



Newsletter 26

Spring 2022

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Chairman's Chatter

Brian Sylvester

SUMMER IS A-COMING IN



Did you learn that song at school? I did, and it has stuck with me ever since, filed away under a number of headings; and it's inclined to pop out every now and then when something triggers it.

Its proper title is in Middle English and is "Sumer is icumen in" and it is remarkable

for the following reasons:

- Incredibly it was written around 1250 (the year, not the time!)
- The composer is unknown, possibly a monk.
- It is one of the earliest pieces of music known to have notes recorded on bar lines and other musical indications.
- It was sung as a round, indeed *the oldest known composition featuring six-part polyphony*, leading to beautiful harmonies.
- The repetition of the words "Sing Cuckoo" is so emblematic, and it is often referred to as "The Cuckoo Song".
- It was used at the opening ceremony of the sad Munich Olympic games, 1972.



If you're not familiar with it, do go online and type in the name, and select video: several renditions are available. It's lovely.

Anyway, this song came to mind during our recent Welcome Day at the cemetery. For once, I wasn't giving a tour in the pouring rain: in fact, it was a beautiful summer-like day and, after our well-attended introductory tour, the revealing nature walk, and the mesmerising medical tour, we were able to sit, chat and take refreshments



outside the chapel. Indeed, *the seed was growing, the meadow blooming and the wood coming into leaf* as the song narrates. [Fortunately, we were spared the billy-goat's breaking wind referred to in the lyrics!]

Many thanks to all those who took part in this event which followed a very enlightening article by Niki Hinman in the Newbury Weekly News: this no doubt created interest in what is truly Newbury's Gem.



Sadly, the weather wasn't to last. The following week the over-night frosts returned and those with magnolias saw their beautiful blossoms quickly turn to brown. What a shame. But the cemetery continues to serve up its seasonal helping of natural colour and splendour. Don't miss it.

My next bit could almost be a "copy-and-paste" from previous newsletters, but it would be negligent to omit our continuing gratitude to everyone who plays a part, great or small, in Newtown Road Cemetery:

The Newbury Town Council and their contractors; your committee; group leaders and their teams; the researchers; our thespians and guides; our photographers; our website guru and the website in-putters; and naturally our revered newsletter editor. And I must add thanks to those who compose the monthly Plant and Grave of the Month: I hope you enjoy them as much as I do.



Once again, heart-felt appreciation to all for the essential contribution you make on our journey of 'Taking the Past into the Future'.

Enjoy your *sumer when it icums in*. Meanwhile do make a note in your diaries of our mid-summer event on 24th June.

Hauser Questions Answered

Ros Clow

In Spring 2010 I wrote about Charles Hauser in this newsletter.

I had discovered an entry in the records, kept at Shaw Cemetery, recording that the Home Office had allowed the exhumation of his remains in 1963. He was to be re-buried in the German Cemetery at Cannock Chase.

Some initial research showed that at the beginning of the war he was employed as a Head Waiter in the Café Royal in London. Who knows, he might have waited on Oscar Wilde or Walter Sickert. He was married to a much younger woman and had a young child, Constance. I was perplexed. I wrote:

“How did he come to Newbury during World War I? His death certificate provided the answer. He had died, aged 45, from pneumonia in ‘The Hospital, Prisoner of War Camp, Racecourse, Greenham’, on the 5th December 1914. We do not know when he came to England; he had anglicised his name, presumably from Hans Klaus, married and had a good job but because he was German he was transported to Greenham and interned.”

Since then, I have found out more. In 1914 there were lots of German waiters in England. At the outbreak of the Great War an anti-German frenzy was reported in the press and all over the country ‘alien enemies’ were rounded up, imprisoned and transported to the ‘concentration camp at Newbury Racecourse’.



The Newbury Concentration Camp sized up to be published in 'The Pageant of the Century' 1933.

The conditions at the racecourse were brought under question by the Hamburg Medical Association, complaints filed, and the British Medical Association mounted an enquiry. They were concerned about the nine doctors among the internees. An internee who was over 60 years old was released and wrote about the conditions.

