

Brompton Cemetery Friends welcome NFCF during National Cemeteries Week

The 2023 NFCF AGM held in the Chapel at Brompton Cemetery, London on Saturday 10th June also contributed to National Cemeteries Week. It was attended by 45 people on behalf of 23 member groups. Robert Stephenson gave the welcoming address followed by an illustrated historical introduction to Brompton Cemetery, after which attendees were invited to participate in a guided cemetery tour with the option of a visit to the catacombs.

Opened as the West of London and Westminster Cemetery in the mid-19th century, it became known as one of London's Magnificent Seven cemeteries. Grade I listed on the Historic England Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, the cemetery consists of 39 acres, between Old Brompton Road and Fulham Road.

The main entrance off Old Brompton Road (image right) incorporating the North Lodge gives access to the Central Avenue which leads southwards towards the impressive Great Circle, and the domed, octagonal Grade II* listed cemetery Chapel just beyond. The cemetery is subdivided by a grid of linking pathways, and another stone-built cemetery lodge lies near the south entrance from Fulham Road.



*Main entrance on Old Brompton Road comprising the North Lodge
Photograph by Ann Wilkinson*

Continued over page



*Left: The Great Circle and right: the domed cemetery Chapel
Photographs by Ann Wilkinson*

Monuments range from grand family mausolea to more simple headstones. Over 200,000 people were laid to rest at Brompton Cemetery including the suffragette leader Emmeline Pankhurst (1858 - 1928) and the physician who identified the source of London's 1854 cholera outbreak, Dr John Snow (1813 – 1858).

The formal AGM business took place after lunch. Details can be found in the minutes sent to NFCF members. Any members who have not received the minutes please contact the secretary whose contact details are on the back page.

Following the business meeting, Robert Stephenson on behalf of the membership presented retiring secretary Gwyneth Stokes with flowers, a pair of engraved wine glasses, and gift vouchers. Gwyneth was standing down after 30 years' service to the Federation, however, she has agreed to take on the role as its first President.



*Presentation to Gwyneth
Photograph by Colin Fenn*

Thank you to the Friends of Brompton Cemetery for their hospitality on the day. The next NFCF AGM will be hosted by the Friends of Bedford Cemetery at Foster Hill Road Cemetery, Bedford on Saturday 8th June 2024.

Jacqui Ambler, Trustee of the Undercliffe Cemetery Charity attended the NCF AGM in June. She was inspired to write the lament below following a visit to the Catacombs at Brompton Cemetery:

On the shelf at Brompton Cemetery

by Jacqui Ambler

Even on the hottest of days
It is cool down here
Beneath the honeyed colonnades
Of best Bath stone
The symmetrical beauty of which
Made us choose this place
For the final venue.
You remember?

Find the steps down
That lead under
The porticoed arch,
And push hard through
the iron-grilled gate
And enter.
Do not be afraid, my love!

All is silent and still,
Although I am not alone.
But I *am* restless,
Waiting on your promise
To be fulfilled.
Do not leave me here
Amidst the tombs
On my bier,
On the shelf
In Brompton Cemetery's
Catacombs...

National Cemeteries Week (NCW) 2023

by NCW coordinator, Emer Seamark

This year, for the first time, National Cemeteries Week embraced the NCF Annual General Meeting. We also aligned with the conservation charity Caring for God's Acre: Love Your Burial Ground Week with Churches Count on Nature 2023.

Although we held our first NCW in 2016 the Covid Pandemic prevented us from holding the event in the years 2020 and 2021 which was a great pity as the number of participants was beginning to rise steadily. As the NCF membership grows, we hope that a good number of Friends' groups will continue to take part or join us for the first time in this national celebration of the work being done by so many volunteers across the country.

Our thanks to the cemeteries and churchyards which participated this year:

Willesden Jewish Cemetery, London
Friends of St John Baptist Churchyard, Cirencester
Friends of Lister Lane Cemetery, Halifax
Friends of Southampton Cemetery
Friends of Beckett Street Cemetery, Leeds
Dockyard Graveyard Trust, West Yorkshire
Friends of Nunhead Cemetery, London
Friends of Reading Old Cemetery
Friends of Brockley and Ladywell Cemeteries, London
Friends of Bedford Cemetery
Friends of Salford Cemeteries Trust, Manchester
Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, London
Friends of St Helens Cemetery
Friends of Farsley Rehoboth Burial Ground, Pudsey
Friends of Barkby Road Cemetery, Syston
Friends of Brompton Cemetery, London
Friends of Hampstead Cemetery
Friends of Flaybrick, Birkenhead
Friends of West Norwood Cemetery, London

A notice will be sent out before Christmas providing details for National Cemeteries Week, Saturday 8th to Sunday 16th June 2024 when we plan to coincide with the AGM in Bedford and again share publicity with Caring for God's Acre. We will hope for the same glorious weather which blessed us this year.

