



**Newsletter 19**

**Spring 2019**

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## **Chairman's Chatter...**

*Brian Sylvester*

You may recall in my last epistle I referred to the seven ancient wonders of the world. Of these all that remains are the Pyramids at Giza. But have you heard of a 19<sup>th</sup> century plan to build an even larger one in London? Why? It came about as follows:

With the rapid growth of the capital, and at a time of high mortality, disposal of the dead became a huge issue. So, in 1829 architect Thomas Willson prepared a blueprint for what would become known as The Metropolitan Sepulchre. Its form was a giant pyramid to be built on Primrose Hill with a base of 18 acres (our cemetery is a mere four), and 94 stories high – that's four times the height of St. Paul's Cathedral. It was to be constructed of brick with granite facing and would hold five million bodies. Wow!



The project was fully costed, and The Pyramid General Cemetery Company would sell shares realising a profit of £11 million based on 40,000 bodies per year.

As you can guess, it never happened as the mood changed to having garden graveyards modelled on those being created in France. A bill was passed by Parliament in 1832 encouraging the establishment of private cemeteries outside London. As a result, many were created shortly afterwards including Kensal Green, Highgate, Nunhead and Brompton.

And Newbury wasn't too far behind, was it! Those of you who saw our play "In The Beginning" will remember how local residents successfully petitioned for an Act in 1847 which brought about Newtown Road Cemetery.

Just think, had there not been that change in attitude, we might have had a vast pyramid of our own, towering over Newbury to the south.

**WORLD WAR ONE CENTENARY COMMEMORATION:** Once more we contributed to the WW1 Exhibition in the Town Hall, commemorating not just the 15 commonwealth war graves in our cemetery from that conflict, but also those who lie in “some corner of a foreign field” but whose relations wished to remember them with an inscription on their family tombs. Deirdre Duff and Doug Larson did a great job on this display which was well received. Many thanks to them both for this, and for giving their time stewarding the show.

On the eve of Remembrance Sunday, we gave our usual tour of the Commonwealth War Graves to an appreciative audience, and then held a most moving evening of “World War Words” in the chapel. Huge thanks to our readers Jane Burrell, Michael Huxtable and Paul Shave. A strange touch was added when a nearby firework display started up about the same time, providing a background of noisy, realistic “whizz-bangs”.

A number of us attended the Sunday evening gathering in the market place as part of the national ‘Battle’s Over’ ceremony. After lighting a candle for each of the 339 Newbury casualties and the playing of the Last Post, the event turned to celebrating the peace with a peal of bells, and community singing around a beacon.



My Chairman’s Chatter would be incomplete without our heartfelt appreciation to Newbury Town Council, as well as the committee; our webmaster; the researchers; the helpers; and to all who attend our ventures. Very many thanks to all.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, as well as on our website, you’ll find details of our future events which your committee has crafted for you. Do come along and share this wonderful adventure of *Taking the past into the future*.

## Beetles and Burial Grounds

*Silent Speaker at AGM*

After the usual speedy AGM meeting this year (there is still just about a committee and Brian Sylvester is still Chairman) we were expecting a talk from Meg Cathcart-James, a researcher from Reading University. The only problem was she had lost her voice!

By using her presentation, we were entertained to some fascinating new facts about Newtown Road Cemetery. Here is a resumé:

Meg and her team are finding out how cemeteries and graveyards provide space for wildlife in urban areas. She has chosen flying beetles as her focus. This has never been done before. She selected urban cemeteries over four counties: from us in the west over to Slough in the east, High Wycombe in the north to Godalming in the south. In each site she has taken four samples, each one over a two-hour period. Each sample was taken on a white sheet hung on poles. The beetles were then sucked off with a pooter (a tube with a mesh at the mouth end!) and identified. The only species I recognized was ladybirds. Variables noted at the time of collection included temperature, time of day, wind speed and cloud cover.



*How to use a pooter*

Of particular interest to us was a comparison between Shaw Cemetery and our cemetery. She has found eleven families of beetles in Newtown Road Cemetery, only five at Shaw; 107 individuals compared to 88. So now she has to look at the differences between the two sites. The obvious ones are surrounding land use and density of graves. In both these cases you might predict that Shaw would be more welcoming for flying beetles – more space to fly, fewer buildings surrounding but that is not the case. Another difference is that NRC is managed for wildlife and Shaw is not. Our cutting

and mowing schedule allows for wild meadow areas over the common grave areas and different levels of grass throughout the year. Meg commented that she will now have to find out who owns farmland next to Shaw and what sprays are used on it.