He said that “1,340 Germans were confined in a training stable, eight or ten men lying together on old straw in a horsebox. Each man received two thin blankets and nothing else. There was no furniture and no light, so that at dusk they must all ‘creep into their straw’. They had to cook their own food in the open air on a hearth consisting of a ditch and some bricks on which stood saucepans which had to be used alike for cooking tea and thin soup....” [*British Medical Journal* Dec 5th, 1914]

A Times newspaper reporter investigated and reported that the charges were over-stated. The Prime Minister visited and made inquiries. The accusations were refuted but on December 12th the BMJ announced that the Newbury Concentration Camp was to be closed forthwith. This was too late for Charles Hauser who had died, aged 45, on 5th December.



He was buried on 8th December 1914 in the Old Cemetery and from the funeral report, we discover that he was a Catholic. Father Green (Catholic priest of St. Joseph's, Newbury) had attended him 'up to the very last' and conducted the funeral service. The funeral cortège consisted of a hearse, behind which came Father Green, eight prisoners of war who bore the coffin, and an armed guard of half-a-dozen National Reserves acting as an escort. *[NWN, 10th December 1914]*

Unsolicited documents arrived (I think from the Red Cross) with more information. Hauser was born in Offenburg, i/Baden, Boldgasse 5. Offenburg is Southeast of Strasbourg. He was referred to as 'Henry Charles' in these documents. He was buried in plot 1521 in our cemetery. I wonder where that was!

In March Dave and I set off for a Warner's Weekend near Nantwich, Cheshire. We couldn't resist visiting the German Military Cemetery at Cannock Chase. Their online diagram and map meant that we knew exactly where to find Hauser. There are four names on each gravestone and from his inscription we discovered that his name was Heinrich Hauser, not Hans as I had guessed back in 2010.



The view of the German Military Cemetery from Heinrich Hauser's grave.

My First FNRC Research Project

Carol Brindley

I joined the FNRC in October 2021 with the idea of researching and sharing family history information for some of the graves. However, Ros suggested something a little bit different...

If you enter the left, un-consecrated, side of the cemetery from Newtown Road and walk diagonally to the top (SW) corner you will see a bench in the grass. Just behind it is the grave of Hannah Thomas (April's Grave of the Month). From there you can walk along the west or the south paths which form the boundary of a grassy plot close to 6,000 sq. ft. For many years dissenters who did not wish to be buried in the consecrated side of the cemetery were buried in this space, including Hannah in 1879 (see arrow). But, in 1906, when the right, consecrated, side of the cemetery near the Chapel became full, this particular plot was consecrated by the Bishop of Reading so that Anglican burials could also take place there.



As Ros and I walked round the cemetery on a frosty February morning, she explained that she was keen for someone to draw up a map showing which of the burials in this plot were Anglican and which were non-conformist. I volunteered for the challenge, not realising at the time quite how much of a challenge it might be! I'm only a couple of months in and already I have a feeling that it's going to be a long job, but I am hoping I will eventually have that new map and some interesting stories to share with you at a later date.

Of course, it may prove harder than I anticipate so, in the meantime, if you see someone walking backwards and forwards over that small patch of grass, it might be me following in the footsteps of Jean Sprackland, author of 'The Silent Mansions', who says she will walk through a graveyard "*trying to read it with the soles of my feet and up through my body. As if by wanting hard enough I could understand everything that had happened there.*"

Well, if it works for her ...

ENTERTAINING EPITAPHS
Simon Gilker, died November 5, 1696, aged 48 <i>Location: Church of Holy Trinity, Milton Regis, Kent</i>
<i>Epitaph: Killed by means of a Rockett</i>
<i>Poor old Simon may have been the very first victim of a Guy Fawkes night accident. He died 90 years after the gunpowder plot was foiled, and just as fireworks were introduced into the celebrations.</i>
© Daily Mirror

Eileen Barnes

Another hard-working member of the History Group has died recently. In our early days, Eileen was a regular attendee at meetings, already an experienced family historian. When she became unable to go out and about, she started checking our files to make sure that everything in them was on the website. I would take the files round to her and stop for a cuppa.

She was a policewoman in her younger days and her community work included ensuring Wash Common had a better Community Hall. Here she is, with Doug Larsen, back in 2014 at one of our Welcome Days.



