

National Federation of CEMETERY FRIENDS

NEWSLETTER No. 43

Spring 2019

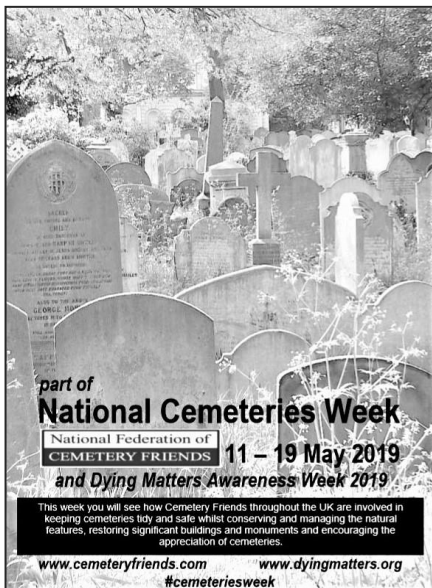
Editor: Ann Wilkinson

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Preparing for National Cemeteries Week

11th to 19th May 2019

The poster for you to add your events and display during the NFCF's National Cemeteries Week (NCW) is now available. The deadline for registration will be the end of April so there is still time to register the activities and events at your cemeteries. For registration and information please contact Emer Seamark at ncw@cemeterifyriends.com



If not participating this year then you might consider adapting and displaying the poster just to let your community know it is NCW: an opportunity perhaps to invite people to consider becoming volunteers?

As their contribution to NCW, The Victorian Society is holding a study day entitled 'Great Gardens of Death; urban cemeteries in nineteenth century England' to be held in London on 18th May. (See *page 2*)

Once again NCW overlaps with Dying Matters Awareness Week,

13th to 19th May and the NFCF have agreed to share publicity; they do not have local groups as such but are happy to promote your events and there may be scope to publicise their events too. (See *page 3*)

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

Great gardens of death: Urban cemeteries in nineteenth-century England

forwarded by Ian Dungavell

Understanding historic cemeteries is key to valuing and saving them. To coincide with National Cemeteries Week, the Victorian Society has organised a study day to bring together eleven speakers to share their new research and focus attention once again on England's important funerary heritage.

Talks and speakers:

The landscape of British cemeteries in the 19th and 20th centuries - Brent Elliott

Public celebration and private grief in the garden cemetery - Josie Wall

Four cemetery firsts - Ian Dungavell

The landscape of the Sheffield General Cemetery - Jan Woudstra

Some human aspects of cemetery monuments - Roger Bowdler

Northern provincial cemeteries - Chris Mayes

The cemetery chapel - Brian Parsons

Competing burial ideals in nineteenth-century England - Julie Rugg

Margravine Cemetery and its reception house - Charles Wagner and Robert Stephenson

The United Synagogue Cemetery at Willesden - David Lambert

The early crematorium in the cemetery - Hilary Grainger

Tickets £55, including sandwich lunch.

Doors open at 9.30am.

To book, see www.victoriansociety.org.uk/events

Venue: The Art Workers' Guild, 6 Queen Square, London WC1N 3AT
Saturday 18 May 2019. 9.55am to 5.30pm.

Organised by The Victorian Society, 1 Priory Gardens, London W4 1TT.
Telephone 020 8747 5895

Dying Matters Awareness Week 2019

by Toby Scott, Head of Communications and Campaigns, Hospice UK

Dying Matters Awareness Week has been running since 2010 and this year takes place from 13th–19th May. Hundreds of events will take place across the country, from 'death cafes' to behind the scenes tours at funeral directors. We are delighted that so many events are already planned for National Cemeteries Week and that this overlaps with Dying Matters Awareness Week. There is really only one rule for a Dying Matters event: does it offer a safe space for people to talk about dying, death or grief?

Our theme this year is Are We Ready? Are we ready to talk about dying, to think about our own death? Are we ready to die? For most people, the answer will be no, and that's fine. What matters is thinking about how we do get ready: the practical steps as well as the emotional and spiritual. Everyone responds differently to this challenge, and there are many different settings or events that might help people start to think about this. For some, a visit to a cemetery might be the prompt they need, whether it is to visit the grave of someone they know, or a famous historic figure or just because it is a local place and they have always been curious. What brings them there is not the issue: what we hope for is that it will get them thinking and talking.

