



Newsletter 10

Autumn 2014

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



King Tutankhamun
NOT buried in the cemetery!
©Wildhunt.org

After years of painstaking research, Howard Carter finally broke into what he hoped was King Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922. He passed an oil lamp through the gap and peered in to see if anything was inside. His backer, Lord Carnarvon, impatiently demanded "Can you see anything?" and after a few minutes Carter replied with the famous words: "Yes, wonderful things." A jaw-dropping moment!

I don't for one moment suggest we have similar treasures buried in Newtown Road, as nice as that might be! But we are continually finding a wealth of fascinating information about life in old Newbury, as well as heaps of natural history.

Sometimes our jaws drop too at the wonderful things we uncover.

The caption on our website is "Taking the Past into the Future" and we are constantly turning up gems from the past – details of real peoples' lives (and deaths!) and events. One such example was recently turned into a play by Ros Clow, who heads up our History Group, after some thorough research.

With the title "The Tragedy on Enborne Road" the Coroner's Enquiry into this sad event was re-enacted to a sell-out audience at the Phoenix Centre in May. Such was its success it has been decided to repeat the experience on 29th November. Modestly-priced tickets are available from the Corn Exchange and early booking is advised to avoid disappointment.



The “thespians” involved in this performance have called themselves “The Resurrection Players” - quite appropriate, don't you think, as they are resurrecting the stories of Newbury's past for the future? Besides which, what is the subject of our chapel stained-glass window? The Resurrection.

On the nature side of things, Joan Stacey and Rita Gardner gave us the benefit of their experience on a Wildflowers Day in June. It was really fascinating to see and hear about the abundance of flora we're fortunate to have which, in turn attracts insects, then birds and bats, and so on.

There's been a lot of interest generated this year, being the centenary of the start of The First World War. As you may know, we have a number of servicemen's graves which are registered and maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Again, we'll be offering tours of these final resting places, together with explanatory details, on the Sunday before Remembrance Sunday – 2nd November. So, if you haven't yet experienced this tour, you're invited to join us then. Let me give an example following more extensive research.



Thomas Arthur Maccabee

Thomas Arthur Maccabee was a Corporal in the Royal Berkshire Regiment. On the 3rd December 1917 he was taking part in the Battle of Cambrai. Sadly his legs were shattered by an explosion from a shell but, in the heat of battle, poor Thomas lay on the battlefield for three whole days before his recovery during which time he also suffered from frost bite.

In consequence both his legs and seven of his fingers were amputated and he was shipped home to England. He endured nineteen operations during the next four years before finally succumbing in March 1920.

Further details may be found on the excellent Website “West Berkshire War Memorials” which can be found on <http://westberkshiriewar memorials.org.uk/texts/stories/WBP00931S.php>.

But, do you know, despite this harrowing tale, Thomas's grave had not been acknowledged by the CWGC! I'm happy to be able to report that this discrepancy has now been remedied through the good services of our Friend, Phil Wood, and the “In from the cold project” (<http://www.infromthecold.org>).



Now it's our hope that members of the family might be located and will wish to pay tribute to this brave man.

On a happier note, we're pleased to hear Newbury Town Council have now appointed a new Grounds Maintenance Officer, James Heasman. An introductory meeting has been held and we look forward to working with him in the future

Yes, it's that time again – Annual General Meeting. This will be held on October 22nd at St. Francis de Sales Church Hall. Do come along and hear more about the treasury of the cemetery – I promise you the business will be brief, and you won't be roped into something you'd prefer not to do! As you'll see elsewhere in this newsletter, we've a guest speaker which promises an interesting evening.

And finally, let me again offer heartfelt thanks to the teams and the administrators who work on behalf of the Friends, enabling us to enjoy this enlightening project.

Dates for Your Diaries

<p>22nd October, 2014 (Wednesday) 7.30pm</p>	<p>The Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery AGM.</p> <p>The meeting will be held in St. Francis de Sales Church Hall, Warren Road Wash Common, Newbury RG14 6NH.</p> <p>The business will start at 7:30 and the usual AGM business will be followed by a talk by Victoria Barlow from the West Berkshire Museum entitled “Reawakening the Museum”.</p>
<p>2nd November, 2014 (Sunday) 10am to 3.30pm</p>	<p>Cemetery Open Day for Remembrance</p> <p>100 years after the start of World War One, our remembrance open day has special meaning this year. Note that our event is a week earlier than Remembrance Sunday to avoid clashes with the official town events. Hopefully the weather will be kind to us this year!</p>
<p>29th November, 2014 (Saturday) 4.15pm and 7.15pm performances</p>	<p>The Tragedy on Enborne Road</p> <p>A play written by our very own Ros Clow. First performed in May of this year and back by popular demand, this is about the true story of a local murder and suicide in 1892 which generated a lot of interest at the time.</p> <p>The show will be held at the Pheonix Theatre, Newtown Road. Tickets available from the Corn Exchange box office or website.</p>

Don't forget, the cemetery is open daily from 10am to 3pm. Come along, relax, see and enjoy the constant changes which occur in our peaceful local amenity.

Newbury Trefoil Guild Visit the Cemetery

Jan Budgen (Newbury Trefoil Guild)



To commemorate the start of World War 1, a visit was recently made by members of the **Newbury Trefoil Guild** to place crochet poppies on the graves of victims of that conflict; the poppies having been kindly made by one of their members.

The Guild is a group mainly of women who have at some time been Guiders, and endeavour to carry on the spirit of Guiding.

During their visit they had three members of Downview Home with them: Downview being a residence in Hungerford for people with learning difficulties.

As the poppies were laid, the group was told about each person whose grave it was and what had happened to them. This was done by the Chairman of The Friends of NRC, Brian Sylvester, who made the stories come to life; and all went away more enlightened to the horrors of war.

