

Lister Lane Cemetery blooms in the rain

NFCF Chairman Robert Stephenson reports on 2019 AGM in Halifax

This year's NFCF AGM on the 8th June was hosted by the Friends of Lister Lane Cemetery, Halifax. A total of 32 members attended Calderdale College on behalf of 24 groups. The day began with welcoming addresses delivered by the Deputy Mayor of Calderdale, Councillor Angie Gallagher and by Holly Lynch, MP for Halifax, before there was the customary tour of the local cemetery.



*Lister Lane Cemetery in bloom
Image courtesy of Robert Stephenson*

Lister Lane Cemetery, which opened in 1841 and is Grade II listed, covers no more than 3 acres but contains nearly 20,000 burials. These include many local dignitaries, chartists and members of the Crossley family who were the biggest carpet manufacturers in the world.

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Most of the headstones are made of the admirable local sandstone Elland flag that retains inscriptions for years as crisply as slate. Unfortunately, the tour took place in pouring rain. This helped the recently planted wildflower meadows which were in full bloom and a multi-coloured feast for the eyes. The hosting group had laid on actors in Victorian costumes to take the parts of various grave occupants. Their performances much enlivened the tour and gained our further admiration because of the weather



*Re-enactors recounting the lives of Waterloo veteran Daniel Milton (above) died 1856; army pensioner Thomas Batho (above right) died 1893; and singer Mary (nee Tankard) Marsden (right) died 1915
Images courtesy of Robert Stephenson*

After lunch the AGM received reports from various officers. Honorary Secretary, Gwyneth Stokes, mentioned, amongst other things, the newly revised edition of *Saving Cemeteries*, the Federation's substantial guide to forming a group and dealing with common problems. She stated that the committee was always pleased to answer questions not covered by the book. A Financial Report was given by the new Treasurer, Melvyn Hawkins, (the person also responsible for overhauling the reprinting of the book). He has been updating membership details and currently the Federation has over one hundred members. In response to a question he stated that he was in the middle of shaping an insurance policy suitable for cemetery groups that if

accepted would result in a discount for members. Vice-chairman, Colin Fenn, then reported on memorial safety and testing standards. He also spoke about the badly treated Brinscombe Quaker burial ground and Calderstones Cemetery which is resisting the building of a crematorium. In both cases the NFCF was able to give useful advice and support. A discussion then took place over the digital plotting of graves initiated by Geoffrey Thurley of Ladywell and Brockley Cemeteries. The proposed exposition about next year's AGM venue at Rectory Road Cemetery, Berkhamsted failed to take place as their representative had been in a non-serious car accident on the way to Halifax. The Friends of Welford Road, Leicester offered to host the AGM in 2021. A discussion was initiated by Mike Martin on the maintenance of the ubiquitous war memorial and finally Jeff Hart of Nunhead Cemetery proposed that successful bidders for Lottery Grants should share information and actual files with other groups further down the ladder.

The next NFCF AGM will be on Saturday 13th June 2020 hosted by the Friends of St Peter's Berkhamsted, Herts. Details to members to follow.

Two awards for the Friends of York Cemetery forwarded by Clive Dawson

The Friends of York Cemetery have been awarded a Duke of York's Community Initiative Award. On Wednesday 3rd April, 3 Friends went to Catterick Garrison where the Duke presented the awards and spoke to all 200 people from 55 charities who received the award. The award lasts for 5 years and we can use the logo on leaflets and headed paper. Prior to being selected 2 assessors visited the cemetery to view our work and community involvement followed by questions concerning the organisation.



In September, the Friends were also awarded a Platinum in the Parks, Gardens and Cemeteries category of Yorkshire in Bloom.

King's Lynn's Hardwick Road Cemetery comes top again in Anglia in Bloom's Medium-Sized Cemeteries Award

forwarded by Julian Litten

The Friends of Lynn's Hardwick Road Cemetery were delighted to learn that, for the second year running, it has won the Anglia in Bloom Gold Award for Medium-Sized Cemeteries. The citation commented on three aspects of the cemetery: its Horticultural Achievement, its Environmental Responsibility and its Community Participation.

