



Newsletter 33

Autumn 2026

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

Maureen Hudd



At last we have some seasonal, autumnal weather after a scorching summer. Despite the intense heat, we were amazed that the Nature Group were able to find 24 varieties of wild flowers on 15th August; thanks to them for their monthly monitoring of the precious flora in the Cemetery.

We have continued to host events in the Cemetery beginning with the re-dedication of the grave of Georgiana Leonie Douglas, who left money in her will for the building of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in

Newbury. The Italian marble angel on the grave had fallen, and without any living relatives to restore it, the Friends of the Cemetery paid for the grave to be restored. Fr Michael Fava, Priest at St. Joseph's, and a goodly number of parishioners and Friends were present for the re-dedication almost 100 years to the day Georgiana died.

Primrose Day in April was well attended, and once again the highlight was on the flowers and fauna in the Cemetery ably demonstrated by the Nature Group.



We held our Midsummer event on a Saturday in June this year and noted that attendance was not as good as when we celebrated Midsummer at an evening event.

In August we hosted the U3A Recorder Group who gave a recital in the Chapel of music old and new. This was a new venture for us, and we hope to maybe have further musical events in the Chapel, which has good acoustics.

Very recently, The Friends joined with Newbury Field Club to host an event for Heritage Weekend called 'Working Lives', where we showcased photographs and memorabilia of Plenty's Engineering collected by the Oral History Programme masterminded by Ros Clow.

We look forward to welcoming you to the Annual Meeting of the Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery when Ros Clow and Maureen Hudd will talk about the Cemetery 'Past, Present and Future'. Tuesday 27th October at 7 pm at St Francis de Sales Parish Hall, Warren Road, Wash Common, RG14 6NH. There is very good parking, well-lit and no steps.

All Saints Day Night – 1st November – please come along to this or at least display a poster, which will be coming out to you soon. Note – this is a ticket-only event.

Remembrance – Saturday 7th November – 10 am – 12 noon – Poppy Crosses will be laid on 20 Commonwealth War Graves plus graves of others who have served in the Armed Forces.

We still need help with filing and researching – contact Ros Clow if you can help.

The Friends also need a Secretary; if you think this is something you could do, please get in touch with Maureen Hudd.

Mr Canada and Lady Hawk

Ros Clow

About a year ago Norman Byng told me about a friend of his, called Stephen Copperthwaite. He lived in Canada and was researching his family tree, and Norman was helping him.

This year I realised that Stephen was visiting Newbury and would be speaking to the Berkshire Family History Society in May. Maureen Hudd and I attended the meeting in the museum, and it was basically a stroll through Stephen's family history, which has resulted in him writing a book called 'Lady Hawk'. It started with a relative in Speen Workhouse. He was an engaging character, and when he gave me his email address, mrontario@aol.com, he explained that, as well as working in a bank, he was a body-building champion! And had been Mr Canada too!

As he was talking, I couldn't help myself, when he explained that his relative Eleanor was married to Joel Haines, who died in 1830 and then married his brother, Job Haines, I spoke out that that was illegal. He said that might explain why he couldn't find that marriage. Back home I checked our website, and Christine Gambles had pinned the second marriage down to Reading and Eleanor was calling herself Ellen by then. I emailed him the link and he thanked me.

He has also sent us all the death certificates for his family members who are buried in the cemetery. And we remain in touch. He gave Maureen a copy of his book. I read it on holiday and really enjoyed it. The Haines family were cheesemongers and were bullied by a local drunk, so left Newbury spending the rest of their lives in the Henley area. Do contact Maureen

if you would like to read the book or buy it on Amazon. Unfortunately, the drunk is not buried in NRC!

Lady Hawk was the nickname of Fanny Ann Vickers, the granddaughter of Job and Ellen. She lived with her grandparents for many years. Job was a corn porter.

As the meeting ended, a member came over to me and said, "You're obviously something of an expert"! I laughed; this was a society where they were all doing family history research. And then I thought that since 2009 I have filed the records of 5,430 residents and amongst them regularly found examples of illegal marriages.



So, I've offered to give a talk for the society, based on the stories of illegality that abound in our cemetery!

