



Newsletter 25

Autumn 2021

The Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery, c/o 100 Enborne Road, Newbury, RG14 6AN
Website: www.fnrnewbury.org.uk

Tel: 01635 30108
E-mail: committee@fnrcnewbury.org.uk

Chairman's Chatter

Brian Sylvester



Do you remember their plaintive pleas when taking our kids on a journey - 'are we nearly there yet?' I feel that way with this 18 month journey we've taken with the covid epidemic - have we got through it yet? Well, nearly we can say, but hasn't it been dire! Our poor founding-chairman, Elizabeth Capewell, has been knocked back by the disease, despite double vaccinations and sticking rigidly to all the isolation rules. We wish her a speedy recovery.

On the subject of journeys, imagine travelling along a busy city street and suddenly finding

yourself transported to the past. Apparently reports of ghostly visions like this are countless: but are they real or simply tricks of the eye - or the imagination?

I recently came across an article on this topic and, whilst it is easy to dismiss these events as 'supernatural nonsense', many who have experienced the ghostly feeling that the past and present have collided are convinced they may have lived through a 'Time Slip' - a paranormal occurrence where it's suddenly possible to see the same spot but from many years ago.



Some people even claim to have spoken to those from the past or bought goods from them in shops. But don't just take my word for it (as if you would!), go online and google 'Time Slip' where you will find plenty of genuinely-believed examples. Rodney Davies, a paranormal researcher, has even compiled a book of them, and suggests reasons for their existence.

My question is - have *you* ever experienced one? Do let us know. I can't say I have; however, I do find myself drawn to the graves in Newtown Road Cemetery, as if the 'residents' are calling on me to find out about them because, after all, they lived, loved, laughed, languished etc., just as we do. And what fascinating stories we have unearthed. However, I do keep an eye open for the men in white coats coming to take me away on another journey!!!



In my profession of a Toastmaster, I often encounter the question 'How long should a speech be?' The stock answer is 'As long as a mini-skirt. That is to say - long enough to cover the essentials, but short enough to be interesting!'

Not a speech, but I hope you found my journeying above of interest: and not too long! We're nearly there now but just let me drive through the essentials.

First, we welcome Paul Shave to our committee as your Membership Secretary. He is an 'old friend' of the Friends having appeared in some of the past performances by our very own Resurrection Players. I take this opportunity to thank Celia Pay for fielding this job for so long, and let you know she will continue to be our trusty Treasurer. Obviously, any change of your contact details should now be forwarded to Paul whose email address is on the circular that brought you this newsletter.

We shall miss very much the many contributions of Julie Goddard. A fuller tribute to her will be found elsewhere in this newsletter. R.I.P. Julie.

The other essential of a Chairman's Chatter is to sincerely thank all of those involved with our cemetery: The Newbury Town Council and their contractors; your committee; group leaders and their teams; the researchers; our thespians and guides; our photographers; our website guru and the website in-putters; and naturally our revered newsletter editor. Heart-felt thanks to all for the essential contribution you make on our journey of 'Taking the Past into the Future'.

Are we there yet? Nearly!

Notice of the Annual General Meeting

The AGM of Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery will take place on Tuesday 19th October 2021 at 7.30pm at St Francis de Sales Parish Hall, Warren Road, Wash Common, Newbury, RG14 0AF

After the normal business part of the meeting, there will be some refreshments, followed by an illustrated talk by Jane Burrell entitled: **The Lost Churches and Chapels of Newbury**

Enquiring Minds

Maureen Hudd

Towards the end of July two groups of children from Year 2 at St John the Evangelist Infant School were welcomed to the Cemetery by Joan Stacey and Maureen Hudd. Each group comprised of 30 children, so Joan took one group of 15 and Maureen the other group of 15 and we proceeded to 'Bug Hunt'. The children had come with their teachers and helpers prepared to look for bugs, but the visit turned out to be so much more!



One pupil asked, 'why is this grave so white and clean and the others are dirty?' This enabled us to tell the children about the Commonwealth War Graves which they were very interested in. The teachers explained that the children always have a remembrance event in school so this in turn led on to Maureen suggesting that maybe this November the children might come to the Cemetery to plant poppy crosses. The children will of course be a different group, the ones who came in July having now gone on to Junior School.

The school have been in touch and want to take up the offer and informed us that Year 2 are studying WW1 this year.

