National Federation of
CEMETERY FRIENDS

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The Manchester and Salford cycle trail

by Gail Spelman, Chair of the Friends of Philips Park Cemetery

A scenic cycle which passes through cemeteries across Manchester and Salford has been organised to highlight a new bike trail.

The launch of the new cycle trail. Left, the Ceremonial Mayor of Salford, Cllr Gina Reynolds and Consort; middle, Carl Austin-Behan OBE DL representing the Lord-Lieutenant of Greater Manchester, and right, the Lord Mayor of Manchester Cllr Yasmine Dar and Consort
Photograph courtesy of Gail Spelman

Coming together we want to encourage community cycling in cemeteries, instead of people using cars, to cut emissions. Cemeteries are beautiful green spaces for people to enjoy and reflect whilst visiting their loved ones. Philips Park Cemetery adjoining Philips Park, which is opposite the Velodrome, would welcome more cyclists and is in a perfect location close to the cycling Centre which is where the idea all began.

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

We have lots of bike riders that cycle through the cemetery on a daily basis. On a few occasions bikes have been left against the privets in the cemetery while people attend graves. Whilst visiting the cemetery there is currently nowhere to chain a cycle up whilst attending family graves. In order to encourage and welcome cycling in our cemeteries we have applied for funding to add 4 cycle stands in each cemetery which makes cemeteries more cycle friendly and in turn encourage people to cycle to the cemetery giving the opportunity to store their bike safely.

Our 8 cemeteries (Blackley, Philips Park, Gorton, Southern, Weaste, Peel Green, Swinton and Agecroft) make a circular trail round the City Centre. We will promote the new cycle facilities in our onsite lecterns and on our Facebook pages. We will also put a sign on the cycle stand to include the funder with information on the trail. We have various different cycle routes for this loop, and they are directed by a simple scan of a QR code on the cycle stands at each cemetery. We have a great deal of history to read in each cemetery and they make wonderful stopping points.

High Escomb Cemetery, County Durham

Howard Chadwick, High Escomb Cemetery Friends writes:

High Escomb Cemetery was opened when the graveyard of the world renowned oldest Saxon church became full. It "closed' in 1945. It is 1.4 hectares and compromises four sections. In the 1970s the County Council decided to 'clear' the whole area. Only objectors markers remained but moved to against the south wall. Inexplicably a row, of over 200, Victorian headstones were laid side by side, in front of aforementioned modest markers, stretching the full length of the wall.

At this time the church was demolished. A parishioner left a £90k donation on condition that on "the site of the church" a nature reserve was created. The parish Council interpreted this as the whole cemetery and effectively abandoned the cemetery. For the next 50 years hung an occasional bird feeder while brambles made it impenetrable. All headstones were either lost to the brambles or buried under many inches of leaf mould and debris. So confronted by this, 5/6 volunteers, average age 75 years waded in clearing. Sadly, the band dissolved after two

seasons, but the clearance done in that time allowed me to carry on. The major part of the cemetery is now biodiverse.

Progress can be followed on Facebook: High Escomb Cemetery at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/881019782975493/?ref=share_group_link All headstones have been photographed and documented and are available on Facebook: Escomb St John's Cemetery (High Escomb) at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/573395277685507/?ref=share_group_link

I have digitalised the plots if anyone needs a search.

At the 2023 County Durham Environment Awards held at the Hardwick Hall Hotel on 7th March this year, it was announced that Howard (who will be 80 next year) was a winner in the Volunteer of the Year – Over 18 category.

Howard (far right) with his certificate and award Photographs courtesy of Howard Chadwick

NFCF's NATIONAL CEMETERIES WEEK
8th to 16th June 2024
and
Caring for God's Acre Love Your Burial Ground Week
with Churches Count on Nature
See: https://www.cemeteryfriends.com

NFCF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Hosted by
The Friends of Bedford Cemetery at Foster Hill Road, Bedford
Saturday 8th June 2024
Any members who have not received details
please contact the NFCF secretary
secretary@cemeteryfriends.com

Learning Blooms at St John Baptist, Cirencester

from Peter Vujakovic, Friends of St John Baptist Churchyard

2023 was another successful year for the Friends of St John Baptist Churchyard in Cirencester with our volunteers clocking up over 460 hours of work at the site, as well as hosting local schools for nature study. While much of our effort is to ensure that the churchyard is maintained in a manner that respects its role as a place of memorial, the Friends have also invested a great deal of time and effort in enhancing the biodiversity of the site, with education in mind. This includes areas of grassland and woodland, as well as more formal planting (designed to support pollinating insects).

