

'Impenetrable jungle' becomes impressive churchyard in Prestwich

by Dorothy Fletcher, St. Mary's Churchyard Action Group

Priest in charge, the Rev. Chris Wedge, and members of the Churchyard Action Group, were pleased to welcome the Rt. Rev. C.P. Edmondson, the Bishop of Bolton, to St Mary's Parish Church, Prestwich. The Bishop came to see the many recent improvements which have taken place in the Churchyard, thanks to the efforts of these volunteers and to generous Heritage Lottery Funding. Safer paths, new fencing, repairs to various graves and monuments, lopping of dangerous trees, planting of bulbs and wild flowers, and the



*St Mary's Parish Church
Photograph taken by David Dutton*

provision of interpretation panels, have all taken place. The panels describe important features of the Churchyard and the exterior of the Grade 1 listed Church building. The Bishop blessed these panels and the team's efforts. He said, "I am thrilled to see the work of the group and how it has transformed the graveyard. You have my deep appreciation for all the hours of commitment that have been given. Now people can be here to visit family graves or just enjoy this glorious setting." Chairman of the Churchyard Action Group, Bill Cottam, also warmly thanked the members for all the work they have put in over 10 years to transform what had been an impenetrable jungle in places, into a safe, impressive and attractive graveyard.

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Graves and monuments of national importance are to be seen at St Mary's and visitors, who come from far and wide, will now find interesting information about these, both on the panels and in leaflets which are now available.

Seventeenth century grave slabs are listed for their antiquity and a table tomb to Mary Diggle is listed because it is a rare example from this era of a monument carved by a female stone mason. The Brooks memorial listed Grade 2* was made from Sicilian marble and Aberdeen granite. John Brooks was Secretary to the Anti-Corn Law League. The monument, designed by John Thomas, who also worked on Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle and the Houses of Parliament, was exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851.



*The John Brooks memorial
Photograph taken by David Dutton*

The funeral of Sir William Fairbairn is claimed to have been witnessed by 50,000 people. He worked on the Conway and Menai Straits bridges and was also involved in building the first steel hulled ship. There is a plain grave slab to William Sturgeon inscribed "The Electrician." Sturgeon invented the world's first electromagnet in Manchester in 1823 which resulted in the development of the dynamo. A Venetian Gothic chest tomb to John Slagg was designed by Alfred Waterhouse in 1863. Waterhouse is best known for his design of Manchester Town Hall and the Natural History Museum in London. A Celtic cross marks the grave of Sir William Mather, founder and head of the international engineering company Mather and Platt which manufactured textile machinery.

Between 5000 and 6000 patients from Prestwich Hospital, known formerly as Prestwich Asylum, were interred mainly in unmarked graves between 1851 and 1994. A Welsh slate memorial to all the

patients has been erected and wild flowers planted over the unmarked graves.

Three artisan naturalists are buried in the churchyard. John Horsefield was a handloom weaver, who, as well as being president of the Prestwich Botanical Society, propagated a new variety of daffodil, *Narcissus Horsefieldii*. Bulbs of this variety have been planted around his grave. Richard Buxton, a clogmaker, was the author of *The Manchester Botanical Guide*, published in 1849. Many of the plants he noted can still be found in Prestwich today. James Percival became president of the Lancashire Botanical Society. His grave is inscribed, "He had no favourite flower but loved them all."

These are a few of the interesting and notable graves in St Mary's Churchyard. The lives of those buried here are a source of great interest and inspiration.

Change of ownership of Brookwood Cemetery

forwarded by Margaret Hobbs, the Brookwood Cemetery Society

The Brookwood Cemetery Society would like to inform members of the Federation of the change of ownership of Brookwood Cemetery on the 12th December 2014. Woking Borough Council are now major shareholders and thus will be responsible for the future of the cemetery. This should be secure as greater investment will be made into the infrastructure of this historic site. Diane and Kevin Holliday will remain as managers.

NFCF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Hosted by

The Friends of Beckett Street Cemetery, Leeds

Saturday, 13th June 2015

Any members who have not received details
please contact the NFCF secretary

gwyneth1@btinternet.com

“Recording Angels”

from Bill Scott

“Recording Angels” is a voluntary, charitable organisation, set up in 1998 to collect, collate and publish for public benefit all aspects of memorial within the administrative area of Midlothian. It was born out of frustration at the haphazard and inconsistent forms of memorial inscriptions available to family and local history researchers.