Friends of Barkby Road Cemetery, Syston

forwarded by Catherine Voyce, Town Manager, Syston Town Council



*Attendees at the graveside of
Barbara Annie Squires
Photograph courtesy of
Catherine Voyce*

During an open day held on Saturday 3rd June, the Group showcased the War Graves at the Cemetery and the history behind the Syston people that fought for their country and lost their lives.

Photograph left shows the grave of Barbara Annie Squires, the only female war casualty to be commemorated with a War Grave at Barkby Road Cemetery. Attendees photographed are Chairman of Syston Town Council, Cllr Mark Cherry; Friends of Barkby Road Cemetery Ros and Dave Hackett; Catherine Voyce, Town Manager and Gary Radford of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

NFCF website: help us make this your own

The NFCF website is undergoing redevelopment. As part of the redevelopment, both Members and Associates now have their own unique 'Members Page' and are invited to check that contact details and web links included on their page are up to date by visiting the website at: <https://www.cemeteryfriends.com/members>.

If not already done so, Members are also invited to include on their page a photograph and some descriptive text about their cemetery and their Friends group. Guidance on photograph size, content for the descriptive text, and submission of updates and content can be found at: <https://www.cemeteryfriends.co/news/members-pages>

An update on the Horton Cemetery research project
from Kevin McDonnell, Trustee of the Friends of Horton Cemetery,
Epsom

I last wrote to you a year ago (see Newsletter No. 48) about our Horton Cemetery Research Project which resulted in creation of the charity “The Friends of Horton Cemetery” Reg. No. 1190518. The project was initiated to protect the cemetery from destruction – the NHS sold it to a developer in 1983 - by bringing its residents “back to life” through volunteers’ work in genealogical research and publication of their stories. These unclaimed dead psychiatric patients have been helped to speak by our volunteers and are being listened to by people all over the world. This wonderful cooperation between the living and the abandoned and formerly forgotten dead brings the suffering of mental health patients higher in our consciences, hopefully helping to remove at least some of the stigma that sadly taints those of us with mental health issues.

We have been joined by cooperators. King’s College, London partnered us and their inspirational leader, Dr Alana Harris, brought students who used our research and worked with Surrey History Centre staff and archives to create and deliver the Out of Sight Out of Mind project. This community arts and crafts project, based on the stories that our researchers have created from the genealogical work, was partly funded by an award from Historic England, helped by artwork from hundreds of local school children and volunteers from many local charities. The culmination was on World Mental Health Day, 10/10/23 in a day of remembrance and celebration, partly held at Horton Cemetery. See: <https://tinyurl.com/3uwfn5cw> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrqjo3mhdXk>

Some of the King’s students, mentored by our volunteers, produced their own stories. A joy for us all to have “not so young” volunteer researchers who are interested in genealogy, some with fairly basic education, helping and encouraging young students from a top UK university. I’m sure that you can imagine the mutual pride, on one side from helping and encouraging young students and on the other from publishing stories that will be read all over the world and help to protect this cemetery.

I believe that this unanticipated benefit has transpired to be especially beneficial for our volunteer genealogical researchers. These people are mostly “not so young” and also mostly women. For many their working days are behind them, their children have grown up and perhaps their grandchildren too. They stepped forward to work as volunteers on a project based around formerly forgotten and abandoned dead psychiatric patients. This project could be (and is) unfortunately perceived by many to be any or all of, eccentric, unusual, wasteful and even wrong – it has been seen in many negative ways. But these are short sighted views. This project has empowered our volunteers. The “not so young”, “past it”, “over the hill” (at least they’ve been up it), our pensioners, our retired are delivering a world unique project that is bringing dead so called “loonies”, “nutters” and “psychos” etc. (and many more slanderous names for mental health patients), “back to life” and into the light to speak to us, to teach us and to set the record straight.

These many legions of abandoned people, not just in Horton Cemetery in Epsom, but across the UK, where there are way more than 100 cemeteries like this. Each of these, today, almost secret places, holds many hundreds and even thousands of mental health patients buried from our now closed County Asylums. They lay abandoned, forgotten, unnamed and almost unmarked. But some of us are working on a plan to bring them “back to life” too. More soon.

You can read the 400+ stories so far published by “The Friends of Horton Cemetery” charity here: <https://hortoncemetery.org/the-people/horton-cemetery-stories/>

Please sign our petition to help us protect Horton Cemetery from development by returning it to public hands. This link chnng.it/p7ctXnW5MY will take you to the petition page. Once you’ve “signed” the petition you will receive an email which needs to be acknowledged for your signing of the petition to be recognised. Please pass this link on to friends and family it will help our cause a lot to get as many signatures as possible. Thank you.

