



Newsletter 30

Spring 2024

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Chairman's Letter

Maureen Hudd

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter. There has been a lot of activity both in the Cemetery and outside. The poplars have been pollarded and other trees lopped and made safer. High winds recently have caused some tree damage and temporary closure of the Cemetery but hopefully we will now have some calmer weather and be able to enjoy the signs of Spring as snowdrops and primroses begin to appear.

I hope you were able to purchase a copy of The Friends' calendar. This was new venture for us and made possible firstly by the amazing photography of Andy Cantwell and then the hard work of Lynette and Bob Edwell who masterminded the production of the calendar. We did have some calendars left over and our enterprising Secretary, Carol Brindley together with permission from Andy to use his photographs, has produced cards and bookmarks from the calendar pictures. These will be available for sale,



while stocks last, at forthcoming events.



By the time you read this Newsletter we will have had the first of our Coffee Mornings. We are introducing these events as an opportunity for Friends to gather socially and enjoy the natural surroundings of the Cemetery and get to know each other. The Coffee Morning was very successful in spite of the weather,

we had 18 people including four Committee members and some interesting contacts were made. We are looking forward to better weather for our Spring Open Day on April 20th when hopefully the ground will be a little less soggy.

We are still working on getting a water supply re-connected in the Cemetery and John Gardner is in negotiations with Thames Water.

We have been able to re-locate all our files to the Riverside Centre where we have a secure room, and it is possible to have filing sessions with space to spread out. We are grateful to Ros and Dave Clow who have given a home to all the files for many years and now have an 'extra' room in their house.

Do keep an eye on the website for information about forthcoming events and do spread the word about the Cemetery and the work we do.

We are very much in need of Monument Recorders as a number of Friends who were doing this are now not able to. We are in a race against time as some of the inscriptions are becoming almost illegible. If you can offer to fulfil this role or you know someone who can please get in touch. You may read elsewhere in the Newsletter about an exciting development with Monument Recording.

"In Ever Loving Memory of our Darling Daughters"

by Carol Brindley



On one of my earliest walks around the cemetery I noticed a fairly large cross. I was struck by the simple design; sharp angles and flat, smooth surfaces. No curves, or swirls. No ornate carving. Below it, in plain block capitals was written:

**IN EVER LOVING
MEMORY OF OUR
DARLING DAUGHTERS**

DAISY MILDRED SAVAGE

who fell asleep in Jesus
Oct 30th 1922
in her 21st year

BERYL HILDA SAVAGE

who departed this life
July 14th 1921
in her 18th year.

I was surprised that such an austere memorial was for two girls, and I wondered why their parents hadn't also been laid to rest there at a later date. It all seemed rather sad; as though grief had erased all the superficiality of the world and left just the bare bones.

I thought about those words a lot - "our darling daughters". How could two young women have died so close together? How could the parents have weathered such a tragedy? What was their story?

In the summer of 1921 Beryl was having the time of her life. She was a probationer nurse at Newbury District Hospital; training had been standardised and regulated thanks to Florence Nightingale and others. Beryl was on the cusp of a highly valued and very worthwhile career. Public service was in her blood. Her father was a Police Constable and the family had recently moved into the Police House at Crux Easton. Her sister, Daisy, was also a nurse probationer.

While the work was hard and the hours long, Beryl found time for her boyfriend, George, a gardener at nearby Hollington. They became engaged and, although quite young, were obviously planning a happy life together.

On the 6th of July Beryl became very ill whilst at work. She was admitted to the sick bay and the doctor prescribed treatment for what was considered to be a touch of gastritis. The Matron called Beryl's father who straightaway came to see her. He asked what he should tell George. "He's given me up", said Beryl. Surprised at this sudden turn of events, her father asked her to explain what had happened.

In the preceding few days Beryl had received two anonymous letters, signed by '*a friend*' saying that George had been seen walking out with another girl. Beryl had written to George demanding an explanation. George wrote back. "I can only say it's not true" he said. "This is not the first time this has happened ... and I think it will be best for us to part this time. I have always been true to you and will never forget you as long as I live." *

Six days later Beryl told the Night Sister that she had unlocked the hospital medicine cabinet and swallowed some tablets. The pills were corrosive, and Beryl died from internal injuries. The coroner's inquest judged her death to be suicide by poisoning.

