

Horton Cemetery: community research project brings forgotten hospital burials "back to life"

by Kevin McDonnell, Trustee of the Friends of Horton Cemetery, Epsom

For almost 100 years from the end of the 19th century until the end of the 20th century five large psychiatric hospitals were built and operated in Surrey. The hospitals and their associated cemetery were built on the

Horton Estate which was just west of Epsom and had been purchased by London County Council (LCC) in 1899. The hospitals were mostly populated with patients from London's boroughs. It was the largest cluster of such hospitals in the UK and perhaps in Europe. Between 1899 and 1955 the bodies of people who had died in these hospitals, but whose bodies



The site in 1981

Photograph courtesy of the Bourne Hall Museum, Ewell

were not claimed by family or friends, were given pauper burials in its Horton Estate Cemetery. By the time the cemetery was closed in 1955 there had been almost 9,000 burials there.

In 1948, after its formation, the NHS took ownership of the land, the hospitals and the cemetery. In 1983 the five-acre cemetery was sold to a developer by the NHS, leaving the cemetery in danger of building development. The few headstones that had existed were removed as were the thousands of grave markers, leaving the graves unmarked. From that point regular care and maintenance of the cemetery ground ceased. Today the site is totally overgrown, dug up by wildlife and used

as dumping ground for builders' rubble and abandoned white goods. Human bones can be found on the ground, which is almost impenetrable in some areas and is unrecognisable as a cemetery. Its condition is a disgrace, as is abandonment of the thousands buried there and the disrespect of their memory.

But the cemetery was not entirely forgotten. Volunteers based in a local library had transcribed the cemetery burial register and placed its contents online. A local history enthusiast used this data to tell the story of the burials through statistics. In June 2020 a successful call for volunteer



*The site (south view) in 2021
Photograph © Ethan Hibbitt*

genealogical researchers was made in the hope that researching and publishing the lives of the people buried in the cemetery would help get public support to protect the cemetery from development. The Friends of Horton Cemetery charity was created, the researchers' stories started to be published on the charity website, more volunteer researchers came forward, more stories were published, local

interest increased. An article was published in the national press. The charity encouraged the local council to formally add the cemetery to the local Heritage Listing and was ultimately successful.

Today our website gets hits from all over the world and we have about 50 volunteer researchers. We are reaching out to similar charities in the UK with whom we hope to form co-operative relationships. One of London University's most prestigious colleges is looking at partnership with our charity's research arm, and partnership is in place with Surrey History Centre and in the future, we hope, with London Metropolitan Archive and associated organisations. The residents of our cemetery are being brought "back to life" and their stories are not only giving insight to the lives of many thousands of Londoners but showing us all that there are similar research opportunities throughout our country. For more information, including the Epsom Cluster, and Stories, see: <https://hortoncemetery.org/>

Contact: Kevin McDonnell, hortoncemetery@gmail.com

Memorial service for Arthur Tait

by Robert Stephenson

On Tuesday 26th of October a Memorial Service was held for the life of Arthur Tait, who was the Chairman of the National Federation of Cemetery Friends for 13 very successful years. The venue was appropriately St Mary the Boltons in Chelsea where he served as a churchwarden and wrote a history of the church. It was packed to hear a series of glowing accounts from his extended family and friends recounting his many admirable qualities. Arthur was educated at Eton and then did National Service in the army before reading History at Cambridge. The next thirty years were spent at ICI, mainly in the personnel department. After retiring he became the Secretary General of the Institute of Actuaries, which he was able to update in many ways and wrote a history of the Institute. He was Chairman of the Friends of Brompton Cemetery for 23 years during which time he saw the complete restoration of the cemetery mainly funded by a Heritage Lottery grant in 2018 and more recently accepted the position of President of the Friends.