The excellent condition of the grounds, its large number of specimen trees, the high standard of maintenance and the quality of its information boards were remarked on in the Horticultural Achievement category. The cemetery's Environmental Responsibility rested on the its development as an arboretum and the areas set aside for conservation and the use of fallen trees and branches as habitats for birds, insect and mammals. The Friends were complimented in the Community Participation category for its close association with the Borough Council



*Catherine Brown monument restored
Image courtesy of Julian Litten*

of King's Lynn and West Norfolk (BCKLWN) and their position as main lead for the development of the cemetery, showing an excellent working partnership with the local community.

Dr Julian Litten, Founder and Chairman of the Friends of Hardwick Road Cemetery, said "We are delighted to have, yet again, been awarded Gold in the Anglia in Bloom Medium-Sized

Cemeteries class. Our association with the BCKLWN shows what can be achieved when voluntary groups work in close association with the local authority. Its excellent landscaping, devised in 1856 by Aicken & Capes of London and planted by H & F Sharpe of Wisbech, is a top-rank arboretum in the history of the Garden Cemetery Movement, being the first cemetery to include tulip trees and

Wellingtonias (Giant Redwoods). The recent restoration of the serpentine chalk pathways, together with a planned programme of monument restoration funded by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund, has returned Hardwick Road Cemetery to its appearance as it was in the 1860s. It is a delight to visit.”

The cemetery continues to seek volunteers to help in recording the inscriptions and in doing minor ivy removal from the tombs and monuments, and guided tours of the cemetery are held at 2.00pm on the first Sunday of every month.

It's website www.hardwickroadcemetery.co.uk gives details of the cemetery's history, of future events and of its publications. It is a fascinating place, being the burial ground of all of those who died in King's Lynn between 1855 and 1939.

National Cemeteries Week (NCW)

review by Emer Seamark

NCW took place from 11th to 19th May this year and those who participated in the many and varied activities are listed below. It is hoped that many of you will do so again in 2020 when the event will be held from 9th to 17th May: newcomers are very welcome! Thank you to all those who took part and made this year a success:

Friends of Wombwell Cemetery, Barnsley
Friends of Bedford Cemetery, Bedford
Friends of St Peter's Cemetery, Berkhamsted
Friends of Flaybrick Memorial Gardens, Birkenhead
Birkenhead Priory and St Mary's Tower, Birkenhead
Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bristol
Friends of Spital Cemetery, Chesterfield
Dean Cemetery Trust, Edinburgh
Friends of Morningside Cemetery, Edinburgh
Friends of Warriston Cemetery, Edinburgh
Friends of Cathcart Cemetery, Glasgow
Friends of Glasgow Necropolis, Glasgow
Southern Necropolis, Glasgow
Friends of Lister Lane Cemetery, Halifax

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Friends of North Cemetery, Hartlepool
Hove Old Cemetery, Hove
Lancaster Cemetery, Lancaster
Friends of Beckett Street Cemetery, Leeds
Friends of Lawnswood Cemetery, Leeds
Friends of Belgrave Cemetery, Leicester
Friends of Brockley and Ladywell Cemeteries, London
Friends of Brompton Cemetery, London
Friends of Nunhead Cemetery, London
Victorian Society, London
The Beautiful Burial Ground Project, Norfolk
Friends of Earlham Cemetery, Norwich
Friends of Redcar Cemetery, Redcar
Friends of Salford, Agecroft Cemetery, Salford
Friends of Zion Graveyard, Attercliffe, Sheffield
Sheffield General Cemetery, Sheffield
Sheffield Botanical Gardens, Sheffield
Friends of Raikes Road Burial Ground, Skipton
Friends of Old Southampton Cemetery, Southampton
Eccleshall Road Cemetery, Stafford
Stafford Crematorium, Stafford
Stone Cemetery, Stafford
Park Road Cemetery, Stockport
Friends of St Helen's Cemetery, St Helens
Friends of York Cemetery, York

It was pleasing to receive some very positive feedback from members at the AGM and more detailed accounts of the week from three groups, Friends of Brockley and Ladywell Cemeteries, Friends of St Helens Cemetery and Friends of Salford Cemeteries Trust.