WILDLIFE AT THE CEMETERY

Lynette Edwell

At last, thanks to Linda Clark, we can be sure that there are two types of bats detected in Newtown Road Cemetery this year: the pipistrelle and the noctule (pictured). The pipistrelle bats, which also visit the back gardens of Priory Road nightly, have been known to visit and perhaps live in the cemetery. This is a new visiting variety for us, the largest bat in the country, which flies in a straight



line high up before descending and eating insects in flight. It can sometimes be seen on street lights devouring moths. We are not certain that the noctule is sleeping in the cemetery, but they are attracted to tall trees rather than buildings, so we could be in luck.

At our Midsummer Event on June 20, our expert moth man recorded 160 moths and mini moths in the cemetery within a 24-hour period. Several of the moths were then placed in capsules, named and displayed on tables in the cemetery chapel, and were released unharmed in the evening.

Our member and wildflower enthusiast Marguerite Shave has noted four main species of bumblebee and is carrying out a monthly survey walk in the cemetery. I am not aware of wild bees nesting in the cemetery this year, but they did last year, and their nest was very prominent – fortunately the tree they chose was surrounded by virulent stinging nettles!

Our monthly wildflower count was up to 57 varieties of wild flowers in May, then the heat wave struck, and the mowers moved in, so that only 24 varieties were recorded in August. The main victims were the orchids, as just as the third Pyramidal orchid opened, the heatwave started, and that was it, compared to the 40 Pyramidal orchids we counted last year.

In August we had a visit from lichen expert Richard Todd, who spent the day recording the wide variety of lichen in the cemetery. We have the records of an earlier survey, and it will be interesting to compare the two when we hear from Richard, who has agreed to let us know what he finds.

In the late autumn this year we hope to do a mushroom, toadstool and fungi survey, which should include the beautiful cemetery earthstars, and if we are lucky this year we may again see the large toadstool ring, which two years ago appeared and lasted for several weeks.

So there is a great deal of recorded wildlife at the cemetery, and we welcome new findings. Did anybody spot the jay I saw last week? And the newcomer kites have made themselves very much at home in the large Cedars of Lebanon where they look down on all of us, with their whooping cries.

Please let me know if you see anything new or interesting in the cemetery – just contact Lynette Edwell at 24 Priory Road, Newbury or phone 01635 820445 - and I will either record it, or try and help you to identify your discovery!

Subscription Reminder

Paul Shave



Thank you for continuing to be a Friend. We depend on Friends' donations to keep us going, and it's time to renew your subscription. The annual membership form for renewal is on the website. [Click here](#) for the link.

If you're not currently using a standing order for your payments, we would appreciate it if you could - it makes it easier for you and the Treasurer as you don't have to do anything each year. A standing order form is on the website. You can download it by [clicking here](#). Subscriptions are due on 1st October.

Jane Burrell

Maureen Hudd

Members will be saddened to hear of the recent death of Jane Burrell. Jane was the first membership secretary of Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery and was always on hand to provide historical information and guidance. Jane was a regular attendee at events and supported The Friends with displays. She was the speaker at The Friends' Annual Meeting last year. She will be much missed.



The Westall Grave

Ros Clow

In June 2024, the Westall family laid to rest the cremated remains of Richard Charles Westall.

The family had all the appropriate documentation to show ownership of the grave, so the procedures were not too complicated. The fee for the Town Council was £340.



The Westall grave just after the funeral.

Richard Westall is remembered for, in 1990, founding the charity 'Loose Ends' which is still going and provides hot meals at Newbury Cricket Club for anyone in our community who may otherwise go without a hot meal.

In 2024 Loose Ends won The King's Award for Voluntary Service. This is the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK and is the equivalent of an individual being awarded an MBE.

Richard was the sixth family member to be interred in the grave; the majority being cremated remains. The plot was bought to hold the remains of an infant, who was an aunt to Richard. This explains why it is located on the 'Children's Path'.

Mark Westall, who provided the photo and other information, was a founding member of the Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery, serving on the original committee. His interest was that his other brother, Andrew, and his mother, Myrtle Moon, had been interred there in the 1990s. His father, Norman, was interred there in the 1970s and also his grandmother, Mary Elizabeth in the 1930s.