Geoff Brandwood

1945 – 2021

from Maya Donelan, Events organiser for the Victorian Society

Geoff Brandwood, architectural historian and a former Chairman of the Victorian Society, was a well-known and respected figure in the world of 19th century architecture. His many publications on his two great loves, churches and pubs, were inspiring and influential and his skill in photography has enhanced recent works by other authors. Geoff was an enthusiastic, energetic and hardworking historian who gave unstintingly to the Victorian Society and the other organisations with which he was involved. He leaves much important work unfinished and above all a great gap in the lives of his many friends and fellow architectural historians, who will miss him greatly

Geoff had not long become the Chairman of the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery, but during this period had advanced negotiations regarding the restoration of the Anglican Chapel and other matters.

Wainsgate Chapel burial ground

from Chris Barnett, Friends of Wainsgate Chapel,
Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire

Work is continuing on the Wainsgate Graveyard Project, which has two main aims. Firstly, to comprehensively record the graveyard: plot the positions of the graves (around 1,200), transcribe inscriptions, describe and photograph headstones and other memorials and list the names of everyone interred or commemorated there (over 3,500 people). The other aim is to tell some of



*An old image (date unknown) showing the Chapel and graveyard
Photograph courtesy of Chris Barnett*

the stories behind the names and dates: who were they, what did they do for a living, where did they live, how did they die?

The results of our research, together with digitised archive documents such as burial registers will be accessible through our website (www.wainsgate.co.uk). The contents will be constantly evolving, and we will be encouraging people to submit suggestions, photographs, documents, or anything else that adds to our knowledge and understanding of Wainsgate graveyard and the history of the area.

We have been joined by a new volunteer, Tom Finch, a retired gardener who has also worked in various cemeteries as a gravedigger and monumental mason's assistant. Tom has been working tirelessly in the graveyard, not only keeping paths mown and brambles and ivy in control, but also clearing the overgrown areas and exposing hidden gravestones and buried memorials.

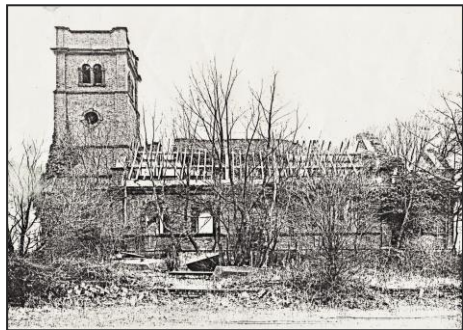
We have recently started working with garden designer Jack Wallington on proposals for a Garden for Lost Workers, a memorial garden in one corner of the graveyard to remember and honour those who have died as a consequence of their work. The idea is particularly relevant to

Wainsgate, which is very close to the site of the notorious Acre Mill which processed asbestos between 1939 and 1970. It is thought that several hundred people have died, and are still dying, of asbestosis and mesothelioma as a result of working at or living near this mill which was finally demolished in 1979. The project is still at feasibility stage, but we are hoping to proceed to consultation with the community and fundraising in the near future.

Friends of the Red Church, Broseley, Shropshire

by Graham Hollox, Secretary

The old St Mary's Church, consecrated in 1767, gained its familiar name from the handmade red bricks used in its construction. It was built to cater for the expanding population in the early years of the industrial revolution, but fell into disrepair and was eventually demolished in 1961.



Old St Mary's Church before demolition, circa 1960

A couple of years ago, one of the saddest sights in Shropshire was the churchyard at the old Red Church in Broseley. Sad, not because of its association with loss and death, but because of its totally disrespectful, unkempt and heavily damaged condition caused by at least 60 years of neglect. With support from the local Town and Parish Councils, a group of local residents formed the Friends of the Red Church at the end of 2019 with the long-term objective to restore the site to the respectful memorial for the community that it should be; creating an environment rich in nature, a place of contemplation and a celebration of local history through the lives and stories of those buried there.

In our first year, the Friends Group has:

- Cleared invasive vegetation, supported by Caring for God's Acre.
- Surveyed plant species and installed nesting boxes.

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Red Church continued

Identified diseased and damaged trees and developed a tree management plan.

Documented the history of the church.

Recorded all legible vaults and memorial inscriptions.