It has no formal membership nor is there a subscription, it being thought that the volunteers would be spending enough of their own money as they carried out the work. Although at the moment there is a committee of five and two Trustees, there are a further three persons actively engaged in the work. In the past sixteen years there have been approximately twenty five others working for varying periods of time.

Working on a parish by parish basis we produce A4 sized books listing everything memorial that we can find from earliest records until 31 December 2000, although later detail which is listed on pre 2000 items is also included.

The work involves reading headstones and transcribing them in an easily read format but to a high degree of accuracy. To that is added all other burial detail taken from official records. The next step is to note all memorials plaques and other forms of memorial in churches, schools, clubs, pubs and elsewhere, even including benches and trees. War Memorial detail is also given. The result is the most comprehensive published record of burials and memorials available in the UK. Unfortunately, as noted above, it only applies to Midlothian, although we continue to hope that other organisations will feel a desire to compile similar books for their local area.

Each book contains some local historical detail as well as location plans and maps of the burial ground layouts. The whole is indexed by name, address and occupation. There are also lists of the clergy officiating in the various churches within each parish.

So far twelve books have been published, the last being for Dalkeith - Part 1. Because of the size of the parish of Dalkeith it is not practicable

to issue everything in one book. Part 1 covers all the usual aspects of our books, as noted above, but excludes the cemetery and the New Cemetery. The thirteenth, referring to Dalkeith Cemetery is now available. It runs to 250 pages and costs £10. It is hoped that the third book relating to the New Cemetery will be available later this year. A fourteenth book, for Roslin Parish should be ready in a few weeks. It is likely to cost £6 and will include all that parish's details.

Full details of our work can be found on our website: www.recordingangels.org.uk Details of the size of the books, their cost and postages are also given on that site.

Concern over graffiti on cemetery outbuildings

CemeteryWatch, the Friends of Kingston and Surbiton Cemeteries in Surrey, have recently expressed concerns about the amount of graffiti that has become visible on some outbuildings near the main gatehouse at Surbiton Cemetery.

Steve Woodbridge, CemeteryWatch secretary, explained: 'For many, many years there was a regular member of Council staff on duty every weekend at Surbiton Cemetery and also in the early evening hours on weekdays in the summer months. The cemetery lodge house, near the main gates, was also regularly occupied by a member of the cemetery management team, but is now left empty for long periods of time, with grim-looking metal security shuttering now fixed to the ground-floor office windows. About three years ago a controversial decision was also taken by the local Council to withdraw the weekend and weekday evening patrol staff, in order to save money. We predicted at the time this was a very short-sighted move, and sure enough there has been a steady rise in ugly graffiti being scrawled on some of the outbuildings, clearly visible from the road and certainly from within the cemetery. This not only creates an uncomfortable atmosphere for visitors, it is also unsightly and will entail significant cleaning costs to remove it, which we are very keen to happen. The longer it is left, the worse it will become'.

Logo competition winner

The Federation is pleased to announce that the winner of the logo competition is Dorothy McCulloch of the Friends of York Cemetery.

The prize awarded for the competition winner was £50 of M & S vouchers but Dorothy very kindly declined to accept these from NCF funds.

The logo, which is which is used on page 1 of this newsletter, gradually being introduced into NCF publications etc and it will be sent by email to all members for their use. Many more newsletter editors could mention their membership at the end of newsletters and we hope this logo will be an incentive.

NCF website

Each member now has a unique profile page on the NCF website which can contain a picture, description, contact details and web link. The image size for a picture is 960 pixels wide x 280 pixels high. We can crop your picture for you but please make sure it is at least 960 pixels wide. This picture size works best with a panoramic view. See the web site for examples: <http://www.cemeteryfriends.org.uk/>

To ensure member profile pages stay up to date throughout the year please do not refer to local events in your description. If you have an event of national interest please let us know so that it can be added to the events page. Content for the members section can be submitted via email to the webmaster and other content to the secretary. See the Contacts on back page of this newsletter.