We have developed a relationship with the Royal Agricultural University (which has its campus on the edge of town) and our 'no mow' areas are assessed annually by one of their ecologists for their value as a source of nectar. We would certainly recommend working with a local university or college, as we now have a comprehensive species list for our grassland provided by an expert, and the university is a useful source of equipment for education events and other activities. 2023 also saw the establishment of a tree trail, with wooden name-plaques (made by one of our members) attached to each of our many specimen trees; their names carved and then burnt into wood off-cuts (we aim to recycle as much as we can; composting, use of cut branches for a 'dead-hedge', wood chippings for mulch, etc.).

Plant identification: Pupils from Down Ampney C of E Primary School
Photograph: Helen Russell

2023 was the third year of our experiment with 'No mow' to encourage summer meadow growth. The results have been very encouraging, although each year has its surprises. 2022 was an excellent year for ox-eye daisies (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) but few were seen in 2023. The greatest surprise was in 2023; a group of older (Year 5 and 6) primary school children were undertaking species identification as part of their

biodiversity studies, when one of our team suddenly spotted a single spike of the pyramidal orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) just in time to protect it from being trampled! We are hoping that this is the first sign of a colony. Other indications that our churchyard is old undisturbed grassland (as many churchyards are) is the fact that we have yellow meadow ants which prefer areas that are not cut too often. One large nest benefits from the protection of a gravestone from the mower. Plants also benefit from such protection, for example Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*) and some of the speedwells that inhabit the nooks and crannies of the various monuments. This protection, however, also works for tree and shrub species that may one day topple a headstone or break up a chest tomb!

Pyramidal orchid – the first since 'no mow' Photograph: Peter Vujakovic

Bee watering station Photograph: Helen Russell

As noted above, we encourage visits by local primary schools and have designed a range of activities that work for pre-school children to those about to transition to secondary school. We work closely with teachers to ensure the activities are both fun and a good fit to the curriculum. Even the youngest can be engaged with practical ecology – one of our favourite activities is getting the children to create 'bee watering stations' using a shallow plastic dish and a range of materials such as pebbles, fir cones, shells and twigs to provide a safe perch for the insects. The children learn why bees and other insects need access to water and how a watering station needs to be constructed, but also how this can be a little work of art! They make their station, then select a suitable location – sensibly most site theirs by flowers in bloom – before adding the water. Many agree that they will make one for their own garden or school grounds.

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Learning blooms continued

Even as this short piece is being written in January there are signs of renewal, with 'cuckoo pint' already poking through (*Arum maculatum*). This plant is also known as 'Lords and Ladies', 'man in the pulpit', 'Kitty-come-down-the-lane-jump-up-and-kiss-me' or 'gentleman's-finger' – in fact it has well over one hundred record regional names in England, although none of our team have been heard to refer to it by a supposed Gloucestershire variant 'snake's-victuals' (source: C. T. Prime – *Lords & Ladies*, Collins New Naturalist (1960)).

NOTE: a fascinating source of folklore and related material about wildflowers is Richard Mabey's *Flora Britannica* (1996) and its concise version, both often found in good charity bookshops or available online for a few pounds. A great resource to help engage people with nature in our wonderful burial grounds!

Presentation of the King's Award for Voluntary Service

by Stuart Wilkinson, Vice-Chairman of the Friends of Lister Lane Cemetery, Halifax

On 26th March 2024, the Friends of Lister Lane Cemetery were presented with the Crystal and Certificate for the King's Award for Voluntary Service by the Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire, Ed Anderson CBE in the presence of the Mayor and Mayoress of Calderdale, Councillor Ashley Evans, and his wife Rosie Tatchell.

Photograph by Mike Brook

The event took place at the magnificent Halifax Town Hall, with many of the Friends volunteers and supporters present. The citation on the certificate reads 'Reclaiming and preserving the historic Lister Lane Cemetery, ensuring accessibility to families/historians from across the world'. We are delighted to have received this prestigious award. It is recognition of all the hard work of the volunteers in caring for this historic cemetery.

The Friends of Wrexham Cemetery's genealogy guide

forwarded by Jayne Alton, Chair of the Friends

Friends of Wrexham Cemetery announce the release of *Welsh Family History Research: A Beginner's Guide* to encourage and facilitate genealogical research by its members and the general public. Visitors to the cemetery office will find copies of the *Guide* next to two computers generously provided by Wrexham City Council. Use of the computers, including access to Ancestry.com and Findmypast.com is free.