Geoffrey Thurley reported that the vice-chair of **Brockley and Ladywell Cemeteries** gave a talk to the Lewisham Local History Society prior to NCW when attendees were invited to join a guided walk of both cemeteries on 12th May. Around 20 people came along including the moderator of www.Ladywell-Live.org which promotes local groups and events; members also took part in Nunhead Cemetery Open Day on Saturday 18th May, a wonderful example of cooperation and coordination between various organisations.

The **Friends of St Helens Cemetery** were one of several partner organisations involved in the St Helens Cemetery and Crematorium

Bereavement Service Open Day held on Saturday 11th May to mark the launch of Dying Matters Awareness Week and as part of NCW. The Friends provided a Heritage Walk which included a tour of the cemetery and launched a fundraising appeal aimed at providing an area in the cemetery designed to help children express their feelings after bereavement. The Friends also opened the donated summerhouse gazebo located in the children and infants section within the cemetery.

Peter Kilvert, Secretary of the **Friends of Salford Cemeteries Trust**, sent the following account on the Open Day at Agecroft Cemetery:

The Friends of Salford Cemeteries Trust in conjunction with Salford City Bereavement Services held an Open Day at Agecroft Cemetery on Saturday 11th May as part of National Cemeteries Week. About 50 people attended and took the opportunity to take part in a tour of interesting graves; an explanation and update of the restoration of the derelict Anglican burial chapel; a demonstration of grave digging and preparation for burial; a tour of the Crematorium; and a delve into the burial books of Salford's four cemeteries for family tree enthusiasts.



Image courtesy of Peter Kilvert

Agecroft Cemetery was opened in 1903. The three chapels (Anglican, Roman Catholic and Dissenters) along with a lodge, offices, gateway arch, boundary walls and railings were designed by Manchester architects Sharp and Foster and constructed by Swinton building firm Gerrard's. The Dissenters chapel was converted into a Crematorium in 1953; the Roman Catholic chapel was demolished in 1968 and the Anglican chapel is currently being restored.

For further information about NCW, 2020 please email Emer Seamark at ncw@cemeteryfriends.com

United Nations Memorial Cemetery, Korea

by Carol Stevenson

I recently had the opportunity to visit the United Nations War Memorial Cemetery in Buson, South Korea, where the dead of the Korean War are commemorated. This is the only UN cemetery in the world.

Visitors are first directed to a chapel where they are shown a short film about the war and the Cemetery, including regular acts of remembrance by Korean schoolboys, Turkish officials, and a British veteran who was on body collecting detail at the age of 19 and now returns every year.



Courtesy of Carol Stevenson

The grounds are landscaped with flowering trees (we were there at cherry blossom time), neatly trimmed bushes and lawns. There are rows of low headstones and memorials and national flags mark the various plots.

The first thing that struck us was how well maintained and how respected it is – and how peaceful, considering it is now in the middle of a busy city.

Established 70 years ago, it commemorates the dead of the two dozen nations who became involved in the battles to resist the invasion of South Korea. Now, with most Americans having been repatriated (only 36 remain), it holds 2297 casualties from Australia, Canada, France, Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa, a token 36 from Korea, Turkey, UK, USA, others and 'unknown unto god'. Other countries with memorials are Norway, Sweden, Ethiopia, Denmark, Belgium, Luxemburg, Italy, India, Greece, Thailand and Philippines.

Walls of black marble inscribed with the names of the fallen surround a pond with a helmet sculpture which was being carefully cleaned when we were there.

This Cemetery does not of course deal with civilian casualties. A visit to any museum will show the traumatic effect of the war on the people of South Korea, with well over half the population forced to flee as refugees and hundreds of thousands killed. People who lived through that time as children still show very stunted growth from the years of starvation, and the threat from the North continues to cause fear. Interestingly, we were told several times that without foreign interference Korea would be a single united country. Should you ever be in the south of South Korea, this memorial cemetery is well worth a visit.

Interpretation panels to WWI civilian war memorials

by Geoffrey Thurley, Chair and Secretary of the Friends of Brockley and Ladywell Cemeteries, SE London

After a bit of a delay following the end of the HLF/local authority funded project to memorialise the civilians killed in bombings during the First World War, (see Newsletter 41, Spring 2018, for the unveiling of the first memorial) the interpretation panels were installed near the memorials concerned. HLF had agreed to us adding these panels to the project as we were within the expenditure limit. In the event, the project came in under-budget, and monies had to be returned to HLF at the end of 2018.



