

The Friends of Arnos Vale Cemetery recognised with Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

from Sue Puddy, Chair of the Friends of Arnos Vale Cemetery

On Tuesday 24th November 2015, volunteers at Bristol's Arnos Vale Cemetery welcomed His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester to formally present the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK.



Photograph forwarded by Sue Puddy

Launched back in 1987 following press reports that the owners were looking to clear a large section of the cemetery for commercial development, a group of concerned local people came together to oppose the proposals and win long-term protection for the site, placing it back into public ownership. Today the Friends support the Cemetery Trust in promoting Arnos Vale as a place of remembrance, heritage, wildlife and learning for the community.

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The Friends of Arnos Vale Cemetery is one of 187 charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups to receive the prestigious award in 2015. The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service is the highest award given to local volunteer groups across the UK to recognise outstanding work in their communities.



*Photograph forwarded by Sue Puddy
© Bob Pitchforth*

A delighted Chair of the Friends of Arnos Vale, Sue Puddy, said "This award is for each and every one of our dedicated team of volunteers here at Arnos Vale Cemetery who help to keep such a special site for the community. It is an honour that all their hard work has been recognised in this way. We have a team of almost 100 people who give up their time to work on the

landscape, in reception, in the shop, doing research and many other administrative roles and new volunteers are always welcome to come along and join us".

Theft of tools and equipment from All Saints Church

In February, thieves used welding gear to burn off padlocks in order to gain entry to the storage shed at All Saints Church in West Bromwich. They snatched £4,500 worth of tools and equipment including strimmers, a generator and a lawn-mower. The equipment purchased from public donations was used by the volunteers of the Friends of All Saints Church to maintain the graveyard. (See: <http://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/thieves-use-welding-gear-church-10966653>)

The Friends set up an online campaign to raise funds which was boosted by a generous donation of £1,000 from Wates Giving. Secretary Jean Fletcher reports they have already been able to replace some items but the appeal continues.

Please join us for our first National Cemeteries Week

10th to 18th September 2016

Following a suggestion at the AGM, the committee has invited members to take part in the NCF's National Cemeteries Week as an opportunity of promoting the concept of cemetery friends nationally while linking it to groups' individual events to show the public the wonderful legacy of our cemeteries.

By extending the 'week' to include both weekends it will cover both London Open House and Heritage Open Days weekends which many members already take part in. If you have no events scheduled for these dates, why not plan one.

The Federation will publicise on <https://www.cemeteryfriends.com/> and seek national media interest while members do the same locally as part of National Cemeteries Week.

Our membership increases steadily as more groups are formed yet still we are given puzzled looks and asked 'What do Cemetery Friends actually do?' So here is a chance to show them and put Cemetery Friends and their National Federation on the map.

A small number have already let us know but we are hoping to hear from many more. If you wish to join in, please contact the NCF secretary by sending an email to secretary@cemeteryfriends.com

New NCF web address

The website has a new web address: <https://www.cemeteryfriends.com/>
The inclusion of 's' in https indicates it is a secure website and anyone visiting an old web address will be automatically redirected. The website has also been updated to become more mobile and tablet friendly so the layout adjusts to screen size and the speed of downloading of the web pages is significantly faster.

Interested in hosting a future Federation AGM?

Secretary Gwyneth Stokes gives the background

Over 29 years NFCF members have enjoyed the opportunity to meet each other at various interesting locations throughout the country. They tour the cemetery, perhaps hear a helpful talk on our work, contribute opinions and discussion at the business meeting and, most valued of all, informally share their high and low Cemetery Friends' experiences with others who feel the same. Though the next opportunity is probably 2019 several of our hosts have found it is not too early to plan, book a hall, and seek local authority interest and support.

What is required?

The host group needs to be in a position to fund the event to a certain extent but as the main cost is usually the hire of a hall, the NFCF is prepared to contribute or pay for this depending on the charge. Attendance varies according to the location but usually between 40-50. Lunch can be a cold buffet provided by the volunteers. Until recently the lunches were complimentary to two members of the group and charge made for any extra. These days necessity may require that all who want lunch are charged. Ideally it can be provided by the local authority or other sponsor.