The *Guide* was written and will continue to be updated by Vice Chair and Genealogy Assistant, Madeleine Dale. Comments, suggestions, corrections and genealogical questions can be sent to Madeleine at: madeleine.wrexhamcemetery@yahoo.com

Left: Computers and Guides in the cemetery office. Right: Adrian Howells, Wrexham Cemetery and Crematorium Attendant, receives the Welsh Family History Guide from Madeleine Dale. Photographs courtesy of Jayne Alton

There is a great deal of history to be discovered in Wrexham cemetery. It is hoped our new guide motivates people not only to learn more about their ancestors buried at Wrexham or not, but also to visit the cemetery and walk the garden paths, noting the architecture, the symbols and sentiments on headstones. Wrexham Cemetery is a place not only of family history but also military, occupational, religious, and cultural history. Wrexham Cemetery is an open-air museum if you think about it.

The Cemetery office is open 1 April to 31 October, Monday to Friday, 10 am to 6 pm, except bank holidays, and weekends 10 am to 6 pm including bank holidays. From 1 November to 31 March, the cemetery hours are 10 am to 4 pm. The Ruabon Road and the Bersham Road entrance gates are locked 15 minutes prior to the official closing time.

History of the Hull General Cemetery

forwarded by Karen Towner, Secretary of the Friends

The Hull General Cemetery opened in late April 1847 and has a multi-layered history which covers many aspects of daily life in Victorian England. Within Hull General Cemetery are several notable monuments and burials, including one to the cholera outbreak of 1849 when 1,834 people died. There are also four Grade 2 listed monuments as well as the cast iron main gates. Between 1847 and its closure in 1972 there were over 54,000 burials within the 13-acre site.

Following the closure of the cemetery in 1972, the site was taken over by Hull City Council and they decided to transform the cemetery into an open area for public recreation. It was determined that the majority of the 5,000 headstones and monuments should be removed to provide a more open area, leaving approximately 1000 headstones. However, the site soon deteriorated, and it quickly became an overgrown, fly tipping site and a no-go drug dealing location. Many of the remaining headstones fell into disrepair with tree roots and invasive plants damaging the foundations and inscriptions.

The formation of the Friends of Hull General Cemetery

In 2015 a small group of local volunteers decided to take an interest in tidying the overgrown cemetery and began organising monthly litter picking ventures and disposing of used syringes etc. In 2016 the Friends of Hull General Cemetery was established with a view to formalising the clearance of the cemetery: they met regularly, with representatives of Hull City Council attending their monthly meetings.

Several of the volunteers decided to increase the litter picking to a weekly routine and introduced litter bins in the cemetery to encourage users to be aware of the problem. The Council agreed to remove any collected litter/rubbish on a regular basis from a single point collection location adjacent of the main gates.

The volunteers' activities quickly evolved into clearing ivy and invasive plants from headstones, and systematically photographing the monuments inscriptions and architectural details. A Facebook site and a website was set up in 2018 and the results of the groups research were

published on the sites. In order to raise funds for tools, plants etc, members published books on the history of the cemetery, the war graves and other historical records. Work continued and improvements to the designated Quaker Burial Ground was undertaken, clearing of the Workhouse Burial section, planting of some small trees and shrubs commenced. Bird, bat, owl, hedgehog boxes and bug-hotels etc were installed and records of occupation rates are regularly taken, and bulbs and indigenous wildflowers have been planted.

It was soon evident that some form of storage would be required to store tools, equipment, PPE etc and the group successfully applied for a Ward Budget Grant of £2,880.00 to purchase a 3m x 2m storage cabin. The volunteers raised funds to install a Philip Larkin memorial bench on the anniversary of his death on 2nd December 1985. It is in the spot where Philip Larkin and John Betjeman met in 1964. The bench was purchased by the Friends with a generous donation from the Philip Larkin Society.

Larkin bench
Photograph courtesy of Karen Towner

Information board
Photograph courtesy of Karen Towner

It was felt that there was a need for an Information board for the benefit of those visiting the cemetery for either leisure or research purposes. A Ward Budget Grant was secured in 2021 to erect an Information Board which gives the history and heritage of the cemetery, and this was erected early in 2023. Larger projects such as the renovation of the Blundell tomb, Middleton and Fountain family monuments have been undertaken and the commissioning of a professional renovation of the Wilson Family tomb has commenced.