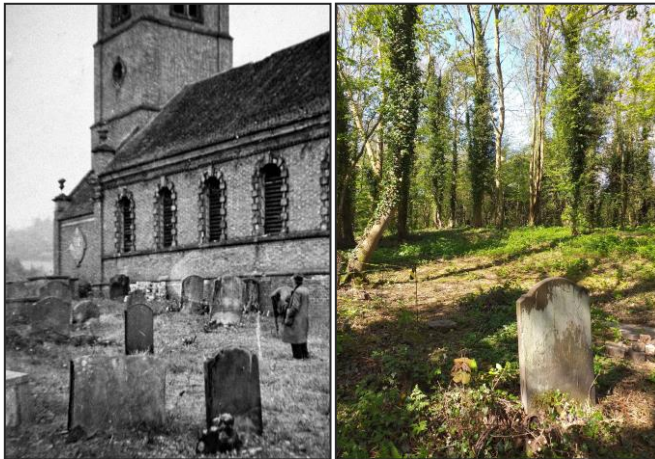
Identified the footprint of the demolished church.

Developed the website www.broseley.org.uk/redchurch and established a social media presence on Facebook.

Established links with the local community through guided tours of the site, working groups and talks to local societies and groups.

Successfully developed some stories of those buried in the churchyard.

The churchyard was formally “closed” in 1885 after over 1200 persons had been buried there. Only some 20 memorials and vaults dating back to 1770, including several in cast iron, remain relatively unaffected by the demolition. However, historical photographs suggest that 70 or more memorials might remain under the debris.



Churchyard in 1939 (left) and in 2021 (right)

If there is one thing that we are satisfied with, it has been the publication of a 16-page pamphlet entitled “Tales from the Red Church 1” in which we describe the lives of some of the people buried in the churchyard and their contribution to the district in the early years of the industrial revolution. Among them are highly influential industrialists such as the Brodie and Cochrane families that produced cannon and patented stoves

at the Calcutts Ironworks and supplied Royal Navy ships during the Napoleonic Wars including HMS Victory at Trafalgar. In contrast, more than twenty members of the Stephan family worked at the local Coalport China Company, the most notable being Peter who is considered one of their most accomplished artist-modellers. Unfortunately, we have yet to locate their graves and indeed, we may never find them under remaining demolition debris. By far the greater number of graves are those representing the plethora of trades that came with the coal, iron and clay mining and manufacturing industries and the essential barge trading on the river Severn before canals and railways changed their world. Even the few existing memorials allow appropriate appreciation of craftsmanship in cast iron and stone.

Of course, we have been frustrated by the consequences of graves not being recorded or protected before demolition of the church, the site being neglected and ignored for over 60 years and in dealing with the legislation and practices surrounding the status of a “closed” churchyard. Maintenance is the responsibility of a financially-stretched Local Authority. Despite recommendations from a government Select Committee that responsibility should lie “within a Bereavement Services or similar department,” our Local authority cedes that to the Transport & Environment function. The guidance on them at present is simply “to see that the churchyard is kept in a decent and fitting manner, that is cleared of all rubbish, muck, thorns, shrubs and anything else that may annoy parishioners when they come into it.” In today’s world, it seems an unsatisfactory situation that there are no standards to which that maintenance is performed. Equally, it is rather strange that having relieved themselves of all maintenance costs, the law allows the church to have a controlling presence over work on the “closed” site as it remains consecrated, requiring the complexity of the faculty system for approvals. It would be interesting to hear from others who have experienced anything similar.

History is history and we are now developing a common understanding and moving forward together. We are in the throes of trying to establish all the necessary permissions to undertake the planned restoration, recognising that it will take several years and we have to find the funds to do it.

All photographs courtesy of Graham Hollox.

Publications

Two book reviews by Robert Stephenson

London Cemeteries in Old Photographs by Brian Parsons

This publication has been produced as an adjunct to the sixth edition of the major work *London Cemeteries: an illustrated Guide & Gazetteer* (1981) by Hugh Meller and subsequently updated several times by Brian Parsons, who is also the author of a number of related books.

