



# *The Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery Newsletter*

Autumn 2011

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*Newsletter 3*

## *Notice of AGM*

The Annual General Meeting of The Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery will be held on October 13th in the Council Chamber, Newbury Town Hall. The meeting will begin at 7:30pm. All Friends are welcome to attend. As well as the business of the AGM there will be a talk on "How Funeral Practices Have Changed since 1850" by Peter Cox (West Berkshire Funeral Directors). Refreshments will be available.

## *Chairman's Chatter*

Hello Friends,

Another year flown by and our AGM is once more upon us.

I do hope you can make it on 13th: I promise it won't be a stuffy meeting; I'm hoping we can get through the formal business as quickly as possible so that we can get onto the good bits - an informative talk from our guest speaker, Peter Cox, and a natter over a cuppa.

I won't steal the thunder of the other members who are including articles in this newsletter but we have had an action-packed year and worked closely with Newbury Town Council to achieve our goals. Our thanks go out to all who have played a part in everything.

If **you'd** like to become more involved in the pleasures of our organisation, don't be shy. There's plenty to be done to satisfy all needs, interests and skills and, perhaps a strange thing to say about a cemetery but, it's fun!

The biggest, big achievement of the year is that the cemetery is now once more open to the public providing 'a safe, tranquil area for the pleasure of both people and wildlife'. Now I don't know who coined this phrase but I'm grateful to them as it sums up in a sentence what we have all been aiming for. And it really is just that: come and see for yourself.

May I just mention that, because it's the AGM, it does mean the subs are due for renewal. Because of grants, Council funding and much volunteer work, we are able to operate on a shoe-string, but your subscription makes all the difference and considerably helps the cause. Our membership secretary, John Guild, has included a renewal notice on the back of this letter.

Fill it in and come and join us in the Town Hall on 13th October: you'll be most welcome.

*Brian Sylvester*

## *Opening The Gates*

The "Discover Newbury" Weekend brought many curious visitors to the cemetery. With freshly mown paths, a spruced up chapel complete with decorated bier and coffin, the overwhelming impression was of beauty and intrigue.

Saturday saw 37 people, while Sunday brought 81 making a very respectable total of 118 for the week-end. The introductory tours led by Hazel Russell, Hilary Konya, Ros Clow & Yvonne Paris were very popular. Steve Attrill, Grounds Officer for Newbury Town Council, led the nature tours

and produced a delightful booklet on the bird and insect life in the cemetery.

Visitors found the war graves tours, led by Brian Sylvester, to be very informative. All the tours were much appreciated with many visitors vowing to return.

Following a lot of work by Newbury Town Council in conjunction with the Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery, the site is now safe and once more open daily to the public. Let's hope many discover this tranquil site which we firmly believe is a great amenity and an area of pleasure for both people and wildlife.



*Brian Sylvester leads a small tour of war graves*

### *Delving into the past – Ros Clow*

The History group continues to meet every two months, usually at the Clow's house in Priory Road with a hard core of about 12 Friends! Meetings are a time to tell each other about our research: what and whom we are following up at the moment.

Some Friends are continuing to research their own family (some of these families are very large!). Some of us look into more general topics about the history of the cemetery such as finding out more about Henry Godwin's stained glass window and we investigate individuals that seem interesting to us. An excellent example of this is Susan Rosier's pen picture of Annie Parkes Roche, a local well respected nurse (see following article).

We intend that as soon as possible to put all these pen pictures on our website. In that way the website will become a memorial for all the 11,000+ burials, even when they don't have a gravestone. We have planned our meetings through to November 2012. If you'd like to join us you are very welcome. Just contact Ros Clow 0163540188, [raclow@ntlworld.com](mailto:raclow@ntlworld.com).



Dates of future meetings: Weds 2<sup>nd</sup> November (to finalise the details for the Remembrance Sunday event). Then in 2012: 18 Jan; 21 March; 30 May; 25 July; 5 Sept and 7 November.

### *Annie Parkes Roche – Sue Rosier*

Annie Parkes Roche was born in Camberley, London in 1860 and was for many years the parish nurse for Newbury.

At the annual meeting of the Newbury Parish Nurse Fund in 1894, as reported in the Newbury Weekly News, she is described as a clever, patient, kind and attentive nurse who had 368 patients and had made a total of 3093 visits. The committee at that time was concerned by her work load, and as they had a surplus on the balance sheets they secured the services of an efficient nurse to help her. The balance sheet figures show that at that time Nurse Roche was being paid £80 a year for her services at a time when a nurse in London would earn less than £30. The chairman is reported as saying that it was a great privilege to hear the praises lavished on the

parish nurse by the poor people she had helped spiritually as well as physically.

In a report of the annual meeting of the Parish Nurse Fund for 1896 Nurse Roche's salary had been increased to £90 a year, she had 448 patients, and had made a total of 4799 visits.

There was also a Ladies Work Party superintended by Miss Roche who met once a fortnight to convert old clothing into new garments for her store cupboard. These clothes she would take to needy patients when required, an example of which follows.