EX LIBRIS JULIE GODDARD

Brian Sylvester

Our late Friend, Julie Goddard, was a great historian, and had gathered a goodly number of books to read and aid her research.

Most of these have been passed to Oxfam to be enjoyed by others whilst raising money for that worthy cause. But the following local books may be of interest to you and have been held back. You are welcome to them in exchange for a donation to the Friends' coffers and our own 'worthy cause'!

If interested, please let Brian know on **01635 580 012**. Many thanks

- **BEEF BACON AND BAG PUDDING** - Old Berkshire in the Civil War - David Disbury, 1998
- **BERKSHIRE** - A County History - Daphne Phillips, 1993
- **BERKSHIRE TALES OF MYSTERY & MURDER** - David Kidd-Hewitt, 2004
- **DID YOU KNOW? NEWBURY - A MISCELLANY** - The Francis Frith Collection, 2006
- **MEMORIES OF NEWBURY** - Camp Hopson & Newbury Building Society, 1999
- **NEWBURY THEN AND NOW** - Sue Hopson, 1988
- **ROYAL COUNTY OF BERKSHIRE** - Berkshire County Council, *undated*
- **TALES OF OLD BERKSHIRE** - Cecilia Millson, 2011

And finally, **NEWBURY ROUNABOUT II** by The Creative History Group, 1991, which includes eight enlightening contributions with a wealth of local knowledge.

News on the website

Paul Thompson

I am always grateful to the hard-working friends behind the scenes that are entering biographies, histories, memorial transcriptions, newspaper cuttings etc. to the history records on the website. It is massive job, and many hands certainly contribute to providing as much information as possible to the family historians around the world who look to us as a valuable and accurate source of Newbury history.

The website has been running for over 10 years now, and in that time nearly 40,000 pieces of information had been added to the database!

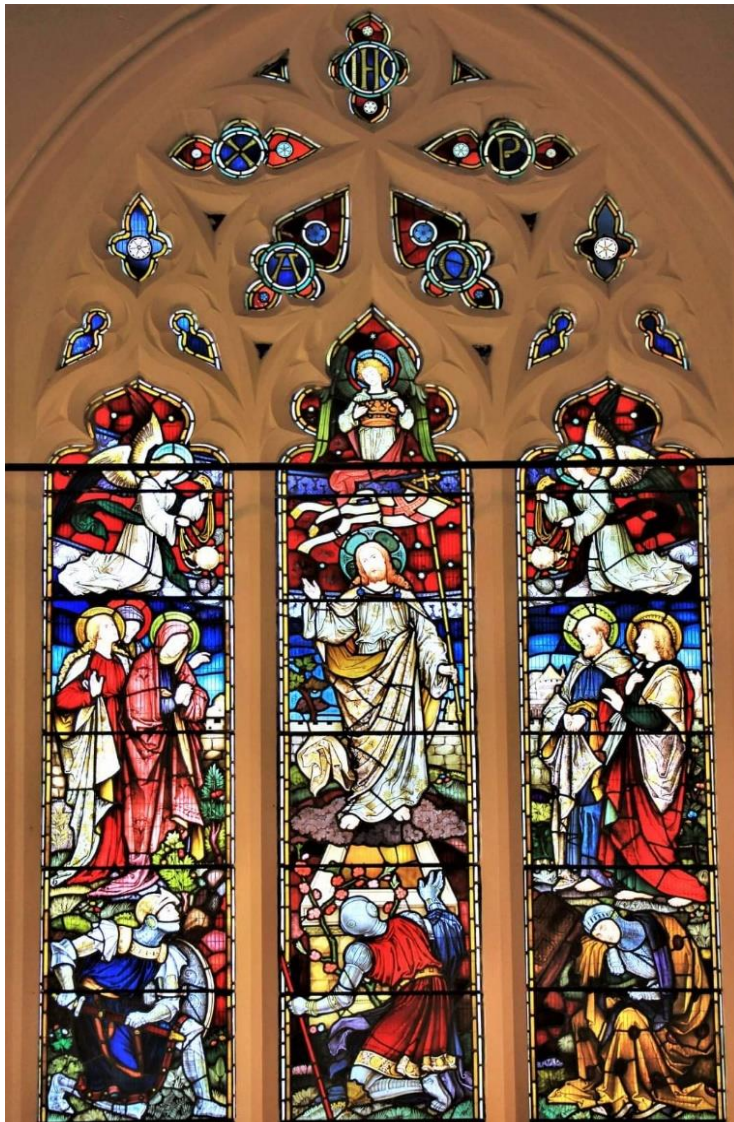
It is inevitable that sometimes little pieces of information have been duplicated or not included for one reason or another, so there is a project running at the moment to tidy up the database.

