



Newsletter 8

Autumn 2013

The Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery, c/o 100 Enborne Road, Newbury, RG14 6AN
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Chairman's Chatter...

Brian Sylvester

Hello Friends

I seem to have a habit of starting my chat by diving into the etymological dictionary, and the word I picked out this time is "Coffin". It turns out this came to us through the Old French "Cofin" originally a basket or hamper. In time the word was applied to a chest or box of valuables (hence "coffers") and by the 1520s took on its present funeral sense. [Ironic isn't it that we have turned a full circle and are using basketware coffins for "green" burials.]

Well, we have much of value in Newtown Road Cemetery and are frequently turning up more gems as you may see elsewhere in this newsletter. You'll also come across the formal notice of our AGM – doesn't it come round quickly! Now don't run and hide - you won't get "lumbered" with a job if you attend, though we will welcome some new faces on the committee (especially if you would like to do school and youth group liaison or PR). As well as a report on the state of our coffers, you'll hear of the added-value that's being given to our cherished amenity and what promises to be a fascinating talk.



Turning to entomology and matters flora-and-fauna, as you'll also see in this newsletter, we are progressing very nicely here: I'm happy to report that, as promised, the lime trees have survived their "short-back and sides" and are thriving and enhancing our natural habitat.

Don't forget to visit our website from time to time, where you'll be able to keep an eye on progress. There you'll find pictures of the removal of the stained-glass window (see right) which is now undergoing renovation, as well as some very atmospheric pictures kindly contributed by Charles Price-Green, better known to us as Stan Green.



Good news and bad news spot. Bad that John Guild has had to step down as our Membership Secretary due to family and work commitments: we thank him for all his help in the past and wish him well. [Meanwhile our Treasurer, Celia, has thankfully taken on the mantle.]



© Isabel Carmona-Andreu

The good news is that the cemetery is becoming increasingly popular as a venue. Hopefully you were able to see the chapel in use during the “Open Studios” exhibitions (re-booked for next year) We've had school sketch and photographic clubs visiting and enjoying the location, as well as some groups taking evening tours. Later this month a Cub activity is planned, and we've just heard of a serious enquiry to run art classes in the chapel in the autumn.



Finally, may I just mention the Remembrance event which will be on Sunday 3rd November this year. On this occasion we lay poppies on the Commonwealth War Graves and give tours to commemorate the brave servicemen who lost their lives in two world wars. We anticipate a growing interest in this topic as next year marks the centenary of the start of the First World War – supposedly the war to end all wars!

So Friends, I hope to meet you all for a peaceful chat over a cuppa at the AGM: do come and share your stories and suggestions with us. You'll be most welcome.

Pratts and Sparrows

History Group Research by Ros Clow

After attending a course at the WI's Denham College at Marcham, Jessica Lempp decided to visit Newtown Road Cemetery and try to find her grandmother's grave. She found it just inside the South Lodge gate and left flowers. As she was leaving the woman locking up suggested she contacted the Friends through our website; this she did.

This contact led to an exciting morning on Monday July 29th. Jessica told us the names of her ancestors and Doug Larsen found the three graves involved and made sure they were cleared. Jessica brought her mother, Jill Sparrow, and son Christopher for a trip to Newbury. Their first stop was 1, Rockingham Road where Jill's mother, Katherine Sparrow ran Craven School for many years. There they were all invited inside and given refreshments.



*Lawrence Pratt in the uniform of
Christ Hospital School*



*Ros Clow, Doug Larsen,
Jill Sparrow and Jessica Lempp*

Then they came to Priory Road where we spent an hour in the kitchen going through photographs and newspaper cuttings relating to the Pratt family. Henry Pratt (1834-1922) was the first headmaster of the National School (now St Nicolas). One of his sons, James, was born in the tower of the Butterfield building (now the Newbury Hall International High School, on the corner of Rockingham Road and Enborne Road). He was a stationer in Cheap Street for much of his life. Another son, Lawrence Charles Pratt died

in 1921, aged 23, reportedly as a result of being gassed in WW1. We have ordered his death certificate.