A BIT OF LIGHT INTERENTAINMENT

*I've just seen a sign for
Bury Crematorium...*

Make your mind up!

Milton Jones

Beside the questions and interest about the war graves the children were fascinated by the bat boxes, the bee hotels and the grasses and flowers in the Cemetery.

We are looking forward to lots of visits from the children from St John's and also other schools who hopefully will take up the opportunities the Cemetery has to offer from learning about the hundreds of insects and wildflowers but also the

history of their town and the wider world through exploring the history of some of our 'residents'.

Nature Group

Martha Vickers

We continue to meet monthly to walk slowly around the Cemetery with our plant, flower and insect experts sharing what they find. Dorothy is recording the plants seen. Either Andy or Lucie join us and their photographs are uploaded to the NTC website. Andy tells me that he has not seen them there recently. I have said I



will follow this up with NTC officers. Also, there is still a problem with printing and displaying Joan's Plant of the month' in the noticeboard. Andy has been forwarding this to David Ingram. Jo is now back in the office, and I have spoken to her regarding this. I will probably arrange to pick up Poster and key to notice board in future if no one is visiting the Cemetery.

Finding volunteers to rake up mowings, following wild flower cut, is a bit of a problem with community payback still not functioning.

Monuments at Newtown Road Cemetery

Doug Larsen



Many visitors to the Cemetery may be surprised at the variety of monuments that can be seen as they walk around the paths that divide the burial areas. It soon becomes apparent that the condition of these monuments varies widely. It is not so surprising that some are almost unreadable when you consider that some of them have been there for 150 years. It is a pity that the most popular choice of monument material was sandstone which not only becomes weather-stained but actually loses material; sometimes whole sheets come detached taking the inscriptions with them; this is very bad news for the monument recorders who then have to

resort to cribbing it from the wonderful records of Mrs Margaret Pattison. This may provide about 75% of the lost material.

Of course, many monuments are made of something almost indestructible: granite. Little did those who chose this material realise what a gift this was to the recorders. Many other hardy materials were chosen such as limestone or marble or even cast iron! These were, of course, the choices of very wealthy families of which Newbury had a plentiful supply.

At the other end of the scale, we assume that others just planted wooden crosses which, at a guess, would have lasted 20 years maximum. Nowadays, such graves can be spotted by a slight depression in the ground, and we can only assume it is a burial site and, with luck, identify a name.

At any rate please be assured that we will leave no stone unturned (excuse the pun) to identify every resident of this distinguished Cemetery.

A BIT OF LIGHT INTERTEINMENT

*When the man who invented the
crossword died there was no clue as
to how it happened.
But we do know he is buried in
Newtown Road Cemetery.
His grave is the seventh down and
one across.*

Subscription Reminder

Paul Shave



Thank you for supporting us as a Friend through this last difficult year. We depend on Friends' donations to keep us going and it's time to renew your subscription. A renewal and standing order form are included with this newsletter and as an extra attachment to the email version of the newsletter. Subscriptions are due on 1st October.

We've tried to make it easier for you (and us) so that if you're paying by standing order or BACS you don't have to send a form to the Treasurer but can email the information.

If you're reading the email version of the newsletter, please click on the link on the attached form to send the details of your payment to the Treasurer and the Membership Secretary. If you're reading the paper version, please follow the instructions on the form.

WELL, WELL!

Brian Sylvester

We've often referred to the contact we've been pleased to receive after people have discovered their ancestors are buried in Newtown Road. These have included queries from Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand and Belgium.

We've recently received an enquiry, a little nearer to home this time, from Edinburgh. From a descendant of the HASKINS and WELLS families. His predecessors include a Newbury Mayor and a Wallingford MP (but not in NRC) and were, for several generations, wine and spirit merchants in Newbury. We have at least a dozen family members in our cemetery.

Our contact is Gerald Wells and he has been carrying out his family research for some time, entering his findings on a website called 'Wikitree'. We've come to a very satisfactory arrangement with Gerald that he cross references his finding to our webpages and we do the same to his.



One of the delights which arose from this exchange was this charming portrait of [AMELIA MARIAN WELLS](#) (1872-1968).

Isn't she so, so sweet, with those beautiful eyes!