Contact: Kevin McDonnell, hortoncemetery@gmail.com

A Grand Day Out!

by Jacqui Ambler, Trustee of Undercliffe Cemetery Charity, Bradford

Undercliffe Cemetery Charity volunteers were delighted to receive the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in June 2022. In May this year, two Cemetery Trustees, Jacqui Ambler and Stewart Field, were privileged to represent the Charity at King Charles' Coronation Garden Party on Wednesday 3rd May 2023.

Here Jacqui shares a personal account of this red-letter day...

At lunchtime on Wednesday 3rd May, I was looking out for Stewart from the corner of a Costa at Victoria Station. It took me a moment to recognise him without the customary maintenance volunteer boiler suit;



*Jacqui and Stewart
Photograph courtesy of Jacqui
Ambler*

he was very smartly suited and booted on this occasion! We had a quick coffee, and I had a chance to don my fascinator.

All set, we made our way out under the station archway and walked up Buckingham Palace Road to join the snaking queues along the perimeter walls of the royal residence. As we waited, the workmen opposite busily constructed the stands at the top of the Mall to be used for the coronation. There were lots of us queuing, all smiling and clutching our entrance tickets and photo IDs, waiting for 3pm to tick round so that we could get inside the huge Palace gates. There were only the security

checks to get through now. Stewart breezed in, but the uniformed official held on to my passport for a little too long, then asked me if I was still living in Sheffield, the place of birth on my passport. I was a bit flummoxed, and at this point I couldn't help noticing a row of his uniformed pals behind him all armed with machine guns...My face must

have fallen, and I confessed to living in Bradford now, but a smile broke out (he hails from Chesterfield), and he waved me through as I commiserated with him on the twisted spire...

We were in. There were two bandstands, blasting out beltiers as only brass bands can, in their brilliant scarlet suits and gold buttons. We strolled along the manicured lawns and found ourselves heading for the visitors' tea tent, joining another queue which gave us a chance to feast our eyes on the fare on offer. It did not disappoint: the menu included Coronation chickpea wraps, crushed pea and mint fingers, smoked salmon and lemon cream cheese mini-bagels, Clarence Court egg mayonnaise and fresh salad cress. There wasn't a crust in sight, everything was impeccably presented and served, and there was a lovely atmosphere as people waited their turn patiently, all minding their Ps and Qs!

For 'afters', there were a range of cakes to rival those on offer at our own Undercliffe Cemetery tour events. As they were miniatures, I was able to sample almost all of them: coffee eclairs, raspberry shortbread, chocolate croustillants, mulberry Bakewell slices, apricot and lavender tarts, doll-sized Victoria sponges – as well as scones with jam and clotted cream. I was in cake heaven! This was all washed delicately down with Twinings 'Garden Party Tea', a variety which I haven't spotted as yet on the shelves of our local Asda.

Suitably replete after an hour's queuing and grazing, the bandstands alerted us to the arrival of the royal party with their rendition of the National Anthem. Although the flag was flying so we knew the King was in residence, I wasn't convinced that he would have time to appear, given the coronation was only three days away. However, appear he did, on the West Terrace at the rear of the Palace in morning suit and top hat, along with Camilla in an eye-catching navy and white dress coat, and the new Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, with Edward in a matching morning suit and topper, and Sophie in a lovely pink gingham dress coat and high court shoes (walking carefully on the grass!). Stewart held his camera above the heads of those in front of us and got a good shot of Charles chatting to people in the line. When they mingled, it was lovely to see Camilla making a bee-line for those with mobility issues who could not approach easily.

Continued over page

A couple of lines developed forming a corridor towards the entrance to the royal tea tent (separate from the visitors' and diplomats' tea tents), with the royal party stopping to speak to individuals as they made their way towards their afternoon tea. We opted to do a tour of the gardens and were able to do a quick maintenance audit of the area...both the Ladies and Gents scored ten out of ten.

Further into the gardens we found a lake, a rose garden, and an arboretum. At the far end we were only a stone's throw from Hyde Park Corner and the junction of Knightsbridge, Park Lane and Piccadilly, but it didn't feel or sound like it. Strolling back towards the Palace, we found a pair of enormous ornate urns that would not have looked out of place at Undercliffe Cemetery.

Finding ourselves back near the tea tent, we bagged a couple of chairs (which couldn't be had for love nor money earlier) and sat down to enjoy the atmosphere and some more people-watching. Stewart spied the waiting staff mingling with trays of ice cream – and we felt duty bound to sample them. They were just the thing to cool off as the afternoon was, unbelievably, continuously warm and sunny, not a cloud in sight.

All too soon it was time to join the crowds filing out the way we had come in, via the Palace gates, and make our way by tube and train back to Bradford. It had been a marvellous day to remember: a very Grand Day Out!

