

## Friends of Welford Road Cemetery hosts the AGM

The 2022 AGM held on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> June at the Attenborough Arts Centre, University of Leicester, was attended by 42 members representing 18 cemetery groups. Welcoming addresses were given by Chris Powis on behalf of the Friends of Welford Cemetery and Peter Soulsby, the City Mayor for Leicester. This was followed by a PowerPoint presentation given by Elizabeth Blood, University History Research Associate at the University of Leicester, entitled 'Neighbours of the dead: the University of Leicester's relationship to Welford Road Cemetery'. Members were then invited to participate in a conducted tour of Welford Road Cemetery.

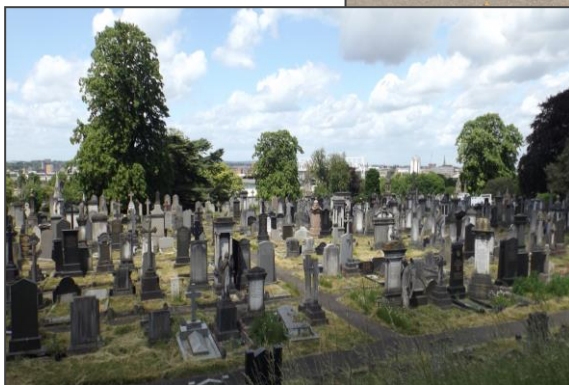


*Guided tour of the Cemetery led by Chris Powis  
Photograph by Robert Stephenson*

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This beautiful cemetery opened in 1849, comprised Anglican and Non-Conformist sections each with its own dedicated gothic style chapel which were joined by a central archway. A lodge stood at each of the two main cemetery entrances. The Visitor Centre now stands on the site of the former lodge at the Welford Road entrance. By 1869 the cemetery had been extended covering a site of 31 acres. Sadly, the chapels were demolished in the late 1950s.

One hundred memorial plaques commemorating notable people interred at the cemetery have been laid out around the footprint of the former chapels.



*Above, the memorial plaques on the site of the former chapels.*

*Left, the cemetery (and the city beyond) laid out below the site of the chapels*

*Photographs by Ann Wilkinson*

People interred at Welford Road Cemetery include the travel entrepreneur Thomas Cook (1808 - 1892) and Alice Hawkins (1863 – 1946) leader of the Women’s suffrage movement in Leicester.

During improvements undertaken in the grounds of Leicester Cathedral between 2012 and 2014, whilst no burials were disturbed it was necessary to remove many of the headstones, some of which were relocated and erected in the grounds of Welford Road Cemetery. The Friends have photographed and documented the headstones.



*The Cathedral Headstones  
Photograph by Ann Wilkinson*

After lunch the formal AGM business took place. Details can be found in the minutes sent to NCF members. Any members who have not received the minutes please contact the secretary: [gwyneth1@btinternet.com](mailto:gwyneth1@btinternet.com)

Thank you to the Friends of Welford Road Cemetery for their hospitality on the day. The next AGM will be hosted by the

Friends of Brompton Cemetery, London, on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

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**Friends of York Cemetery -  
National Volunteers Week and the Queen's Platinum Jubilee**  
forwarded by Clive Dawson, Chairman of the Friends

Twenty-four volunteers turned out for the first Saturday in the month Task Day on 4<sup>th</sup> June. It was a morning of weeding and mulching around trees and plants with wood chippings, chipped in April and also planting out in the Herb Garden which should be a really good show this year. With two occasions to celebrate a buffet lunch was laid on by Victoria, Alyson and Chris and of course delicious homemade cakes from Chris W. A most enjoyable way to end another successful Task Day. Many thanks to all who came along



*Left, a table full of food for hungry volunteers and right, the volunteers enjoying a well-deserved buffet in the Harriet Centre  
Photographs by Clive Dawson*

## **‘Filling the Voids’: project for finding non-British war dead**

Professor Tim Grady explains this project and how Cemetery Friends can contribute

During the two world wars, thousands of non-British soldiers and civilians died on British soil. The German dead, who were originally buried in over 700 separate cemeteries and churchyards throughout the country, are the most obvious example. Alongside them, however, there were also large numbers of Italians, Americans, French and Belgians amongst others, all of whom were also buried locally. A project being run by historians at the Universities of Chester and Kingston hopes to shed new light on this largely forgotten history.

Through the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, we have excellent records for the dead of Britain and its former empire, but there is now very little trace of these other victims of the world wars. The principal reason for this silence is that most of the non-British dead were gradually exhumed in the wake of war and either repatriated overseas or concentrated into large national war cemeteries, such as the Brookwood American Cemetery in Surrey or the Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery in Staffordshire. Once exhumed, the original plots were often reused, and any traces of the war dead were then lost.