It is only thanks to the efforts of Cemetery Friends and all the work going into National Cemeteries Week that so many people will be able to visit a cemetery in May, and we hope they all have a peaceful, interesting and rewarding visit. For those who come away thinking a bit more about death or grief, there is a great range of resources on www.dyingmatters.org. Like talking about death, people assume visiting cemetery is a gloomy idea. But once they have done it, they will realise there is a lot more to it, and that it is really worthwhile.

NFCF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Hosted by

The Friends of Lister Lane Cemetery, Halifax
Saturday 8th June 2019

Any members who have not received details
please contact the NFCF secretary
secretary@cemeteryfriends.com

**Moving from Dead Space to Living Place –
with help from the National Lottery**
by Elaine Mercer, Communications Officer,
Rectory Lane Cemetery Project

‘St Peter’s Detached’, or Rectory Lane Cemetery in Berkhamsted as it is now more often known, had become a problem and something of an embarrassment for the town. Originally opened in 1842, by the 1950s it was considered full - apart from interments in family plots. Despite the efforts of many local people who helped over the years by cutting grass and providing some maintenance, it was obvious that ‘something would have to be done’.

Starting in 2014, the Friends of St Peter’s began to look at how the ‘problem’ could be turned into an asset. A great deal of work was required for the place to become used and valued. Dacorum Borough Council and the Parochial Church Council, although key stakeholders, had limited means and so the Friends applied for and were granted a ‘Parks for People’ award from the National Lottery.

The first tranche of money funded a temporary Project Manager to help the team to quantify what needed to be done, and in July 2017 the Friends received the remainder of the £981,200 requested to complete the work in a three-year timescale. Two part-time staff were appointed: James Moir changed hats – the former Volunteer Convenor became the Project Manager. He has been joined by Kate Campbell, in charge of fostering interest among a wide range of audiences and managing the people side of the programme.

To date all walls have been stabilised, the Memorial Arch and Gate Piers are underpinned and 19 of the most at risk and valuable monuments are expertly conserved. A vital water supply is re-installed and for the first time in its 176-year history - electricity is on site enabling a wider variety of activities.

Work parties continue and have been augmented by a group of people who have ‘adopted’ a grave to care for. The volunteers, some professional gardeners, other flat-dwellers and others who love gardening enjoy bringing the garden element back to neglected plots.

One lady was delighted to discover that she was working on the grave of Henry Stainsby who worked tirelessly for blind people, inventing many useful appliances such as a shorthand machine, a Braille typewriter and an eye-less needle for sewing with coir yarn. This particular memorial is now undergoing conservation work by Will Yendell who is doing a Stonemasonry apprenticeship in heritage skills.



*Scouts clearing graveyard
Image courtesy of Elaine Mercer*

Many biographies have been researched by our volunteer genealogists aided by the Berkhamsted Local History and Museum Society and over 80 are now available on the website. Themed booklets, in print and downloadable from our website, charter various groups of people and in March 2018 we launched our most recent, *'Remarkable Women'* looking at the lives of various women associated with the Cemetery.

The main events programme commenced on a very miserable looking Easter Sunday but there was a great atmosphere among the many families who came to discover answers and were rewarded with Easter eggs donated by local businesses.

On our Heritage Open Day on 9th September 2018 Eleanor Buchan and Lizzie Crarer of *The Heroine Project Presents* delivered an interactive story-telling piece featuring figures from *'Remarkable Women'*. From trying their hand at stone carving and floral decoration making, visitors were asked what they would like to be remembered for and encouraged to write their own epitaph in a 'cathedral' under the yew trees constructed for this purpose.

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Volunteers donned costumes to become local figures from the past; Mr Ghost the gravedigger engaged youngsters in maths puzzles relating to his work and the Countess of Bridgewater told visitors how she had donated the land and cajoled many of the local citizens to match her generosity.



Left: Momento Mori told to visitors on 9th September 2018 at Rectory Lane Cemetery

Below: Countess of Bridgewater with visitors on Heritage Open Day - 9th September 2018

Images courtesy of Elaine Mercer

In the second Heritage Open Day on 16th September, Remembering the Fallen and the end of WW1, Berkhamsted Youth Theatre performed a playlet by Elaine Mercer based on characters in the Cemetery. Berkhamsted Glee club contributed some of the songs of the time.