Beryl's sister, Daisy, continued to work at the hospital, but sadly, just one year later, she became ill with an exophthalmic goitre – a type of hyperthyroidism. Beryl and Daisy's parents must have been distraught to lose both of their beautiful, blossoming young girls, denied the future that would, most likely, have moulded them into caring, compassionate medical women. Their loss must have been compounded when the Police transferred them away from the Newbury area, but that was the nature of Police work at the time. I believe PC George Savage died in Petersfield in 1933 and his widow moved to Christchurch to live with her one remaining child, Victor.

Having learned the story of the two girls, the plainness of the monument seems inevitable. How could their parents have even begun to discuss extravagant embellishment; to talk about the words they wanted to write, to choose carvings of roses or a statue of an angel? Maybe there was no space in this double tragedy for such decision-making; their loss would have been all-consuming.

I walk past it often...

Yes, on the one hand, I am still constantly jolted by the stark silhouette of the cross when I view it against an oppressive, purple, stormy sky. I see an incongruous expression of remembrance for two lively, loving, dedicated girls. And I imagine it to be the saddest of signs of how much their parents loved their “darling daughters” – unable to function or think straight without them.

But, on the other hand, I have come to love the undecorated, unadorned stone when I catch it cutting a steely-edged stencil out of a blue summer sky. Then, I see a truly accurate reflection of two fledgling probationer nurses who would, I believe, have been modest, humble, no-nonsense and unpretentious – exactly like the cross that commemorates their short, but generous lives.

Either way, to me, it is perfect.

**Source: NWN, July 1, 1921. Coroner’s Report*

Full story: <http://www.fncnewbury.org.uk/persondetails.asp?PersonID=43>

Newtown Road Cemetery – A Personal View

Lynette Edwell

I first noticed Newtown Road Cemetery when I arrived to view the house which eventually became my new home in Priory Road in 1978. It was an enclosed open space, overgrown and wild, accessible only to the grave visitors who called infrequently, using the water tap by the main entrance gate.



I never went in as it never appeared to be open. Until the 1980s, when my friends Yvonne and Louise Veness were installed as Newbury Town Council tenants, moving their Newbury Wildlife Hospital from Pelican Lane. It was sometimes a tight fit, with the variety of birds which ranged from buzzards and owls to pigeons and starlings – lodged in makeshift cages and sheds in the back garden.

It became a busy centre for people calling in with injured birds, and the occasional truckers who corresponded with Louise on the citizen's band radio she installed and ran from the front room. You never knew who you would find there, visitors ranged from Mrs Hopson to the Countess of Craven - she knew them all.

Photographers would call to take pictures, especially of the owls and swans. There was one barn owl injured in a road accident that survived with his head upside down. There was a heron in the pond, made up near the rear cemetery wall in the right-hand corner, with an artificial leg, constructed by a local vet.

It was a natural progression for the birds and squirrels to be released into the cemetery, where they could stay for a while, being fed daily until they were strong enough to take off on their own. But the little rabbits that sometimes escaped the garden did not fare so well, they lacked the ability to adapt in the wilds of the graveyard and were picked off by the visiting fox.



they had suddenly grown in the night.

My daughter and her friend were also allowed privileged access to the graveyard where they spent happy hours playing and building a tree house during their summer holidays. We noted the woman in dark clothes making notes of the graves, an important document in later years, and the white shining tombstones to the dead of the two world wars that appeared mysteriously and suddenly as if

Sometime after Louise Veness died and Yvonne was rehoused elsewhere, a decision was made to open the cemetery to the public. Thanks to the work of Newbury Town Council and the Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery we now have a wonderful amenity, open to the public to visit and enjoy. There are still inhumations in established family graves and ashes scattered, so it continues with its original use.

But now records are being compiled of the lives of the people who were buried there, the wealthy and the famous, but also, unusually, the ordinary people whose relatives frequently visit and request their details. The history group attached to the friends are willing and happy to assist people to locate graves and to pass on the history of the people they have researched. Family members are also encouraged to do their own research and



to share that with the group. Several times a year there are conducted tours of the cemetery giving its history, and the history of the occupants of selected graves.