Penzance Jewish Cemetery wins HLF support

BOD Heritage Ltd, which owns the Penzance Jewish Cemetery has received a grant of £13,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help restore this Grade II listed cemetery. A Friends group has been recently formed and the cemetery was featured in the last (No 34) issue. See new website: penzancejewishcemetery.org.uk

War Memorials Trust and the Learning Project

As part of their Learning Programme started in 2011, The War Memorials Trust completed its Learning Volunteers in Kent programme last December. Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Learning Volunteers attended training sessions in Canterbury run by the Trust's Learning officer and then they arranged visits to 31 schools and youth groups. Throughout the UK the Learning Officer and volunteers have made a record number of visits to schools, instigated by the First World War Centenary.

SEDA help plants trail in Tower Hamlets

Terry Lyle in the March newsletter of the Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park describes the happy task of how they are planting a 'Plants for People' trail in the cemetery park. This is being established with the aid of a grant from Santander Social Enterprise Development Programme (SEDA).

With categories for creating a greener environment and for working with deprived neighbourhoods, members may be interested in looking at this: www.santanderseda.co.uk

The 'Landers' Campaign: Kensal Green block surprise development

The Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery had to move quickly last August after the shock of receiving a notice of a planning application to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea for the redevelopment of E M Lander's showroom on Harrow Road, east of the cemetery's main gate.

Landers is the last of the monumental masons' showrooms which once lined the approaches to the cemetery and is a remarkable example of 1920s architecture. Following a campaign and objections submitted, planning permission was denied in September on specific points, though they could be addressed in another application. The full story of the campaign, plans for the future and the history of Landers are in the January edition of the Friends 'The Magazine'.

First World War first air raid: victim's grave restored

from Paul Davies, Friends of Great Yarmouth Cemeteries

The first air raid on Great Britain occurred on the 19th January 1915 in Great Yarmouth.

On the 19th January 1915, on a cold, foggy and wet night three airships of the Imperial German Navy set out from Hamburg to attack ports on Britain's east coast, possibly the Humber River. They had open, exposed and unheated control cars and primitive navigational aids.

One returned (L6) to base after developing engine problems. Due to the weather conditions and the wind, they were blown off course. The second, L4, crossed the coast at Bacton at about 8 pm and flew to King's Lynn. The third, the L3 crossed the coast at Happisburgh and headed for Great Yarmouth and dropped about ten bombs.

The greatest damage was caused by a 110 lb explosive bomb in St Peter's Plain, Great Yarmouth. The damage was considerable and two people were killed. One was a shoemaker, 53 year old Samuel Smith, who was standing outside his shop at the time.



*Mayor of Great Yarmouth laying a wreath on Samuel Smith's grave
Photograph courtesy of Paul Davies*

The coroner at the inquest of Samuel Smith declared that it could be defined as murder. It was a wicked and wilful act. It was an outrage that adults and children should be attacked in their homes.

The raid was deplored in the national papers. The Zeppelin crews were called baby-killers. One paper railed: the loathsome blood mad fiends who did this foul work have only stirred every

Briton's heart to sterner resolve. The paper continued: demented Germany is gloating over the way that their Zeppelins can cross the North Sea and kill our civilians.

Samuel Smith was buried quietly, so as not to cause alarm, in Great Yarmouth Cemetery. His grave was overgrown and now has been restored. It features pebbles, which are common in the local graveyard. On the 100th anniversary of the raid a short service took place at his grave and a wreath was laid by the Mayor of Great Yarmouth.

*Right: Samuel
Smith's grave
Photograph courtesy
of Paul Davies*



Further HLF success for a Friends group

The Friends of St Matthew's Churchyard, Lightcliffe, have received £14,700 from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards the renovation of the old churchyard. Over the next two years, the funding will be used to clear overgrown areas; improvement of paths; installation of information boards and seating; creation of visitor trails around the churchyard and run educational events.

Appeal for information on Chinese burials

I am researching the early Chinese community in the UK i.e. those persons who arrived about 1900 to 1940. Most would have passed away by about 1975. Their gravestones can yield much information (in Chinese writing); name, date of birth and death, place of birth in China etc. and I am interested in examining as many as possible. I am already aware of those in the Chinese sections of Liverpool, Cardiff and East London cemeteries, but would be very interested in seeing others in all other parts of the UK.

If you have any information, please contact me, Walter Fung, walter.fung888@btinternet.com

Re-reading the British Memorial

Report by Gareth Beale, Centre for Digital Heritage,
University of York

The Re-Reading the British Memorial project is based at the University of York and the University of Southampton and seeks to assist local recording groups in the use of high-tech solutions for cemetery recording. Rather than relying on expensive and difficult to use technologies we provide training in the use of free open source imaging techniques which can help with documentation, conservation and interpretation of memorial inscriptions.