Recognition for NFCF members

In November it was announced that two cemetery Friends groups had been awarded The King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS). The KAVS is equivalent to an MBE, and is the highest Award given to voluntary groups in the UK.

Congratulations to the Friends of Flaybrick (KAVS) in Birkenhead and the Friends of Lister Lane Cemetery (KAVS) in Halifax.

The Cemetery Research Group website

by Dr Julie Rugg

The University of York's Cemetery Research Group was established in 1991 and since that time has promoted and supported research on the ways in which societies dispose the dead. Here 'dispose' connotes a less familiar meaning: to arrive at a certain order or placement. Every society comes to an accommodation with mortal remains. The sites of burial, and technologies used, constitute an invaluable commentary on humanity's response to death. The Cemetery Research Group has re-launched a new, expansive website: <https://www.cemeteryresearch.org/>

The site has a dual function. First, it aims to develop into an invaluable resource for the growing international community of cemetery researchers working in multiple disciplines. The site's remit now covers burial, cremation and technologies including alkaline hydrolysis and necro-composting. A fully searchable bibliography points in all possible directions and includes useful tabs to support thematic reading. Second, new pages will also be developed for people with an interest in researching in their own local area in the UK. Site pages include a nineteenth-century timeline which lists national developments likely to have local ramifications. The timeline includes a brief explanation of the Burial Acts – always tricky – and adds links to sources and further reading. In the coming months, this section will expand to include events in the twentieth century.

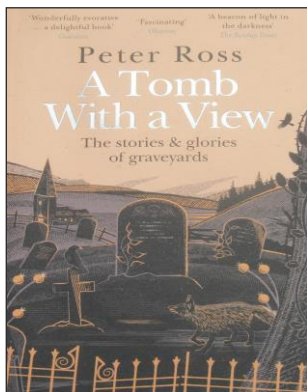
The site has also begun the task of listing secondary sources on burial sites throughout the UK, ordered by region. This section references the many Friends websites that include historical information about the sites they aim to protect and promote. Here, the emphasis is on the history of the site itself. Please do get in touch with further references or if you have a historic image of the site you are interested in that you would like to share. A further section will be developed to look in more detail at the wide range of primary sources that are valuable to support historical research on burial and cremation. Again, these pages will include links and further reading.

The website is a gradually expanding resource. If you would like to contribute with material or ideas, contact julierugg36@gmail.com.

Publications

A Tomb With a View: The stories & glories of graveyards by Peter Ross

Book review by Robert Stephenson



This is a wonderful wander through many places and organisations with something to do with death. It ranges over the entire British Isles and some related foreign shores. Topics covered include ghost story tellers, Muslim undertakers, the graves of Peter the Wild Boy, alleged witches and suicides, ossuaries at Rothwell and Hythe, cemeteries at Brompton, Highgate, Kensal Green and Arnos Vale, woodland burial, the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Irish Republican Army deaths, self-directed

funerals, weddings in cemeteries and more – nothing necrological seems to have been left out.

It is really a book about people and their attitudes and enthusiasms in relation to various aspects of death. In a series of engaging interviews, the author sensitively encourages his subjects to share their innermost thoughts and reveal the true essence of their feelings.

Excellent and highly recommended.

Headline Publishing Group 2021 - 352 pages £10.99; also good bookshops and online.

New edition of *London Cemeteries*

The sixth edition of the useful illustrated guide and gazetteer by Hugh Meller and Brian Parsons has recently been published by The History Press. The extensive revisions include updated biographies, details about visitor facilities and entries for a further 28 cemeteries.

Price £25 from good bookshops and online.

New Members and Associates

The following groups have joined as Members:

Friends of Billing Road Cemetery, Northampton by Christine Addison

Billing Road Cemetery is one of the most significant heritage assets within the Billing Road Conservation Area on the edge of the former Victorian town of Northampton. As well as those who come to remember loved ones, the cemetery is regularly visited by local strollers and dog walkers, and others from further afield such as historic garden enthusiasts; it remains a much-loved but sadly long neglected and decaying gem of urban historic landscape close to the heart of the modern town.

Between 1800 and 1850 Northampton tripled in size; Spencer Perceval, local MP (and Prime Minister 1809-1812), promoted the town's boot and shoe trade establishing it as the country's primary footwear manufacturing centre. In common with many towns and cities, by the 1830s and 40s burial spaces were at a premium.



Billing Road Cemetery (Northampton General Cemetery): 25-inch First Edition Ordnance Survey map extract, Sheet XLV.10, published 1887

The Northampton General Cemetery Company (NGCC) was formed and opened its new cemetery in 1847, offering shareholders a profit and eventual burial service in the town. It was Northampton's first secular burial ground, providing much needed relief to its overcrowded medieval churchyards. Garden cemeteries had become fashionable and NGCC aimed high, commissioning a design from the eminent 19th century Scottish gardener Robert Marnock, who was at that time both designer and Superintendent of The Royal Botanical Society's Gardens at Regents Park, London.