In addition, the nature group are busy every month recording the wildflowers, animals, birds and insects that reside there. On Midsummer Day each year, moths are humanely collected, placed in test tubes, so that the various varieties can be observed, before they are released carefully at sunset.

Membership is open to all. There are also open days when the public is invited to visit and join special history and nature tours. If you are not already a member, why not consider joining us?

Samhein in the Cemetery

Ros Clow

A joint project between City Arts and Newtown Road Cemetery, Newbury.

In October 2023, we joined forces with the community arts centre to celebrate Samhain. Samhain, a Gaelic word pronounced 'sow-win', is a Celtic ceremony as the year passes from light to dark. The precursor of Halloween, which here is now very American.



Participants started by doing crafts, mostly decorating small skulls, at City Arts. Then they were called to the domain of the Great Memergiser (downstairs), played by Steve Wallis. He explained their tasks for the evening. They had to follow three alleys towards the cemetery. They will meet three wise women who will give them items to carry and information to remember.



Two volunteers shepherded the group along the alleys. The 'Maiden' gave each person a sprig of rosemary (for remembrance). Then to acquire energy they must touch green on green. They used the rosemary to swipe any overhanging branches. The 'Mother' gave them each a thin red candle. As they walked along the outside high wall of the cemetery, they could hear a drum beating, sticks

snapping, a whining noise, screams.

The 'Crone' gave them a black stone decorated with a rune.



The Crone then took the group to the cemetery gate and called out 'Is anybody there?' The cemetery sexton appeared, opened the gates and told the group to follow him/her. As they walked along, they were told to 'touch iron' to increase their strength. Many of our graves have iron railings around.

Eventually they reached the ceremonial space where, lo and behold, the Great Memergiser had appeared. First, he asked them to crush the rosemary and smell it, then drop it to the ground and stamp on it. Then they all lit their candle, still holding it. He asked what they had been told by the Wise Women, who might be memergised. Then they held their stone and started chanting. The chant, as it got faster, became 'We Remember Them'.

At this point they had turned around and were facing the Chapel which was in darkness. Inside we had disco smoke machines with coloured lights. The doors of the Chapel slowly opened, the smoke billowed out and through the smoke walked the 'ghost'.

The ghost thanked them for memergising him/her. Said a little about what they were going to do with this opportunity and walked away. The group were led towards the Chapel. As they reached it, the lights were switched on and they came inside. Warm spiced apple juice awaited them and the Magister. (That was me in my academic gown). I asked them to look at my photos (19th century CDVs) to see if they could spot the ghost they had seen.

Of course, they couldn't despite all the photos being taken by professional photographers in Newbury. No-one had bothered to write on the photos who each person was. Also, they could match the design of the rune on the stone to see what its meaning was.

So, two messages to take away. The importance of remembering those who had died every year in some way (flowers, visiting graves, looking at letters, photos, talking about them) and secondly, taking time to print off photos and then writing who each person was on the back. A good winter evening project.

We did eight performances over three nights, £10 per person. We had three different 'ghosts' all based on real people buried near the ceremonial space. (a motor mechanic played by Dave Stubbs, a female parish visitor played by Judith Bunting and a wine merchant/Freemason, played by Brian Sylvester.). All researched by Christine Gambles.

It was the most complicated thing I have ever done in my life! But such fun!

Note: 'memergise' is a word I made up for a story I wrote for Halloween in 2017. Remembering someone gives them the energy to walk about on Halloween and talk with anyone, ghost or not, they meet in the cemetery.



Dates for the diary

Saturday April 20 th 10am – 4pm	In the cemetery and Chapel	Welcome Day <i>The Chapel will be open all day, with displays and refreshments.</i> Find-A-Grave service available (please contact us before the event so we can track down your particular grave) Guided Tours - more information <i>later</i> .
Wednesday June 19 th 4pm – 9pm	In the cemetery and Chapel	Midsummer Event and Moth Release <i>The Chapel will be open from 4.00pm onwards, with displays and refreshments.</i> Find-A-Grave service available (please contact us before the event so we can track down your particular grave). Guided Tours - more information later. Moth release late evening.
Tuesday 1 st October 7:30pm – 9:30pm	St. Francis de Sale Church Hall	Annual General Meeting <i>A short business meeting followed by coffee & cake plus a guest speaker.</i>

A Tale of Two Archives - Riverside and Highclere Castle.

