



Newsletter 15

Spring 2017

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

Dear Friends

As I write this at the end of February I can comment on the mild winter we have had (I hope I don't have to regret saying this before this newsletter comes out!). As a result the country is enjoying a host of beautiful spring flowers, and Newtown Road Cemetery is no exception – have you been and seen?



I was reminded of a poem we read at junior school way back in the dark ages; namely "Flower Chorus" by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Here's a couple of extracts...

*O such a commotion under the ground,
When March called, "Ho, there! ho!"
Such spreading of rootlets far and wide,
Such whisperings to and fro!*

*And now they are coming to lighten the world
Still shadowed by winter's frown.
And well may they cheerily laugh "Ha! ha!"
In laughter sweet and low,
The millions of flowers under the ground,
Yes, millions beginning to grow.*

Full poem available at: poetrynook.com/poem/flower-chorus

Your committee thought it would be nice to mount a Spring Welcome Event and we hit upon Wednesday 19th April, referred to in our diaries as "Primrose Day". How appropriate, we thought, as we have such a richness of these dainty flowers; but how come they have their own special day? A quick search on Wikipedia soon gave the answer ...



*Benjamin Disraeli
photographed by
Cornelius Jabez Hughes in 1878*

“Primrose Day is the anniversary of the death of British statesman and prime minister Benjamin Disraeli, 1st Earl of Beaconsfield, on 19 April 1881. The primrose was his favourite flower and Queen Victoria would often send him bunches of them from Windsor and Osborne House. She sent a wreath of primroses to his funeral.”

Aah! Not a lot of people know that!

So please, whatever your politics (and there's a lot of that about at present!), come and join us for this occasion – details elsewhere in this newsletter.

We continue to receive enquiries from abroad about our “residents”. We've recently heard from Australia (a descendant of Henry Beck - the town crier who died in 1872), delighted to learn of their ancestor and to find our copy of a watercolour of him.

Likewise, we were contacted from Belgium from a great-great-great-whatever of Charles Gee Taylor, a manufacturer of patent medicines and, at the same time, an ardent teetotaler. Elsewhere you'll find a contribution from our Belgian friend.

As usual I extend our grateful thanks to a number of people – the Town Council, the committee, and those who turn out to share in our intriguing pastime. Thanks to Deirdre and Doug for their wonderful display at last year's First World War Exhibition in the town hall, and I know they are planning already for this year.

Especial thanks must go to Paul Thompson who, due to business commitments, has retired from the Committee but has kindly agreed to carry on maintaining our website and producing our newsletters. We really do appreciate your past contribution, Paul, and your ongoing support.

And finally, we're still looking to fill those vacancies for Schools Liaison, and Public Relations: any takers – PLEASE?!

See you soon, amongst the Primroses.



Constable Henry Beck

*Henry Beck
© West Berkshire Museum*

Anthills in the Cemetery

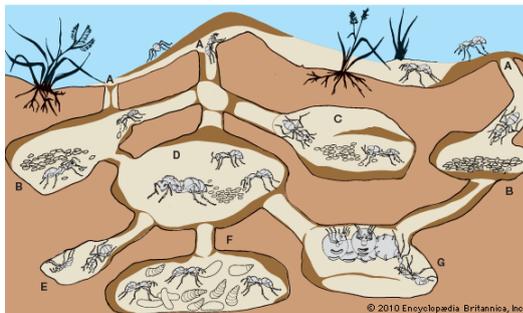
Rita Gardner

I've been thinking of the anthills as a nature topic for some time. The Wildlife Management Plan (2010) stated that anthills are only found in mature grassland and that the grassland in the cemetery "is the single most important feature of the cemetery". In turn, the anthill is an important feature of permanent grassland as it supports an interesting range of plants and animals.



Nicola Chester (Nature Notes in the Newbury Weekly News) writes so eloquently about local wildlife. A recent column (NWN 26 Jan. 2017) described anthills as they should be regarded - an integral part of nature's diversity.

The initial information I found regarding anthills was quite negative. Many people dislike them in their gardens and use ant poison to kill the colonies or pour boiling water into an anthill to destroy the ants.