Continued over page

Due to demand the cemetery was enlarged northwards in the late 1800s, and eventually contained more than 21,000 burials. Many of Northampton's best-known sons and daughters lie there, such as humanitarian overseas worker Caroline Chisholm, and local model engineer W.J. Bassett-Lowke. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission tend the memorial to 149 dead from two world wars. In 1941 an enemy bomb badly damaged the cemetery, but it had already



Billing Road Cemetery, general view looking north-east (Nov 2022).

Photograph courtesy of Christine Addison

become more difficult and expensive to maintain, and an attractive, brand new crematorium for the town was proving a popular alternative. In 1959 NGCC was wound up and ownership of the cemetery passed to the local authority, now West Northamptonshire Council (WNC). The cemetery is now closed to burial.

Over the last 60 years most of the monuments have been removed and surviving monuments have deteriorated; the cemetery's buildings have been lost along with elements of the earlier designed landscape and its planting. However, during 2023 a new chapter has opened for the cemetery, aiming to stem such losses and reinvigorate a sense of local pride in the cemetery; The Friends of Billing Road Cemetery will be formally launched in January 2024. This has been made possible thanks to Northamptonshire Gardens Trust (NGT), via a small community grant from The Gardens Trust.

The Friends will help to better understand, care for and enjoy the cemetery's modest but peaceful green space, working in partnership with owners WNC, and also the local Wildlife Trust. Packed open public meetings have been surveyed and the group aims to bring together what local users and visitors most want for their site. Respect for the dignity of the existing cemetery and its interred is paramount but it is also hoped to overcome the challenges of anti-social behaviour and long term neglect by sympathetically increasing public access whilst

enhancing both wildlife and historic interests. This will extend to exploring the potential for conserving grave monuments and perhaps restoring other historic features such as original paths and historic planting; it will also include opportunities to contribute stories about the cemetery and its people past and present. More volunteers would be very welcome.

Visit the cemetery on Billing Road, Northampton (open 24/7). For further information contact: Christine Addison, fobrcsecretary@gmail.com or (until the Friends have their own website) visit the NGT website at <https://sites.google.com/view/northamptonshiregardenstrust2/billing-road-cemetery>

The Oxenhope Old Burial Grounds Trust

forwarded by Susan Mottram

Oxenhope is a village in the south Pennines, West Yorkshire, and in the heart of Brontë country, lying just a few miles from the Brontë Parsonage Museum in Haworth. Oxenhope village has Lowertown and Uppertown at its centre, surrounded by the settlements of Horkinstone, Leeming, Shaw, Lower Marsh and Upper Marsh.

The Oxenhope Old Burial Grounds Trust (OOBGT) was formed in 1991 and is currently managed by 6 volunteer trustees, all of whom live in the village. The trust is responsible for the maintenance of 2 cemeteries, one in Lowertown and one at Horkinstone on the eastern edge of the village, its aim being to preserve the 2 cemeteries for the benefit of the public. The first burial in the Lowertown cemetery was in 1807 and the last named one was in 1901. The OOBGT bought this burial ground in 1991. The former burial ground at Horkinstone was purchased in 1999. The first burial here was in 1837 and the last in 1955. The OOBGT website contains a wealth of historical information, old photographs and, for those researching their family history, it also has a list of surnames on graves in both cemeteries.

Contact: Susan Mottram, oobgt98@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.oobgt.org.uk/>

New members continued

Friends of Huntington Cemetery, York forwarded by Pamela Hoggarth

Huntington Cemetery is situated three miles from the City of York. The cemetery opened in 1986 and is managed by the Cemetery Committee of Huntington Parish Council. The Friends of Huntington Cemetery formed after the Parish Council instructed the groundsman to enforce their rule 10 and to carry out the removal of items from all the offending plots in April this year. This instruction was carried out without supervision from the Burial Clerk or any of the Cemetery Committee and resulted in just over 30 plots left vandalised and their gravel and borders thrown away.



*Damaged plot
Photograph courtesy of
Pamela Hoggarth*

Our group formed after these events in order to try and protect our cemetery from any further destruction by the Cemetery Committee or Parish Council. We now have a good relationship with the Cemetery Committee and are working with them on amendments to their rule 10 and we are fully involved in any decision regarding the cemetery. We are committed to making our cemetery a welcoming place for anyone paying their respects to the people resting there. We now have 23 members, 10 of whom regularly join our working group in the cemetery.



*Hi-vis vests
Photograph by Mark Sanderson
Photography, York*

Our hi-vis vests are sponsored by local company Portakabin and we have had donations of a tree, two wheelbarrows, rockery stones, top soil, bird boxes, hedgehog homes, spring bulbs and pansies so far from members of our local community. The Cemetery Committee have provided a first aid kit, litter pickers, new traffic

cones and weed membrane for our rockery. Portakabin are also supplying pallets for us to make our first bug hotel.