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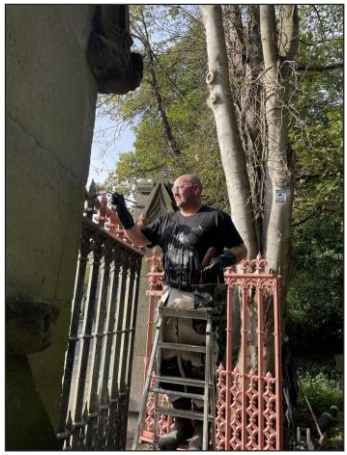
Cuthbert Brodrick Main Gates:

The original entrance gates and gate house were demolished early in the 20th century. The gates and associated pillars were relocated to the present entrance on Spring Bank. The gates and masonry are now Grade 2 listed. The cast iron work was last painted many years ago and was looking distressed. The Friends received a Ward Grant for the gates to be repainted in their original livery.



Gates being painted
Photograph courtesy of Karen Towner

Our Team

The Friends of Hull General Cemetery achieved charitable status in 2023 and consists of an executive team of four trustees together with a number of core volunteers (typically 8 - 10) who meet every Monday morning to carry out the maintenance and restoration work.

Our contribution

Our primary objectives are the maintenance and restoration of the monuments and the built heritage of the site. A key part of this is the control of the invasive vegetation and removal of litter and debris from the headstones and monuments. The cemetery is accessible to the general public and the footpaths and open areas are in continual use. Without the regular work carried out by the Friends the area would quickly deteriorate and become totally overgrown.

Education is also a key part of our activities and in this respect, we have a number of publications on sale relating to the history of the cemetery. We also organise regular walks around the cemetery to show visitors the most significant tombs and we are developing walks/talks on different themes. We are regularly contacted by descendants of the deceased for genealogical information, location of grave (if any) data of death, cause of death, next of kin etc. Our database and photographic archive are invaluable in enabling us to offer assistance and a worldwide source of information.

Several of our members research the lives of some of those interred within the cemetery. We believe there is a “story under every stone”. These short biographies are written up and posted on the web site for all to read.

Burial registers
During COVID lock-down, in conjunction with the East Yorkshire Family History Society, the volunteers transcribed the archived Burial Records of the cemetery into a computer database to enable it to be searchable. This groundwork forms the basis of our application for external funding to make the results of the research freely accessible to all through the Friends’ website.

Photographic archive
Over the recent years the Friends and volunteers have photographed all the remaining headstones in the cemetery, recording each elevation, name, and inscription, and we have a total of over 4000 images on file.

Future plans
In addition to making the burial records and photographic archive available as a searchable data base there is the on-going programme of regular maintenance. The Friends have an ambitious programme of future works to improve access and the visitor experience for the general public:

- Continued management of the woodland aspect of the site, including thinning of invasive species, such as sycamore and continue a planned planting regime of native, indigenous trees, shrubs, and wildflowers.
- Restore and replant a dedicated wild-flower meadow and maintain as a conservation area.
- Upgrade and maintain the existing paths to provide greater access to all, using environmentally sustainable materials.
- Locate all 28 Commonwealth War Graves and mark for future reference.
- Introduce more educational walks and talks.
- Keep headstones clear of ivy and other invasive species to ensure that they are preserved for future generations.
- Expand research of the 'residents' and continue to publish findings.

Document Share Service: aid to funding success

by John Moffat, NFCF Committee Member

I doubt if any of our members take on the completion of major funding applications without some feelings of trepidation. I know that I certainly do!

Well, this service for NFCF membership will help to both guide and alleviate any worries. You can see documents that have succeeded in obtaining National Lottery Heritage Fund funding or that have provided the building blocks towards major funding such as feasibility studies and conservation management plans. Also included is an excellent PowerPoint presentation from Jeff Hart. Although it dates from 2008, it still provides excellent guidance on project management for voluntary groups.

NFCF members have been succeeding in obtaining multi - million pound funding for decades now. I remember congratulating Richard Smith of the Friends of Arnos Vale on obtaining the biggest award to any UK cemetery. A lofty £4.8 million back in 2004. He told me their submission consisted of 17 A4 binders! At least today we don't have the worry of collapsing shelves and members will receive their chosen documents by zip file.

This service has only been possible due to the cooperation of the Friends of Flaybrick, West Norwood, Nunhead and Anfield cemeteries.

The dates of the documents, the names of the consultants who produced the documents and their fees (where available) have been included.