The picture, measuring 25" x 30", has been passed down through the family but Gerald has no idea who the artist was. I've tried enlarging and enhancing the signature and have come up with the following:



The date appears to be 1875 when Amelia would have been three, but who was the talented artist? The monogram looks like a capital 'C' but what's the symbolism in its centre?

Any suggestions out there as to how we find out who he/she was, please?

Edward Pellew Plenty

Ros Clow

One Man Show?

Or was it? I started writing this monologue in summer 2020 whilst on holiday in France. I knew nothing about World War 1, although my father was in the RAF in WW2 and I worked in the factory making Concorde before I became a Mum.

The first book I read was 'Biggles Learns to Fly' by Capt W.E.Johns! Then I read 'Open Cockpit' by Arthur Gold Lee (1969) and 'Fighter Heroes of WW1' by Joshua Levine (2008).

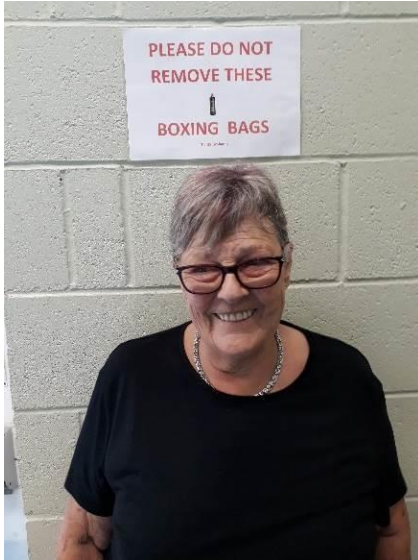
By the autumn it was becoming obvious that Covid was going to prevent our Resurrection Players 2020 production. We had several scripts ready to go but had to put them all on hold.

In Spring 2021 the committee decided we could go ahead with our Midsummer Evening Event, and I had one of my good ideas: why not perform a monologue that evening, in the cemetery.

A 'Newbury Weekly News' letter I had written in 2020 had brought me a volunteer who was delighted to accept the role of Plenty. I started rehearsals at the end of March when we were allowed to meet outside on a bench! My actor had not studied French at school, so my first helper was Yvonne Paris who worked to improve the actor's French accent. Plenty was a French speaker, and this was important to the story.



Andrew J. Smith as Major Plenty



I also recruited Jan Budgen who took on her usual role of costume maker and assistant stage manager. We had costume fittings in the Chapel and rehearsals on the site of the Dissenters Chapel where I wanted the performance to be. Progress was slow!

Then the actor had to self-isolate because of contact with someone with Covid. This sounded alarm bells for me, so I decided to be on the safe side and try find an understudy to read the script. Mike Huxtable refused that honour but became Casting Director when he found me Andrew J. Smith, who was more than willing to be an understudy and within two days had learned two pages of the script.

With a month to go I made the decision to offer the part to Andrew. I've not heard from the first actor since then!

Jan had to start from scratch with the costume; the two actors were very different sizes. Rehearsals went well, including working from a map to be able to point to where Plenty had lived and gone to school. Meg Thomas knitted a scarf, Dave Clow made a flight notepad, Jan found a bell and did all the costume alterations.

Serge Comini, who runs a Facebook page in France (Abbaye et aérodromes de Beaupré sur la Lys - La Gorgue), sent me photographs of Plenty when he was based at La Gorgue and later took the time to audio record correct pronunciation for all the place names in the script. French place names often do not follow the general rules of pronunciation.

The Town Council manager David Ingram arranged for additional chairs to be delivered and the performance space grass to be mowed, Maureen Hudd bought disinfectant spray and wipes to clean the chairs between performances, Deirdre and Alistair Duff created a display board, illustrating Plenty's life, for the Chapel.

Paul Shave (our new membership secretary) and Mike Huxtable didn't take much persuading to dress up as previous characters they had played and become ushers for the night.

It had rained non-stop for what seemed like weeks, but the clouds cleared on the night of the dress rehearsal. Lucie Robinson came and videoed the performance. It went well.

On the night of the performances the weather was perfect, the cemetery beautiful and Andrew J. Smith became Edward Pellew Plenty IV - twice. He was brilliant and made the part his own.

