



Newsletter 16

Autumn 2017

The Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery, c/o 100 Enborne Road, Newbury, RG14 6AN

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Chairman's Chatter...

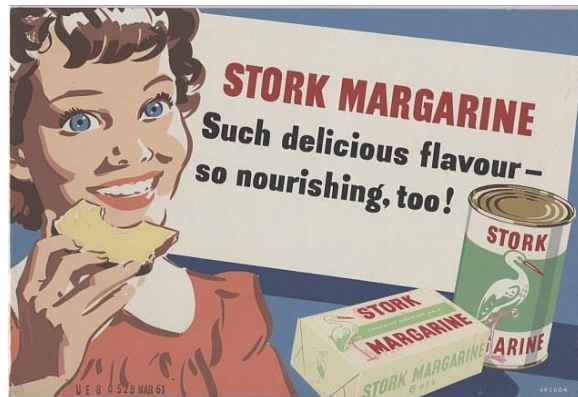
Brian Sylvester

Dear Friends

Do you remember that advertising slogan
"Our Fame is Spreading"?

Was it for Stork Margarine? [By the way: I wonder what became of that!]

Anyway, I think it's fair to say that our fame also spreads as we continue to enlarge our website, and receive enquiries from around the world about our "residents" in Newtown



Road Cemetery. Mention has been made previously to requests from the Antipodes, The Dominion of Canada, and from those rebellious Colonies of America.

More recently, however, we've had two very interesting enquiries from outside of the Empire – from Belgium and Brazil. Let me explain how-come.

First, we were contacted by Tom Bekers, a Belgian school teacher, about his three-times great-grandfather CHARLES GEE TAYLOR who died in 1890. He had visited the family grave, sent us a photo of his ancestor, and was curious about what further information we could offer.

At first, we located this obituary published in the Newbury Weekly News

Old Gee Taylor is dead, and with him has departed one of the oldest inhabitants, and certainly one of the characters of the town.

The old man was well known for miles around, having during his life taken an active part in sick visiting and temperance agitation; quaint in

his manner, out spoken in his opinions, he offended many, but there was a kind heart beating behind all, and many poor sick homes have missed his visits during the time he has not been so active as formerly.

"He was a rum old chap, but well meant in his intentions" is the short mode in which C. Gee Taylor's biography has been put in a single sentence. *But are not the chronicles of C. Gee Taylor already written in a book which he himself published?* - a characteristic of the man.



We were to learn that all family archives had been destroyed when an earlier ancestor married a Roman Catholic, breaking the mould of Wesleyan Methodism faithfully followed by CGT. So now we faced a new challenge – could we track down these “chronicles”?

And Bingo! We did – in fact Double Bingo because we were able to trace:

- A set of 3, 16-page pamphlets in West Berkshire Museum’s collection, stuck into the back of a copy of Walter Money’s Popular History of Newbury:
- A later 40-page booklet held in Reading which largely repeated the contents of the earlier pamphlets.

These make absolutely incredible reading: do try it by going onto:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/afpo6op8gqumxzv/AAApW8lxuqI6xEeYbFPyF8mfa/Charles%20Gee%20Taylor%201%20vol?dl=0>

It’s just like a Dickens’ novel – except it’s hard fact! Life was so very harsh in those days.

Tom was naturally delighted with this additional material and promises to visit us on the next possible opportunity.

[Incidentally we were also able to tell Tom that one of CGT’s daughters, Emma, had died from an accidental overdose of Laudanum which came as a surprise to him. You can read the account on our website.]

And now to the enquiry from Brazil. We were contacted by Juliana Mori who is working on a mini-documentary about penicillin’s history they’re producing for the online ‘Museum of Pharmacy Universe’, which is currently under development.

On learning that we have the first penicillin patient, ALBERT ALEXANDER (pictured right), buried in NRC she wondered if we had a photo of him and any further particulars. And so, we were indeed able to provide pictures as well as contact details with a relevant body in Oxford. From them she was able to gain yet more information and which has now been added to our Friends' website.



Juliana also requested pictures of the cemetery in general, and the family grave which we were able to do to her delight, and which will be included in their documentary. So, another satisfied customer.