The service will only be available to paid-up members of the NFCF. If you would like to take advantage of the service, or donate documents to it, please contact me at: flaybrick.m.garden@ntlworld.com

New Members and Associates

The following groups have joined as Members:

Sid Vale Burial Research Group (see Page 14)
Contact: Ian Simpson, izsimp@hotmail.com

Cherishing Sidmouth Cemeteries (see Page 18)
Contact: Amanda O'Carroll,
amanda@cherishing-cemeteries.vgsidmouth.co.uk
Website: https://cherishing-cemeteries.vgsidmouth.co.uk

Friends of High Royds Memorial Garden, Ilkley
Contact: Quentin Mackenzie, quentin.mackenzie@gmail.com

Friends of Nottingham Road Cemetery, Derby
Contact: Scott Jarvis, friendsofnrc@gmail.com
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofNottsRd/

Friends of Penzance Burial Ground, Heamoor
Contact: Tamara Thomas, heamooropengardens@gmail.com

The following groups have joined as Associates:

Audlem Cemetery, Crewe, Cheshire
Contact: Adriana Roscoe, audlem.cemetery@gmail.com

Cemetery Research Group, York
Contact: Julie Rugg, julierugg36@gmail.com
Website: https://www.cemeteryresearch.org/

Sid Vale Burial Research Group

by Ian Simpson

On arrival in Sidmouth, I joined the Local History Group and found that very little research had been carried out on the town cemetery. Along with other group members I commenced the recording of MIs and researched the burials and the formation of the cemetery. We then moved on to record MIs in the other cemeteries and churches in the area. The names on headstones in the Parish Churchyard had been recorded in the 1930s but no further work carried out in this area, so we sought biographical details.

The population centres we have included in our work are:

Sidmouth which was an unassuming farming and fishing town for centuries, being part of the manor of Otterton. In Georgian times when travel to Europe became difficult it developed as a holiday resort with a number of large properties built. The cemetery was opened in 1878 with a pair of linked chapels and entrance lodge. These buildings remain but the lodge is now a private home and only one chapel is in use. The cemetery has been extended twice and further space is available (currently allotments). Burials only take place in the cemetery run by East Devon District Council, but some memorial trees have been planted in The Byes – parkland alongside the River Sid.

Sidford was originally a separate village up the valley on the old Roman road to Exeter from Dorchester but has since the war been completely linked by housing to Sidmouth. Cremation plaques are now being laid in the churchyard.

Sidbury, on the road to Honiton is some 4 miles inland and has a more extensive history with a Saxon crypt in the parish church. Burials only now take place in the cemetery on the hillside outside the village. The non-conformist chapel was sold off but some burials have continued in its burial ground.

Salcombe Regis is the parish on the east side of the River Sid with its centre over the hill from Sidmouth but the hillside above the river has for the last couple of centuries been effectively part of Sidmouth. The churchyard was extended in C1900 and again in the 1980s but burial

numbers are low with both Sidmouth and Sidbury cemeteries being used instead.

We have now completed the MI recording which has identified some 14,000 names, for many of whom we have obtained biographical data. The area has attracted many military and scientific retirees over the past 150 years. The growth of Exeter University and the location of the Met Office in Exeter has added further interesting people to the area. We continue to research our buried residents and help other family and local historians with their studies.

Memorial locations covered by our work:
Sidmouth Cemetery
Sidmouth Parish Church and Churchyard
Sidmouth All Saints Church
Sidmouth Old Meeting Church and Burial Ground
Sidmouth Methodist Church
Sidmouth United Reformed Church (now toy museum)
Sidmouth Convent Burial Ground
Sidmouth War Memorial
Sidford St Peters Church and Churchyard
Sidford Methodist Chapel
Sidbury Cemetery
Sidbury Parish Church and Churchyard
Sidbury Chapel and Burial Ground (now private house)
Sidbury War Memorial
Salcombe Regis Parish Church and Churchyard
Salcombe Regis War Memorial

Religious locations without memorials:
Sidmouth Baptist Chapel
Sidmouth Evangel Chapel
Primley United Reformed Church (Sidmouth)
Sidmouth Quaker Meeting House
Woolbrook Church (Sidmouth)

Burials of interest include:
John Bacon FSA (1777-1859) - Eminent sculptor and fine artist. Six monuments in St Pauls and 11 in Westminster Abbey.

Continued over page

Frances Anna Baker KIH (1873-1950) - 1906 to Madras where started school for girls which grew to 600 pupils by 1933. Also talented artist of Indian scenes.

Alfred Henry Boobyer (1884-1955) - Police service including secondment to Greece to set up first police service in Greek towns.