Ants are social insects; the anthill houses a well organised colony. The ants are rarely seen, remaining below ground unless disturbed. The ant communities have their queen, winged males and females, wingless workers and nurses. A colony is started by a single female. At swarming time in high summer, the female leaves the parent community and mates with a male from another nest. She returns to earth to lay her eggs. As they hatch into larvae, she feeds them from her own body until they spin their cocoons and pass into the pupal stage. After a few weeks the first brood of worker ants emerge. They build the nest and care for the queen who continues to lay eggs. The subsequent broods are larger ants as they have been fed and tended by the initial, smaller size brood. Sometimes the larvae are put out into the sun by the workers to hasten their growth. After the queen has produced a large number of workers, she lays eggs which hatch into a winged brood to start a new cycle. A queen may live as long as 15 years.

Older anthills will have a complicated structure with many storied labyrinths and chambers extending several metres underground; the chambers are used for sleeping in winter, nurseries, store rooms for food and places to protect 'guests', such as aphids (green fly & black fly), caterpillar larvae (those of the common blue and the chalkhill blue), and beetles. Being allowed to live in the anthill protects them from predators above ground such as birds and amphibians. There is a complex life system in the anthill. The aphids are 'farmed' by the ants to feed on the grass roots; this reduces the vigour of the grass and makes it less competitive in relation to the growth of herbs. The ants allow the caterpillar larvae to feed on the aphids. In return for protection, the ants feed on the sticky 'honey dew' secreted by the aphids and the caterpillar larvae. Another creature shares in the complex cycle of the anthill. A spider (*Atyphus affinis*) creates a tubular web in the friable soil around the base of the anthill and preys upon beetles, bees, flies and woodlice. This spider may live 7-8 years. It, in turn, is located by a hunting wasp which paralyses it and uses it as a host.



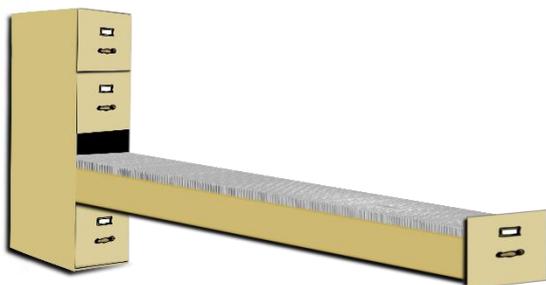
Chalkhill Blue butterfly

On the surface, the soil that is excavated and heaped in a mound, smothers the existing vegetation. This allows the mound to colonise other vegetation which is different to its surroundings, thus increasing plant diversity. Plants such as thyme grow on the cooler north side, while rock roses grow on the warmer south side of a mound. Ephemerals (short lived plants which germinate and seed in the spring) grow on the bare soil of the mound. The permanently bare soil from the excavation provides a unique micro habitat for short lived plant species, such as fungi and mosses.

Woodpeckers, badgers and partridges disturb the anthills for food. The dry soil cushion of the mound is used by pheasants as a dusting bath. Anthills are amazing sites of diligence!

2000+ and counting!

Ros Clow



A reminder to all Friends, the History Group (HG) and Filing sessions are open to all. We usually meet in our dining room where space is limited but don't let that put you off joining us, you just need to let me know you are coming. Dates are always listed under 'Events' on the FNRC website. I thought in this newsletter I would give an update on what we have been doing.

The Filing afternoons (or Research Consolidation Sessions) run from 2.00pm till about 5.00pm. We work in pairs to add hard copies of recent research into the (currently 33) lever arch files which I keep on trolleys in my office. These are the key repository of our work and contain much more information than is on the website. No computer skills needed. Refreshments provided.

About twice a year Dave and I put aside several days to update the spreadsheet of individuals associated with the cemetery. This is sent to all HG members and is basically an index of the 33 lever arch files. You can download it at:

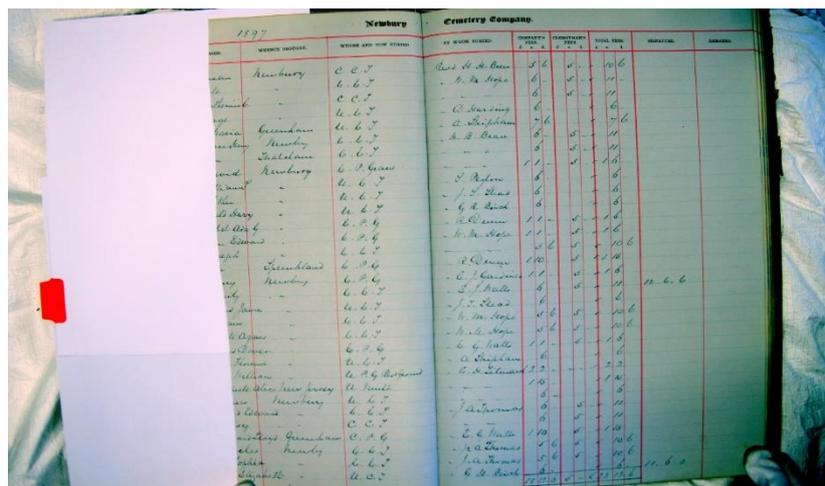
<http://www.fnrnewbury.org.uk/historyresearchgroup.asp>

Most HG sessions are where those attending share their recent research. We all do different things. Alan Vince and Brian Sylvester spend hours in Newbury Library gleaning information from the microfilm copies of old Newbury Weekly News. Alan does this systematically, he has just finished 1873. Not sure what Brian's system is but he does more than everybody else! Death Announcements go straight into the files but obituaries are sent to Julie Goddard who not only types them but double checks all the information. Her work then comes back to me for filing (see above) and I forward the electronic copy to Sylvia Green who adds it to the website.

Also adding to the website is Brian Snook who transcribes the Memorial Recording group's work and the Burial Accounts. Speaking of the Burial Accounts, which we discovered at Berkshire Record Office, Dave has now completed clear photographs of every page and using an A3 printer (thanks to Jo Godfrey) we have two enormous folders which we can use especially for the Missing Years when we are checking research. Dave has also stored various key records on our Dropbox space, these are available to all Friends, just email Dave at

clow@ntlworld.com for the

password. Unfortunately we are still left with a few gaps where someone cut out the stamps from the original ledgers. Alan is working to fill these gaps by matching the information that remains to death announcements in the NWN.



Other members are working on different aspects. Deirdre Duff is doing loads of research often with a military influence, Sylvia Sellwood is focusing on those who lived and worked in Northbrook Street, Julia Radbourne does anything I ask her to! Sometimes this is making costumes for plays!

Both Sylvias, Angela Wilson, Liz Evans, Jenny Peet and Alan were raised in Newbury and this provides a brilliant resource for those of us who are newcomers, although sometimes we do have to ask ourselves *'but is he buried in the cemetery'*!

Dates for Your Diaries

Don't forget to add these dates to your diary.

Primrose Day	19 th April 2017 12 noon – 6pm	Cemetery Chapel
Welcome Evening (Mid-summer)	21 st June 2017 6pm – 9pm	Cemetery Chapel
Newbury Heritage Weekend	9 th – 10 th September 10am – 4pm	Cemetery Chapel
FNRC AGM and Film	23 rd October 2017 7:30pm – 9pm	To be confirmed

Monument Recording Group

Doug Larsen

The monument recording group is continuing their task of manually recording every monument in the Newtown Road Cemetery. This provides 2 benefits:

1. Correcting and adding to the records that were originally recorded by Margaret Pattison. She completed her massive task 30 or 40 years ago and has provided records that we still use today, including the indexing system that she created. However, working as an individual, it is not surprising that some inscriptions had slight errors or monuments were missed altogether. So now is our chance to get as close to 100% accuracy as we can.
2. The records that we create can be digitised by typing them into spreadsheets which are then suitable for transferring to the website.

All of this requires a massive effort by our team of volunteers who show exceptional dedication and enthusiasm for the project. In fact one of our volunteers, Sue Kitchener, has been awarded an M.B.E in this year's New Year's Honours list for of Voluntary Service and was presented with the insignia by Prince Charles at Buckingham Palace. This represents many different activities including almost 40 years in the Girl Guides. This illustrates the calibre of the people we have working with us.



I would also like to mention the work of Brian Snook who has the unenviable task of transferring our work onto the website. The spreadsheets we do must conform to a strict format but sometimes we go astray and Brian has to make manual changes before they are suitable for the web page. Sadly, there is no such thing as a “force fit” when it comes to inserting data. Welcome to the digital world!

I would also like to offer a heartfelt thanks to our Chairman, Brian, who provides the motivation for us to continue our work.