Not only did the family leave copies of photos but they also left Lawrence's medals and dog tag which will be on show when the chapel is open on 3rd November for the Remembrance Event. Doug took our visitors across to the cemetery so they could see all their family graves. Later that day they returned to lay flowers on all three graves.



Christopher with grandmother Jill Sparrow by his great grandmother's grave.

This is exactly the kind of interaction we hope will happen more and more as family historians use our website. As a result of the visit we have eleven more individuals identified, with photos of most, soon to be filed at our next filing afternoon or at our next meeting on 6th November.

Notice of AGM

The Annual General Meeting of The Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery will be held on **Wednesday 16th October 2013** at 7.30pm at **St. Francis de Sales Church Hall**, Warren Road Wash Common, Newbury RG14 6NH.

There will be a short business meeting followed by refreshments and a talk

Stained Glass: Practices and Practicalities

By David Clow

Stained Glass Artist (City & Guilds)

Monuments Recording Group

Doug Larsen

The Monuments Recording team have lost a few members since the last report but have gained one and possibly two new ones including a young man who is still at school but came forward, with his father, at the recent Volunteers' Fair. He is very enthusiastic and has nearly completed the area assigned to him and is looking for more work.

Clearing of Vegetation



Some areas of the cemetery have now been mown and the dead grass collected, making the monuments more accessible. Some areas have been left but when these die down over the winter we can concentrate on them. We have been cutting down the shrubbery, mainly holly and blackthorn that is growing near monuments so that inscriptions that have been blocked can be recorded.

Records

We are building up a body of work on spreadsheets that is ready to be integrated into the database and look forward to being able to see our work being made available to visitors to the website.

Dates for your diary

Here are some dates that you might want to add to your diary.

Wednesday 16th October, 2013	AGM followed by a Talk Stained Glass: Practices and Practicalities By David Clow, Stained Glass Artist (City & Guilds)
Sunday 3rd November, 2013	Remembrance event in the Cemetery <i>Please note that our event is a week before Remembrance Sunday to prevent clashing with official Remembrance Day services.</i>
Sunday 6th April, 2014	Cemetery open day. <i>Details to follow in a future newsletter.</i>
Saturday 21st June, 2014	Cemetery open day. <i>Details to follow in a future newsletter.</i>

The DIY burial

Ros Clow

He slipped in through the chapel doors, taking a moment to find his bearings.

“Welcome to the Cemetery. Have you come for the 2 o’clock tour?”

“I didn’t know there was one.”

“Do you live locally?”

“Yes, just up the road”

“Do you have any relatives buried in the cemetery?”

“Yes”

I searched quickly through the papers on the reception desk and found the Visitors Book. Then I located the pen. Before I could pass them over to him he said: “In fact no-one else knows about one of them!”

It would be an understatement to say my interest was stirred!

“I did the burial myself. The problem was that my mother-in-law refused to pay to have him buried. She’s tight! So as the cemetery was closed I put a spade and a sack of topsoil on a trolley and wheeled it up the path. The wheels were creaking and the owls were hooting but I pressed on till I found the family plot. Then I dug a hole big enough put him in and used the soil to level the surface.”

“Were you on your own?”

“Yes, it was quite spooky”

I had to ask. “Was it a body or cremated remains?”

“It was the urn. I’ve never told anyone before”

Open Days are always worth doing!

The FNRC website

Paul Thompson

The website continues to grow and I am pleased to announce that we have now completed the transcription of the three Burial registers, thanks to the sterling efforts of Brian Snook who has done the first two books entirely on his own. This means that there are now 7,288 names listed in the database. Of course we still have the missing years that are not recorded in any burial register, but the discovery of the Newbury Cemetery Company ledgers earlier in the year will mean that once those records have been transcribed we will finally be able to list every single person who is buried in the cemetery; except perhaps the person mentioned in the article above!