Coincidences

Brian Sylvester

In Newtown Road Cemetery, Newbury, there is a simple stone on a grave which reads: -

*In Loving Memory of
Jack M. Evans
who gave his life for King and Country
Oct. 20th. 1940
aged 23*



Now we know from the records that there was no one of that name buried there, so I looked up his details on the website of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and found it to be a reference to JACK MARSHALL EVANS, a Royal Navy Stoker¹, a crew member of H.M. Submarine TRIAD, which was lost with all hands on that date in the Gulf of Taranto, Italy, on its way to Alexandria. So that leads us to my...

1st COINCIDENCE: My father, Eric Sylvester, was also a Royal Navy Stoker, serving at the same time on submarines in the Mediterranean in the Second World War.

2nd COINCIDENCE: His boat, H.M. Submarine REGULUS, was also lost with all hands shortly after, before its due return date to Italy.³

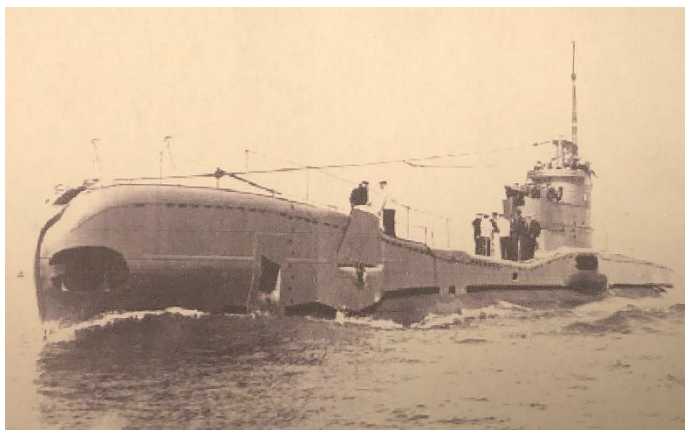
I felt compelled to look further into these losses and was prompted to consider writing a play of sorts, for the Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery. This led to...

3rd COINCIDENCE: Fortunately, on one of our Cemetery Open Days a relative of Jack came forward and offered photos and further information regarding Jack and his family, which were most useful. Apparently, his stone is laid on his grandparents' grave, presumably placed there by his mother.⁴

So I started off to become acquainted with submarine life in WW2 by sourcing and reading six books, both fact and fiction. During this, I encountered my...



Jack Marshall Evans



HMS Triad

4th COINCIDENCE: One book, entitled “Discharged Dead”⁵ by Sydney Hart, another Stoker who had actually served on the TRIAD and referred to Jack in his autobiography. It transpires Syd was taken ill in Malta and hospitalised, so did not go on the final sailing of his boat. He tells us of his shipmate’s call before departure, saying “*I had another visitor: Stoker Taff⁶ Evans. As I wished him luck and*

good hunting, he forced a pound note into my hand with the words ‘You can find more use for this than I can’.”

After tossing all the information back and forth, I decided to write my playlet as an exchange of imagined letters from Jack to his mum, sharing his thoughts, based on the recorded experiences of Jack and my father, adding in snippets from my period as a Navy National Serviceman some time later.

Of course, my first draft was far too long, but with the kind collaboration of the Friends’ History Group Leader, Ros Clow, we slimmed it down considerably, deciding on the following delivery: -

The action was to take place in the home of Jack’s mother, Lydia, on 21st May, 1948, where she had just returned following a War Memorial Dedication and Unveiling at Westminster Abbey⁷ which had concluded with a commemorative address given by The Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill.

In the drama she was accompanied by Syd Hart, who had supposedly kept in touch, and told him how she had held all of Jack’s letters in a shoebox which she got out, and proceeded to open a selection. To the side of the stage, in slightly strange lighting, was Jack himself, sat as if writing the letters, and the playlet continued with extracts, sometimes read by Jack as he wrote them, others by Lydia or Syd. Finally, Jack’s light was switched off as he was “Discharged Dead”, while Syd read the imagined letter of condolence he’d sent at the time to his mum.⁸

The playlet, entitled “Sinking”, was one of three under the umbrella “20th Century Casualties” expertly produced and directed by Ros Clow, and performed at the Royal British Legion, Newbury on three occasions in September 2023, which were well received.

Let’s fast-forward now to August, 2026 for our...

5th COINCIDENCE: Whilst travelling around on a West Country holiday, my wife and I stopped in Beaminster for tea and a delicious locally-made cake, after which we visited the town’s cemetery - as you do!