It contains archive photographs of many of the 120 plus cemeteries in the London boroughs covered by the original work, and a few others included for good measure. The selection is drawn from Parsons' extensive collection of cemetery images that he has lovingly accumulated over the years. Each image is accompanied by a paragraph or a

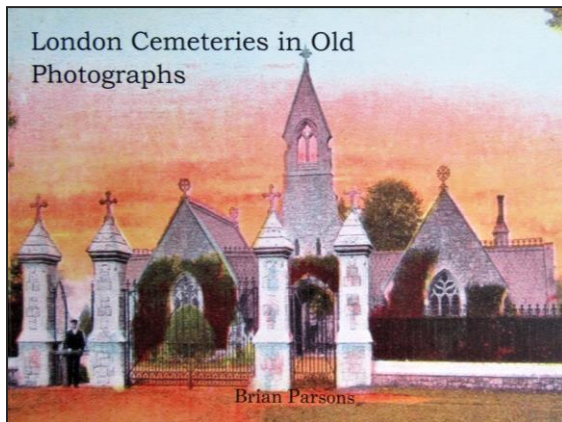


Image courtesy of Robert Stephenson

couple sentences giving all the information known about it. Sadly, several of the photographs record buildings and views that no longer exist, which makes this compilation an important historical record. It highlights the sad neglect suffered by cemeteries within living memory at the hands of benighted local authorities who thought the easy solution to their conservation responsibilities was destruction. Many of these pictures derive from old postcards, which shows that cemeteries were once perceived as being of more interest to the community than assumed by officialdom. Some of the images are scarce and several will be unknown even to those intimately familiar with particular cemeteries. For the London cemetery enthusiast this is a must-have publication and you are advised to obtain a copy while stocks last.

94 pp - soft cover. Limited edition of 200. £12 including postage from www.brianparsons.org.uk

Saint Michael's Kirkyard, Dumfries: a Presbyterian Valhalla by James Stevens Curl (Holywood: Nerfl Press, 2021)

This is a thorough and scholarly work about an outstanding three-acre graveyard packed with high quality monuments. It is prefaced by an

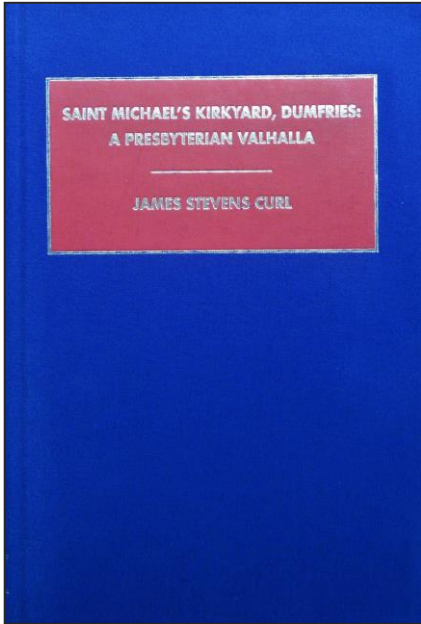


Image courtesy of Robert Stephenson

extensive introduction by the author who has an enviable list of books on architecture and cemeteries to his name. Aerial photographs of the site show a dense sea of red Scottish sandstone, enlivened by the occasional monument of granite or marble. J C Loudon, the cemetery expert, described this ground as "perhaps the most remarkable in Britain, on account of the number and good taste of its tombstones". Many of the family graves are in the form of lairs, which are plots surrounded by dwarf walls topped by railings, although much ironwork has disappeared over the years. This may be a burial ground little known beyond Scotland, but it is famous among the Scots for being the last resting place of their immortal poet, Robert Burns. The mausoleum of

national bard, and the reworking of a large external sculpture depicting the poetic genius, Coila, romantically appearing to Burns, plough in hand, is dealt with in detail. This book has been produced to the highest standards of book binding with gold blocked lettering and is lavishly illustrated with excellent colour photographs on nearly every page. It is thus a joy to own such a volume, although being a limited subscription edition the remaining copies are not cheap.