*Above: The Deptford Panel
Bottom left: The Hither Green and Sydenham panel
Images courtesy of Geoffrey Thurley*



Following a concerted push, Lewisham Bereavement Services staff were able to install the frames, and members of the Friends' group mounted the panels, the day before a guided tour as part of the local Brockley Max Festival on 1st June 2019. It has been gratifying to see members of the public stopping to read the panels as they walk through or around the Cemeteries.

Notes from the Burial and Cremation Advisory Group (BCAG)

Colin Fenn attended the BCAG meeting held at the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) on 16th July 2019

The meeting saw the usual large group of representatives from interested sectors, including cemetery managers, funeral directors, local government and bereavement. The format is currently primarily about information sharing, although when the Law Commission starts its long-awaited review of burial laws the group will have a focus on providing advice and working parties.

Recently the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) put out guidance on the transfer of burial rights. This aims to encourage grave owners to inform cemeteries about next of kin, to make it easier for them to inherit plots. Currently many cemeteries require legal affidavits from descendants.

The story of disposing of pacemakers continues. Someone in the NHS has now taken responsibility for stating their position, which is that the NHS considers their pacemakers to be single-use items and are part of the deceased estate. Therefore, the family can instruct a funeral home to remove the device and donate it to overseas charities, for re-use. Meanwhile the ICCM has started a scheme to collect and donate pacemakers and has already collected thousands of them.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has launched, through its Foundation, an “Eyes on, Hands on” initiative to train volunteers in inspecting war graves and safe cleaning techniques. This is being piloted in the South West and East of England, to be rolled out over the next four years.

Sheffield University recently collaborated with families to run a trial of resomation – dissolving corpses. Five bodies were treated this way, and an analysis of the chemicals has been passed to the local water company. They need to approve of the disposal of the chemicals. Legal advice is that disposal in this way is not illegal, although it is unregulated. If it proves acceptable, this may be offered as an alternative to cremation. There are other approaches also being pioneered overseas, most recently reducing the body to compost.

The role of Medical Examiner is now being trialled in some 20 locations. These are independent doctors who will examine deaths in general or in specific instances.

Review of available burial space and re-use - Earlier a subgroup had met the MoJ to review the availability of burial space. This showed that the main players are unwilling to act to create more burial space. Although Parliamentary Acts to allow re-use had been passed, and a few local authorities had introduced re-use under local authority legislation without furore, in general local government was unwilling to go down this route. It seems that Parliament's focus has been elsewhere and so they perceive the availability of space is becoming an emergency. The planning system is not helping, as planning authorities have failed to consider burial and cremation requirements in Local Plans. To help raise the issue with ministers, the MoJ is looking for anecdotes about the effects of lack of burial space. (For example, historic cemeteries can report on the clumsy conversion of their pathways into 'runways to Heaven').

A new initiative is about to be rolled out, whereby the funeral of all stillborns, children and youngsters up to the age of 18 will be paid for by government from July 23rd. With all-party support, Parliamentary legislation has been brought in remarkably quickly, and is causing much concern amongst funeral directors and cemetery managers. However, the pace of implementation is such that no consultation has been made. Until now many funeral directors and cemeteries have buried or cremated children for free or with heavy subsidies. The new law merely states that government will reimburse 'reasonable costs' but there is no limit on this expenditure. Those present feared that the new arrangements will rapidly become uneconomical and will add pressure to the limited amount of adult burial spaces. They expressed concern that, with no limit on the spend, families will choose extravagant funeral services and prefer burial over cremation, choosing deep adult graves on long leases in the main parts of the cemetery instead of the children's sections of burial grounds. Whereas heavily decorated children's 'shrines' are tolerated in those sections set-aside, they could now start to appear in the main areas of cemeteries. The NHS is also expected to push its costs onto government via funeral directors, as a large hospital can deliver up many stillborn infants. It seems likely that the rushing through of this well-meant initiative will generate some contentious cases and will see a lot more money spent on childrens' funerals than before, funded by the public purse.

Official opening of the Gateway Path

forwarded last September by Liz Cook, Friends of Spital Cemetery,
Chesterfield

This is a busy time of the year for Spital Cemetery and especially so this year because at our yearly remembrance event in November we will be officially opening our Gateway Path.