The aim of the ‘Filling the Voids’ project is to locate and record where the non-British war dead were originally buried and where they rest today. Our hope is that by uncovering these forgotten traces we will be left with a fuller picture of the scale of wartime death and the ways in which it affected local communities throughout the country.

In uncovering this history, we are very keen to work with both the NCF and with local friends groups. As the project takes off, we will be launching a database that will be used to collate information about the individual war dead. The database will be publicly accessible for researchers to search as well as open to the public for adding new records. If you would like to help share your knowledge of local burials or just learn more about the project, then please don’t hesitate to contact the project team at: [t.grady@chester.ac.uk](mailto:t.grady@chester.ac.uk)

Professor Tim Grady (University of Chester)

Dr Layla Renshaw (Kingston University)

## The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

### Friends of St Helen's Cemetery, Merseyside

forwarded by Marlene Downey

On Monday 14th November 2022 in the crematorium chapel the Friends of St Helens were presented with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service Crystal and Certificate of Authenticity signed by Her Majesty the late Queen Elizabeth II by Mr Mark Blundell, Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside. He was accompanied by Deputy Lieutenants Peter Woods and Rebecca Ross-Williams. Father Martin Kershaw, RC Dean of St Helens opened the presentation with a prayer. Members of the Friends group were individually introduced to the Lord Lieutenant who presented them with personal Queens Award for Voluntary Services pin badges. The Lord Lieutenant gave an explanation of the history of the award, the selection process and the exceptional standards required for the award to be given.



*Presentation of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service  
Crystal and Certificate of Authenticity to the Friends by Mark  
Blundell, Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside  
Photograph courtesy of Marlene Downey*

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The Certificate of Authenticity was read out by Ms Rebecca Ross-Williams, DL. Mr Peter Woods, DL gave a summary of the supporting documentation which had been submitted for consideration for the award. An overview of the diverse work of the Friends over the past years was given and special mention was made of Sonia Smith, Bereavement Services Manager who had supported and given many hours of voluntary time to the Friends at their events, and projects.

Also in attendance was Mr Alan Chick, DL, Ms Jane Dearden, DL, Cllr Lynn Clarke, Mrs Celia Parr and Miss Ellie Farrell. The Queens Award for Voluntary Services is the highest award that can be given to a voluntary service and is equivalent to an MBE.

It became an even more special week for the Friends when later presented with a Pride of St Helens Award.

### **Undercliffe Cemetery Charity, Bradford**

Another recipient of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2022 was the Undercliffe Cemetery Charity, who operate and look after the historic Undercliffe Cemetery in Bradford, West Yorkshire.

The Award was formally presented to Allan Hillary on behalf of the Charity by Ed Anderson, the Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire in the presence of Councillor Martin Love, the Lord Mayor of Bradford at Bradford City Hall on 27<sup>th</sup> September.

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### **Contributions forwarded by Lynda Kitching, Secretary of the Friends of Beckett Street Cemetery, Leeds**

#### **Lviv Necropolis, Ukraine**

At a time when Ukraine is constantly in our thoughts - our concern being not only for the people there but also the huge devastation being wrought upon the towns and villages - I am sending this article (see opposite) which the late Sylvia Barnard wrote for our Spring 2007 newsletter. I came across it whilst looking for something else, as is often the case! I thought it would be relevant to the 'situation' and be of interest to members. One can't help wondering what has become of this 'fascinating cemetery'.

## Beckett Street Cemetery – Twinned with Lviv Necropolis?

By Sylvia M. Barnard

Members may remember how, in the days when I used to be responsible for the production of this newsletter, I often included a piece on cemeteries I had recently visited in other parts of Europe or further afield.

Readers may be interested in a short account of the fascinating cemetery in Lviv, Ukraine, which was on my itinerary in August this year. Lemberg in Galicia in the days of the Austro-Hungarian empire, Polish Lwow, Lvov under the USSR and now Lviv in the language of independent Ukraine – the city's history is typical of the many-layered past of central Europe. Our guidebook said the cemetery was unmissable, so David and I made our way on foot out through the quiet, leafy university quarter, full of well-maintained and stylish nineteenth-century buildings, to the Gothic gates and walls of the huge burial ground. It was thronged with visitors, but sadly, there was no information whatsoever available in English, so apart from the short piece in the guidebook and a lucky knowledge of the Cyrillic script and a few words of Russian (similar to Ukrainian), we were floundering!