For £70 post free this fine work can be yours and order forms can be downloaded from:

www.jamesstevenscurl.com/st.michaels-kirkyard-dumfries-a-presbyterian-valhalla

Beautiful Memorial to those without a marker

by Geoff Watts, Founder member of the Friends of Southampton Old Cemetery (FoSOC), Hampshire

The Victorians placed great importance on the grave, and remembrance at it, but by no means did all have money to spend on burial or marker. The Holloway family lived in one of the “courts” off lower Brewhouse Lane, now long gone and, today, a curiosity of old photographs. These were largely wretched slum areas, the subjects of a devastating medical report in the late 19th century. Today the area, with its modern homes, is in the sought after “French Quarter” of Old Southampton.

In the 1881 Census, the parents, with 6 children and a lodger, occupied one of the cramped properties. In 1882, the father, James Holloway, aged 46, died at 7, Brewhouse Court. We know, from the cemetery register, where and when he was buried. It was in a 'common grave' that eventually held, in addition to James, 20 other people. We can only imagine the distress of the widow, Elizabeth, as she stood by the grave seeing the coffin disappear beneath, probably, just a light layer of earth knowing that James was not the first, nor would he be the last, to be interred there. Six bodies were already in the grave and, after James was buried, there would be 14 more.

Tragedy struck the family, again, in 1884 when the youngest child, George, died aged 3. Elizabeth Holloway no doubt attended the burial, but this was in a separate grave though not far away. The child was not buried with the father even though, in 1884, there was a burial there and the last one in the grave was interred in 1888. It seems that, from somewhere, Elizabeth was able to find the money to bury her son, so avoiding a “common grave”, because he is the only one in that grave. How many times she returned to mourn we do not know but neither grave has any marker. Usually, there are no markers on “common graves” and, we presume, Elizabeth could not afford one for George. Was the experience of her husband's burial so awful that she did everything to ensure the same did not happen with her son? The graves are only some 30 yards apart. The remaining family seem to have moved away as Elizabeth is not in the Old Cemetery. Father and son are just two of the many souls in the cemetery whose graves are not marked.



*The memorial dedicated to those without a marker
Photograph by Bruce Lamer, FoSOC member*

It is people such as James and George that the very generous FoSOC benefactor would have had in mind when the new stone was commissioned recently - so they would not be forgotten. A beautifully hand carved surf grey Indian granite memorial rock was erected in the Old Cemetery dedicated to the many souls who are buried there with no grave markers.

On 15th July Monsignor Canon Vincent Harvey kindly attended the Cemetery to say a prayer and sprinkled Holy water to bless the memorial.

The donor is very moved that so many people have left messages saying how much they love the new memorial, because they have family buried at the cemetery, without markers, and greatly appreciate the lovely gesture.

Let us know

Please keep sending the newsletter editor your news stories and events (contact details are on the back page). You get publicity for your events, a place to trumpet your successes, and a chance to air your woes. We get the articles to fill and update our pages.

Members News

A selection of news and events from Members newsletters and websites

Cathays Cemetery, Cardiff

A special dedication service was undertaken at the cemetery on 23rd November to honour John Henry Harding of the 13th Light Dragoons, who took part in and survived, the Charge of the Light Brigade during the Crimean War. Attendees at the event included the Lord Mayor of Cardiff; Tim Hill the great-great grandson of John Henry Harding plus other family descendants, and members of the Friends group.

Northwood Cemetery, Cowes, Isle of Wight

Cowes Town Council will support shortfall in the £12,000 fund-raising target set for restoration of the civilian war grave. Presently, a rededication ceremony is planned for 7th May 2022, and an information panel informing on the events of the night of 4th/5th May 1942, will be installed. The Friends have been awarded a Green Flag Award for the 4th successive year.

Rectory Lane Cemetery, Berkhamsted

A special service was held in September to dedicate the new War Memorial in Rectory Lane Cemetery's Garden of Remembrance. The service was held in conjunction with the Berkhamsted and Tring Branch of the Royal British Legion.

It was announced in October that the cemetery had been awarded a Green Flag Community Award, which was followed by the Rectory Lane Cemetery team being named a joint winner of Team of the Year at the Green Flag Awards 2021 special virtual award ceremony on 24th November. This was followed by the announcement of two Landscape Institute Awards in recognition of the cemetery's restoration project. The awards were in the categories of "Excellence in Community Engagement" and "Excellence in Heritage and Culture".