Ros Clow

Just before Christmas 2023, a group of Friends helped me to move the two trolleys and their full load of lever arch files of historical research to their new home in the Riverside Community Centre, in a broom cupboard on the ground floor.

We had an additional trolley (new) to assemble, and several donated empty lever arch files and the rest of the day was spent filling three trolleys. Then they were locked away, with a plastic box to store blank front sheets, plastic envelopes, date stamps and post-its ready for the first filing session there. This sits on the sink in the cupboard. Not exactly glamorous!

This February I organised a Filing Day at the Riverside (15th February). Very few Friends were able to help so I put out a plea for help to my U3A Tai Chi class. In the end we had seven of us Friends and nine Tai Chi volunteers. Despite working flat out from 10.30am till 6.30pm we were not able to finish, so we did it all again on 29th February. We had eight volunteers that day and we did finish. Our historical archives were up to date for the first time in a year, and best of all they were not in my house!

One of the individual's particulars we had filed was Charles Stevens. He worked for Lord Carnarvon at his Pixton Estate in Somerset, near Dartmoor. When he retired, the local school

presented him with an engraved silver tea service. As Charles never married, I wondered if the tea service might still be at Highclere.

I emailed the Castle asking for it to be forwarded to the Archives. It was and the archivist David Rymill replied. No, they didn't have the tea service, but they did have a letter written by Charles. Would I like a photo of it for our website? And he had found some other documents relating to Charles's father Robert who worked at Highclere and then managed Pixton, essentially a house for hunting, shooting and fishing.

Would I? I could feel this newsletter article coming on and asked if we could visit and take our own photos.

So, on Tuesday 5th March in the afternoon, Maureen Hudd, Brian Sylvester and Dave Clow (with camera) accompanied me to Highclere Castle. Brian has worked there many times before (weddings and formal dinner toastmaster) so I asked him to drive.

As we were waiting for David Rymill to collect us from the back door, a charming lady walking her dogs asked if we were OK. We were as we were sitting in the sunshine. It was Lady Carnarvon!

David started by showing us the stable block. Since our first emails I had added Henry Bickell to our list. Henry was the head coachman at Highclere. His daughter married a Newbury taxidermist called Ralph Alder, and she and Ralph are buried in Newtown Road Cemetery. David had found a letter written by Henry indicating which horses he wanted bred from and therefore he would have been a frequent visitor to the stables. David had concluded that Henry lived on the estate, in a house now called 'Fairmile'.



Fairmile – Home of Henry Bickell



Ros, Brian, and Maureen in David Rymill's office.

We were taken inside and up stairs, lots of them. Maureen and I decided not to brave the stone spiral staircases and used the red carpeted ones to reach the top floor.

In David's office, wallpapered with rectangles of gilded leather wallpaper, we were offered chairs and then David began to show us the gems he had unearthed from the