No one can deny organising this event is an extra responsibility for a busy group, so we cannot stress too strongly that a committed team of volunteers is essential for success. First step is to contact the NFCF secretary; expressing interest and the year you want to do it (usually 18 months ahead but the earlier the better). You will be sent a form requesting information about the group and the cemetery which will go to the committee for consideration. If more than one offer they will take in to account the location - so as to choose different region from previous year, - features of the cemetery and local area, transport etc. and whether this is a 'first time' application. They will then make a recommendation at that year's AGM for the following year.

So please discuss with your members and let us know if interested.

The NFCF thanks the Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery, Newbury, for their appreciated contribution in hosting this year's event. A report will appear in the next issue with date and venue of AGM 2017.

Friends of Adlington Cemetery make a start

forwarded by Stuart Clewlow

Last autumn, Adlington & District Heritage Society established the Friends of Adlington Cemetery, Chorley. The ambition was to help keep the cemetery tidy and care for the appearance of the individual plots and general area.

By way of a historical summary, Adlington Cemetery was founded in 1875 and is now maintained by Chorley Council. Within the grounds is the former Chapel of Rest. Its foundation stone was laid by John Gerrard, J.P. in 1877.



*Adlington Cemetery Chapel –
photograph courtesy of Stuart Clewlow*



*Friends group - photograph
courtesy of Stuart Clewlow*

Society Chairman Stuart Clewlow commented, “We have been fortunate to have the support of Chorley Council on this project and we have already made quite a noticeable impact. The Council fulfil their mowing and grounds obligations and we have been able to follow up behind and tackle the

objective of tidying up the individual plots which appear to have become unkempt. The overall ambition is to help maintain the cemetery to a high standard and make it a place where visitors feel comfortable to pay their respects. Naturally, the group takes pride in their work and hopes it pays a fitting tribute to those who lie at rest in the cemetery, many of whom are ancestors and friends of group members.”

Having already worked over a third of the cemetery, the Friends group wound down their efforts during the winter months but now continue in the spring. Heritage details and information can be found via the Adlington & District Heritage Society and the Friends of Adlington Cemetery group have a dedicated group site on Facebook.

Earlham Cemetery Black Poplars Project

from Dr Jeremy Bartlett, Secretary of the Friends of Earlham Cemetery

Members of the Friends have been raising native Black Poplar trees from trees in Earlham Cemetery in Norwich.

The native Black Poplar, *Populus nigra* subspecies *betulifolia*, is one of our largest and most striking tree species but has also become one of the rarest. In medieval times it was relatively common in East Anglia, especially Suffolk and Essex but by the end of the 20th century there were fewer than fifty trees left, all of them male.



Taking cuttings – March 2014
Photograph courtesy of Jeremy Bartlett



Vanna Bartlett and trees – February 2016
Photograph courtesy of Jeremy Bartlett

There were originally six trees in Earlham Cemetery but now only two remain, so Friends of Earlham Cemetery decided action needed to be taken and we were given permission from Norwich City Council to take cuttings from the remaining trees. We took the cuttings in March 2014 and raised them in our own back gardens. We planted out nine of the cuttings at Marston Marshes, a local nature reserve by the River Yare on the outskirts of Norwich, at the end of February 2016. The Earlham Cemetery trees were themselves probably cuttings from a tree that grew in Chapelfield Gardens in the centre of Norwich until 1932.

The native Black Poplars in Earlham Cemetery are rather out of place and it is probably too dry for them, though they can withstand atmospheric pollution from nearby roads. The tree's natural habitat is along riverbanks, where the seeds can fall onto mud and germinate. The mud must remain wet during the critical first summer of growth. The fallen twigs also grow easily if they fall onto wet mud. But wild riverbanks are now very scarce and most native Black Poplars have been planted and occur in fields and hedges, often near farms and ponds.

The tree can be used to make stakes, bowls, veneers and even artificial limbs, and poplar wood arrows were found aboard the wreck of the "Mary Rose". A well in Viking York was made from a hollowed out Black Poplar trunk.

We plan to plant a tenth tree at Tyrrel's Wood, near Long Stratton (managed by The Woodland Trust), later this spring. This will replace a native Black Poplar blown down in a storm earlier this winter. We will also take more cuttings, which we hope to plant out in early 2018.