By an Imperial decree in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, cemeteries were to be established outside the densely inhabited city. This one is also known as Lychakiv Cemetery, from the name of the nearby village, which (like Burmantofts, once far from the crowded centre of Leeds) is now part of the city. The oldest monuments date back to 1786, and there are said to be over 3,000 memorials in total. The headstones, sculptures and mausolea climb, profuse and higgledy-piggledy, over a picturesque hill with splendid views of Lviv. There are wonderful works of art – sculptured figures burst forth from tombstones, beautiful girls lie draped on couches as though

turned to stone as they sleep, heroes, artists, angels, crosses are everywhere.



*A casket in a sea of knotweed*

There is a large military cemetery with row upon row of pristine white headstones, each engraved with an obviously Polish name. This puzzled us until we could return to home and Google, where we discovered that a bitter war had been fought between Ukrainians and Poles for control of the city at the end of the Great War (Lviv itself was 60% Polish, though the surrounding area was inhabited mainly by Ukrainians). The Poles won, but were then involved in a struggle with the Bolsheviks from 1919 to 1921, and many further burials are from this time. Under Stalin the Polish war graves decayed or were destroyed; however, in an act of reconciliation the military cemetery was restored and was opened in 2005 by the presidents of both Ukraine and Poland. (Sadly, this gesture was not made without considerable opposition within Ukraine.)

Like Beckett Street, Lychakiv Cemetery has its problems of maintenance: overgrown vegetation (including our old friend Japanese knotweed) and crumbling tombs (the steep hillsides don't help). But we saw no litter, and no obvious evidence of vandalism.

Similarities and differences ... Lviv necropolis and Beckett Street Cemetery ... Rest in peace!



*Prometheus and friends*

[Contacts] Secretary Lynda Kitching: 01943 884466 rogerandlynda@guiseley.co.uk | Ch

## Unveiling of a headstone for Edward Caldwell Spruce (1865 – 1922) in Beckett Street Cemetery

It's not often that gathering at a grave-side is a happy occasion, but the 10<sup>th</sup> June was an exception! The occasion was the unveiling of a headstone, on the centenary of the burial of eminent sculptor Edward Caldwell Spruce. Our Secretary Lynda Kitching introduced the event with some context, acknowledging our gratitude to Friends of Lawnswood Cemetery who alerted us to the fact that Spruce was buried in an unmarked grave. (Spruce designed and executed the huge memorial, now Grade 2-listed, to business man and benefactor, Sam Wilson, who is buried at Lawnswood). We were fortunate to have made contact with Spruce's gt-gt-niece Yvonne Clarke, who came up from Chichester to perform the unveiling and bring some family memorabilia.



*Edward Caldwell Spruce  
Copyright: Thoresby  
Society*

Guests then made their way across to the Thackray Museum of Medicine, where we had a presentation from Alison Glew about Spruce's artistic life and from Lesley Newnham about Burmantofts Pottery, now demolished but which was close to the Cemetery, and where Spruce was chief modeller for some years. His terracotta friezes and decorative work can still be seen on the outside of buildings across the country, and even Buenos Aires! We also enjoyed refreshments, including some special buns in honour of Spruce. Besides the people mentioned above, our thanks also go to Brad Farquarson who inscribed both the lettering and the medallion of sculptor's tools, making it a very special headstone. It is situated on Stoney Rock Walk, which is parallel to Stoney Rock Road.



*Yvonne Clarke – Spruce's  
great, great niece  
Photograph courtesy of  
Lynda Kitching*



## Wainsgate Chapel

from Chris Barnett, Wainsgate Chapel, Hebden Bridge

Friends of Wainsgate Chapel have become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (Wainsgate Chapel, charity No.1198994). The chapel (now a community arts and heritage centre) and burial ground are still owned by the Historic Chapels Trust, but are administered by the CIO, which is run by a committee of volunteers.

The Wainsgate Graveyard Project (see NCF Newsletter No. 48) now has its own dedicated website: <https://wainsgategraveyardproject.co.uk>



*Wainsgate Chapel burial ground  
Photograph courtesy of Chris Barnett*

The Wainsgate Graveyard Project has two principal aims: firstly, to tell the story of the graveyard – describe its history and development, transcribe the inscriptions on headstones and other memorials, plot the position of the graves, describe and photograph headstones and other memorials, and record the names of everyone interred or commemorated

there. The other aim is to tell some of the stories behind the names and dates, local people and families, Baptist ministers, Sunday school teachers, people who worshipped at Wainsgate and people who didn't: men who died in two World Wars: people who moved to the area and people who moved away. They all have stories to tell – the history of a community told through its graveyard.

The website will also include digitised archive documents such as burial registers, as well as all sorts of diversions and sidetracks, all loosely related to graveyards, funerals, death, and similar subjects: social history, politics, philosophy, theology, art, literature, poetry and music.

The website is very much a work in progress, and the contents will be constantly evolving as we add more information, images, and stories.