**A BIT OF LIGHT
INTERENTAINMENT**

*I was walking home recently and, as I went to cross the cemetery, I saw three girls stood at the gate. They told me they were too scared of ghosts cross the cemetery at night. I told them that I understood. "I used to get scared too when I was alive."
I'm not sure why they ran away so fast.*

He will be bringing Plenty to life again at our Remembrance Day opening in November and no doubt we will need helpers to produce another One Man Show



Mike Huxtable and Paul Shave ready to welcome visitors Photo: Phil Cannings

Remembrance Events in the Cemetery

Ros Clow

As we do every year, there will be a Remembrance event in the Cemetery on Saturday, November 13th from 10.30am to 6pm.

There will be a tour of the Commonwealth War Graves at 11am, followed by a taster tour, based at the chapel at 3pm.

There will also be a drama in the chapel about Major Edward Pellew Plenty (played by Andrew J. Smith). Details and tickets for the drama will be made available soon.



A Personal View of the Cemetery

Elizabeth Capewell

I've always valued seeing the Cemetery from our upstairs windows, watching the change of seasons over the years since we arrived in 1986, and being entranced by the play of the sun on the stones or the snow covering it in a shroud of white. I have enjoyed the song of the birds and the occasional birds of prey flying overhead and the visits to our garden by woodpeckers.



Being busy with work and children meant I didn't often visit at first and its closure for ten years began to make me realise what I'd missed. From when I started the Friends in 2009 and NRC was open again, I have come to know its diverse wildlife, the lives of the people interred there and its history, enhanced by the hard work of the Committee and special interest groups. Having discovered vital pieces of stained glass lying in dust on the Chapel floor in 2009, a particular joy has been seeing the determination of Brian Sylvester, when he took over as Chair of The Friends, in ensuring the stained glass window was gloriously restored.

When the first Lockdown began in March 2020, I grieved over the loss of access to NRC & the loss of a safe place to walk close to home and to continue recording the graves. I was in again like a shot when it reopened, and my oasis of peace was restored. How glad I was that it has stayed open during later lockdowns.



Its value to me has soared since February when I surprised everyone, but most of all myself, by having a heart attack. Instead of our usual 10 mile walks, my horizons were sharply reduced. I can't tell you how I valued my walks round the Cemetery as I rebuilt my strength, watching the detail of the emergence of snowdrops and celandine, daffodils and bluebells. Another shock came at the end of August after a hospital visit when I, and

then my husband, went down with Covid. We had both been doubly vaccinated and extremely cautious because my husband was shielding. It wasn't the easy ride that the vaccinated had been promised, especially for my husband. But the Cemetery has come into its own again and I've been so grateful that it is in easy reach of our house for my first steps after the weeks of utter fatigue with seats to rest on in the September sun. The signs of Autumn, especially the emerging fungi, have given great joy. Now my husband is out of hospital his aim is to walk to NRC and regain his strength.

It also gives me pleasure to know that singer Maia Hendrickx is now renting the Chapel during the week for her pupils. They are delighted by the acoustics, and it is the first time many of the younger ones have sung in a chapel and heard what a glorious sound they sing.

So thank you to the Town Council for keeping NRC open and thank you to the Friends for adding to its many aspects. Long may it continue, and long may the Friends thrive into, and past, its second decade.

Elizabeth Capewell, 29 Sept 2021

“Have you got any more typing for me?” – A Tribute to Julie Goddard

Ros Clow

The history group lost one of its stalwarts this summer. Julie Goddard joined us right at the beginning and became our chief typist.

She had had a career as a librarian and was experienced in researching family history, especially the Goddard family although that was her married name not her own name, Barnard.

She always double checked everything she transcribed, using FreeBMD and Mrs. Pattison's Memorial Inscriptions (MRS P).



Brian Sylvester and Julie Goddard in the cemetery

As well as typing hundreds of obituaries and funeral reports gleaned from the Newbury Weekly News microfilm in the library, she was a regular attendee at History Group meetings, filing afternoons and was always on hand at Welcome Days and other events.

In 2015 when we performed *Residents Resurrected* at the Phoenix Theatre, Julie was on Reception.

She was one of the authors of that production having written the script for Richard Goddard (1797-1875). The role was played by Mike Brook.

After Julie had watched the performance, I asked Julie what she thought. "Better than I could have ever expected" was her reply.



Thank you, Julie, for everything you have done for the Friends.

Julie's family have donated some of her books to be sold in aid of our 'memorial wall' project.

They cover Genealogy, Heraldry, Berkshire, Newbury etc. and will be on sale in the Chapel on Saturday 13th November.