Thanks to Imogen Mole (Arboricultural Officer) and Paul Holley (Natural Areas Officer) from Norwich City Council, who have been very supportive of this project.

Former hospital burial ground now a nature reserve

forwarded by Eileen Moschke, Friends of Mendip Hospital Cemetery, Wells

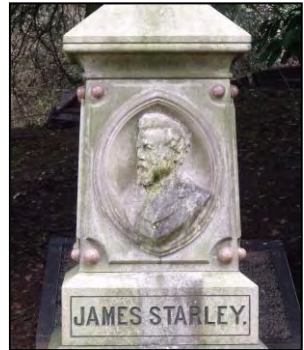
The burial ground of the former Mendip Hospital was taken over by the Friends in 2000. Volunteers maintain the site as a nature reserve. The grass is cut in early autumn to encourage seeds to set and wild flowers to flourish and plentiful varieties of grasses and shrubs attracts insects, butterflies and birds.

(See: <http://www.wellsjournal.co.uk/Burial-ground-offers-wildlife-refuge/story-28799008-detail/story.html#ZQDwijwE15JC0Wq3.03>)

Publications

A Victorian resting place for a growing industrial city: Coventry's London Road Cemetery

This book by Ian Woolley, Chairman of the Friends of London Road Cemetery, deals not only with the design of the cemetery by Joseph Paxton, it also features over 60 individuals buried within the cemetery, including many former Mayors and industrialists involved in Coventry's growth in the 19th Century. Amongst these industrialists is James Starley who brought cycle manufacturing to the city and his nephew John Kemp Starley, also a cycle manufacturer whose company would eventually become Rover cars.



*Photograph courtesy
of Ian Woolley*

Other people worth a mention is Francis Skidmore one of the finest metalworkers of the Victorian period making decorative pieces for churches and cathedrals and the metalwork for the Albert Memorial. There is the man killed by an elephant when the fair was in town, the man who founded what would become Coventry City FC and a royal connection; the illegitimate daughter of George IV.

The book can be purchased directly from Ian Woolley at woollian.60@hotmail.com or through the Friends of the London Road Cemetery, website: www.lrcemetery.co.uk

Publication from “Recording Angels”

Their publication covering the Midlothian parish of Roslin is now available. It runs to 104 pages and costs £6 (plus postage). Formed in 1998 “Recording Angels” is a voluntary organisation set up to collect, collate and publish all aspects of memorial within the current administrative area of Midlothian. For details of this and their other publications see: www.recordingangels.org.uk

Churchyard and Cemetery: Tradition and Modernity in Rural North Yorkshire

Julie Rugg explores the turbulent social history of churchyards and cemeteries over the last 150 years. Using sites from across rural North Yorkshire, the text examines the workings of the Burial Acts and discloses the ways in which religious politics framed burial management. It presents an alternative history of burial which questions notions of tradition and modernity, and challenges long-standing assumptions about changing attitudes towards mortality in England.

The hardback edition can be purchased directly from the Cemetery Research Group, University of York for the discounted price of £35.00 (plus £3 p & p).

(See: <http://www.york.ac.uk/spsw/research/cemetery-research-group/>)

Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe (ASCE) Dublin 2016

The ASCE conference and AGM will take place on 6th to 8th October in Dublin Castle. The theme this year is “Conflict, Memorialization = Reconciliation”

The conference will be of special interest as it addresses the sustainability of cemeteries in new innovative ways - through Europe's largest cemetery restoration, state of the art museum telling the stories of the dead and an engaging education programme. The key speaker will be Professor James Stevens Curl a world authority on funereal architecture.

Delegates will be able to experience the full splendour of Glasnevin Cemetery - Ireland's National Cemetery, containing within its walls all of the key players in the foundation of modern Ireland.

For further details check the ASCE website:

<http://www.significantcemeteries.org/>

Lottery grant successes

Brompton Cemetery, London

It was announced in January that The Royal Parks (TRP) had secured nearly £4.5 million from the Big Lottery Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) towards protecting the future of Brompton Cemetery. In addition, TRP will invest a further £1.2 million with another £500,000 coming from The Royal Parks Foundation (the charity for TRP).