## Events held for National Cemeteries Week 2022:

### Loxley Cemetery Open Day

by Verity Brack, Secretary of the Friends of Loxley Cemetery, Sheffield

As part of National Cemeteries Week, the Friends of Loxley Cemetery decided to hold their very first Open Day. We are a small group that has only been running since the latter part of 2019, and with disruption due to the pandemic, we have not made as much progress as we might have.



*War grave tour with Malcolm Nunn  
Photograph courtesy of Verity Brack*

Loxley Cemetery dates back to 1806 and has around 5000 burials. The church closed in 1993 and the building and burial grounds were sold to a private developer. Unfortunately, both the building and grounds were neglected over the subsequent years, and we were faced with the mammoth task of clearing around 10 acres. However, in spring 2021 we got down to it and have made enormous progress so we thought we should celebrate by holding an Open Day and make ourselves known to a wider public. We advertised in as many places as we could, including on social media and through other local cemetery Friends groups.

We were absolutely blown away by the response! A rough reckoning is that we had 150-200 visitors. We held it on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May bank holiday, which was obviously a good idea as we had a lot of family groups attending. We did tours of our war graves (those listed by the War Commission), and of the victims of the Great Sheffield Flood of 1864, when a newly completed reservoir dam further up the valley burst, wreaking havoc in the Loxley Valley and then in the Don Valley.

Both tours attracted a great deal of interest. We plan to repeat the tours in September during the South Yorkshire Heritage Open Days, and to produce leaflets with additional information on the flood and war victims. We enrolled 31 new members and received some lovely compliments on our work. We have also learned some valuable lessons for holding an event! Some more photos can be found in our Gallery on our website:



*Flood grave tour  
Photograph courtesy of Verity Brack*

<https://e-voice.org.uk/friendsofloxleycemetery/gallery/>

## **‘Convicts, Cartographers and Captains!’**

### **A guided history walk for National Cemeteries Week**

by Mike Guilfoyle, Friends of Brockley & Ladywell Cemeteries.

As part of National Cemeteries Week, I was pleased to be able to undertake a guided history walk in Brockley & Ladywell Cemeteries, grandly entitled ‘Convicts, Cartographers and Captains!’. Although the weather forecast was unpromising around a dozen or so visitors ventured out on the walk which was pitched to last around two hours starting in Ladywell Cemetery. The following account is offered as a brief digest of some selected highlights of the grave stops of those illustrious deceased buried in these two cemeteries in SE London.

With some literary licence, one of the first stops has a headstone inscription from the poet Shelley and marks the final resting place of a minor novelist whose legacy is perhaps shaped by a candid observation made by a critic, who described him as a ‘hard living journalist much entangled with women’. Alexander Crawford Lindsay d.1915 (was overshadowed by his better-known brother, David Lindsay d.1945 author of the science fantasy novel ‘A Voyage to Arcturus’). Nearby lies the final resting place of Astronomer, James Carpenter d.1899, his eponymous lunar legacy ‘Carpenters Crater’.

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An admiral called Howard who featured on the wrong side of a Crimean War naval defeat (topicality intended) forms a link to the family vault of Sir Alexander Nisbet d.1874, who, aside from being one of Queen Victoria's physicians, was an enlightened surgeon aboard a number of convict ships bound for Australasia in the 1830s. A recent discovery of a historic familial link to the ill-fated arctic exploration ship HMS Terror, is a war scarred vault (Blitz) of the Donaldson family. Midshipman Donaldson died aboard the ship on an earlier expedition in 1837. The only known headstone in the cemeteries with the description 'historian' is that of Blackheath school master, Hubert William Ord d.1954. His readable autobiography has a foreword by Sir Frank Dyson (of BBC pips fame!). Moving ahead, we stopped at the toppled headstone of minor poet and arts patron, Francis Bennoch d.1890, a close friend of American author, Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose daughter Rose lodged with Bennoch and is now on the road to canonisation!



*Mike Guilfoyle on his NCW walk  
Sunday 1st May 2022  
Photograph courtesy of Geoffrey  
Thurley*

The cartographer's headstone is sadly entwined in bushes but Admiralty surveyor Henry Scharbau d.1902 left behind an impressive body of map making and is hailed as far apart as Japan and the Hebrides. He is neatly located between an aristocratic French and German duo. Hard to imagine, but skirting the graves of the Decadent poet Ernest Dowson d.1900 and the World War One poet, David Jones d.1974. We stopped at the grave of the controversial diplomat and naval officer, Horatio Nelson Lay d.1898 whose forays into China and later Japan have long occupied the curious attentions of Sinologists! Passing seamlessly into Brockley Cemetery, the lapidary timeline of Army Surgeon, James Henry Horton d.1917 (buried Baghdad) informs the viewer of earlier conflicts in Somaliland, North west Frontier, and the Balkans, before the

messy campaigning in Mesopotamia. His brother's untimely demise at the hands of an infamous outlaw in the Punjab, in 1924 adds a poignant family footnote.