This started last January as an open grassy area in the cemetery, packed with graves but few actual gravestones. On the centenary of the beginning of WW1 Chesterfield Borough Council designated this area as a poppy meadow. Now, 5 years later, we wanted somewhere to recognise that peace had finally arrived 100 years ago with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.



*Above and top right, an open grassy area where the old path was revealed and right, the area as it is now
Images courtesy of Liz Cook*



We uncovered an old winding path and dug flower beds. Greggs awarded us £1000 and suddenly our dreams to get roses and rosemary plants, benches and plaques and entrance gateposts became a reality. Here we are thinking about life after the wars, when peace returned. We will remember the mothers/wives of service personnel buried in Spital Cemetery from WW1 and 2, who, in peace, bore their loss and rebuilt their lives. We will also remember the many veterans who have returned to Chesterfield and this part of Derbyshire over the years. We give our thanks to others remembered on family graves who 'did not return'

New Members and Associates

The following groups have recently joined the NFCF

Friends of Allerton Cemetery

This group was formed in 2016 with the aim of saving and returning to use the three chapels which still stand in the cemetery. To have three chapels is a rare feature in cemeteries and the Friends consider this may be not only unique to the UK but worldwide. The Grade II listed cemetery, which is owned by Liverpool City Council, opened in 1909 and with 150 acres is still a working cemetery.

Among the many Liverpool notables buried here are Cilla Black and Sir Ken Dodd. A natural woodland burial area is now available.

Website: www.friendsofallertoncemetery.com

Contact: Barbara Roberts, barbara@friendsofallertoncemetery.com

Friends of Hull General Cemetery

Hull General Cemetery was the first and only private cemetery in Hull and opened in 1847. It is about 13 acres in extent and until 1972 undertook over 54,000 burials. It houses a number of Grade II listed monuments and its remaining gate piers were designed by Cuthbert Brodrick. Hull City Council took ownership in 1974. The council put into effect a landscaping project that removed 80% of the headstones in the face of public protests. By the end of 2010 the council were finding it difficult to maintain the site in the face of funding cuts and there were problems with litter and anti-social behaviour. The Friends group set up in 2015. Local councillors are members of the group and work in partnership. The Friends litter pick on a bi-weekly basis, with the result that they are rarely bothered by fly-tipping now. They also maintain the trees and the headstones as much as possible and are gradually clearing the undergrowth to allow more access to the public. They have local mindfulness groups of families with children using the site and have links with the local schools. There are regular guided walks and talks to help raise the profile of the cemetery as a valuable historical resource as well as an area of woodland in the city.

Website under construction: www.friendsofhullgeneralcemetery.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/friendsofhullgeneralcemetery

Contact: Peter Lowden, pete.lowden1@gmail.com

Camberwell Cemeteries Working Group, South East London

Camberwell Old Cemetery a 34-acre site and originally the Burial Ground of St Giles, Camberwell, opened in 1855, and with the growing population a nearby 60 acres was purchased, now Camberwell New Cemetery.

The working group was established in May 2016 particularly to campaign to save the woodland and trees in these cemeteries and to encourage wildlife and diversity. They meet regularly with local councillors and officers of the London Borough of Southwark to discuss matters relating to both cemeteries. They arrange events in cemeteries and this year have held bat walks and flower walks in association with local wildlife and botanical societies. A booklet is available with a walking route around the Old Cemetery highlighting 30 interesting graves and 17 trees; the latter also now having botanical labels on them.

Website: www.ccwgroup.weebly.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ccwgroup

Contact: Anne Stanesby, stanesbyanne@gmail.com

Friends of Farsley Rehoboth Burial Ground, Leeds

The Farsley Rehoboth Baptist Burial Ground was a place of interment from 1785 to 2000 and reflected the growth of Farsley, in particular its textile industry with many of the industry's prominent residents buried there. In total, within the 2-acre site on Coal Hill Lane, Leeds, there are circa 4,000 local people interred in the Rehoboth, all with their own histories and contribution to the growth and history of Farsley. From 2008 the Burial Ground was in private ownership with no public access and was left for nature to take over on what was already a steep wooded slope.