Now Ros Clow has been at it again – she's indefatigable! She's written yet another play which, as you will find elsewhere in this newsletter I'm sure, is to be performed in November. It involves those we've come to recognise as "dissenters", that is to say non-Church of Englanders, who formed a large portion of Newbury residents a hundred years ago, and apparently were quite vocal.

And they were up in arms when they found that part of their rates were to pay for children's education in C of E Schools. You will see how this pans out in Ros's play "what she wrote".

During her research, she stumbled across a website called "My Primitive Methodist Ancestors" which included references to some of those involved in this dispute, and some of whom are buried in NRC. As a result, contact was made with the Project Director of the Primitive Methodist Museum and a most useful exchange of data has been achieved, and our website further extended. Just type "Methodists" or "Primitive Methodists" into the Google search box at the top of our website and you'll see what I mean. Or go onto:

http://www.myprimitivemethodists.org.uk/category/newtown_road_cemetery.

So there we have it, great teamwork from your committee, ably backed by other Friends doing such things as nature-watching, website enhancement, gravestone reading, research, typing and filing, without whom none of this would be possible. And, as ever, our gratitude to the Councillors and Officers of Newbury Town Council for their support and encouragement. As our slogan says we are "Taking the Past into the Future"!

I hope to see you all for a cuppa, a chat and a video show at our Annual General Meeting on **23rd October** which will be held this year north of the town at the Riverside Community Centre (see elsewhere for full details).

Book Reading event in the Chapel

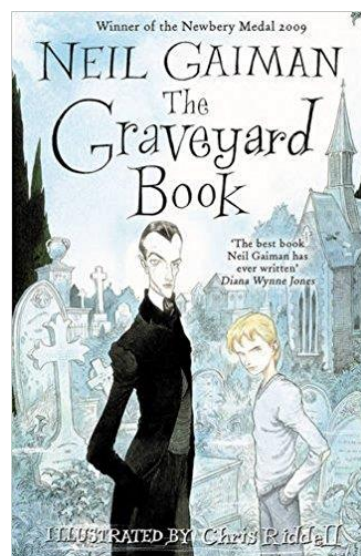
Ros Clow

The Graveyard Book, by Neil Gaiman, will be read by members of the Newbury U3A Booklovers group at 5.00pm every evening from Monday October 30th till Friday November 3rd.

The readings will take place in the candlelit chapel. Children must be accompanied by an adult and is a **FREE EVENT**.

Children need to bring a cushion to sit on. Chairs available for adults.

The Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman, who wrote Coraline, was one of the books read by our book club this year. It is well written and quite spooky, about a child brought up by the residents of a cemetery. We thought it would lend itself to being read around Halloween and have decided to give it a try. Reading will start at dusk and last for about an hour maximum each night of the week. It is probably most suitable for 11-13 year olds. Please tell your friends who have children to come and try it out.



Dates for Your Diaries

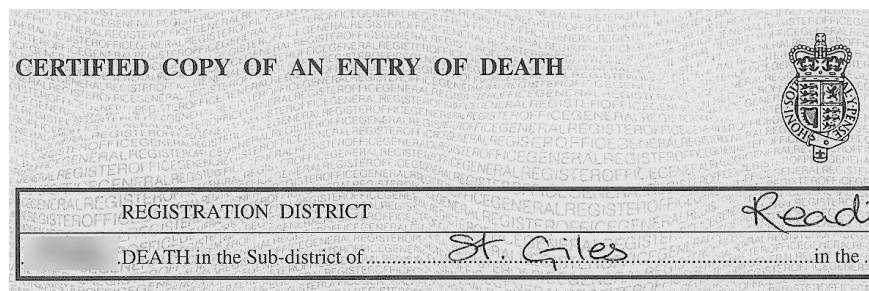
Don't forget to add these dates to your diary.

FNRC AGM and Film	Monday, 23 rd October 2017 7:30pm – 9pm	Riverside Community Centre Main Hall
Remembrance Event	Saturday, 11 th November 2017 10am – 3pm	The Cemetery and chapel
Passive Resistance	Saturday 25 th November 2017 Matinee and evening performances	The Phoenix Centre, Newtown Road
Passive Resistance	Sunday 26 th November 2017 Matinee performance only	The Phoenix Centre, Newtown Road
Fundraising Coffee Morning	Thursday, 30 th November 2017 10am – 12pm	St. Nicolas Church Hall

Monument Recording Group

Doug Larsen

As we learn more about the names and histories of the people buried in Newtown Road Cemetery we become more aware of causes of death. We don't consider this to be morbid or distasteful but part of the natural process of life.