The impetus to move at a quicker pace due to darker clouds and timings, results in bypassing links to the Thames Paddle Steamer, Princess Alice disastrous sinking of 1878. But stopping at a Deptford Whaler's faded headstone and recounting the loss of a Whaling Captain off Brazil drawn from the remarkable journal of Thomas Reed Stavers (1798-1867) who is buried here. A drop by reference to Captain Cook on another headstone brings us to our most contemporary interment, but one that visitors can follow up on, as the Imperial War Museum oral history department has a moving recording of her life story. Dr Jadwiga Karnicki d. 2014 (her husband Boris, d.1985 was one of Poland's most charismatic submariners in WW2).

The tragic history of Adeline Tanner d.1890 was referenced - she is the subject of one of my narrated podcasts (free to listen to on the Friends website) before the penultimate stop, a juror who attended the seminal 1843 insanity trial of Daniel M'Naghten, called William Jewett Harris d.1883. The final stop is perhaps a dip into that strain of darker cemetery humour, which enlivens the ending of what has been a successful if abridged walk, as I peer sideways at my notes on the luminaries overlooked due to the time. But a passing nod to eminent cemetery historian, Brian Parsons, who I first met when he was cutting ivy from the family vault of the well-known Chappell funeral directors which lies close to the Brockley Cemetery entrance. John Archibald d.1923 had the grave misfortune to die on his honeymoon due to an accident in the Hotel lift! Amusing double entendres echo into the fading light and recent dipping sales for three of my cemetery history guidebooks attract some of the hardier cemeterians!

### **Correction**

In the write up on National Cemeteries Week included on Page 6 of the Summer Newsletter No. 49, the Friends of Brockley and Ladywell Cemeteries were missed from the list of participating cemeteries. We apologise for the omission.

## New Members and Associates

The following groups who have recently joined as Members

### The Friends of St John Baptist Churchyard, Cirencester

Closed to interments in 1871, our churchyard is an oasis of calm just off Cirencester's very busy marketplace, shielded by our church and the walls of the neighbouring Abbey Grounds (*reports Peter Vujakovic*). Approached by two almost hidden entrances, the churchyard opens to a view of headstones and a large open grassland; this is backed by an area dominated by trees, including a yew avenue and a magnificent copper beech. A small area is maintained for the burial of ashes at the far end of the site.



*Photograph courtesy of the Friends of St John Baptist Churchyard*



*No mow  
Photograph courtesy of the  
Friends of St John Baptist  
Churchyard*

This 'green heritage' space has been much improved in recent years as the Friends have nurtured both the heritage and ecological value of the site. The group was only initiated in late 2019 and started work on the site in earnest in 2020. From a churchyard that was regarded as 'down-at-heel', the group has transformed it into a tranquil space that is enjoyed by both locals and visitors to the town. The grassed area nearest the church is carefully maintained to provide neatly cut areas that display our historic burials. We also manage parts as summer meadow, having adopted 'no mow May' in 2021 and following additional advice from the charity

Caring for God's Acre. An ecologist from the Royal Agricultural University now monitors the meadow areas systematically.

The further end of the churchyard is largely shaded by trees with a understory of herbs that can cope with these conditions. This forms a wild area where bats, birds and insects thrive, and a resident fox has made its den.



*Photograph courtesy of the Friends of St John Baptist Churchyard*

We see the churchyard as an important local resource and each year we invite children from a nearby primary school to engage in activities through which they learn about the resident wildlife. This year we extended this to a local nursery. As a relatively young Friends Group, we hope to further develop our activities and management of the site in coming years!

Contact: John Tiffney, MBE, [johnriffney@icloud.com](mailto:johnriffney@icloud.com)

### **Friends of Trinity Cemetery, Tunbridge Wells**

Trinity Cemetery is a small graveyard around Holy Trinity Church, Church Road, Tunbridge Wells in Kent. In 1974 the church was deemed redundant and deconsecrated. The local community saved it from the hands of developers by raising £50,000 for use of the building as a community arts centre of which the thriving Trinity theatre is at the centre.

The first burial was in 1839 but the graveyard was virtually closed when full in 1847. It contains over 2,000 burials with some headstones and a couple of tombs. The Friends of Trinity Cemetery Tunbridge Wells was setup in 2021 to help conserve the cemetery and the knowledge of who is buried within it.

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They are focusing on digitising the burial records, categorising them (e.g.: law, medicine, the church, notable people etc), putting together histories of interesting people/families and making them accessible to all. The Friends will also be creating leaflets, booklets and other information about the cemetery and trails within the cemetery itself.