We recently applied for a Ward Grant to help fund our projects in the cemetery. We plan to create areas for quiet reflection including a rockery and memorial garden area and we hope to plant spring bulbs and wildflowers all around the borders of the cemetery.

Our working members meet in the cemetery every Saturday morning and usually one afternoon during the week. Our volunteering duties include tidying between the graves, removing dead flowers, giving the gravestones a wash if they have cut grass or bird mess on them, cleaning the benches and picking up any litter that has blown into the cemetery. We also report back to the Cemetery Committee with any problems and raise any concerns from visitors to the cemetery.



*Photograph by Mark Sanderson
Photography, York*

Contact: Pamela Hoggarth, secretary.fohc@gmail.com
Website: <https://www.huntingtoncemetery.org.uk>

The following groups have joined as Associates:

Friends of Ocklynge Cemetery (see Page 18)

Contact: Shirley Moth, friendsofocklyngecemetery@gmail.com
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/416039670286740>

Bradwell Crematorium Friends, Newcastle under Lyme

Contact: Kay Booth, bereavementservices@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk

Reading Old Cemetery History, Heritage and Education Group

Contact: Yota Dimitriadi, readingoldcemetery1843@gmail.com
Website: <https://www.readingoldcemetery.uk>

Crewe Cemetery Friends

Contact: Ingrid Shaw, Ingrid.shaw@orbitas.co.uk

The Friends of Ocklynge Cemetery

by Kevin Gordon, Chairman

The Friends of Ocklynge Cemetery in Eastbourne, Sussex, is one of the more recent members of the National Federation of Cemetery Friends having been established in 2022.

Following the passing of the Burial Act of 1854, Eastbourne's Parish Vestry took no time in establishing a local 'Burial Board'. The following year they purchased a field north of Eastbourne called 'Ocklyng Piece' for £400. The cemetery was landscaped to provide a pleasant rural area for visiting relatives and was finally consecrated and opened in May 1857. Two thousand pounds was allocated to build a chapel and cemetery lodge. The designer was Benjamin Ferrey (1810-1880), an architect who had studied with Augustus Pugin, the designer of much of the Houses of Parliament. The first person to be buried in the cemetery was Henry Ford, a 73-year-old bricklayer who died whilst building the cemetery chapel.

The cemetery gates were originally cast at the famous Colebrookdale Iron Foundry in Ironbridge, Shropshire. The cemetery was extended in 1892 with land purchased from the Duke of Devonshire at a cost of £9,000. He haggled with the burial board, insisting that the land was 'building land' rather than 'agricultural land' therefore getting a better price.

Tens of thousands of people are buried in the cemetery but, as Eastbourne was a prestigious seaside resort (known as The Empress of the South), the cemetery includes many visitors, for instance Sarah Wentworth (1805-1880) the wife of Australia's first Prime Minister and Susan Agnes Macdonald (1836-1920) the wife of Canada's first Prime Minister. Both died whilst staying in Eastbourne for the summer season.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists 178 war graves at the cemetery of which 134 are from the Great War. The graves are not only for British soldiers but include Australians, Canadians, South Africans, Belgians and even an airman from Brazil. One war grave of note is for Lieutenant-Colonel Oswald Fitzgerald, the personal secretary and close friend of Lord Kitchener who died alongside Kitchener onboard HMS Hampshire in June 1916. Despite the Imperial War Graves Commission directive that servicemen would be buried 'where they fell', the body of

Fitzgerald was returned to Eastbourne and interred with great ceremony at Ocklynge Cemetery. His gravestone was the work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh and is believed to be the only gravestone that he designed.

There is one Victoria Cross hero buried at Eastbourne, Henry Jones (1831-1916) who was awarded his medal for bravery during the Crimean War. There is also a headstone for Benjamin Elliot of the Rifle Brigade which lists the 21 battles he participated in including Waterloo. As well as the war graves there are the graves dozens of civilian casualties of the many air-raids of the Second World War. One bomb landed in the cemetery and shrapnel-scarred gravestones can still be seen.

The Friends of Ocklynge Cemetery has been researching many of the notable graves which include, professional footballers, motor-racing drivers, a Grand National winner and even a world swimming champion. As Eastbourne is a coastal resort many of the graves have a maritime association including graves for fishermen and life-boat crew. Strangely the most sought-after grave is for someone not actually buried at Eastbourne. Although comedian Tommy Cooper (1921-1984) is noted on the grave of his wife's family, his ashes were scattered in London.