Meg's purpose in doing all this is that she discovered that National Planning Policy Framework guidance for decision making (2012) no longer protects graveyards and she suspects it should. At the moment, 50 years after the last burial, graveyards can be used for development. Local policies can provide that protection, does West Berkshire's?

Meg's research will carry on for another three years and she will keep us posted.

## Website News and Accounts Transcriptions

*Paul Thompson*

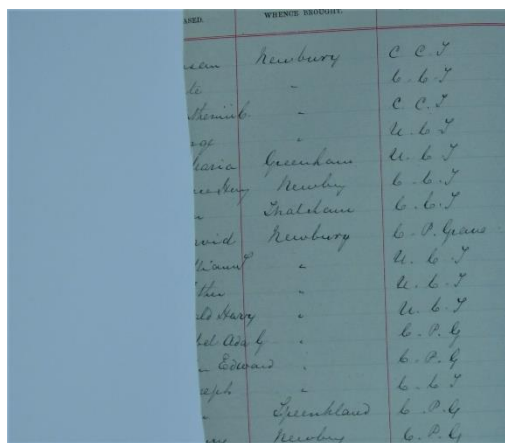


The content on the website continues to grow thanks to the work of our small band of researchers, transcribers and typists currently documenting and transcribing everything they can get their hands on.

We originally started with only the three books of burial registers, which contained the names of 7,288 persons buried in the cemetery, but this was far from complete. We know at least two burial registers are missing, presumed lost which created the infamous “missing years” in our cemetery’s history. With the discovery of the Newbury Cemetery Company account books, we have now almost “filled in” the missing years, thanks to the sterling efforts of Brian Snook.

Of course, there is still work to do on the accounts. We have to transcribe the “non-missing years”. This will help to validate all the original burials register entries with matching names etc and assist with names we could not previously read on the registers and vice-versa.

We also have to deal with the incident of the pilfering philatelist who, at some point in the history of the account books ripped out all the postage stamps used as official marks, in the process destroying the information on the following pages such as names and dates. These we will only be able to piece together from other sources, such as the burial registers, newspaper announcements, obituaries, the FreeBMD online database, death certificates etc.



As we are all human and no one is perfect, mistakes can happen in transcription or by typing errors. I recently found someone buried in our cemetery in the year 4890; time travellers can be so difficult sometimes! All joking aside, we are a small group and mistakes do happen, so if you see something that does not look quite right, please let us know by emailing the History Research Group at [historyresearchgroup@fnrcnewbury.org.uk](mailto:historyresearchgroup@fnrcnewbury.org.uk) so it can be checked and corrected.

As for the rest of the website, its growth can be shown in a few numbers. It currently contains:

- 7,288 burial register record entries
- 4,874 accounts record entries
- 955 gravestone/memorial records linked to 1,829 people
- 849 transcribed obituaries
- 759 biographies
- 231 personal images
- 292 Union workhouse records
- 167 death certificates
- 83 news stories with 221 linked images

## 'What are we doing wrong?'

Ros Clow



At the autumn U3A meeting for group leaders Caroline Morrison asked why Newbury had no Shared Learning Project. Other branches did research linked to Universities or cemeteries! Of course, I leapt to my feet and offered to find them a project. Caroline recruited six others. I invited them to our house in January where I offered talked about research opportunities offered by the cemetery. I also prepared a handout listing all

the research sources we currently use.

They went away to decide what they might do BUT could not find a topic they wanted to follow up.

This was disappointing especially to Alan Vince who was hoping to have help with his sterling work collecting death announcements related to our 'residents' in the library microfilmed Newbury Weekly News. This was one of the ideas I suggested.

Similarly, Maureen Hudd ended the January Corn Exchange Volunteer event with 8 names. We invited them all to meet up with Maureen, Doug and I the following Thursday evening. Three came, with one serious apology as she was on holiday, and we explored their interests. By the end of that we thought we had two new monument recorders and the core of a nature group that meets regularly. How exciting!

But at the last check not one of them has joined.



What more can we do? It seems that in all voluntary organisations you end up with a hard core who do all the work, especially the committee roles. But we need members to be active now. With each frost, monument inscriptions are damaged, family pass away without giving us photos and certificates and there is no ongoing survey of the natural side of the cemetery grounds. In terms of history group, we know there

are roughly 12,000 burials and so far we have information on 2,500, and much of that information has not been written up for our website.

I estimate that at this rate it will be another 30 years before our work is finished!!

On the brighter side I now have a handout which lists all our sources, should anyone want to start doing some history research!