Contact: Emma Cox, [enquiries@trinitycemeterytunbridgewells.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@trinitycemeterytunbridgewells.org.uk)  
Website: <https://trinitycemeterytunbridgewells.org.uk>

### **The Friends of Christ Church, Todmorden, West Yorkshire**

As the church is now a private residence, the newly established volunteers are aiming to restore the surrounding Church of England graveyard. This was opened in 1834, closed in 2007 and now



*Top, drone image of the graveyard in summer 2021. Below, recent drone image showing the change.  
Photographs by Dave Lively*

maintained by Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council. The Friends' focus is on community engagement with local history via "adopting a grave", encouraging use of free resources in the local library to research the deceased, and have just run their first successful tour (Commonwealth War Grave Commission graves). Their most immediate short-term goal is re-transcribing the graves and making the graveyard more accessible and safer to wander through. They will be working with local heritage and ecology groups to beautify the cemetery sympathetically and encourage the community to help them

keep it maintained and attractive. The new owners of the church are sympathetic to their aims and are also clearing the graves on their property so that they can be included in future tours.

Contact: Sarah Browning, [friendsofchristchurchtod@outlook.com](mailto:friendsofchristchurchtod@outlook.com)  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/focct>



### **Friends of St Giles Hill Graveyard, Winchester**

St Giles Hill Graveyard has been a burial ground since at least the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It was the site of the medieval St Giles Chapel. The oldest surviving gravestone dates from 1694. It also contains Commonwealth War Commission WW1 and other historic graves. The 2.2-acre site was rundown for many years and became overgrown and impenetrable. Now the established group of Friends works with the owners, the C of E East Winchester Benefice, and Winchester City Council to maintain and develop it as a community asset. The graveyard is part of a network of green spaces in the town known as Green Infrastructure. It offers a place for quiet, reflection and contemplation.

The aims of FSGHG include preserving and protecting the social and historic importance of St Giles Hill Graveyard, conserving the value of the graveyard as a wildlife haven and promoting knowledge and appreciation of its importance to the local communities while offering them volunteering, skill building and educational opportunities. The Friends arrange workdays and information days and also research the lives of the people buried in order to preserve their memory and heritage. See their website for full information.

Contact: Dave Stewart, [dave@stgileshill.org.uk](mailto:dave@stgileshill.org.uk)

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

### **Friends of Bethel Sketty Cemetery, Swansea**

Contact: Fiona Nixon, [fiona.nixon1@gmail.com](mailto:fiona.nixon1@gmail.com)

### **Also joined as Associates:**

#### **Community Orchard Project South East (Eashing Cemetery), Godalming**

Contact: Claire Matthes

Website: <https://www.copseorchardproject.org>

#### **Friends of St Mary's Graveyard, Beverley, East Yorkshire**

Contact: Karyn Murby, [treetree12399@outlook.com](mailto:treetree12399@outlook.com)

#### **Friends of Christ Church Pellon Cemetery, Halifax** (see Page 20)

Contact: Kath Sharman, [kathleen.sharman@btinternet.com](mailto:kathleen.sharman@btinternet.com)

Website: <https://www.friendsofchristchurchpelloncemetery.com>

## **Members News**

A selection of news and events from Members newsletters and websites

### **Abney Park Cemetery Trust, London**

In May 2022 a campaign led by the Abney Park Cemetery Trust and Sharon Wright author of 'The Lost History of the Lady Aeronauts' was launched to raise the £5,000 required to commission a permanent memorial to honour pioneering balloonist Margaret Graham (1804-1864) who in 1826 was the first British woman to fly solo. The donations included a contribution from the London Region Balloon Club. After achieving the funding, stonemason Charlotte Ruse was engaged to create the memorial in slate which was unveiled at the cemetery on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

The stone was erected near to where Margaret was buried in an unmarked public grave. The attendees at the unveiling included Margaret's 90-year-old great-great granddaughter.

### **Flaybrick Memorial Gardens, Merseyside**

On Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> November, Father Michael Coughlan from the church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception conducted a short service of blessing over the Yorkstone memorial laid in 2021 on the site of the former Roman Catholic chapel demolished in 1971. The stone was a replacement for an earlier memorial which had been vandalised and the lettering inscription had become illegible due to the effects of weathering.

### **Nunhead Cemetery. SE London**

Plans to fully restore Nunhead Cemetery's East Lodge are one step closer thanks to a £100,000 development grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The Grade II Listed East Lodge is currently on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register. The joint project of FONC with Southwark Council, which has received initial support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, aims to reinstate the building as a welcoming gateway to the cemetery with a new café, community space, and new base for Friends of Nunhead Cemetery and their volunteers.