The Friend's work-parties have been very active in clearing long-lost graves and researching the history of the cemetery and its occupants. We work with the council to help the public find the graves of their loved ones and add details of graves to the 'Find-a-Grave' website. We provide guided tours of the cemetery and hope to have a website up and running soon. We would like to thank the National Federation of Cemetery Friends in providing support and good advice.



*The Friends at work
Photograph courtesy of Kevin Gordon*

Members News

A selection of news and events from Members newsletters and websites

Beckett Street Cemetery, Leeds

A new Leeds Civic Trust Blue Plaque was installed during a Heritage Open Day event in September. This was a replacement for the original plaque, now faded and marked which was installed on the south gate pillar and unveiled by Sylvia Barnard on 11th September 1998.

Brookwood Cemetery Society, Woking

Around 50 attended a service of rededication of the restored grave of Scottish artist Arthur Melville which stands just outside of the cemetery's boundary.

Cathays Cemetery, Cardiff

In July, a new stone shield was installed above the cemetery entrance on Fair Oak Road. This was a replacement for a shield lost some time ago which research indicated bore the coat of arms of former Mayor of Cardiff and High Sheriff of Glamorgan, Charles Croft Williams. Mossfords Memorial Masons, who undertook the carving of the shield produced a video of its making and installation. See: <https://mossfords.com/media/>

Farsley Rehoboth Burial Ground, Leeds

A Pudsey and District Civic Society Commemorative Plaque installed on the wall of the memorial shelter was unveiled at the burial ground in July. This plaque recognises the history and heritage of the burial ground, and the contribution made by the Friends volunteers since the reclamation began in 2019.

The Mausolea and Monuments Trust

The Trust have welcomed heritage professional and historian of monuments, commemoration, and conservation Dr Elizabeth Blood as a Trustee. Elizabeth will be focusing on developing the Trust's social media profile.

The Gazetteer has had a number of updates and new entries. The addition of a 'Find Nearby' button enables the search on mobile devices to find mausolea in the Gazetteer within the specified distance radius of a location.

Surrey Cemeteries

by Ian Simpson, Friends of Surrey Cemeteries

Friends of Surrey Cemeteries was formed in 2004 by a small group of cemetery enthusiasts with the aim of finding and visiting all of the Victorian and 20th Century cemeteries in the county and collecting information on these cemeteries and any Friends/Local History Groups who have data on the sites. Many of us had been members of the Brookwood Cemetery Society but left this group after completion of Monumental Inscriptions (MI) and Burial Register transcriptions when the Society supported demands by the cemetery owner that our work be handed over to him. We would not do this.

It was not the initial intention of the Group to record all memorial inscriptions or copy burial registers; however this information has been gathered on several cemeteries in the county in separate exercises. In some instances, it was remarkably difficult to locate the cemetery with very little if any signage or information being available. In others there were notice boards, maps and even staffed offices. Size alone did not seem to be the deciding criteria here. Background research also indicated changes in a number of instances between planned developments and the final cemetery location, area or buildings. Although not specifically within our plans we included information gleaned on Quaker Burial Grounds especially as their location is in some cases problematic!

We visited some 105 cemeteries/burial grounds (see below) covering the historic county of Surrey. We identified and researched 10 others whose grounds are now repurposed (largely Quaker grounds). We also gathered MI or Burial Register transcriptions for 9 of the cemeteries. For Dorking we recorded and researched all of the burials as well as leading some walks.

The work was largely completed by 2013 and a copy of our files, including a summary of our visit notes including scans of cemetery maps obtained or hand drawn, deposited in the Surrey History Centre.

Continued over page

The Centre has an extensive collection of maps and documents for many of the cemeteries in the county and we included references to these in our notes. We did not duplicate information available from Friends Groups already formed.

We have responded to queries on our work over the years but following deaths and house moves feel it is sensible to wind up the group now having completed the work we set ourselves nearly 20 years ago.