A Charity was established in March 2019 to purchase, reclaim and maintain this historic ground to make accessible as a community asset, and the purchase was completed on 31st May 2019. Thanks to the many volunteers, work has already started to make this historic site a public open space. The group's website is in process.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/farsleyrehoboth

Twitter: twitter.com/FarsleyOf

Contact: Frances Barker, farsleyrehoboth@gmail.com

Friends of Loughborough Cemetery

This Leicestershire Cemetery owned by Charnwood Borough Council opened in 1857 and covers 12.5 acres. Two chapels in Gothic revival style are linked by three carriage archways with tower and spire over the central one. These are Grade II listed as are the lodge, gates and railings. The cemetery is a designated conservation area.

The Friends set up in 2018, in partnership with owners Charnwood Borough Council, to help maintain the site as an excellent example of a public cemetery that enhances the heritage and landscape and benefits the local community and wildlife alike.

Contact: anji.wray@btopenworld.com

Friends of Syston Barkby Road Cemetery

Also, in Leicestershire, the Syston Town Council has joined the NCF as an Associate to set up a Cemetery Friends group for their five-acre cemetery in Barkby Road. It was opened in 1879 and the original chapel has been restored and is in use.

Website: www.systontc.org.uk

Contact: Catherine Voyce, catherine@systontc.org.uk

Friends of Rake Lane Cemetery, Wallasey

Wallasey Cemetery, locally known as Rake Lane Cemetery, was opened in 1882 with a chapel and three sections comprising Church of England, Roman Catholic and Nonconformist. The Friends of Rake Lane Cemetery was formed at the end of 2006, following a sustained attack by vandals. The aim of the Friends is to make the cemetery more secure and safe, as well as raising awareness of its historical significance. At the same time, the Chapel, then on the verge of dereliction, became a Russian Orthodox Church!

Among the thousands buried here, are Crimean War veterans; memorials to victims of the major sea disasters of the early 20th century; hundreds of local civilians who lost their lives in the Blitz as well as 143 Commonwealth War Graves.

Website: www.wallaseycemetery.co.uk

Contact: Diane Robinson, jonandi1@btinternet.com

Friends of Ramsey Mortuary Chapels, Cambridgeshire

The Ramsey Burial Board was formed in 1858 and four acres of land was purchased from William Fellowes Esq for the sum of £450. Huntingdon borough architect, Robert Hutchinson drew up plans for a new cemetery and in 1858 a tender of £1,530 was accepted for the building of two chapels, a lodge for a caretaker, plus the cost of drainage.

Ramsey Cemetery Chapels, built in the Gothic style, stand at the centre of the burial ground. There are two chapels, one Anglican and the other Nonconformist, which are connected by an arch surmounted by an octagonal belfry and spire. Each chapel has a plate glass and wooden contagion window which allows the remains of the deceased to be separate but still visible to the mourners during the funeral service. The coffins were taken into and removed via doors with a hinged hatch at the back of the apertures behind the windows. The Anglican Chapel became Ramsey's mortuary in WWII and after Ramsey was bombed in August 1942 the bodies of those killed were laid out in the chapels prior to interment in the cemetery. The Lodge is now in private hands. The cemetery and chapels were allowed to fall into a distressed state from the 1970s onwards. About four years ago, the Friends of Ramsey Mortuary Chapels group was formed with the primary aims of restoring the cemetery grounds and renovating the chapels. Great progress has been made but much still needs to be done. A digital database of the graves has been created and work is continuing on the history of the people buried there.

Website: www.ramseymortuarychapels.org.uk

Contact: Dr Rod Sambrook, rod.sambrook@btinternet.com

Friends of Calderstones Cemetery, Whalley, Lancashire

The Friends are conducting a campaign to protect their local burial ground from inappropriate development. The cemetery is in the grounds of the former Calderstones Hospitals and has been derelict since sold by the NHS to a private developer.

Contact: John Caswell, jcaswell10@btinternet.com

Jim Thomson

Adviser and inspector on repair, restoration and preservation of older monuments.

Website: www.teleshore.com

Contact: Jim Thomson, jim@teleshore.com

Family grave searchers surprised when they see more than cemetery gate

John Barker of new member group, Friends of Farsley Rehoboth Burial Ground, sends a letter they received in September which makes our cemetery work worthwhile.