Digital imaging techniques are increasingly widely available to non-specialists and the development of open source technologies such as Reflectance Transformation Imaging has helped to ensure that advanced tools are now available free to anybody who wants to use them. These techniques are a very useful way of analysing carved stones or wood, often revealing details which are invisible to the naked eye.

In March we held an event with The Upper Wharfedale Heritage Group to provide training in the use of Reflectance Transformation Imaging for the documentation of church memorials. The session was a follow up to a previous event and attendees came well equipped with cameras and homemade recording equipment. We recorded a number of interesting objects on the day and are looking forward to seeing more results soon.



Photograph copyright of Rose Ferraby

If you would like to know more about the project, please visit our website at <http://ourti.org>.

The Centre for Digital Heritage at the University of York is a leading centre for digital imaging in archaeology and cultural heritage and we

are committed to spreading the use of these technologies to different communities and new research areas. Find out more about our work at www.york.ac.uk/digital-heritage

New Members

The New Friends of Dewsbury Cemetery, West Yorkshire

Dewsbury Cemetery which opened in 1860 was designed by William Barratt, guided by the principles advocated by John Claudius Loudon, and was regarded as an excellent example of the garden cemetery movement. Features included three entrances, a promenade, a war memorial and a pair of chapels in restrained Gothic revival style. Over the years the cemetery has been neglected and the chapels in particular have deteriorated until now they have to be fenced off. This is a working cemetery owned by Kirklees Metropolitan Council.

In 1997 the Dewsbury Cemetery Action group was formed but they struggled unsuccessfully for a few years to improve matters. Now a group of enthusiasts have formed the New Friends of Dewsbury Cemetery and with the support of Kirklees Council they aim to restore the chapels and the cemetery to their former glory.

See their website: www.newfdc.co.uk

Contact: Paul Edwards, info@newfriendsofdwsburycemetery.co.uk

Friends of Queensbury Cemetery, Bradford

Queensbury Cemetery opened in 1905 and is a working cemetery owned by Bradford Council. It features a memorial wall where stone plaques can be engraved in memory of loved ones. Local residents with family graves in Queensbury Cemetery have formed a group to give added maintenance care and other support to the council's limited efforts. The group feel more needs to be done to ensure visitors are welcome.

Contact: Sue Dewdney, sue.dewdney@gmail.com

Members News

A selection of news and events from Members newsletters and websites

Broadwater and Worthing Cemetery, Worthing

From the NFCF secretary. The evidence that the NFCF's role in encouraging the exchange of information between members is worthwhile can be seen in this cemetery's latest *Broadsheet*. After reading of the Friends of Great Yarmouth's success in the Anglia in Bloom competition (NFCF Newsletter 34), Broadwater made a fresh approach to their council's Head of Environment about a future mowing regime and received a very positive 'open door' response and promise of a meeting.

Ford Park Cemetery Trust, Plymouth

Over fifty people attended the annual remembrance service for George Hinckley VC on the 31st December, the anniversary of his death. Attendees at the service included representatives of the Royal Naval Association and George's descendants including great, great grandson Andrew Smith who was presented with a replica of the Victoria Cross.

Northwood Cemetery, Cowes, Isle of Wight

In February, the Friends announced that their 'Round 2' grant application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) had been submitted. Detailed professional survey work undertaken using an initial development grant of £73,500 indicated the full cost of the Northwood Cemetery Heritage Project would be substantially more than originally estimated. Subsequently, a revised figure of over £1.6 million has been submitted and a decision from the HLF is expected in July.

Park Cemetery, Ilkeston

During their Spring Open Day in March, the Friends unveiled a new interpretation board at the Park Avenue gates. The board designed by the Friends features some of the interesting residents in the cemetery as well as the history of the site. It is intended to be first of several boards provided from funds raised through donations by local people.

We are the Community Champions

Sue Garwood, Ilfracombe Holy Trinity Graveyard Group reports:

Ilfracombe Holy Trinity Graveyard Group is a community based group looking after some 2,500 graves in this now beautiful old churchyard. We started work in August 2014 with a need to find the War Graves; since then our activities have spread in many directions and we have recently joined the NCF as an Associate.