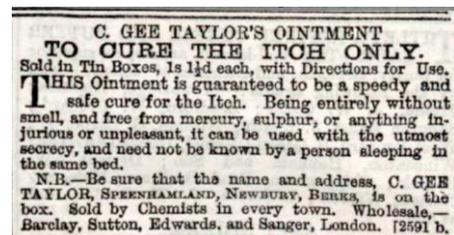
A letter from Belgium

I am Tom Bekers. I am a Belgian teacher, family historian and descendant of the Longcotton-born Charles Gee Taylor (CGT: 1806 - 1890), who was buried in Newtown Road Cemetery in 1890. I have done research on several aspects of this great man (birth, profession [inventor of pills and ointments], family, will and death). Charles Gee was very prolific: his descendants live across England, in Shetland, the USA, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium. I live and teach in the lovely city of Antwerp.

I have been on a CGT-hunt since 2005 and this resulted in my visit to CGT’s Newbury grave with my family in 2012. This was my first chance to admire the good work of the FNRC and I have been an admirer ever since. The Hungerford chemist William Gee Taylor was CGT’s son. I contributed to the Hungerford Virtual Museum in 2015, you’ll find more info there.

<http://www.hungerfordvirtualmuseum.co.uk/index.php/15-artefacts/80-medical-and-pharmaceutical>

You’ll find scans of Charles Gee Taylor’s advertisements for his pills and ointments there and photos of some medicinal dispensers from his son’s shop.



Not so long ago I bumped into newspaper articles on your FNRC website published on the day of CGT’s death and burial. The articles had been retrieved from Newbury Weekly News microfiches by Friend Brian Sylvester and recently added (July 2016). They refer to his death in 1890:

“Old Gee Taylor is dead, and with him has departed one of the oldest inhabitants, and certainly one of the characters of the town. The old man was well known for miles around, having during his life taken an active part in sick visiting and temperance agitation, quaint in his manner, out spoken in his opinions, he offended many, but there was a kind heart beating behind all, and many poor sick homes have missed his visits during the time he has not been so active as formerly. “He was a rum old chap, but well-meant in his intentions,” is the short mode in which C. Gee Taylor's biography has been put in a single sentence. But are not the chronicles of C. Gee Taylor already written in a book which he himself published? - a characteristic of the man.” (Source: NWN April 1890)

The latter was quite of interest to me and I contacted Ros, who put me through to Brian. To cut a long story short: the continuous efforts of your researcher Brian Sylvester (and his team) have eventually enabled us to track down two (sic!) editions of the “chronicles” referred to. CGT wrote them around 1863. They were widely spread and – although CGT’s Catholic descendants “*did all they could to burn every copy they could get hold of*” (CGT was a Wesleyan lay preacher and he railed against popery quite fiercely. He couldn’t stop – though – his son marrying a Catholic) – some made it to Reading Library and the West Berkshire Museum Collection. They reveal a myriad of new details about CGT’s early life (quite Dickensian, how he was cruelly injected with smallpox-rubbish) and about his dream to become a medicine dispenser as a result of this cruel experiment. CGT was a real survivor. It is Brian’s and my intention to share the “life and adventures of CGT” with you through the FNRC website. Brian also managed to crack a long-lasting mystery: how CGT’s only daughter died tragically through poisoning in 1900.

But not all has been said and done: I would very much like to get hold of medicinal bottles or ointment dispensers labelled Charles Gee Taylor, but haven’t been successful up to now. They probably all landed on Victorian tips. But I guess I take after CGT, I don’t easily give up. Maybe you can help?

I am sure our joint research will see further projects developed in the coming years: medical tours on the cemetery, maybe a re-enactment of some of CGT’s adventures on the stage? I am looking forward to it and hope to visit Newbury on the occasion.

I thank you all for your efforts to preserve the cemetery and its graves and hope you can continue your good work in times to come.

Kind regards from Tom Bekers, Antwerp.

Cemeteries around the World

Ros Clow

In January while staying with our daughter near Sydney, Australia, Dave and I visited Waverley cemetery again. We knew there had been storm damage to the Coastal Path and wondered how this had affected the cemetery. As you can see the Coastal Path has been re-routed right through the middle of the cemetery! It’s not often you see so much flesh in amongst the graves!



The cemetery management are making the most of it and using the railings to display information about famous people buried there (none of whom I had heard of) and advertising guided tours.