During the autumn Nurse Roche was called to a cottage to visit a child suffering from bronchitis, she found the mother in bed with a young baby and three other children without proper clothing. Nurse Roche went back to her house to her store cupboard and found some nice warm garments for the children and sheets for the mother's bed, returning to the cottage she made all the little patients warm and comfortable.

Tragically Annie's illustrious career was brought to an end by a terrible misfortune. While dressing a wound, a scratch on her hand became infected and she contracted septic poisoning. To save her life her arm had to be amputated making it impossible for her to continue nursing. As a result her health and mind were seriously affected and it became necessary for her to receive institutional care. She had been so well thought of, that a fund was raised in the parish to ensure she had as much comfort as was possible.

Annie Parkes Roche died on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> May 1929 at 214 Newtown Road, (Newbury Infirmary) aged 68, the cause of death being Atheroma (thickening of the arteries) and Senility.

Her funeral took place at St. Nicolas Church on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May, the Rev L.R. Majendie conducting the service. Annie was laid to rest in Newtown Road Cemetery in the same grave as her elder sister Jane, who had died in 1904.

## Acting Up!

The dramatic re-enactment of the 1847 Parliamentary Enquiry into the establishment of a cemetery in the town, titled "In the beginning..." drew much praise acclaim from the audience.



*Twelve men good and true? The cast of "In the beginning..."*

Written and directed by Ros Clow, and played by enthusiastic local amateurs, the drama was able to incorporate the precise words used 164 years ago, due to some first rate sleuth work in tracking down the original report. Two sell-out performances in the Town Hall were swiftly followed by hospitality - kindly provided by the Hatchet in the Market Place.

## Nature Notes – Rita Gardner

What a lot's been happening in the past few months! Firstly the Friends received 50 tiny saplings of native trees in February. Three flowering cherries were planted in Newtown Road Cemetery; the remainder (silver birch, rowan, ash and oak) were planted in Shaw Cemetery. Periodic inspection shows the cherry trees to be surviving and growing. There have been private donations to Newtown Road Cemetery of a cedar, a birch and 2 walnut trees and feeding tubes for bees have also been placed in the cemetery. A children's walk in May was enjoyed by a small group of children, accompanied by their parents.

Future consideration is to be given to enhancing the grassland area with a limited selection of wild flowers.



## *Remembrance Sunday*

We are planning to hold another Remembrance Sunday Event on November 13<sup>th</sup> following the successful day we had last year. This was to provide tours, for the general public, of the Commonwealth War Graves in the Newtown Road Cemetery. These will be guided by members of the Friends who will use notes prepared by our researchers. There are 19 graves in all and the tours take about 1 hour to conduct. A few days before the event, we place poppy crosses on all 19 CWGs; in addition, although not included in the tours, we also honour service men who are buried overseas as a result of war service, by placing poppy crosses on the 40 or so family monuments which mention their names.

As before, we are looking for volunteers to help with various aspects of the tours including guides, helpers to greet visitors at the gate and provide membership forms to prospective new members. The event begins at 2pm after the usual ceremonies at the Cenotaph in the Town Centre.

If anyone wishes to help please contact Doug Larsen on 01635 826334 or [dlarsen@ntlworld.com](mailto:dlarsen@ntlworld.com)."

## *Recording inscriptions for posterity - Elizabeth Capewell*

We have a major task on our hands. As you will all know, Mrs Margaret Pattison did an amazing job in the early 1980s making a record of all the monuments and inscriptions providing of the most valuable resources for finding graves and for research. It is vital this record is up-dated, checked and most importantly, placed on the website so that is easily available to people all over the world. A few graves were completely missed from the earlier record and of course there have been interments since 1980.

Another aspect of our effort is to record the nature and condition of the grave, particularly

marking those at risk with local, national or architectural importance so they can be entered on the National At Risk Register set up by the National Federation of Cemetery Friends. One of the saddest examples is the poor state of our most nationally known incumbent, William Corden the Younger, portrait painter to Victoria and Albert, to the north east of the chapel. Another is the fallen sculptured column of the John W T Allee monument to the south east of the Lodge.

Our small team has made a start but it is a slow process, much dependent on the weather. First, we make the graves ready so that inscriptions can be read and photos taken. Then we record inscriptions, noting any lost inscriptions since the 1980s and dates or other information we later find on the internet. The detective work is particularly rewarding. With just a few words left on one monument by the South Wall we discovered the monument was for a John Mills, boiler maker, and his wife Charlotte of Marlborough House, Speen.

This slow detailed examination of the monuments makes the job intriguing as you notice many things that are easily missed, from bugs and flora to the symbols, styles of lettering and rock types.

If you would like to help us, please contact Elizabeth Capewell, [ccme.org@which.net](mailto:ccme.org@which.net) or 30644. It is best to work in pairs to ensure accuracy, safety and to share tasks. It is a task well worth doing and a fascinating exercise discovering more about the people in the cemetery, as well as honouring our past citizens.

## *Appeal For Info*

We're trying to track down reports on the disappearance of THE DISSENTERS' CHAPEL: can you help? There used to be a second chapel in the cemetery which was, allegedly, burnt down and/or demolished. We know from photos it was there in 1950 and gone by 1960, but would like to narrow this down more. Do you know anything about this, please?