The Mausolea and Monuments Trust

The Trust have recently undertaken a major revision of their website, which has included an upgrade of their gazetteer of mausolea. The new gazetteer layout should work well on both desktop and mobile devices and now includes the addition of a "find Mausolea near me" function.

Undercliffe Cemetery, Bradford

Professor Christopher Gaffney accompanied by archaeology students from the University of Bradford undertook geophysical survey work in the cemetery in May this year. The objective of the geophysical survey was to identify areas within the cemetery which may be suitable for future interments. The survey included the lawned area covering the site of the former chapels, as well areas within the cemetery's historic core and an area at the western end of the main promenade. The survey results are forthcoming.

Zion Graveyard, Attercliffe, Sheffield

Funding from the J G Graves Charitable Trust and the Hallamshire Branch of Soroptimists International, has enabled the Friends to produce a set of interpretation panels. Another grant from Sheffield Town Trust was put towards the purchase of tools and secure storage.

Do you know your nearest defibrillator? Colin Fenn raises some serious questions

Many Friends Groups have gardening groups or work parties who engage in some vigorous exercise in the cemetery's "open air gym". We draft risk assessments that cover accidents, incidents and safeguarding, etc. but would we know what to do if one of our team suddenly, with no warning, collapsed? Unfortunately, this is just what happened with a churchyard grass-cutting group in rural Herefordshire. Even with a GP in the group to take charge, after 15 minutes of CPR, two ambulances, plus a helicopter ambulance, they never got a heartbeat and sadly the person expired.

They were able to respond as well as anyone could, and it seems no more could have been done. However, time was wasted finding the nearest defibrillator and then there was a delay getting the key holder to open up the relevant building. Might that have made a difference?

No-one wants to ask that question. Would you know where your nearest defibrillator was? Would anyone in your group know what to do with it? And has it been regularly checked and maintained?

Burial and Cremation Advisory Group (BCAG) update

by Colin Fenn, Vice Chairman of the NFCF

Cemetery Friends are normally represented on this Ministry of Justice advisory group twice a year through the NFCF. However, this group has not met since the pandemic, as understandably the focus has been on immediate crisis management. Instead, a Deceased Management Advisory Group was rapidly formed from front-line funeral organisations across the nations. Their meetings were minuted and can be seen on the Cremation Society website www.cremation.org.uk, which are also a useful historical record.

Grave re-use?

However, I spotted that this crisis group was anticipating the long-awaited redrafting of English and Welsh burial legislation. New burial legislation in England and Wales would inevitably look at introducing grave re-use. I sent a reminder that the BCAG was the appropriate forum for discussion, as it was more representative of the users and it was not crisis legislation. This viewpoint seems to have been accepted and we have also reminded the Law Society to involve us in any consultation. We would want this legislation to be much more sympathetic than the recent Scottish Burial Act, which is being introduced incrementally north of the border. All the old burial laws were repealed without much consultation and the new law allows graves to be reclaimed after just 25 years, with only a perfunctory requirement to consider the historic environment. We are proposing that the NFCF's stance would be to seek a minimum period of 75 years and require a formal assessment of historical significance and local community consultation. This would be more like the approach taken by the current Highgate Bill, which seeks to allow selective reclamation of specific unmarked graves. There should also be protections for disturbing remains and penalties for not following the correct procedures. As this law would affect everyone, we would prefer that this legislation is discussed in Parliament rather than rubber-stamped as "delegated" legislation.

I welcome feedback and suggestions from member groups as we develop our position before we are presented with formal notice of proposals. Contact: vicechairman@cemeteryfriends.com.