The £6.2 million will be put towards giving the cemetery a major facelift aimed at meeting the needs of a wide range of visitors whilst protecting the wildlife and retaining the unique character of the cemetery. This will include the restoration of the cemetery chapel, central colonnades and catacombs; turning the North Lodge into a visitor centre, with a shop, café and accessible toilet facilities; conservation of the historic landscape, buildings and monuments; wildlife conservation to maintain and improve existing habitats; facilities and activities to improve the community use of the cemetery; as well as a volunteering programme to help conserve and interpret the cemetery.

West Norwood Cemetery, London

Also in January, Lambeth Council secured a development grant of £241,000 from the Big Lottery Fund and the HLF. This grant will be put towards developing plans for a project to conserve the landscape and monuments and increase the community use of the cemetery which will involve the design for a new visitor centre. This development stage is expected to take up to two years leading to a further staged application for £4.8 million to deliver the many improvements envisaged.

Sheffield General Cemetery

A £430,000 grant from the Big Lottery Fund and the HLF has been awarded to progress plans for the cemetery over the next two years to include restoration work and development of the site as a wildlife park. Sheffield Council hope to apply for a larger grant of up to £4.0 million in 2018.

Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, London

The Friends were awarded a grant of £9,800 through the HLF's First World War: Then and Now programme. The grant will fund a project to

research the lives of the 204 servicemen killed during World War One who are recorded on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission War Memorial located near the Southern Grove entrance to Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) - launch the Living Memory Project



*Launch of the CWGC – Living Memory Project
Left to right: Colin Kerr, CWGC Director of
External Relations; Lord Faulkner of
Worcester; Robert Stephenson, NCF
Chairman, and the Rt Hon Jeffrey Donaldson,
MP.*

Photograph courtesy of Colin Fenn

The official launch of the CWGC's Living Memory Project took place at Westminster Hall on Monday 11th April. This project remembers the 'forgotten front', the 300,000 Commonwealth war dead from two world wars who are buried or commemorated in more 12,000 locations right here in the UK. It is hoped this project will encourage the public to reconnect with the war dead in their local community and this year the focus is on marking the centenary of the 141 days of

the Battle of the Somme. The NCF members have been assisting the CWGC in this project and further information and how to get involved can be found on CWGC website:

<http://www.cwgc.org/about-us/cwgc-projects/living-memory.aspx>

Funding application

The Friends of Spital Cemetery in Chesterfield reports Margaret Hersee, have started the process of putting together a funding application for information boards and leaflets for walks through the cemetery so that the public can have a better idea of what can be found in the cemetery.

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

Ann Wilkinson attended the November 2015 meeting of BCAG on behalf of the NFCF

Alan Fairchild of the Society of Local Council Clerks, briefed the meeting on his paper **reviewing the provision of new burial space, grave re-use and maintenance of closed churchyards**. The problem of available burial space is now impacting on local towns and smaller communities who are trying to eke out available burial space by charging higher fees and no longer burying non-residents. It was emphasised there is a need for the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to address the shortage of burial space by considering an extension of grave re-use powers to all burial authorities in England and Wales which would go some way to alleviating the problem in the short term. A key factor in this issue is planning and the need for (affordable) land to be made available for burial use. Private legislation is being considered by some groups as a means of introducing reuse of burial space. New Southgate Cemetery have introduced a Private Bill to address its lack of burial space but the cost of this option may be prohibitive for many.

Despite opposition from some Druids, Professor Parker Pearson has been granted an extension to his licence to enable the **Neolithic remains from Stonehenge** to be curated indefinitely at Salisbury Museum. This will allow the remains to be studied scientifically as new techniques come to light.

The DCLG has led a **review of crematoria facilities** which will assess the level of services being provided to local communities.

The **Greenspace Mapping Project** started in 2014 is expected to be completed by Spring 2016. The Ordnance Survey were commissioned to produce detail of all green space in England and Wales for inclusion on a mapping dataset which can be accessed by the public.

The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management reported that the **metal recycling scheme** had raised another £350,000 surplus in the previous six months which brought the total to £700,000 in 2015.

Guided walking tour at Wembdon Road Cemetery - “Lost at sea: The Mariners of Bridgwater”

Bernice Lashbrook, Friends of Wembdon Road Cemetery

On a bright sunny morning in May some 40 people, including members of the Friends of the Wembdon Road Cemetery and visitors were welcomed to the cemetery for a special guided walking tour.