The website is becoming truly global now. In the past 12 months the site had over 4,000 hits by 2,238 individuals from over 50 countries. Over 25,000 pages have been looked at in the past year which is contributing to our own data as researchers and family historians contact us with information about their relatives buried in the cemetery and provide stories, photographs and certificates. These help us to bring people buried in the cemetery back into

our lives and help us remember them all whether famous, infamous or simply the workforce of our great little town.

Nature News

Rita Gardner

Newbury Town Council has had another habitat survey done. The present grounds management plan for the cemetery appears to be successful, as the new survey indicated an increase in the biodiversity.

James Shipman, a licensed bat handler, has looked at the bat boxes. No bats are roosting in the boxes, but they are used as resting places.

The slow start to summer delayed the butterfly activity. Once the days became warmer, there were a myriad of browns and whites.

The birds, hopefully, enjoyed feasting on the abundant wild strawberries.

The lime, chestnut and oak trees survived the pollarding and were in abundant leaf.

Tribute To A Victorian Town Crier

Brian Sylvester

Following a long search Newbury's present Town Crier (Brian Sylvester) has been able to track down the resting place of one of his illustrious predecessors and pay him a special tribute.

During research into Newbury's past, he found reference to a previous "Constable and Crier" Henry Froom Beck. Subsequent searches turned up a water-colour picture of him in the Museum, and a copy of his Death Certificate which lead on to an obituary notice in the Newbury Weekly News for 1872.

Reference was made in the article to his being "described as the best town crier in England", and that "he will be buried on Saturday at the Cemetery, and the police force will follow his remains".

Why the police? A former Thames Valley Police Chief Inspector (Richard Godfrey) has researched and written a book about the Newbury Constabulary which had been set up in 1836 and, it appears, the post of Town Crier had been absorbed into that Force and an appropriate uniform issued to him.

Which Cemetery? The one in use at that time was that in Newtown Road. But, on enquiry, Brian found this burial place has been closed for many a year for safety reasons.



However, quite recently a group of “Friends” of the cemetery has been set up and Brian eagerly joined them to follow up on his research and, hopefully, track down Henry’s grave. Easier said than done in a graveyard with over 10,000 buried in it but, with the help of a book of tombstone engravings compiled by the late Mrs. Pattison between 1978 and 1982, the position was established and the stone finally located - broken off and laying face down in the mud!

Contact was then made with the Stonemason (Joss Nankoo) often seen working on Saturdays in the market place, which resulted in a lot of digging and heaving before the gravestone could finally be re-erected in its rightful place and duly spruced up.

So, at a recent small commemoration, the refurbished stone was unveiled, some flowers laid, and Henry Beck’s obituary read again. And, needless to say, this was followed by a libation or two! A worthy tribute, it is hoped, to a long-serving officer of the town, Henry Beck.



*Left to Right: **Joss Nankoo** (the Master Stonemason who assisted in the restoration), **Brian Sylvester** (the present Town Crier who researched, located and re-erected the gravestone), **David Stubbs** (a retired police officer who took the part of Henry Beck in the recent re-enactment at the Town Hall of the original Parliamentary Cemetery Hearing in 1847) and **Richard Godfrey** (another retired officer who wrote the book “Newbury Borough Police 1843-1875” which referenced Henry).*

Membership

Please note that your annual membership expires on September 30th. You can use the membership form and/or standing order form at the end of this newsletter to re-join or pay at the AGM.

Tragedy On The Railway

History Group Research by Julie Goddard

For a long time the people of Newbury had seen work progressing on building a railway line to connect Newbury with the villages along the Lambourn Valley, finishing at Lambourn itself. It would be a boon to people, easier and quicker than walking, or by carrier's cart. They could bring goods in from the countryside to the town markets, or even to find employment in the town but still live at home.