In January of this year we were approached by the Community Development Foundation, a national organisation. Having filled in form after form, sending them off and then forgetting about it, we were surprised to find that we fulfilled all but one of the criteria needed to become Just Act Community Champions. We were awarded this after the panel had seen our Facebook page and realised all the work that we have undertaken. This, we hope will be useful when applying for local grants.

We are self-funded at the moment and 'grant' funding is a problem because we are not a charity and we are not an official Friends group and have no constitution or committee. It works for us by having a show of hands among the group. We all believe that trying to make it more formal would spoil it for us. So, to raise funds we have plans for a quiz and an evening of bringing history alive, actually entitled Dead Famous in Ilfracombe with a local drama group.

We have joined forces with Incredible Edible and they have installed a herb box and have dug over some spare ground in the cemetery where they are planting peas, beans and fruit bushes for members of the community to help themselves. The helpful local scout group have taken over a corner for a 'bug hotel' and are starting to plant out the graves with flowers.

We have a good relationship with Community Resources who have made us hedgehog boxes. We also have bird boxes and Community Payback are undertaking to build us some seating.

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Please see our Facebook page and give us a 'Like' to keep up with our news. Better still if you are in the area of Ilfracombe, North Devon let us know and come and see us!

Contact: Sue Garwood, suegar200@hotmail.co.uk
<https://www.facebook.com/ilfracombeholytrinitygraveyard?fref=ts>

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

Geoffrey Seamark attended the December 2014 meeting of BCAG on behalf of the NCF.

Cross-border Death Certificates, England/Wales and Scotland have accepted Form 14 Registration of Death as an interim measure until Scotland produces compatible registration and providing there is sufficient and robust scrutiny, this covers the transportation of bodies from south to north.

Changes to the 1857 Burial Act, initiated by the Church of England (introduced in January 2015) will simplify the procedure involved in the **reuse of graves**. Suggested changes to the 1884 Disused Burial Ground Act, will allow greater flexibility and more sensible planning of buildings within churchyards.

Grave reuse was recently raised in parliament in reference to London legislation whereby reuse can be sought under ancient faculty. It was questioned if this was workable on a national level. The Minister (Simon Hughes) has expressed sympathy and concern on this matter but felt more research was needed and evidence presented before the task of framing conclusive legislation could be considered. There is frustration in the industry at the continued delay by the government and the many consequences of the failure of ministers to act decisively. Grave reuse is seen as a short term measure; the real issue is planning and need for land to be released for cemetery use.

Funeral directors concerned about the growing problem of **unclaimed ashes** have requested the cremation form include a statement that unclaimed ashes are returned to the originating crematorium after a specified time period. The latter having the responsibility for locating

someone associated with the deceased to arrange for collection; if this was not possible to arrange for the respectful disposal of the remains. It was further emphasised the need for an audit trail to remove the existing onus of the legal and practical responsibilities. The Minister of Justice (MOJ) said this would require an accepted standard throughout the industry.

The MOJ wanted to know how well informed the industry was regarding a **possible UK Ebola outbreak**. Those concerned offered assurance that all involved are being briefed and constantly updated. The Muslim Faith Group expressed concern at the possibility of cremation becoming the chosen means of disposal. In response, they were reminded that the danger lay in handling remains and if the procedures already applying to contagious diseases were followed, this would be satisfactory.

Natural England are looking into the change in status of **cemeteries as local nature reserves** and asked for any legislative hurdles or issues which might present themselves. It was suggested contact be made with cemeteries such as Tower Hamlets and Sheffield General which have already chosen this route. The five year, government funded project to map all green spaces in England and Wales inclusive cemeteries and burial grounds is to be carried out by the Ordnance Survey.

On **out of area autopsy**, the waiver of fees for transportation of the deceased in such cases has been raised with the Chief Coroner who remains undecided on this issue.

At Burntwood Cemetery, a **breach of planning** highlighted in the proposal to build a crematorium too close to housing, has resulted in plans being redrafted to build a mausoleum instead.

The existence of at least four or five burial sites on the proposed route of the **High Speed 2 rail link** has been acknowledged but impact studies are being revised due to scale and cost implications.

Agreement has been reached concerning the minimum standard; quality of materials and construction used in **coffin manufacture**. Legal implementation will be sought.

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A list of members is available from the Secretary

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