### **West Norwood Cemetery, SE London**

A new 116-page full colour guide to the cemetery has been produced by chairman Bob Flanagan. Building on an earlier guide, the book contains details of 99 graves (109 notables, 69 of whom feature in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography). An innovation is the colourisation of the many monochrome photographs. The price is £7.50 plus postage. See: <https://fownc.org/publications/>

### **Reading Old Cemetery, Berkshire**

The Econet's Friends have published their own dedicated website. See: <https://readingoldcemetery.uk>

### **Rectory Lane Cemetery, Berkhamsted**

In October, the Friends held a thanksgiving ceremony to mark the 180<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration of the cemetery undertaken by the Bishop of Lincoln on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1842.

### **Southampton Old Cemetery**

In the latter part of November, members of the Friends group planted about 850 crocus corms kindly donated by the Southampton Solent Rotary.

### **Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, London**

A recent survey commissioned to assess the condition of around 70 monuments has highlighted that several will require special care and attention. In 2023, the Friends will be launching a fundraising campaign to raise £100,000 towards the conservation of the monuments.

### **Tunbridge Wells Cemetery, Kent**

On Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> November, the Vicar of St Mark's Church Reverend Claire Allwood conducted a blessing over the new memorial stone installed to mark the gravesite where 15 people originally buried in unmarked public graves had been reinterred 2 years ago.

## Restoring a graveyard: case history of Christ Church Pellon Cemetery

Project Coordinator David Ramanauskas gives a personal step-by-step account of how the Friends made a start

Christ Church Mount Pellon in Halifax was built in 1854. It is an Anglican church with a graveyard roughly the size of a football pitch containing 2226 graves and 8,500+ residents. Many of the graves and headstones had become completely covered in a forest of thick brambles up to two metres high.



*In February 2022 much of the graveyard looked like this - or worse!  
Photograph courtesy of  
David Ramanauskas*

As a member of the church, I attended a meeting in January 2022, to be informed that our belief the local council had agreed to clear the graveyard for us and keep it clear was incorrect. The necessary paperwork had not been signed. It was suggested we reapply to the council to take over our graveyard and clean it up, however, I suggested that we should form a group of volunteers from the church and members of the community and

clear the graveyard ourselves. As a church we are small in numbers but large in terms of age (most of us are retired and would have a valid medical reason for not doing any form of gardening at all).

A couple of my friends said I was mad as the graveyard was so big, and the brambles presented an insurmountable problem to defeat. I said I would get the volunteers and clear the graveyard of brambles – even if I had to do it myself! At that moment I didn't have a clue how big a job it would be, and I didn't have a clue how to get volunteers to help us. I did a Google search looking for helpful information and came across the website for the National Federation of Cemetery Friends and ordered their handbook. I also began looking through members' websites which I found invaluable.

I made an announcement in church and put a notice on the church gate informing people what we were doing and asking for volunteers. I knew we would need to look for grants and that it would be easier to look for a community grant rather than a grant for a church. I set up a Facebook page and a website. I asked the PCC (church council) for permission to have oversight of our project in terms of what we do and accounts. This would be useful in terms of accountability (with it being a church graveyard even though there are no new graves or burials) and the accounts for our project could be included in the church accounts which meant we did not have to pay for separate accountancy fees.

Our team of volunteers made a start on the first Saturday in February with the intention of meeting at 10am having a break for lunch and then working till 2 or 3pm. However, it was freezing cold and raining and by the time we had a break for lunch (homemade soup and bread) everyone was frozen, wet, and very tired from the manual work. So, we finished after our lunch together. From then on, we decided to meet every Saturday morning, work, and finish with lunch. Thankfully, whatever the weather the volunteers continued to return every week – between six and ten volunteers each time.



*Before (Left) and after (right) brambles and weeds cleared  
Photograph courtesy of David Ramanauskas*

We started with two electric hedge trimmers and extension leads, a couple of rakes and one professional gardener who brought his petrol hedge trimmer. After the first two weeks of seeing the progress we had made and how much had to be done I realised that as the graveyard was so big, the brambles presented an insurmountable problem to defeat.

*Continued over page*

When cutting densely thick brambles six feet high, you don't use a hedge trimmer the way you would use it to trim a hedge. You have to use it like an axe and hack away chopping it into pieces, and it is very heavy work. After chopping through the power lead a few times I realised we needed cordless battery hedge trimmers. Thankfully at that time the Council were offering Ward Forum Grants. I applied and received a grant to buy six cordless hedge trimmers. This made a big difference to our work rate.