Dave Clow and a team of volunteers are going through all the information held in the History Group's huge collection of archive files, to make sure that every scrap of each person's known history is included on the web site, and removing any duplicates found.

It is hoped that this project will make the website a much more accurate source of information for our users.

ENTERTAINING EPITAPHS
<p><i>Found in Elmwood cemetery, Burlington, Vermont, USA</i></p> <p><i>She lived with her husband fifty years.</i></p> <p><i>And died in the confident hope of a better life.</i></p>
<p><i>The grave of Margaret Daniels</i></p> <p><i>Hollywood cemetery, Richmond, Virginia, USA</i></p> <p><i>She always said her feet were killing her but nobody believed her.</i></p>

ALPHA & OMEGA



Photographer: Chris Culley
Newbury & Thatcham Past & Present Facebook

The beautifully restored stained-glass window* in the Newtown Road Cemetery Chapel is packed with symbolism. For example, the stylised apple tree refers to the Fall of Man through eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, whilst Christ's redemptive power is implied by the blossoming apple branch that rises from his tomb.

And the tracery above blazons several sacred letters among which are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet; Alpha and Omega, or -

ΑΩ

Can you spot them in the photo?

Wikipedia kindly informs us: “**Alpha** (Α or α) and **Omega** (Ω or ω) are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, and a title of **Christ** and **God** in the Book of

Revelation.” In other words, “The beginning and the end.”

Recently Newbury Town Council remembered its own Alpha beginning in its present form, 25 years ago. And at their celebratory event a timeline of their activities was shown which included this cutting:

So there we have it in black and white – the very beginning of The Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery – thanks to the Newbury Town Council, the leadership of Elizabeth Capewell and the pioneering band of volunteers; dating back to 1st April(!) 2009. Fortunately, the Tree of Knowledge has flourished since then and we have not (to our knowledge) fallen foul of any Forbidden Fruits!

From that Alpha beginning we can take pride in what has been achieved by unlocking an important phase of the town's social history as well as discovering a fascinating insight into our natural environment. And these we have been able to share to a much wider audience through tours, plays, monologues, talks and our website.

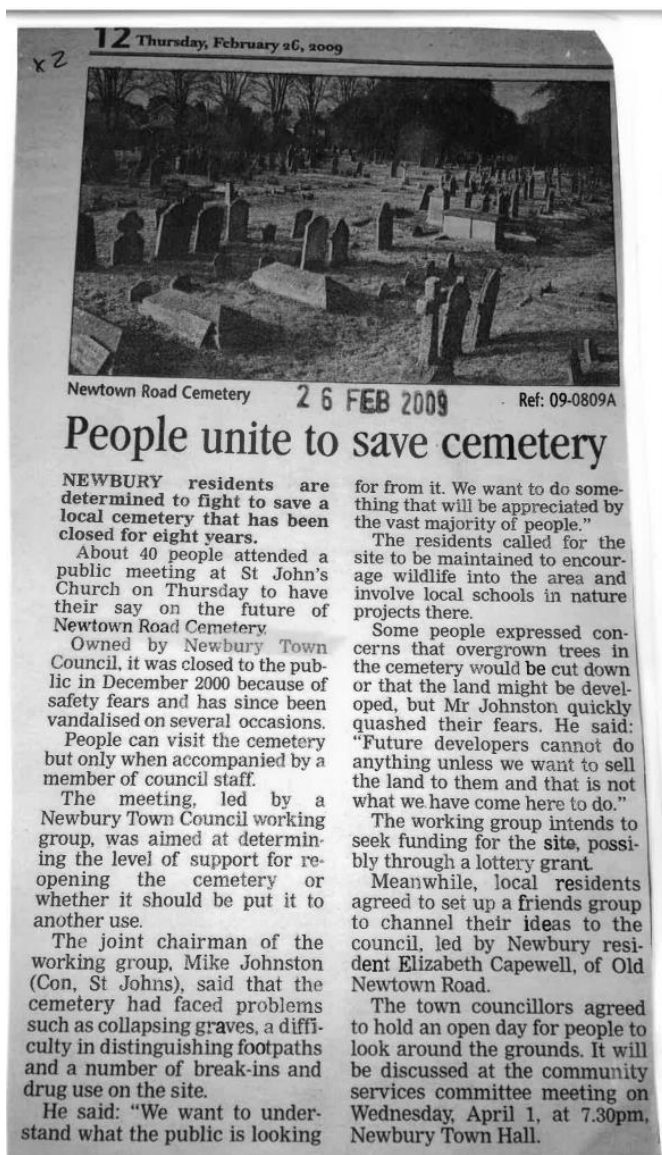
So is Omega, our end, in sight? Far from it!