The work on building the embankments and bridges of the Lambourn Valley Railway (LVR) to cross the Kennet was hard and expensive. Several prospective financiers had withdrawn either before or after work had started. Work progressed so slowly that Newbury families began to make a habit of walking along the line at weekends. The new embankments, built to make a level track for the trains, opened up new views of the countryside - as the Newbury Bypass was to do a hundred years later.

The line was officially declared open on Saturday April 2nd and a scheduled timetable began on Monday 4th April 1898 using the one engine that the impecunious LVR owned at that time. Attached to the engine were four smartly painted carriages capable of carrying eight first class and fifty-six second class passengers.



*Speen Station on the Lambourn Valley Railway
© www.lambournvalleyrailway.co.uk*

The following Friday was Good Friday and the LVR staff wanted to make a few experiments and calculations on the timing of the journey between Newbury and Lambourn. It had been calculated that it should be 35 minutes, but the length of time the train stopped on the way to pick up or put down passengers must be affirmed and also how many engines it

would be needed for the most advantageous pecuniary return. Was the one engine enough?

Besides the schools being closed many ordinary people were free, either to take a trip on the train, or to inspect the finished track. The weather was fine and dry, if a little windy.

Two school boys, Edmund Walter New aged 13 and his friend Albert James Hammond aged 11 were good boys: so good that they attended the extra Sunday School at St Nicolas church and then the service afterwards. Edmund was the eldest son of Mr Edmund New of the "Two Brewers" in West Mills and Albert was the son of widowed Mrs Hammond of Westfields. Having done their duty in the morning the boys were eager to go out to play. Albert's elder brother Edward was at his mother's house when Albert eagerly made his escape. "Keep away from the railway" was his mother's last admonishment.

Needless to say the words went right out of the lad's head and he and Edmund climbed up the embankment, either at Craven road, or the canal bridge. Excitedly they ran along the lines to where they crossed the River Kennet at Speen Moor. Although early in the season some boats were out on the river below. Seeing a pleasure boat approach the bridge on the Newbury side and disappear underneath, the boys waved and shouted to the passengers and ran back across the tracks to see it come out the other side. Unfortunately they had not understood, or remembered that trains were now using the track.

A train had left Lambourn at 2.15pm and was expected to arrive in Newbury at 3.02pm. At Speen the driver, William Young, had found that the coach axle boxes were "running hot" but decided to continue at a reduced speed of about 10 mph. As the train entered the straight part of the line leading to the bridge at Speen Moor the driver saw three young women gaily walking along the line ahead apparently without a care in the world. The driver blew the whistle and stopped the engine, probably exasperated at their stupidity. The young ladies hurriedly removed themselves. It was at this point that, as he looked back down the line to the guard for the signal to restart, to his horror the fireman Ernest Gardiner, saw two bodies by the track. Realising that they must have been run down by the train he shouted as much to the train driver. The driver told him to go and make sure. Passengers, alerted by the train stopping, began to climb down to see what was the matter – and then perhaps wished that they had not. The two bodies were not a pretty sight. Albert had been hit on the head and seemed lifeless; Edmund had been run over by the train wheels and his legs were badly mangled and he had other injuries to his upper body. Mr Gipps, the general manager of the railway and Mr. Brain, the Lambourn station master, both of whom were on the train, took charge. The train was backed alongside the boys and they were placed in a carriage with the guard in attendance.

The station at Newbury was alerted and an ambulance was waiting as the train drew in. The guard, who alone had travelled in the carriage with the boys, said that Albert had died as the train travelled the short distance between Speen Moor and Newbury Station. His body was taken straight to the hospital mortuary. Edmund, still alive but in intense pain, was tenderly transported to the nearby Hospital and all the medical staff assembled and discussed what could be done. His injuries were truly horrific. His parents arrived at the

Hospital and were asked for permission to remove Edmund's mangled legs above the knee. Being told that this was his only hope, they consented. The boy was given ether, the only anaesthetic available at the time, while Dr Jenner Clarke swiftly performed the operation. However, the shock and loss of blood were too much for the young lad and he died on the operating table. He was the New's eldest child; while Albert was the son of a widowed mother.