Eliminating groundwater contamination

Also, through the BCAG we have received notice that there is a consultation for new legislation that will affect any cemetery owner: "Amendments to the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 as applied to Groundwater Activities and related Surface Water Discharge Activities". The consultation closes on Wednesday 22nd December 2021.

https://consult.defra.gov.uk/water-quality/amendments-to-the-epr-for-groundwater/supporting_documents/Consultation%20Document.pdf

This legislation has the noble intention of eliminating groundwater contamination from graves but will make burials impossible in some circumstances. Cemetery owners will want to consider their response and given the short notice we suggest you reply directly. There is a useful briefing note here: <https://lawandreligionuk.com/2021/11/24/burials-groundwater-activities-and-related-surface-water-discharge-activities/#more-68279>

Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe (ASCE): Cemetourism Online Conference

by John Moffat, UK Steering Group member

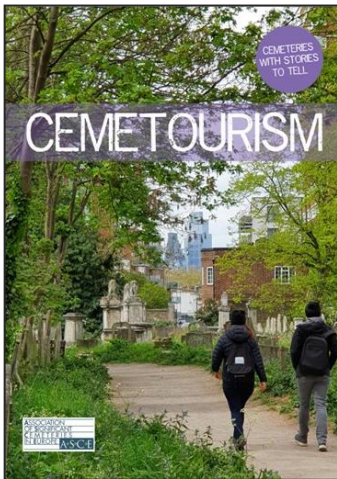
Reflecting our changing environment, the conference was not held this year in a far-flung part of Europe but easily accessible on line as webinar on the Zoom platform hosted by the Highgate Cemetery Trust. Add to that a discounted registration for NCF members and the result was a record number of UK delegates for the two day event on the 10th and 11th of November.

On offer were first class speakers from 10 European countries, two from the USA and five from the UK. Conference chairing was shared between Ian Dungavell, myself, Ioanna Paraskevopoulou, (Greece) and Andrea Pop, (Romania). Chairing was certainly a challenge, I had to listen to the speaker, make sure they kept to time, read both the chat and question text and follow the closed communication from the editorial board - never have I so multitasked! Ian was keen from the outset that speakers would explain how they achieved results rather than what they planned to do.

continued over

ASCE Conference continued

The outcome was a largely pragmatic conference although we did have the expertise of Dr Julie Rugg urging us to consider the aspect of funerary heritage when setting up our cemetery interpretation plans. In respect of problems, sanctity of space was an issue faced in Greece, Georgia Antonopolou of Athens, told us that they cannot even place interpretation signs. Similarly, the Jewish cemetery environment can be equally sensitive as Ruth Gruber, Director of European Jewish culture, explained. She also gave us the shocking statistic that before World War 2 there were 20,000 Jewish cemeteries in Europe and that figure has now been more than halved.



*Image from front cover of
the Cemetourism
programme brochure
Courtesy of John Moffat*

On the positive side Renate Niklas spoke of the success of Vienna Central Cemetery, with an array of education, cultural and other initiatives including on onsite interpretative museum. As a consequence, the cemetery is the most visited place in Vienna!

Towards the future, and for a UK cemetery, Paul Tourle, of Barker Langham consultants, spoke of the advantages of taking a plurality approach in planning a Brookwood landscape that can accommodate an increasingly multi faith environment.

Aude Thevenon, co-ordinator of Printemps des Cimetieres, told delegates of this national spring event encompassing all levels of French cemeteries. The event is similar to our own National Cemeteries Week and Heritage Open Days and aims to show that all cemeteries have artistic and cultural importance.

Mari Pilkhoun, from Indianapolis, explained that the young people in the USA are becoming increasingly distanced from death and she uses cemetery tours to help develop awareness and understanding. Her presentation was particularly appreciated as she had to speak at 4am in the morning her time!

As Ian Dungavell said at the start of this project, “every cemetery has a story to tell” and I feel the conference proved him right. If you would like to know more about ASCE conferences, my 20-year retrospective is available on this link. <https://www.significantcemeteries.org/2021/08/how-our-agms-have-evolved.html>

New Members and Associates

The following groups have recently joined the NFCF

Friends of Loxley Cemetery, Sheffield

Loxley Cemetery is in the Loxley Valley in north-west Sheffield, bordering the Peak District National Park. The church has been known by a number of names: originally Loxley Congregational Chapel, then Loxley Independent Church (or often just Loxley Church), and then finally Loxley United Reformed Church. Locally, it is usually referred to as Loxley Chapel. It was built in 1787 and closed in 1993. It is a Grade 2* listed building.

