeting of BCAG on behalf of the NCF.

*Costs of maintaining closed churchyards*; a red flag is being raised about this issue. If a Parish Council is unable to maintain a closed churchyard and passes its care on to a Local Council which in turn (due to financial constraints) is unable to maintain it adequately it is within the rights of said council to cede responsibility to a District Council. It has become apparent that some economically challenged DCs have found legal means to 'charge back' the fees for its maintenance to the Local Council at a higher rate. Legally unable to reclaim the churchyard the LC is stuck in a renewed position of fiscal responsibility.

Meena Paterson, representing the Department of Health, outlined (via a telephone link) the need for a *new death certification process*, describing the existing model as confusing, opaque and bureaucratic. The new version will be simpler, cheaper and unifying. A working outline is due to be finalised by October, 2014. Bereaved families will be involved by the medical examiner (ME) who will consult with them on the cause of death and the standard of service rendered to both them and the deceased during the final stages by the relevant bodies involved. Faith issues and 'time constraints' were considered and the certificate could be ready if straight forward within 'hours', helped by new electronic systems. At present there is no fee exemption for children but this could change after the consultation period. ME's are to be hired by Local Authorities mainly from local GP's working part-time. Lots of industry related questions were raised concerning implementation, responsibility and possible repercussions. The overall conclusion from the group was that little thought, consideration and consultation had been considered in this working paper and hope was expressed that following the consultation period a more realistic and sensitive draft would appear.

*Minutes available from NCF secretary*

# The Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe (ASCE)

By Emer Seamark



*ASCE – Visit to Westerveld Cemetery and Crematorium*

This year the annual meeting of the ASCE was held in Amsterdam on 19th/20th and 21st September, the chosen theme was ‘Gardens, forests, cities; European cemeteries as a cultural landscape’.

The president, Lydija Plibersek said this year she wished to emphasise and develop research with a view to expanding the website and building an archive; she called for members to be more actively involved in the association. Expanding on this she stated that those members participating in the European Cemeteries Route and displaying the ASCE insignia would in future be required to promote tourism, be involved in at least one scientific and one educational activity (the latter including young people) and must show they are fulfilling these requirements. The association was proud to introduce five new members including Highgate Cemetery in London and is keen to encourage more cemeteries and individuals to become active members.

Current projects include a Europe-wide coordinated photo exhibition and a mobile phone guide which is near completion and promises to transform the visitor experience. Details of these and other exciting activities will be on the ASCE website, input is welcome.

Over the course of the three days spent in Amsterdam participants listened to a number of interesting lectures relating to the chosen theme, were transported to cemeteries in two different areas and enjoyed amazing hospitality from the hosts; a two hour trip on the famous Amsterdam canals provided a splendid experience and brought the event to a close.

The 2014 AGM will be held in Barcelona.

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### **Help with the NFCF website**

Do you have experience of website design? Could you help with improving the presentation and accessibility of the NCF website ([www.cemeteryfriends.org.uk](http://www.cemeteryfriends.org.uk))? If you are interested or know of someone else who may be able to help, please contact the Secretary: [gwyneth1@btinternet.com](mailto:gwyneth1@btinternet.com)

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### **New Members**

#### **Friends of Earlham Cemetery, Norwich**

Earlham Cemetery, established in 1856, covers 85 acres to the west of Norwich city centre. Much of the area is a County Wildlife Site and contains open grassland and a fine selection of mature trees. Friends of Earlham Cemetery were founded in 2011 by local residents.

We hold monthly walks in the cemetery and our members are researching the history of the site and recording its wildlife. We are working closely with Norwich City Council (who own the cemetery) and Norfolk Wildlife Trust to improve the cemetery as a wildlife habitat. More details of the group are on our website: [www.friendsofearlhamcemetery.co.uk/](http://www.friendsofearlhamcemetery.co.uk/)

From: Dr. Jeremy Bartlett, [friendsofearlhamcemetery@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:friendsofearlhamcemetery@yahoo.co.uk)