Trefoil would like to sincerely thank Brian and his team for their time and knowledge.



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 at the end of this newsletter. Subscriptions are due from October 1st.

Nature Report

Rita Gardner

Monkey Puzzle Tree (*Araucaria Araucana*)

This is an evergreen conifer native to Argentina and Chile. One of the first Europeans to see it was a Spanish explorer in 1780. It was introduced in England by Archibald Menzies in 1795.

He was a naval surgeon on Captain George Vancouver's circumnavigation of the globe. Menzies was travelling in Captain James Cook's old ship, HMS Discovery.



*A healthy monkey puzzle tree in a garden off Newtown Road
©Rita Gardner (FNRC)*

While in Chile, he was served seeds of this conifer as a dessert while dining with the governor. He later sowed them in a frame on the quarterdeck of his ship; he managed to grow 5 healthy plants on the return journey to England. One of the saplings was planted at Kew where it lived for nearly 100 years before it died.

The name 'monkey puzzle' alludes to the notion that climbing one of the tree's branches would puzzle even a monkey. The branches are covered in spiny, overlapping leaves, making the branches very sharp to the touch. Climbing a monkey puzzle tree is hazardous and is to be avoided!

compact, taking a high polish. This was popularly used in Victorian times for making jewellery, which symbolized mourning.

The monkey puzzle tree was traditionally used in cemeteries and graveyards because the dark evergreen contrasted with the light headstones. There is a myth that the devil, lurking behind a grave awaiting a burial, saw a monkey climb the tree. The devil was so intent on trying to work out where the monkey's tail was located, amongst the branches, that he was distracted from the burial. This allowed the burial to be completed in peace.



*The monkey puzzle tree in the Cemetery
©Rita Gardner (FNRC)*

The wonderfully ornamental monkey puzzle tree is now a vulnerable species, according to the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red List. The logging of its valuable timber is prohibited in the wild. In 1990, it was declared a National Monument in Chile.

The pictures are of 2 monkey puzzle trees in Newbury, both on Newtown Road. The first is in a garden and has a lovely symmetrical shape; the other is our bedraggled specimen, along the west wall, in the cemetery. It was overshadowed by the Limes, stunting the growth on one side. We could do with a new sapling, planted in a more open space in the cemetery, to replace the aging one.

Parking restrictions

Please be advised that there are now parking restrictions on Newtown Road including in front of the cemetery. Charges apply every day from 8am to 6pm and you can only pay by mobile phone (there are no parking meters). The current rate is £1 for the first hour and up to £4 if you are staying over 4 hours with other rates in between.

Cemetery Notice Boards

The cemetery notice board has now finally been erected near the main entrance. The Council and the Friends will use this new facility to display information and notices about the cemetery and the Friends activities. Brian Sylvester, John Gardner and Doug Larsen were all present when the board was erected (left), now all they have to do is decide what to put on it!



Monuments Recording Group

Doug Larsen

We now have four teams who are working on recording and transferring the data to spreadsheets. One of the teams, Deirdre and Alastair Duff, have recently discovered a new war memorial; this was to Ernest Victor Davis inscribed on his family's burial monument. The discovery was a result of not only recording the inscription but also researching the death of a young man who died in 1917. This is an example of the thoroughness with which all our teams are working. We now have another grave on which we can place a poppy cross for Remembrance Sunday. Maybe there will be more?

We also learn that Brian Snook is assisting Paul Thompson with transferring our data to the website which means a shorter time between our recording in the field and the inscriptions appearing on the website, linked to the burial records. We are very grateful for his efforts and for the enhanced format with which our website is evolving, thanks to Paul's work.

Website News

Paul Thompson

With the centenary of the start of the First World War this year, the Friends have been making a special effort to ensure that as much information as possible is available on the website as we can provide. This was started with the details of all the Commonwealth War Graves being listed on their own page which can be viewed from the link at the top of every page.



From the list of war graves, you can link directly to that person's page and see all the information we have available. The quantity of information will be increasing regularly as more material is made available, so keep an eye on these records. We will also soon be adding the memorials in the cemetery to the page as well.

Museum of Conversations

Ros Clow

The Friends of West Berkshire Museum AGM ended with a short talk from the Museum manager Victoria Barlow. Brian and I were at one of the original consultation meetings about the museum and I remembered a statement then about our new museum being a different kind of museum and this was reiterated by Victoria this month. She is the manager not a Curator. There is no curator.



*West Berkshire Museum with its new central section
©Jon Cruise*

She said she was looking to work with community groups to design exhibitions together. Exhibitions will be up for 3 to 9 months.

Afterwards we were able to wander around the building. The exhibitions at the moment are of course about the history and the development of the museum. One section, which I

really liked, is a Volunteer's Choice section, where each volunteer has chosen one or two objects, says why they like them and why they enjoy being a volunteer. And there are the Newbury stocks! I know this story I thought. But when I read why this volunteer has chosen this object he tells a completely different story to the one I know. The one I know is that Newbury was the last place in the country to sentence anyone to the stocks and, guess what, it's the miscreant that is buried in the cemetery!

To find out the other story you will have to visit the museum! It involves ears.

I told Victoria my story and she was delighted. "This is exactly what we want." So now I have to track down the letter confirming this story, which I bought from eBay about 3 years ago, and send her a copy (or probably the original).

P.S. We could do with a museum-meister who visits on a regular basis and notes any residents mentioned and then checks if they are buried in the cemetery. I did spot one or two paintings by Victor Corden but none by our Williams (Corden and Gore)

Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery

Renewal of/New Membership Form

(Delete as appropriate)

October 2014 - September 2015

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.