Naturally, most people who are buried here have lived a full life and their death was the culmination of the natural process of living. Some of them are notable because of their achievements in life and we research their histories. Our History Group have something of the order of 2,000 records of lives that have been researched, are being researched or are listed for future research but it is important that we understand that all the people buried here are of equal interest to us.

In the case of children's deaths, however, we see a tragedy that has unfolded, a life not fully lived. There can be no "natural" cause and we feel that such deaths should be given an explanation almost as a duty towards the person who could not live their life because nature did not give them this chance.

We have recently found out about such case in the life of a 12 year old girl who died in the middle of the last century and is buried in the Cemetery. We cannot reveal her name because we wish to protect the anonymity of her family.



We have been able to find that the cause of her death was from asthemia, cystitis and Spina Bifida and can only guess at the pain she must have endured all her life. We can only imagine also the suffering of her family in an age when medical intervention was limited or non-existent. To make this worse

there was often a stigma attached to having a child with Spina Bifida which may have made the parents feel shame and even want to keep their child hidden away. Their lives may not even have been spoken about within the family and the little girl deprived of normal social contacts that children thrive on.

So we would like to spare a thought for this girl and all the other youngsters buried here in marked graves or the many that are undoubtedly interred in pauper's graves.

Tangmere Tea Set

Ros Clow

While on a recent visit to Tangmere military aviation museum on the south coast I glanced at a corner display with a Royal Flying Corp tea service. Beside it were two framed photos of a young man. Beneath the display the man was named as Edward Peace Plenty! There were a few facts about him. He joined up in 1915, and died aged 22 in 1918 from influenza. This had to be our Edward Pellew Plenty.

So I went to the reception desk to correct their error. Soon Roger, a volunteer, came to see me and I told our story. He turned out to have been brought up in Newbury along the Andover Road near The Gun pub. And of course he knew all about Plenty Engineering. He said the tea set had been donated, found in an attic packed in straw in a wooden box. It is complete and unused. I wonder who donated it? And were the pictures with it?



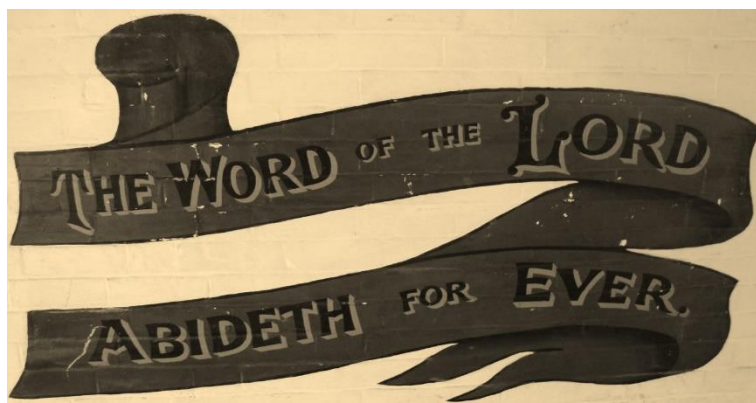
I left my details. He promised to pass them on to the curator when he comes back from holiday. He says they update their displays in the winter when they close for two months. So let's hope EPP has his proper name next year.

By the way this is an excellent museum covering WW1, WW2 and the Cold War. It even has its own NAAFI. <http://www.tangmere-museum.org.uk/>

Passive Resistance - The Resurrection Players new production

Ros Clow

Over a year ago Alan Vince brought a press cutting to a History Group meeting. It was the Newbury Weekly News October 15th 1903. Alan's great great grandfather Charles Midwinter featured in the article, appearing at the Borough Magistrates Court, not



sitting on the Bench, but up before the 'beak'. Alan asked me to work out what was going on.

Easier said than done! Charles was one of 35 local citizens who following the 1902 Education Act had refused to pay their rates. Many of those citizens are buried in our cemetery.

It proved very difficult to work out why they felt so strongly but having read ancient text books, newspapers, the Act itself, it took a 1864 sermon of a Baptist Minister published on the internet before I understood.