Dr William Robert Boon FRS (1911-1994) - Scientist who developed Bipyridine crop-protection chemicals including Paraquat, Gramaxone and Diquat.

Matthew Bridges (1800-1894) - British Canadian hymn writer. Oxford Movement convert to Catholicism.

Sidney George Brown FRS (1873-1948) - Scientist and electrical engineer who designed gyro compasses, radio equipment and loudspeakers.

Joan Bogle Butler (1906-1998) - Aka Joan Hickson, actress "Miss Marple".

Ingram Bywater (1840-1914) - Scholar of Greek who bequeathed over 4,000 volumes to Bodleian Library.

Rt Rev George Kestell Kestell-Cornish (1856-1925) - Bishop of Madagascar. Sold off much of family estate in Salcombe Regis.

Vaughan Cornish FRGS (1862-1948) - Geographical researcher and presenter of Rural England. Family were Lords of Manor of Salcombe Regis.

Ronald Frank Delderfield (1812-1972) - Journalist then author, play-write and screenwriter.

Gen Sir John Hart Dunne KCB (1835-1924) - Crimea, India and China War (introduced Pekingese dogs to Britain).

David Henry Elias CMG (1882-1953) - South Africa, Kenya and Uganda, Nigeria then Malay Railways.

Sir John Ambrose Fleming FRS (1849-1945) - Scientist who developed electrical transformer theory working with the Marconi, Swan, Ferranti and Edison companies. Best known for developing the thermionic valve.

Sir George Smith Gibbes MD FRS (1771-1851) - Physician and polymath. Hon Physician to Queen Charlotte.

Geoffrey Alexander Ginster (1918-1990) - Founder of Ginster's Pasties in 1969 after failure of cream business.

Col James William Grant VC (1861-1932) - Received VC for action to relieve survivors of Thobal after massacre at Manipur in 1891.

Henry Beufort Grimaldi (1831-1907) - Sixth Marquis, family links to Charlemagne.

Albert Haslam (1851-1909) - Aka Professor Anderton, fairground showman whose fair still visits Sidmouth annually.
Maj Gen Robert Augustus Carew Hunt (1838-1935) - Bombay Army – China, Abyssinia, Afghanistan
Peter Orlando Hutchinson (1810-1897) - Polymath diarist, artist, musician, stone carver and antiquarian who studied the geology and botany of East Devon.
Gertrude Lilian Kiely (1898-1970) - Aka Gertrude Lilley music-hall singer with Elsie and Doris Waters.
Sir Norman Lockyer FRS (1826-1920) - Scientist and astronomer who discovered Helium. Retired to Sidmouth and opened an observatory on Salcombe Hill which remains with several telescopes and a planetarium.
Russell Martineau MA (1831-1898) - Classical and language scholar, knew 20 European languages. Many translations of classical works.
George Ernest (Chinese) Morrison (1862-1920) - Born Gelong. Journalist, traveller and political advisor to the Chinese Government. Major collection of Chinese volumes, maps and pamphlets now held in Tokyo.
Kathleen Pettigrew MBE OBE (1898-1990) - Bletchley Park. Model for Miss Moneypenny in James Bond novels.
Samuel Read RWS (1815-1883) - Artist and wood engraver.
Stephen Reynolds (1881-1919) - Author of "A poor man's house" based on the Woolley family in Sidmouth. Inshore Fishing Commissioner for West Country during WW1. Friend of WH Hudson and Joseph Conrad.
Robert William Sampson (1866-1950) - Arts and Crafts architect who designed many commercial and residential buildings in Sidmouth.
Ethel Sargant FLS (1863-1918) – Botanist, studies of Cytology and Anatomical Morphology.
John Roderick Charles Herbert Spottiswoode (1882-1946) - Early flyer. WW1 spy who penetrated Zeppelin factory and sent plans back to England.
Edward Stanford (1827-1904) - Founder of Stanfords, the largest map distributor in the world.
Jean Charles Firmir Fabre Tonnerre (1819-1884) - French homeopathic doctor in Calcutta who treated Sir John Lawrence governor of Bengal.
John Francis Vallance (1871-1944) - Sidmouth Brewery owner.
Sir Pelham Laird Warren (1845-1923) - HM consular service in China 1869 to 1911.
Contact: Ian Simpson, izsimp@hotmail.com

Cherishing Sidmouth Cemeteries

by Amanda O'Carroll

Cherishing Sidmouth Cemeteries (CSC) was formed in November 2023 due to public disquiet over how some burial grounds in the Sid Valley were looking neglected. A public meeting was advertised and held on the 13th January 2024 at Sidmouth Cemetery owned by East Devon District Council, approximately 30 people attended. A number of areas were discussed which included locating and accessing graves, the lack of maintenance, nature conservation and biodiversity, parking and what could be achieved to ensure due respect is given to those buried there.