*Continued over*

*New Members continued*

### **Friends of Milton Road Cemetery, Weston-super-Mare**

Opened in 1856, Weston-super-mare's only cemetery is now owned by the council and the Friends are working with them to restore and preserve it. With an HLF grant they have already renovated the Anglican chapel which is now open for talks and exhibitions. Contact: Theresa Donald, [amenities@wsm.tc.gov.uk](mailto:amenities@wsm.tc.gov.uk)

### **Friends of St Matthew's Churchyard, Lightcliffe, Halifax**

Formed in January the group agreed a Development Plan and now have regular work parties, talks and events and publish a newsletter. See their website: [www.stmatthewsalightcliffe.co.uk](http://www.stmatthewsalightcliffe.co.uk)

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## **Members News**

A selection of news and events from Members newsletters and websites

### **Belgrave Cemetery, Leicester**

This year Leicester City Council entered the cemetery for a Green Flag Award. Prior to the judging for the award on the 24th June, members of the Friends group helped with painting the shed used by the cemetery keeper and planting shrubs. The good news that the cemetery had been awarded a Green Flag was announced in late July.

### **Broadwater and Worthing Cemetery, Worthing**

The Friends held an event on 11th May to mark the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Cemetery. One of the attractions was the presence of a black, glass sided horse drawn hearse and a number of Friends and visitors dressed in Victorian costume. Members of the Salvation Army were also in attendance to dedicate a tree in memory of Captain Sarah Broadhurst, a victim of Victorian 'Salvation Army' riots. On the 6th July, the Deputy Mayor of Worthing, Councillor Vic Walker unveiled a commemorative stone to mark the disastrous Typhoid Epidemic of 1893. The stone was generously sponsored by Co-operative Funeralcare

### **Brookwood Cemetery**

In April, part of the cemetery was used for filming an episode of the Miss Marple television series, in June medical cadets from Keogh Barracks helped with clearance work and in July, the Japanese Ambassador, Keiichi Hayashi unveiled a monument in honour of Professor Alexander Williamson and his wife. Renovation work has commenced on the Cemetery Office.

### **Cathays Cemetery, Cardiff**

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission have erected new information panels in the cemetery as part of their programme to increase awareness of memorials to soldiers killed in the two World Wars. The Friends have also participated in the NCF newsletter exchange scheme.

### **Newtown Road Cemetery, Newbury**

In July, the stained glass window in the cemetery chapel was removed for restoration. The window 'The Resurrection' was made by Heaton, Butler and Bayne in London and erected to the memory of Henry Godwin in 1875. Henry was involved in the establishment of the Newbury Cemetery Company by Act of Parliament in 1847 and on his death in 1874 he was buried in the cemetery opposite the chapel doors

### **Northwood Cemetery, Cowes, Isle of Wight**

The Friends have installed two new wooden benches at the southern end of the site with two more on order (available to sponsor at £250 each) and the Tree Sponsorship planting has also commenced with a Beech, a Silver Birch, a Field Maple and a Small Leaved Lime already planted.

### **Sheffield General Cemetery Trust**

The Trust has secured funding for the restoration of the Nonconformist Chapel.

*Please keep sending in your contributions for the newsletter and website. The contact details for the Newsletter Editor and Webmaster can be found on the back page.*

## **NFCF contact details**

A list of members is available from the Secretary

### **Website**

<http://cemeteryfriends.org.uk>

### **Chairman**

Arthur Tait,  
65 Cheyne Court, Royal Hospital Road, London SW3 5TT  
(020 7352 5127)

### **Secretary**

Gwyneth Stokes,  
42 Chestnut Grove, South Croydon CR2 7LH  
[gwyneth1@btinternet.com](mailto:gwyneth1@btinternet.com)

### **Treasurer**

Carol Stevenson,  
30 Kirkwood Road, Nunhead, London SE15 3XX (0207 732 8396)  
[carol@timandcarolstevenson.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:carol@timandcarolstevenson.wanadoo.co.uk)

### **Newsletter Editor**

Ann Wilkinson,  
129 Siddal Lane, Siddal, Halifax, West Yorkshire, HX3 9JS  
[ann.wilkinson0@talk21.com](mailto:ann.wilkinson0@talk21.com)

### **Webmaster**

John Avery,  
[john@avery7710.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:john@avery7710.freeserve.co.uk) (023 8063 8650)

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