Burial grounds visited: + formation date and area

Aldlestone 1897 8 acres	Ash 1887 8 acres
Ashford B G 1910 9 acres	Badshot Lea 1921 3 acres
Bagshot B G 1807 1.5 acres	Bandon Hill 1899 14 acres
Banstead Asylum 1877 1.5 acres	Barnes Old 1854 2 acres
Battersea New 1891 70 acres	Betchworth 1949 1 acre
Bletchingley B G 1858 1.5 acres	Bramley 1851 1.7 acres
Brockley & Ladywell 1858 21 acres	Brookwood 1854 440 acres
Burvale 1938 6 acres	Camberwell New 1926 61 acres
Camberwell Old 1856 36.5 acres	Caterham St Mary's 1890 10 acres
Caterham Asylum 1914 1 acre	Chertsey 1914 8 acres
Chobham 1858 1 acre	Cobham 1885 8 acres
Compton 1896 0.5 acre	Cranleigh 1899 6 acres
Croydon 1897 43 acres	Cuddington 1902 2.5 acres
Dorking 1855 14 acres	Dorking Quaker B G 1847 0.5 acre
East Sheen 1894 16 acres	Elstead 1896 1 acre
Epsom 1871 24 acres	Englefield Green 1859 10 acres
Ewhurst 1956 1 acre	Farnham West Street 1856 15.8 acres
Farnham Green Lane 1914 4.7 acres	Gap Road Wimbledon 1896 28 acres
Godalming Old 1857 3 acres	Godalming New 1900 16.5 acres
Greenlawns 1940 32 acres	Guildford Mount 1856 10 acres
Guildford Crematorium 1967 26 acres	Guildford Quaker B G 1673 0.5 acre
Hale 1872 4 acres	Hersham Road 1865 0.5 acre
Horley 1920 4 acres	Horsell Common 1915 0.5 acre
Horton Estate 1902 4 acres	Kingston 1855 27.5 acres
Lambeth 1854 41 acres	Lightwater 1927 3.9 acres
Long Ditton 1953 3 acres	Merton & Sutton 1947 57.5 acres
London Road Merton 1929 18 acres	Milford 1911 3 acres
Mitcham Church Road 1883 7 acres	Molesey East & West 1866 7 acres
Mortlake 1926 20 acres	Mortlake Catholic 1852 3 acres
Mortlake Old B G 1854 6 acres	Netherne Asylum 1909 2 acres

North Sheen 1926 26 acres
 Nutfield 1899 2 acres
 Peaslake 1889 1 acre
 Putney Vale 1891 47 acres
 Queens Road Croydon 1861 26 acres
 Redstone 1932 23 acres
 Richmond New 1890 12 acres
 St John's Crematorium 1885 11.1 acres
 St Mary's Battersea 1860 8.5 acres
 St Mary's Staines 1855 2 acres
 St Thomas in the Bourne 1861 0.5 acre
 Shalford 1896 5 acres
 Shere 1940 1 acre
 Silvermere Pet 1977 11 acres
 Stanwell B G 1895 4 acres
 Streatham 1893 36 acres
 Sunbury 1900 9 acres
 Sutton & Cuddington 1889 19.5 acres
 Thorpe 1917 2 acres
 Wandsworth 1878 34 acres
 West Norwood 1837 39 acres
 Weycombe Road 1943 1 acre
 Woolford Lane 1973 0.8 acre

Nunhead 1840 52 acres
 Oxted B G 1967 3 acres
 Putney Lower Common 1855 3 acres
 Putterham 1882 0.5 acre
 Randalls Park 1961 55 acres
 Reigate 1856 9.5 acres
 Richmond Old 1853 15 acres
 St John's Windlesham 1898 3.5 acres
 St Mary's Reigate 1800 1.3 acres
 St Stephen's Chertsey 1800 1 acre
 Send 1952 2.5 acres
 Shepperton 1866 1 acre
 Shottermill 1935 3 acres
 Staines 1913 7 acres
 Stoke Old & New 1855 18 acres
 Streatham Park 1911 70 acres
 Surbiton 1915 11 acres
 Teddington 1881 8 acres
 Walton 1896 1.9 acres
 Warlingham Asylum 1856 2 acres
 Weybridge 1876 8.5 acres
 Wonersh 1900 3 acres

Researched, area reused, not visited (some areas identified some not)

Binscombe Quaker B G 1695 0.5 acre
 Capel Quaker B G 1700 0.5 acre
 Charlwood Quaker B G 1675 0.5 acre
 Kingston Quaker B G 1773 0.5 acre
 Shere Quaker B G 1669 0.5 acre

Cane Hill Asylum 1884 2 acres
 Caterham Asylum 1870 0.5 acre
 Godalming Quaker B G 1687 0.5 acre
 Reigate Quaker B G 1688 0.5 acre
 Worpleston Quaker B G 1667 0.5 acre

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.

NFCF contact details

Chairman

Robert Stephenson (07794 007870)
chairman@cemeteryfriends.com

Vice Chairman

Colin Fenn (020 8670 4146)
vicechairman@cemeteryfriends.com

Secretary and Newsletter Editor

Ann Wilkinson
secretary@cemeteryfriends.com

Treasurer

Melvyn Hawkins
treasurer@cemeteryfriends.com

National Cemeteries Week

Emer Seamark
ncw@cemeteryfriends.com

Committee Members

Lynda Kitching
rogerandlynda@guiseley.co.uk

John Moffat

flaybrick.m.gardens@ntlworld.com

Stuart Wilkinson

stuartwilkinson@blueyonder.co.uk

Website

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

Webmaster

James Slattery-Kavanagh (01825 723943)
webmaster@cemeteryfriends.com

Copy date for next issue: 31st March 2024

Published by the National Federation of Cemetery Friends