Having wandered around the hundreds of graves (including one CWG from WW1), as I was about to leave, somehow my attention was mysteriously drawn to a particular gravestone - a fairly plain one, so I don't know why it called to me, but call it did.

And then, brushing aside a little overgrowth, I read the memorial inscription along the bottom curb stone. It was a tribute to Lt. Cdr. GEORGE STEVENSON SALT who, it said, had died as the Commanding Officer of H.M. Submarine TRIAD when it went down.

Can you believe it - YES, JACK'S SKIPPER!!!⁹ My 'flabber' is still 'gasted'!

MORE COINCIDENCES

1. Exactly a year after REGULUS's official write-off, another submarine PERSEUS was lost¹⁰ in the Med on its way to Alexandria. Eric had served on her previously between December '38 to May '39. There was, however, one survivor this time – *another stoker* – coincidentally named John Stokes¹¹. [You couldn't make it up, could you!]

2. As part of the National Warship Week Campaign in February 1942, Newbury adopted and sponsored H.M. Submarine TIGRIS¹² and faithfully followed and supported her progress¹³. Sadly, she too was lost with all hands off the coast of Italy on 10th March 1943. To this day, the Royal British Legion, Newbury, annually parades and commemorates her service and sacrifice.

FOOTNOTE

In all, 45 British submarines were tragically lost in the Mediterranean in WW2.

R.I.P.



JACK MARSHALL EVANS: 30th December 1916 - 20th October 1940

ERIC SYLVESTER: 23rd November 1913 – 26th November 1940



Notes

¹ A Royal Navy stoker was a historical sailor rating responsible for tending ship's coal-fired or oil-fired boilers and maintaining the engine room. Today, the role has evolved into the modern trade of Marine Engineering Technician, handling advanced ship propulsion, electrical systems, and damage control.

² But likely to have been on 26th November, 1940 – three days after Eric's 27th birthday.

³ The very same waters sailed upon by my father in peacetime on H.M.S. ROYAL OAK. (Another coincidence?)

⁴ See: <http://www.fnrcnewbury.org.uk/persondetails.asp?PersonID=12699>

⁵ This is the term used in the Navy to close the Ship's Book entry for someone who dies, together with the date.

⁶ In the Navy, anyone with a Welsh surname is nicknamed Taff or Taffy, regardless.

⁷ <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/commemorations/combined-services-memorial>

⁸ The parts were admirably played by Andrew Smith as Jack, Judith Bunting as Lydia, and Steve Schollar as Syd.

⁹ His son, known as Sam Salt, went into the Navy and served in submarines (how could you do that after your father's experience?) and later became the C.O. of HMS SHEFFIELD when it was bombed in the Falklands.

¹⁰ 1941: PERSEUS set sail on 26th November (a year after Eric's death) and was sunk on 6th December.

¹¹ See: [Submarine escape: A WWII survival tale from Kefalonia - BBC News](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-55555555)

¹² See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Tigris_\(N63\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Tigris_(N63)): the same class submarine as the Triad.

¹³ **The Town raised a staggering £431,243 – equivalent to £18 million in today's money: wow!**

Heritage Open Day, 12th September 2026.

Ros Clow

This was the first time that FNRC and NDFC had participated in a joint event. This was stimulated by the 2026 theme, 'Working Lives' and information that there would be some kind of financial benefit. There wasn't!

FNRC is allowed to use the Chapel whenever we want so we didn't have to pay for that. It was booked for Friday evening and all day Saturday, using FNRC public liability insurance.

I produced an A4 poster, detailing the day and printed off A5 flyers. This information, sent to the NWNews, produced good coverage on September 3rd. But who reads it?



FNRC History Group members were circulated; this produced one offer of help. NDFC Oral History project members were asked to contribute. Liz Evans and Tom Allen did meet and agreed photos (all Plenty Engineering) but they didn't forward them to Jemma Polland, who had agreed to do a display on the new NDFC display board. I had to organise that when I returned from Wales on 31st August.

I had spent several hours revisiting the Medical Matters information and grave locations. On Friday morning Town Council employees had helped to find Charles Gee Taylor, who, despite having an enormous headstone, is not recorded on the official maps.



Fiona Walker, Dave and I were on our own to set up Friday night. Average age 81. This involved cleaning the Chapel, moving furniture, setting up the display, erecting the screen, positioning the projector, filling the urn with water brought to the cemetery in plastic containers. More of that later. It took us 1½ hours. We locked cemetery, toilet and Chapel afterwards.