And just in case I can tempt you or one of your friends here are projects we would like done

1. Analyse night time video recordings so we know which birds and animals are abroad at night, month by month.
2. Liaise with Meg Cathcart-James at Reading University to test out different coloured sheets to see which attract flying beetles the best.
3. Identify the exact boundaries of the 1906 consecration in the south west corner of the cemetery
4. Identify 'residents' year by year in the NWN, starting in 1883
5. Monument recording in the southern end of the cemetery.
6. Create a leaflet or video about the cemetery origins and history
7. Research individuals in depth
8. Analyse records to provide graphical and statistical about age at death, peak deaths during the year and year by year
9. Create for noticeboard and website information on flowers, grasses and trees found in the cemetery.

Ending on a positive note; At least we do have a volunteer to write a story for next Halloween!

## Soldier of The Queen

*By Deirdre and Alastair Duff*



*Colonel John William Hogge  
1852 - 1910*

Colonel John William Hogge, C.B., C.I.E., was born into an Army family on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1852 in Dum Dum, India, the son of Colonel C. Hogge, C.B., Royal Artillery. Colonel Hogge's career is typical of a British Officer serving in India during the height of Empire. He obtained his commission as Lieutenant in the 41<sup>st</sup> Foot in September 1871 and after 4 years' service exchanged into the 83<sup>rd</sup> Foot on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1875, serving in India. After some months he obtained a commission as Lieutenant Probationer in the Bengal Staff Corps in October 1876.

He first saw action in the Afghan War of 1878, when he was present at the capture of the fortress of Ali Masjid. This was followed by the Mahsood Wuzereee Expedition of 1881. He was promoted Captain, Indian Staff Corps, in September 1883 and took part in the Hazara Expedition of 1888. Promoted to Major in September 1891 he was appointed Commander of the Indian Empire in January 1894. Further action followed in the Waziristan Frontier Expedition of 1897. He was promoted Lieutenant Colonel in September 1897 and was awarded the Brevet rank of Colonel.

As Lt. Col. he was appointed to command the 14<sup>th</sup> Sikhs, then based in Nowshera, India. On the outbreak of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 troops were despatched from India to join the International Relief Column and the 14<sup>th</sup> Sikhs left Nowshera by train on 7<sup>th</sup> July for Bombay

and embarkation for China. But due to an outbreak of cholera in the Regiment their departure was delayed until August. They disembarked at Shanghai and remained there until April 1901. Promoted to Colonel in September 1901, for reasons which are still being researched he shortly thereafter sent in his papers, retired from the active list and returned to England. In 1905 he was appointed a Companion of the Order of the Bath and in 1906 moved to Newbury, and lived in "Tentfield", Wash Common. In August 1909 he was transferred to the unemployed supernumerary list. He died aged 57 years on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1910, and he was buried on 4<sup>th</sup> April.



*Grave stone of  
Col. John William Hogge,  
C.B., C.I.E.*

The Newbury Weekly News' obituary dated 7<sup>th</sup> April 1910 records "During his retirement Colonel Hogge led a useful life visiting those of his poorer neighbours who were sick, administering to their necessities and seeking to convey where acceptable consolations of religion. Colonel Hogge himself was accustomed to conduct public services, and he showed a rare gift in exposition of Scripture. His illness was short, and the news of his death brought sadness into many a humble home. He was laid to rest in Newbury Cemetery on Monday afternoon. Friends near and far gathered around the grave of one whose humility and gentleness was so much in accord with his Divine Master, whose spirit was reflected in his character and life. Sincere sympathy is felt for the widow

and daughters in their irreparable loss".

His gravestone reads:

In Loving Memory of Col. John William Hogge, C.B., C.I.E.

Late of 14<sup>th</sup> Sikhs

Died April 12<sup>th</sup> 1910 aged 57

"Thou makest Him glad with joy in his Presence. Thou hast made him most blessed Forever. (Psalm 21.6)

### **Stop Press Update!**

The descendants of John William Hogge recently visited the cemetery and Brian and Doug were delighted to welcome them. Here is a picture of them at the graveside.



## Dates for your diary

Saturday March 30 <sup>th</sup> 10am – 4pm	Spring Welcome day at Newtown Road Cemetery. Displays in Chapel, tours, Find-a-Grave service
Friday June 21 <sup>st</sup> 6pm – 9.30pm	Mid-summer Eve opening Flowers and grasses; tours; moths and maybe even some music
Saturday November 9 <sup>th</sup> 10am – 3pm	Remembrance Welcome Day Eighty years from the start of World War 2. Tours of our Commonwealth War Graves, Find-a-grave service etc.

## Cedar Damage

As you may know, we suffered damaged in the winter to our cedar trees again. Large limbs were lost from two trees due to the weight of snow that fell earlier this year.