After the public meeting, core members of the group met with council staff responsible for the maintenance of the cemetery. They discussed the issues raised at the public meeting and how CSC volunteers could work in partnership with the council. The council has since updated its management plan.

Following on from the meeting, every Thursday, apart from one due to the appalling weather, a group of 5-10 volunteers have turned up for 2 hours to rake grass, cut brambles and hedges, plant and weed. CSC is a Vision Group for Sidmouth (VGS) initiative. CSC volunteers need to be signed up to both groups to ensure they are covered by VGS insurance and can sign in when volunteering. Not everyone who would like to volunteer can commit to a Thursday so they can request a different day to sign in.

The council's horticultural officer meets with the volunteers once a fortnight and has organised for the council's street scene team to leave its truck available for the volunteers to load with arisings. As well as working at the cemetery, various volunteers have taken on additional tasks such as asking if the local scouts would like to help, which they did one Saturday, contacting various local businesses to see if they will provide funding for equipment, plants, information boards etc. To date Sidmouth Town Council have funded Hi-Vis vests for the volunteers and Bradfords Building supplies have provided dumpy bags and gloves.

Hi-Vis vests funded by Sidmouth Town Council being given to Cherishing Sidmouth Cemeteries volunteers
Photograph courtesy of Amanda O'Carroll

The volunteers consist of a mixed group with a variety of reasons for wishing to help. There are those with a very personal connection, as they have family members buried in the cemetery. For others it is the biodiversity and the location's importance as a wildlife corridor in the valley. The history of the cemetery is the pull for others but the one thing that connects us all is wanting to see the cemetery as a respectful place where people can visit and reflect in an environment that feels peaceful and cared for.

For more information visit: https://cherishing-cemeteries.vgsidmouth.co.uk

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.

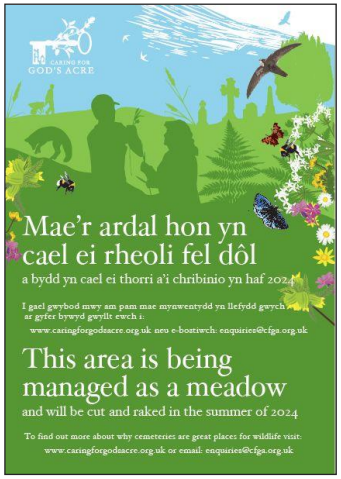
Caring for God's Acre - New signs for flowery areas

from Andrea Gilpin, Conservation and Communications Manager

Cemeteries and other types of burial grounds are often the oldest enclosed spaces in a parish, town, or city and host grassland that has remained relatively undisturbed for centuries. The gradual, natural re-seeding over an extended period has given rise to a diverse ecosystem of grasses, flowers, and animals. This ancient, unimproved grassland, once abundant across the UK, has now become a rarity. We have lost 97 percent since the second world war.

Cemeteries are some of the few sanctuaries left for this flower-rich grassland. Allowing certain sections of our cemeteries to grow freely during the summer months allows the flowers to bloom once more. However, it is important to inform visitors why we are leaving the grass to grow long to prevent any unnecessary concern. We need to let them know that it is about active management – not neglect!

Caring for God's Acre provides a set of signs (see below) that you can download, print, and laminate to place by your wildflower areas: https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/free-meadow-management-sign/



Meadow management signs available in both English and Welsh with English

For more information on the importance of species rich grassland visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7aIt-GU-Ts

Members News

A selection of news and events from Members newsletters and websites

Beckett Street Cemetery, Leeds

The burial of a 'Barnbow Lass' was discovered last year in an unmarked grave. Eighteen-year-old Elsie Martha Atkinson died during an explosion at the Barnbow Munitions Factory, Crossgates on 5th December 1916. The Friends decided to have a headstone erected to mark the grave which they hoped to unveil in time for International Women's Day on 8th March. However, due to a long waiting time for delivery of the stone, the unveiling has been postponed. In the meantime, the grave has been marked with a plaque and bulbs planted around it.

Other Barnbow workers who were buried in the cemetery included Bridget Agnes Jubb, who died of TNT poisoning on 20th July 1916; William Orange, who was one of three men killed in another explosion at the factory in May 1918, and seventeen-year-old Hannah Robinson, who also died in 1918.