These Newbury and Hungerford Passive Resisters were part of a national movement which contributed to the Liberal's win at the 1906 election. The massive protest that continued for many years has been completely forgotten. Want to know more? Then please come and see our latest play, 'Passive Resistance', on 25th and 26th November at the Phoenix Centre.

Subscription Reminder

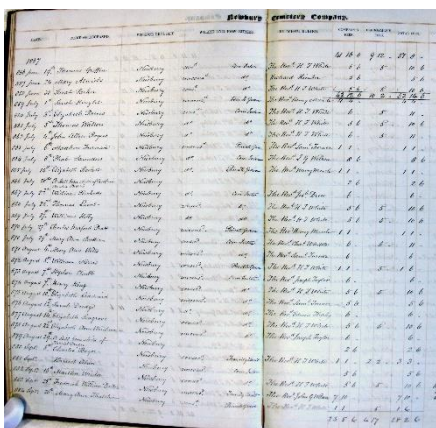


Thank you very much for your support as we continue on this fascinating journey we have undertaken.

Even if, for whatever reason, you are unable to take an active role with the Friends, please don't forget to support the on-going work through your subscription. A membership renewal form and standing order can be found with this newsletter as an extra attachment to the email version of this newsletter. Subscriptions are due from October 1st.

Words from the Web

Paul Thompson



As our chairman noted earlier our website continues to grow. We are continuing to transcribe the Burial accounts and to date have completed the years 1850 to 1866 (with 1867 in progress) meaning that the first part of the "missing years" (to 1868) is almost complete.

2,261 entries have already been made and the transcription continues. We take the time to check the entries for spelling because of the sometimes illegible writing and ensure we get the details correct. It also

works the other way and we find that FreeBMD is wrong!

So... 17 years completed and only 73 to go! – the accounts records stop at 1940 when the town council took over the cemetery.

In other news, I have done some work on the database recently to better “inter-link” all the records from the various sources. Now there is a single starting point for all the entries which has the name, the date of birth and death (if known) and also, of course, the burial date. Everything else is linked to that single record like a tree of information, including biographies, photographs, links to other websites, newspaper articles, war grave and workhouse information not to mention the birth, death and burial entries.

At this point we have the names of 9,878 people buried in the cemetery. This will grow as the gaps for the “missing years” are filled in from the accounts and we will get a true account of exactly how many people are interred in the cemetery.

Here are some facts and figures about the information on the web site at present.

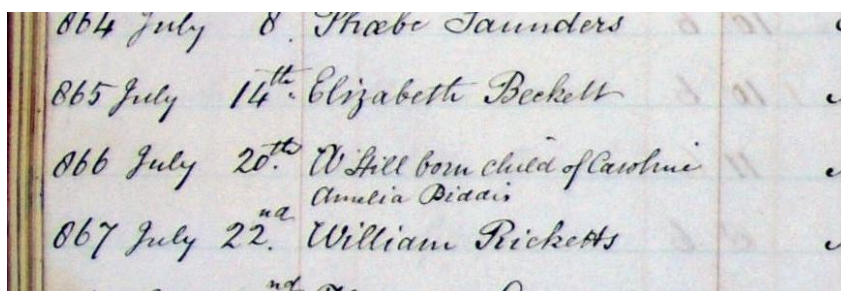
There are in the database; 7,288 burial register entries, 2,261 Burial accounts entries, 820 memorials, 292 workhouse death records, 20 war grave entries, 691 biographies and 648 obituaries.

I would like to add my thanks to all those who actively transcribe and upload data and records to the web site. I could not do it alone as there is far too much!

As was mentioned in Doug’s report about the little girl who died at such a young age, there are many children buried in the cemetery. But perhaps what we had not realised before now was just how many stillborn children there are as well. This is because in most cases, children that are stillborn are not entered on to the burial registers and so, until the discovery of the burial accounts, they remained lost to history.

Just in the period between 1850 and 1867 there are 123 stillborn children buried in the cemetery without marker or memorial. That is 5% of all the burials during that period and in some tragic cases, the entry for the mother also appears a few days later.

The listing is usually limited in detail and just records “A still born child of...” followed by the Mother’s name (sometimes it is the Father’s name instead).



There are no officials listed and usually no service (evident by the lack of a vicar’s name in the records).

We as the “trustees” of the cemetery and those buried there will at least record their existence as members of the human race, even if they never had the chance to breathe the air of the town that their families called Home.