I was awarded another grant from a Bishop's Development Fund which enabled us to buy a chain saw and petrol strimmers which had both the normal strimmer wire and metal blades. We thought using the metal blades would make easy work of the brambles but discovered due to the weight of the petrol strimmers it was difficult to use them without the metal blades hitting the gravestones. The graves are tightly packed together with very few and narrow pathways the metal blades were only of limited use. We experimented with different kinds of strimmer wire, eventually using 4mm heavy duty strimmer trimmer line which is quite expensive but ordinary strimmer wire is hopeless against brambles.

Everything was going well until I took two weeks holiday. On my return I discovered most of the brambles we had cut down had grown back, but thankfully not as thick as before. I had done some research into the most effective weedkiller which would kill the brambles but not kill everything else. Fortunately, we received some donations and bought Vitax SBK Brushwood Killer. It costs around £25 for 1L which you dilute with water. A 12L backpack weedkiller spray unit is also needed to cover a large area. When spraying the weedkiller, you need it to be a dry day and preferably dry the following day, otherwise the chemicals will dilute in the rainwater and that would be an expensive waste of weedkiller and your time. Thus, from that time on we always cut the brambles close to the ground, cleared away the cuttings and then sprayed the short stems of brambles and weeds. After, a few weeks if there were any signs of life in the brambles we would spray them again, and again a month later. We seem to be making good progress. When we first started, if any of the volunteers (including myself) knew what we were doing, had had the right equipment, and worked methodically, then we would have made far better progress.

Most weeks someone would call in person or send a Facebook message asking about a family grave. We would make it a priority of clearing the grave and taking photos for the family. We have posted lots of photos on Facebook and, as well as the families being grateful for our work, hundreds of people in our community as well as overseas have also thanked us for our work. This has enabled us to get more volunteers and some donations. We have a great team of ladies from our church who help with greeting visitors, chat with them, and help with finding family graves. We provide visitors with tea/coffee, biscuits – even a homemade soup lunch – all for free, as we like to look after our visitors. All the volunteers look forward to having lunch together and a chat, and homemade soup never tasted so good!

Someone asked me when we expected to have the graveyard cleared of brambles, and the pathways all as they should be. I replied that I was hoping to have it completed before the return of Jesus Christ – but I couldn't guarantee it! Once we have cleared the brambles there is still plenty of work to be done to transform the graveyard into a beautiful memorial park.

Since we started in February, we have discovered several interesting graves, including those of soldiers from the 1860's to 1910 who we knew nothing about. The oldest soldier's memorial was of a sergeant who fought in the Napoleonic wars and spent a number of years on St. Helena making sure Napoleon didn't get into any more mischief in Europe. On 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023 we will have a church open day and be offering guided tours around the graveyard and church for the benefit of our community. One thing that I feel is of vital importance, is that every week I make sure I talk to every volunteer, encourage them and thank them for their help. Volunteers are like gold. If anyone has any questions or would like to visit then please email me: [david.ramanauskas1@gmail.com](mailto:david.ramanauskas1@gmail.com)



*Beneath 6ft of brambles and weeds we find a double grave concerning seven soldiers buried between 1882 and 1885. David (far right) and volunteers, prayers at the graveside Photograph courtesy of David Ramanauskas*

## **NFCF contact details**

### **Chairman**

Robert Stephenson  
North Lodge East Wing, Brompton Cemetery, Old Brompton Road, London,  
SW5 9JE (020 7351 1689)  
[chairman@cemeteryfriends.com](mailto:chairman@cemeteryfriends.com)

### **Vice Chairman**

Colin Fenn  
20 Selsdon Road, London, SE27 0PG (020 8670 4146)  
[vicechairman@cemeteryfriends.com](mailto:vicechairman@cemeteryfriends.com)

### **Secretary**

Gwyneth Stokes,  
42 Chestnut Grove, South Croydon, CR2 7LH (020 8651 5090)  
[secretary@cemeteryfriends.com](mailto:secretary@cemeteryfriends.com)

### **Treasurer**

Melvyn Hawkins  
7 Coley Grove, Little Haywood, Staffs, ST18 0UW  
[treasurer@cemeteryfriends.com](mailto:treasurer@cemeteryfriends.com)

### **Newsletter Editor**

Ann Wilkinson  
129 Siddal Lane, Siddal, Halifax, HX3 9JS  
[editor@cemeteryfriends.com](mailto:editor@cemeteryfriends.com)

### **National Cemeteries Week**

Emer Seamark  
[ncw@cemeteryfriends.com](mailto:ncw@cemeteryfriends.com)

### **Website**

Includes contacts for Members and Associates  
<https://www.cemeteryfriends.com>

### **Webmaster**

James Slattery-Kavanagh (01825 723943)  
[webmaster@cemeteryfriends.com](mailto:webmaster@cemeteryfriends.com)

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