Brandwood End Cemetery, Birmingham

On 13th April the Friends marked the 125th anniversary of the opening of the cemetery and that of the first interment five-year-old Charles Downes, who died of diphtheria.

Brockley and Ladywell Cemeteries, London

In March, a commemorative bench in memory of Mike Guilfoyle who died last November was placed overlooking the Ladywell Heroes Corner. In attendance were Mike's widow and siblings, friends from the local area, members of the Friends of Brockley and Ladywell Cemeteries, and a deacon from St Mary Magdalen RC Church.

Brompton Cemetery, London

In recognition of International Women's Day, a volunteer of the Friends led a cemetery walk visiting graves of inspiring women buried at Brompton or who had a connection with the cemetery. Women featured included Minnie Bailey Thompson, a staff nurse with the Territorial Force Nursing Service, who died September 1914. Her burial service was conducted with full honours, and she was the only woman to be interred in the war memorial section.

Continued over page

Muriel Thompson, who died 3rd March 1939, aged 63 had many achievements in her lifetime, including winner of the first women's car race at Brooklands in 1908, and as the driver on Emmeline Pankhurst's 1909 national tour. In 1915, Muriel signed up for the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry, driving ambulances in France and Belgium. She was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Leopold II in 1915 for the evacuation of wounded Belgian soldiers under fire, which was followed by the Military Medal and the Croix de Guerre for her courage under fire whilst moving injured during a bombing raid in 1918.

Highgate Cemetery, London

In January it was announced that the Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust had been awarded £105,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund towards their 'Unlocking Highgate Cemetery' project.

Jesmond Old Cemetery, Newcastle Upon Tyne

The Friends have completed a five-year project to oversee the installation of interpretation boards in the cemetery.

Margravine Cemetery, London

The Friends have been awarded a £500 grant from a fund which was set up by the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham to mark Women's History Month. The grant will be put towards the cost of a headstone to mark the grave of French born Jeanne Deroin, who died in 1894 and was laid to rest in an unmarked grave. Jeanne was a campaigner for women's rights and social justice.

Newtown Road Cemetery, Newbury

Last October, the Friends took part in a joint project with City Arts Newbury to deliver an event celebrating 'Samhain'. The event started with a craft session at the City Arts followed by a walk to the cemetery, interacting with some interesting characters and undertaking challenges along the way, and then finishing up with warm spiced apple juice in the cemetery chapel. Altogether, this event was staged for a total of eight sessions over the course of three nights.

More about the event can be found in the Friends newsletter Issue 30, Spring 2024 which is available to download from their website: http://fnrcnewbury.org.uk/newsletters.asp

Paddington Old Cemetery, London

It was announced in March that the owners of the cemetery, Brent Council, were successful in securing combined funding of nearly £35,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Pilgrim Trust. The funding with be put towards a 10-month consultation to develop a strategic plan for the conservation and longer-term sustainability of the former cemetery chapels to be of benefit to the local area. The Friends who contributed to the funding application will be working as a partner in the chapel project along with Brent Council, London Historic Buildings Trust, and with Richard Griffiths Architects.

Salford Cemeteries Trust, Greater Manchester

Bereavement Services announced an application for Section 106 monies for improvement work at Weaste Cemetery had been accepted. The work which is hoped will commence later in 2024 includes updating and adding to the heritage trail, resurfacing of the main driveway and footpath, installation of new signs and notice boards, and meadow wildflower and bulb areas. Once completed it is hoped it will enable the cemetery to achieve Green Flag status in 2025 becoming a Green Flag site like Agecroft and Peel Green.

Wardsend Cemetery, Sheffield

In their first January to April 2024 newsletter, the cemetery Friends were very pleased to announce they had secured £20,000 through the Northern Powergrid Social Impact Programme. This supports community projects engaging with areas such as biodiversity, climate mitigation, community education and wellbeing. More information on an action plan will be made available in due course.

Willesden Jewish Cemetery, London

Volunteers monitoring the cemetery's insect population, noted a range of insects present on the site inclusive of the hairy-footed flower bee, seven-spot ladybird, long hoverfly, and dark-edged bee-fly. Information on the insect population has been added to the iRecord online database: https://irecord.org.uk

On 12th March, sixty pupils from St Joseph's RC Primary School took part in one of the Cemetery's 'Look and See - Planting Session'. These planting sessions aimed at Key Stage 1 children were offered on Monday mornings throughout March.

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