- Whilst we have been successful in recording the inscriptions on most of our gravestones, there's still another estimated two year's work (weather permitting) to be carried out to complete that task.
- Of the 12,000+ "residents" in the grounds, we know about the lives of just a third of them. And no doubt further incredible life stories will emerge and more tales written.
- On the natural side, we continue to be amazed at the discoveries which come to light each year.

Therefore don't bury us just yet – come and join us on this wonderful voyage of discovery.

** P.S. The full Condition Report of the chapel window before its restoration may be viewed on our website - see:*

<http://www.fnrnewbury.org.uk/docs/Chapel%20Stained%20Glass%20Window%20Report.pdf>



Cemetery Tree Maintenance

James Heasman (Newbury Town Council)

Newtown Road Cemetery, as with most cemeteries, in the UK have some of the most impressive tree stocks. They tend to be a place where trees are left to their own devices, to grow without the need of human assistance. Due to this you tend to get some of the slower growing native trees such as Yews, and larger trees such as Cedars thrive in these environments being able to grow to their full potential.

Newtown Road Cemetery has a varied management plan in relation to its tree stocks. Trees such as Limes and Horse chestnuts follow a rotation of Pollarding every 10-12 years, this is best for the trees as they have traditionally been pollarded over the years and are suited to have this done. Other trees such as the yews and Cedars are left to grow out and dealt with when they need attention. In line with this, it is why the Cemetery is closed on windy days to protect the public if one of them sheds a limb.



Newbury Town Council has all their tree stocks externally surveyed every 5 years by a professional tree inspector, who assesses the trees for any faults and does a detailed report on each tree as to whether any work needs to be undertaken in regard to safety. They are then visually inspected by our in-house team periodically usually after high wind events to check for any damage.

I am often asked myself whether a tree is safe. That is a very ambiguous question. Visually a tree can look safe but there may be decay inside that is not seen. What we do as a council is manage that risk by monitoring the trees. This can be for fruiting bodies that could cause this internal decay and visually assessing the trees for signs of issues.

Midsummer Evening Opening

Ros Clow

Date for your diary!

This year we will open on Friday 24th June in the evening.

Planning is in the early stages, but we hope there will be guided tours, displays in the Chapel and hopefully the moth collector will show us what is living in the cemetery this year.

Moths are released about 9.00pm.

If we have enough volunteers, we would like to offer refreshments as we did on the last Welcome Day. Can you help?



Chris Foster releasing a moth



Golden sunlight illuminates a monument through the shade of the summer greenery

THE FRIENDS NEED...



YOU!

Yes, we're looking for volunteers for research at the West Berks Library - just for a couple of hours a week.

You'd fix your own times and days, popping in when it's most convenient for you.

It would involve looking through the Newbury Weekly News microfilm from the past to pick out the individual histories of the Cemetery Residents, so that these may be incorporated into our website.

The equipment is easy to use, and full training will be given.

So, if you can spare a little time, and are looking for a fascinating insight into the town's history and culture, or just want to ask further questions, please contact

The leader of our history group - ROS CLOW

01635 40188 or email: raclow@ntlworld.com

Remember our slogan

"Taking the Past into the Future"

and be part of it.