The churchyard surrounds the chapel on three sides, the first recorded burial being 1806 and burials are still taking place on existing family plots, although no new burials plots are allowed. The area of the cemetery covers just over 10 acres and is home to over 4000 burial plots. Originally built as an Anglican church, it was rented out to Protestant Dissenters or Independents in 1798, and they subsequently bought the building. The families buried in the plots are from all over Sheffield. The chapel and graveyard became privately owned when the chapel closed and sadly have been neglected ever since. Unfortunately, the chapel suffered a serious fire in 2016 and now is a roofless ruin.

There are many graves of interest including War Commission graves and graves of the victims of the Great Sheffield Flood in 1864, when Dale Dyke dam, which was being constructed further up the valley, burst. The resulting flood devastated the Loxley Valley and parts of the Don Valley leading into the centre of Sheffield. At least 250 people were swept away and drowned. The Friends of Loxley Cemetery group was formed in late 2019 and, due to the pandemic, little progress was made in 2020. However, at the beginning of this year, an enterprising member started to

visit the cemetery every week, to clear away the weeds. This was a lockdown activity with plenty of fresh air and exercise. More members joined him, and we soon had regular clearing sessions on Tuesday mornings. We made good progress while the weather was dry but once the vegetation started growing in spring, we realised just what an enormous task we had ahead of us. It felt like being in a jungle – brambles, nettles and rosebay willowherb towered above us, scratched us, stung us, and tripped us up. However, we persevered and now the graves can be seen by passers-by. We get many comments about “I didn’t know there was a cemetery here!” We now have winter ahead of us and we hope to start work on some of the self-seeded sycamores which have turned parts of the cemetery into woodland. A lot of them are sprouting out of the graves themselves.



*Loxley Cemetery volunteers – April 2021
Photograph courtesy of Verity Black*

We have many visitors looking for relatives’ graves and we are always happy to help. It is extremely satisfying to track down a lost grave. We are working with the current private owner to make the graveyard an attractive place to visit, and to restore some dignity to those who have passed away.

Website: <https://e-voice.org.uk/friendsloxfordcemetery/>
Contact: Verity Black, loxley.secretary@yahoo.com

Friends of Cathcart Cemetery, Glasgow

Cathcart Cemetery recorded its first burial on 10 November 1876, although there are some headstones that include dates from before that time due to re-interments from College Churchyard in Glasgow in 1873 and from the Gorbals Burial Ground in 1883. Cathcart New Cemetery (as it was known when it was opened) superseded Cathcart Old Churchyard on Carmunnock Road, Glasgow.

The cemetery opened in response to the development of the “garden cemeteries” movement in Britain. The growth of this movement was in response to problems with overcrowded churchyards and the spread of plague and other epidemics. The Cemeteries Clauses Act 1847 authorised the setting up of private cemeteries. Cathcart Cemetery Company was set up by six local gentlemen from Langside and two Glasgow bankers.

The site was laid out to designs by William Ross McKelvie of Dundee. McKelvie's experience in this line of work was described in the Cemetery Company's leaflet as "unequaled in Scotland". He came to Dundee in 1863 from Greenock, where he had served as Superintendent of Cemeteries and Parks. He later designed Duthie Park in Aberdeen in 1881. Balgay Park and Duthie Park are scheduled for inclusion in the extension to the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland, which gives an indication of the quality of his work.

The cemetery was in Cathcart Parish before the Local Government boundary changes in 1996, where it is now in care of East Renfrewshire Council. It is estimated that there have been 15,000 people buried there and research is underway to establish an exact figure.

Friends of Cathcart Cemetery was constituted in early 2019 and since then we have gone on to run a series of successful tours and online talks which have raised the cemetery's profile. The Friends Group was awarded charity status in June 2021. The discovery of the suffragette links of Henria Leech Williams, who had only name, birth and death dates on her family's grave, was a source of great excitement last year and the subject of an extensive feature in *The Scotsman*, 30 Aug 2020.

Website: cathcartcemetery.co.uk

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