We set off on the tour to hear the stories of many of the past mariners of Bridgwater who are interred there and which was led by our Chairman, and Historian, Mr. Miles Kerr-Peterson.

Bridgwater, close to the sea, has produced notable sea-faring figures, the most renowned being Robert Blake, General-at-Sea during the Civil War. Although not buried in the cemetery he is still regarded as Bridgwater’s most famous son.

The opening of the docks in 1841 saw the growth of trade which brought considerable wealth to the town through the export of the products of a great number of brick and tile manufacturers in the town as well as other merchandise. But, as we all know, this began to decline with the coming of the railway.

Miles included in his tour the stories of many other “sons of Bridgwater” who had given their lives not only in war but during the course of their work in shipping Bridgwater’s goods around the world, often losing their lives in stormy and treacherous conditions.

One mariner who did survive and who came back to lead an active life in Bridgwater was Captain George Lewis Browne. He was a Signals Officer on board HMS Victory with Admiral Lord Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar. It is recorded that he gave the order to raise Nelson’s famous signal “England expects that every man will do his duty.”

One poignant story included was that of a man called Cyril Ricks. His memorial in the cemetery was only discovered, under a pile of brambles, last year. Ricks grew up in George Street and served as a Shop Keeper for First Class passengers on a succession of ships.

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In 1912 he got a job on board a brand new liner; the Titanic. Of course on this ship he was sadly drowned when it hit an iceberg. His body was not recovered but a memorial was erected in the cemetery.

The tour encapsulated a celebration of Bridgwater's prosperity in the ages of steam and sail.

This exuberant part of our town's history came to an end with the final closure of the docks in the 1970's. There are still many residents in Bridgwater who have fond memories of seeing ships moored along the fronts of East and West Quays on the River Parratt.

New Members and Associates

The following groups have recently joined the NFCF. The usual fuller description will be given in the next issue.

Friends of St Helens Cemetery, Merseyside

Contact: Marlene Downey, hello@friendsofsthelenscemetery.co.uk

Website: www.friendsofsthelenscemetery.co.uk

Friends of Old Folkestone Cemetery

Contact: Jan Holben, janholben@yahoo.com

Friends of Lye and Wollescote Cemetery, Stourbridge

Contact: Sue Smith, s.smith@btinternet.com

Website: www.lyeandwollescote.info

Members News

A selection of news and events from Members newsletters and websites

Belgrave Cemetery, Leicester

The Friends were successful in obtaining a grant from the Yew Tree Preservation Society. The cemetery is home to a number of yew trees and a specialist contractor was brought in to wire the trees in order to help maintain their shape.

Cathays Cemetery, Cardiff

As a result of Cardiff Bereavement Services success in procuring funds through crowdfunding; the restoration of the cemetery chapels was resumed in December with work on the inside of the non-conformist chapel.

Lister Lane Cemetery, Halifax

In February, the Friends welcomed the Mayor of Calderdale, Councillor Lisa Lambert to unveil one of two new plaques celebrating the achievement of last October, when Lister Lane Cemetery was awarded *Significant Cemetery in Europe* status. The plaques have been mounted on the wall near the main entrances into the cemetery.

Raikes Road Burial Ground, Skipton

The Friends undertook a two-day archaeological investigation last October on the site of the former mortuary chapel. Nothing remains of the chapel above ground but a geophysical survey in 2013 identified a two celled structure. Excavation exposed the foundations of the east wall and finds included pottery sherds and lozenge shaped window glass. A sweep with a metal detector across the interior of the chapel site uncovered several metal artefacts including a child's toy gun.

Sheffield General Cemetery Trust

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) screen wall commemorating individuals buried in the General Cemetery who died as a result of the two World Wars has now been relocated from the City Road Cemetery. At the time this screen wall was commissioned, the General Cemetery was considered an area of neglect and not a suitable place to locate the memorial. As a result of the work undertaken by volunteers in improving the landscape of the cemetery, the CWGC have decided the memorial should be sited near to the graves of the men and women it commemorates.

Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, London

The Cemetery Park won an Excellence in Service Award and a Special Recognition Award at the Tower Hamlets in Bloom awards ceremony held at Mile End Park Art Pavilion in December.

NFCF contact details

A list of members is available from the Secretary

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