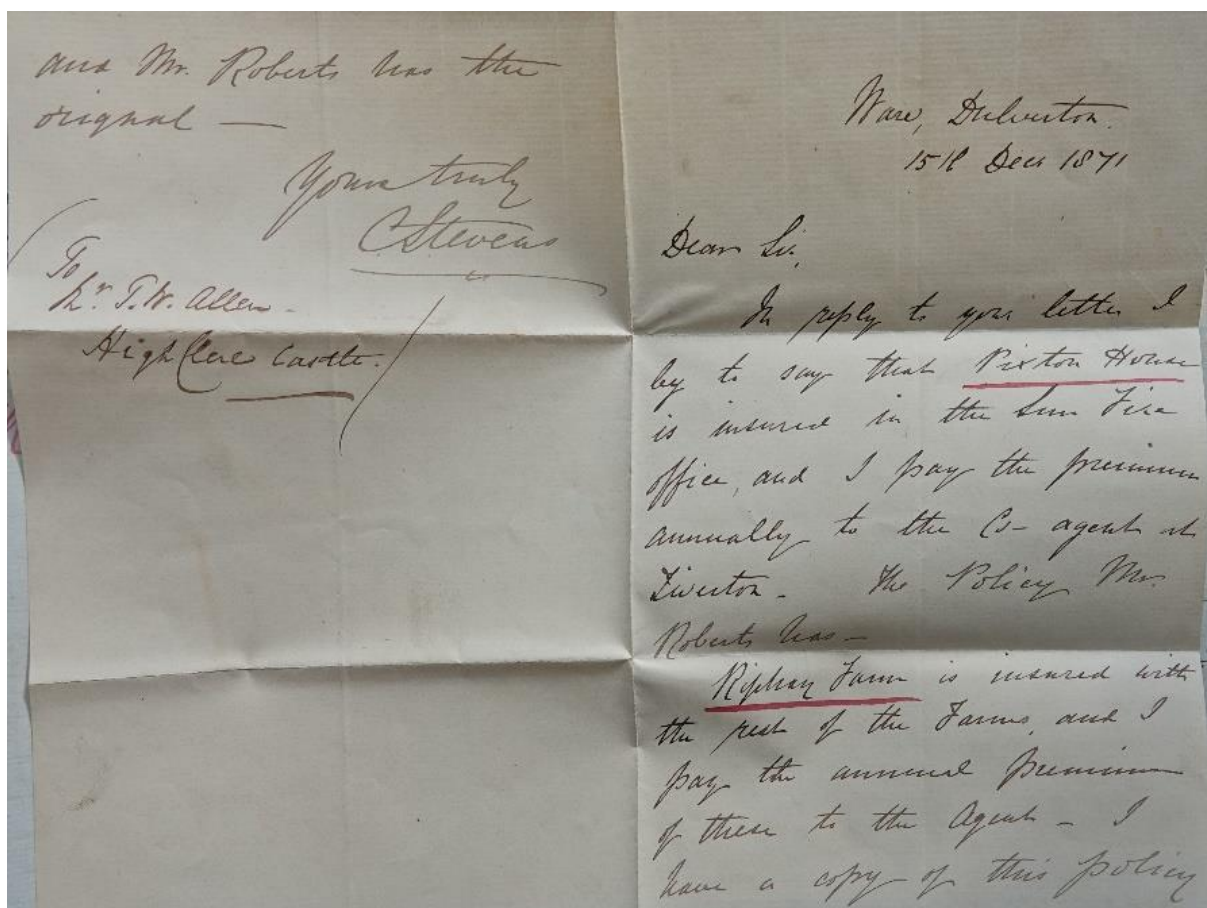
archives. Dave was set up by the window looking out on the park, to take photos, Brian had his phone at the ready to check on our website as different names were mentioned.

We had asked about Ralph Alder in case the Castle had any of his stuffed animals. (They still sell well at auctions). David thought he'd found a receipt in that name. He was going down to the archives. Did we want to go with him?

Down we went, down stone stairs, into a locked – guess what- broom cupboard. A bit bigger than ours at the Riverside and no trolleys but full of shelves, ledgers and boxes.

Back in the office David started going through bundles of old papers and checking any Newbury or Speenhamland names. And there was a receipt to Lady Carnarvon for repairing a fur rug, from Ralph Alder, 133 Bartholomew Street, 6s.0d, 1922.

We said our goodbyes, promising to work together in the future. Brian took us on a detour to photograph 'Fairmile' on our way home. What a great expedition!



Letter by Charles Stevens

Monument Recording Group

Sue Kitchener



I have recently taken over the role of Monument Recording from Doug Larson, and I will do my best to continue with his good work. I have, along with Jan been recording monuments in the Cemetery for quite a while so I do know a few of the areas well.

I have also been helping Dave Clow by adding Mrs Pattison's description to the monuments that have not yet been recorded, so were not on the website. This was a mammoth task, especially for Dave who checked every name on the website to see if it needed input, it

is now finished. There are still some graves that do need to be recorded. Looking forward to better weather for that!!

We have recruited our first Duke of Edinburgh Award candidate. I had a very good session with her on Saturday, although it was really cold and the ground very wet, she seemed quite happy to dig around the graves to find the inscriptions, and was very pleased when she found a grave that had the inscription of the husband and wife as we expected, but then she discovered two daughters added, but not recorded on Mrs Pattison's records. Hopefully the cold didn't put her off!