I had asked several younger people to help to no avail!

Sunday morning Maureen Hudd (Chair FNRC) unlocked the cemetery at 9.30am, put the urn on, installed a toilet roll in the WooWoo. Bob Bosley (Chair NDFC) was also on duty.

Dave and I arrived at 10.30am. Despite the fact that we had not advertised a Find-A-Grave service two couples turned up looking for the grave of Esther Dove and the Warnes. It was lucky that I had taken the map, Mrs Pattison's codes and the Berkshire Burial Index. I was able to find them both. This is not my area of expertise!

A Mrs Bosley (no relation that we know of) was interested in the OHP and has volunteered to interview her uncle who was Union Convenor at Plenty's.

Carol Swanborough had volunteered but was too poorly.

At noon Dave delivered his talk on the Heaton, Butler and Bayne stained-glass window. It was the first time he had shown the video of the man doing the installation losing his trousers! There were 12 in the audience. There has been some good feedback.

Meanwhile I was trying to find the Warne's grave, at the south end of the cemetery. I chatted with a dog walker who is a regular in the cemetery and had read the notices we put up on our fence! I shared the story that the police cadets, who are now looking after policemen's graves, use What3Words to locate them.

Ben immediately said that he wouldn't mind helping with that! I arranged to meet him at 12.30pm by the Chapel. As I was waiting, I saw him race across the north end of the cemetery and make for the exit. I had been very happy for 10 minutes!

I was telling Maureen my story when I saw a bald, bearded man entering the cemetery but without a dog and not wearing a dinosaur sweatshirt. It was Ben back to concentrate on how W3W could be done! He demonstrated on nearby graves. We agreed he would take his reading at each headstone. Wow! And he has been in touch since!

My Medical Matters tour started at 2.00pm. I had eight participants. The first time I did this tour there were 51 participants! This time I included a few extra facts, and I did remember to include Atkins, the horse vet and son of the Grammar School Headmaster. It lasted 1½ hours.

At 3.00pm Dave was supposed to be demonstrating the Turboscribe software. Jenni Collins had volunteered to be the guinea-pig using one of her recent interviews. Noone turned up to observe. They did discover a snag. Whoever is using the package has to use a code which comes to Dave's phone. Needs some thought.

Alison Foulkes said that no one had turned up while I was leading the tour, so we decided to pack up.

That was when the second flood happened! The first happened on Friday when I filled the urn. I tipped the large container of water in without realising that the tap had been left open. The floor was awash and I used toilet sawdust to soak it up.

As Alison, Fiona, Dave and I dragged everything out of the cemetery and into my car, Dave exclaimed "Who didn't screw the top on the milk?" Me, of course, it never occurred to me. The milk soaked all the paperwork in the plastic box, the empty collecting box, pens and pencils.

Overnight I washed the mugs and teaspoons, pens and pencils and collecting box, ready to take back in the morning. It was just Dave and I on Sunday morning, putting mugs, tea, sugar in the sideboard. Locking all the doors of the cupboards, storing the urn in a new box as the last one had been destroyed. We updated the FNRC noticeboard and left. Phew!

Was it worth it?

If Mrs Bosley joins the OHP and Ben Enevoldsen masterminds What3Words grave location, yes, it will have been worth it.

There were only five attendees that I hadn't personally invited. Food for thought. Also, the collecting box was empty. Usually there is at least £20 in it, but this time we didn't offer homemade cakes.

Dates for your Diary

Tuesday 27th October

Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery Annual Meeting

Time and place: 7.30 pm at St Francis de Sales Parish Hall, Wash Common RG14 6NH.

As well as the usual AGM stuff, Ros Clow will talk about 'The Cemetery Past, Present and Future'.

Sunday 1st November

All Saints' Day Night.

Time and place: 5 pm in the Newtown Road Cemetery.

Family Tour - £10 per family - 6.45 pm

Adults only Tours £5 each - 8.30 pm Adults only Tours £5.

Music and refreshments in the Chapel at the Cemetery.

Saturday 7th November

Remembrance Event

Time and place: 10 am – 12 noon in the Newtown Road Cemetery.

Laying of poppy crosses on Commonwealth War Graves and graves of those who have served in war.