'My name is Mike Turner and I live on the Isle of Wight with my wife Ann. I have been doing family history research on my wife Ann's side. She has two half-sisters from her father's first marriage. He had two daughters, Jean and Margaret. Unfortunately, they lost their Mum when they were 5 and 7. Jean and Margaret were never taken to their mother's grave although they knew where it was. Then of course the Rehoboth Burial Ground was sold and became a jungle.



Image courtesy of the Friends of Farsley Rehoboth Burial Ground

This week we visited the site expecting to only be able to look at the gate! Imagine our surprise to see all the work that had taken place and was still underway. I spoke to the volunteers who were working there and explained Jean's situation and that her mum's grave was E23. I could not believe they said it was accessible. We donned high Vis' jackets and were taken to the grave.

Can you imagine how Jean felt being able to see and touch her mother's grave for the first time ever, at age 78 (see photograph). The bonus was that her grandparents were also interred with her mother. Her sister Margaret is visiting Jean in October and I'm sure she would also like to visit the grave. The volunteers at the Burial Ground said they would tidy up the grave and send me a photo.'

Council loosens the lead on dog walkers

In the light of recent NCF discussions on the control of dogs in cemeteries, new member FOPOC has an interesting tale to tell

The Friends of Paddington Old Cemetery (FOPOC), a group which recently has been revitalised, has been successful in its campaign to persuade Brent Council to continue to allow dogs to be exercised off the lead in the cemetery.

On 9th September members of FOPOC addressed Brent Council to explain the advantages of encouraging the community of dog walkers in the cemetery, some of whom are there twice a day. They reminded councillors that users of the cemetery had exercised their dogs their off-lead in the cemetery for decades - it was for a long period a decommissioned cemetery used as an open space and has only relatively recently started opening new graves again. They also explained that dog walkers were a significant proportion of the people who used the cemetery daily and they helped to keep it safe. Most were responsible about clearing up after their dogs and making sure they didn't disturb other people, particularly mourners. They reported incidents and other nuisances such as Japanese Knotweed and had a friendly relationship with the cemetery staff. There was a concern that if dog walkers were forced to keep their dogs on the lead they would drift away from the cemetery and the relatively low level of anti-social behaviour would become more prevalent, driving other responsible users away and changing the nature of the green space.

FOPOC now plans to devise and consult on a code of conduct requiring dog owners to pick up after them and put any out-of-control dog on the lead if asked to by a member of staff.

Friends of Wardsend Cemetery definitely 'thriving'

New NCF member in Sheffield, the Friends of Wardsend Cemetery, entered this year's 'It's your neighbourhood' category of the Yorkshire in Bloom event and were delighted to be judged 'Level 4 Thriving' and the following comments are from the judges' assessment. 'Over the past 12 months the group have continued to engage with the local community in what is a deprived area, to make environmental improvements to the

entrance, to reduce anti-social behaviour and fly tipping issues. It is amazing how much progress the group have made in clearing and making this entrance a more welcome place to visit.’ They commented on how the group had excelled in developing the themes of Heritage, Nature, Art and Performance through collaboration with local organisations. These included: Don Catchment River Trust, the Wildlife Trust, Sea Cadets, Wates Living Space, Remedi, Hillsborough Primary School, and the University of Sheffield. There was praise also for the excellent development of the Facebook Page which has over 1200 members and Twitter with over 570 followers.

See the Friends’ website: www.wardsendcemetery.wordpress.com/

Friends of Heybridge have dramatic start

A group wishing to care for Heybridge Cemetery and rejuvenate the chapel had a dramatic start last year when the electrics blew up in the chapel during their inaugural meeting, October 2018. With the support of Maldon District Council and Heysham Parish Council they had been allowed to meet in the little-used chapel but ‘this was an indication that the chapel roof was in far more serious disrepair than the council thought’, reports Miriam Lewis. ‘However, the re-roofing was completed this April – just squeezed into the financial year’.



*Image courtesy of the
Friends of Heybridge Cemetery*

Meanwhile, the Friends formed a committee and last November a working party was set up to plant 800 daffodil bulbs donated by the parish council, and Miriam also persuaded Tesco to provide refreshments for them. In March the Council chairman visited to see the results (see photograph).

NFCF contact details

A list of members is available from the Secretary

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