Many smaller groups and tours have also enjoyed the Cemetery. For the Chilterns Walking Festivals, characters of the town led 5 tours and we have welcomed Scouts groups, Dacorum Mencap, as well as local schools. Tring District Camera Club came at dusk and produced some interesting images. We trialled two 'Rambling and Writing' creative workshops to be repeated in 2019.

Last but not least our Wildlife related activities have been extremely popular and have included the RSPB Big Bird Watch, two nest box workshops, a Bat Walk and 'Bonkers about Bees' where people could learn about Bees and buy some of the Rectory Lane Cemetery honey.

This year the Friends and the Project will be making a major contribution to National Cemeteries Week with many varied activities. Next year when the restored cemetery is completed, the NCF will be associated with their celebratory conference.



*Bonkers about Bees event
Image courtesy of Elaine Mercer*

To find out more about the Friends of St Peter's Great Berkhamsted and the Rectory Lane Cemetery Project contact:

Kate Campbell: campbellkate01@gmail.com

Website: <https://www.stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/stpetersberkhamstedfriends>

New Members and Associates

The following groups have recently joined the NCF

The Friends of Morningside Cemetery, Edinburgh

Morningside Cemetery, a working cemetery of just over 13 acres, was opened in 1878 by the Metropolitan Cemetery Company and is now owned by the City of Edinburgh Council. The Friends of Morningside Cemetery was formed in 2016 as a subcommittee of the local Community Council to promote interest in the Cemetery as a green space and in both its history and that of those buried there. The group became an independent organisation in December 2018. The Friends forms regular working parties for clearing debris, planting bulbs, maintaining borders, and cutting back invasive vegetation. In addition, it has organised the provision of interpretation panels and benches, a commemoration round the Cross of Sacrifice of the centenary of the Armistice, and guided walks.

Website: <https://fomc.btck.co.uk>

Contact: Edward Duvall, FoMC1878@gmail.com

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Friends of the City of Ely Cemetery, Cambridgeshire

The City of Ely Cemetery opened in 1855 and is now owned by the City of Ely Council and managed by the Recreation & Cemetery Committee. This 13-acre, working cemetery lies on a gentle rise in the landscape with an unusual chapel at the top.

Completed in 1856, the chapel is a brick and stone construction designed by J. L. Prichett of Darlington. It comprises two identical mirror-image chapels joined together by a belfry and spire with single bell. Originally one chapel was for the use of Anglican burials, the other nonconformist.



Both chapels are vaulted and have steep timber roofs, which are slated. Both have all the original detail internally and the North Chapel is decorated in the style of the period. Today only the North Chapel is used for services, having been renovated in 1999; the South Chapel being used as a general workroom by the cemetery custodians.

The Friends of Ely Cemetery Committee (FOEC) was formed in the last year with an aim to generate more interest in the upkeep of the cemetery. The committee is in the process of training volunteers to update the cemetery software with historical records and also allocate friendless graves to volunteers to look after. It is planned that the inscriptions on the memorials will be recorded on a database to ensure when they fade on the memorial, the memory is not lost. It is hoped that in the future the FOEC will become autonomous from the council once it is established.

Website: www.cityofelycouncil.org.uk

Contact: Sarah Jay (Deputy Clerk to the Council),
sarah.jay@cityofelycouncil.org.uk

Members News

A selection of news and events from Members newsletters and websites

Brandwood End Cemetery, Birmingham

In recent months, a 'temporary' roof has been installed on the fire damaged side of the chapels which will help to protect the structure from further deterioration. Major tree work has also been carried out including crown lifting; tree removal and the initiation of a tree replacement programme to oversee the planting of new trees.

Broadwater and Worthing Cemetery, Worthing

The Friends have discovered a number of interesting 'finds' during maintenance and clearance days over the years (See *NFCF newsletter 41*). Their latest in January, included a large number of Worthing Co-op Superstore Customer Privilege Cards dating back to the mid-1990s.

Brompton Cemetery, London

Recent memorial restoration work in the cemetery included the re-erection of a granite obelisk on the Campion family grave which is located on the perimeter of the Great Circle in front of the chapel. The obelisk which has lain prone for several years was found to be in good condition.

Mill Road Cemetery, Cambridge

In March, the Bishop of Ely in the presence of the Mayor of Cambridge and more than a hundred other people, carried out a dedication service on the recently renewed cemetery paths. This much needed work was carried out with the help of Section 106 grant funding.

Spital Cemetery, Chesterfield

Following the successful outcome of a Greggs Environmental Fund grant application, the Friends are now able to proceed with their Gateway Project. Funds are also being raised with the help of the Co-op Local Community Fund towards renovation of the Old Tool House as a base for the Friends.

Notes from the Burial and Cremation Advisory Group (BCAG)

Colin Fenn attended the BCAG meeting on 4th December 2018

There will be a **new Medical Examiner** to review deaths (as a result of the Shipman enquiry). There is a new consultation on the provision of an Independent Advocate to support the bereaved, who could intervene in the event of mass casualties such as Grenfell Tower or a terrorist incident. Suicide verdicts are under review. They currently use a burden of proof of “balance of probabilities”.

Government committed to provide a **Children’s Funeral Fund** last spring in Wales. There is no planned introduction date yet for England, as it has become mired in complexity. There are concerns that may be an open cheque book for the Treasury and that the announcement was premature. Many funeral directors offer this service for free.

There is recent trend that people who die in poverty are being referred by the Department for Work and Pensions or National Health Service (NHS) for cremation or **burial under public health legislation**. This legislation was conceived for dealing with contagious diseases, not for social need. Some local authorities are letting contracts to funeral directors on the condition they cannot say how or when the body is being disposed of, and so have no family present. All are uncomfortable with this and fear that this approach is being used as a deterrent.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has been asked to intervene in the matter of **Tottenham Park Cemetery**, a working Muslim burial ground. Its state of dilapidation was raised in the House of Lords by Baroness Hussein-Ece. The MoJ have also been asked to advise on Burntwood Crematorium, a controversial proposed development in a Staffordshire cemetery, the siting of which contravenes the Cremation Act. I noted that there was also a similar issue which had been raised through our membership over a proposed crematorium at Calderstone, Whalley, where the Friends of Calderstones Cemetery are campaigning against the clearance and redevelopment of the cemetery. The MoJ said they were aware of it too although they had struggled to understand ownership. The MoJ will now liaise with us over this. There appears some uncertainty as to who would enforce breaches in illegal siting of crematoria; Police, MoJ, Chancellor or planning authority.

There is currently no national planning framework to address perceived shortages of local burial space, although the London Plan does now include access to burial space.

There was also a mention of “direct cremation”, a proposal for cheap disposal whereby the crematorium is isolated from any grounds or ceremony. It raised a few eyebrows.

The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) have launched a framework for **recycling implants** removed from bodies in the new year. All funds would go to charity. But after decades there is still no legal certainty over ownership, as the NHS that supplied the implants have failed to respond, leaving funeral directors worried about accusations of theft. The ICCM’s attitude is now to “see you in court”.

The law requires **burial registers** to be kept, but there seems to be a question mark over what exactly this means in a digital age. An example was given of a cemetery that is using a spreadsheet which holds the legal minimum data as well as everything else to do with the funeral. Also, of a coroner’s order for burial that was delivered across three separate forms.

There is now a move to incorporate columbaria for ashes in stately home gardens. As these are unregulated there was concern expressed as to how they would operate, especially in the event of bankruptcy.

The Competition and Markets Authority report was mentioned, as providing a useful background to the funeral market. It is unclear how their action will progress, but it seems they have one or two large funeral companies in their sights.

After NCFE committee discussion, I raised the issue of **monument safety testing**, explaining that recent events raised questions over the suitability of current MoJ guidance: specifically the release of a new British Standard, the panic destruction of monuments immediately after a child’s death in Glasgow, while the Health and Safety Executive does not require this pre-emptive monument testing as a result of its Red Tape Challenge. There was no appetite in the BCAG members present to re-open this matter, but it was noted that Scotland has started to review its guidance, and the BCAG will then look at what it presents.

NFCF contact details

A list of members is available from the Secretary

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