The inquest was held in St John's parish room on the next day, Saturday, before Dr Watson, J.P., and a jury, the foreman of which was Mr Walter Church. Both bodies were formally identified by their families- his father for Edmund and his older brother for Albert. Both agreed that children had become used to having the railway line as a playground.



Memorial to Albert Hammond

The engine driver stated his part in the affair. At Speen Moor his eyes had been on the young ladies walking on the line ahead. He had stopped the engine so that they could get off the line as quickly as possible. His gaze fixed ahead he had seen no sign of the boys. Acknowledging that it had become a custom for local people to walk along the railway line, there was much discussion at the inquest over whether the railway should have had more

notices along the line forbidding trespass. Mr Gipps resignedly stated that notices were just ignored. There were even sightseers on the line that afternoon he said. Despite this there was still more discussion, but eventually a verdict was called for and finally the Coroner recorded "Accidental death through being run over by a train."

It had hoped to have the funerals of the two boys could be held together, but for one reason or another, this could not be organised.

Albert Hammond's funeral took place on Tuesday afternoon and that of Edmund New on the Wednesday; both at St Nicolas' Church. There were large congregations at each, relatives and friends, both adults and youngsters who had been to school or Sunday school with the boys. The coffins were carried from the church on the shoulders of four of their young friends. Both



Memorial to Edmund New

were buried later in the Newtown Road Cemetery. Albert's grave was later marked by a headstone for him and his mother.

***“In loving memory of Albert James Hammond,
youngest son of Charles and Mary Hammond,
who met his death accidentally on April 8th 1898 aged 11 years,
and of his mother Mary Hammond who departed this life February 5th 1911”.***

The Lambourn Valley Railway lasted for seven years. In 1907 it was taken over by Great Western Railways and became just a branch line. For several years in and after the Second World War it was used by the RAF and United States Air Force to access their establishment at Welford. After their withdrawal the line was used by fewer and fewer passengers and it was finally closed in 1973 as being uneconomic to maintain.

There is a website for the Lambourn Valley Railway if you want to see some more pictures and history at www.lambournvalleyrailway.co.uk

Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery

Renewal of/New Membership Form

(Delete as appropriate)

October 2013 - September 2014

By completing this form, I agree to the following:

- To further the aims of the Friends.
- To allow my contact details to be maintained on the Friends' computer for the purposes of the Friends alone; they will not be passed on to a third party.

Membership is secured by donation;
please indicate the level of your donation by ticking the relevant box.

Under 16 Free £5 £10 £15 Other £_____

(Minimum payment - £5 per person)

You can pay your donation by one of the following 3 methods (*please indicate preferred method*)

- 1) By cheque payable to *The Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery*
- 2) By completion of attached Standing Order Form
(please see instructions for return of form and tick box)
- 3) By cash

Please return this form to: Celia Pay, Treasurer
5 Abbots Road
Newbury, RG14 7QW

PLEASE NOTE:- if paying by Standing Order you **MUST** return that form to your bank not FNRC but please return this form to the person named above so that we know you have joined. Thank you.

Name(s)	
Address	
Post Code	
Telephone Number(s)	
Mobile (if applicable)	
E-mail (please print)	



Friends of
Newtown Road Cemetery

Standing Order Instruction

Please complete the following: (Your bank details)

Bank name: _____

Address _____

Account Sort Code ____ -- ____ -- ____

Account number..... _____

Please pay to Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery

At **Barclays Bank PLC**

Newbury Branch

Sort Code:**20 – 59 – 14**

Account Number:.....**23154289**

The sum of £ **each year**

(In words.....)

From (Date)..... **until further notice.**

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Please return the completed standing order to your bank.

Thank you for choosing standing order to renew your membership of Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery.