



Newsletter 13

Spring 2016

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Chairman's Chatter...

Brian Sylvester

Dear Friends

As I write this (in the middle of February) I may come to regret what I'm about to say, but, so far, hasn't it been a mild winter for us here in Newbury! We've been most fortunate to avoid the flooding suffered in other parts of the country, and our sympathies must go out to those further north who have been washed out of their homes not just once, but two or even three times. And if it does come to it, let's hope that the recently-installed flood-prevention schemes here in Newbury come up to expectations.

It will be interesting to see what impact the weather will have on the natural scene especially at the cemetery. Will we have an abundance of insects surviving the winter and subsequently a wealth of bird activity? And lots of beautiful wild flowers? Let's see.



Now I know you'll be disappointed if I didn't pick on a word to examine (nod your head in agreement, please!) and this time I've chosen "Federation" (I can sense your excited anticipation even now!). It comes from the Latin "to ally" and "league".



One definition, of course, is that of a number of independent states joining up under a central government to form a country. The one that instantly springs to mind is The United States of America. But I was surprised to learn just how many more there are: e.g. Austria, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and, further afield, Brazil, India, Nigeria and so on.

But another use of the word is for an organisation within which smaller divisions have some degree of internal autonomy: e.g. the World Chess Federation, the Police Federation and the Federation of Women's Institutes.

And yet another example is the Nation Federation of Cemetery Friends to which we belong, along with over 80 other groups (see their website <http://www.cemeteryfriends.org.uk>). They do a splendid job of sharing information and maintaining enthusiasm for our pursuit.

So, we are very flattered that in June this year we have been chosen to host their AGM; a feather in our cap, you might say. This we'll be doing at The Phoenix Centre which we've used in the past for our dramatic performances. Elsewhere in this newsletter you'll see a request for assistance on this special day so that we can show off the gem which is Newtown Road Cemetery and give the delegates something to remember. Please help.

And, talking of our dramatic performances, I hope you all enjoyed our latest at Halloween. Once more it's congratulations and a big big "thank you" to Ros Clow for her excellent writing (assisted by Julie Goddard) and direction; to Maureen Hudd for her administrative skills; to Rita and John Gardner for their backup; and to all the "thespians" who took part to put on such a moving show.



It would be remiss of me, while I have my "thanking hat" on, not to extend this to all the Friends who participate in one way or another – the committee, the researchers, the gravestone decipherers, the filers, and so on. You all play your part in our quest and it's really appreciated: we'd be lost without you.

And even more remiss of me if I were not to heartily thank Newbury Town Council for its constant support in maintaining and furthering this invaluable piece of local history. We'd be sunk without them!

Monument Recording Group Report

Doug Larsen

This is the quiet period for the Monument Recording Group because so much of our work is outdoors and there hasn't been much of a break in the weather. However we do get queries during most times of the year from people who ask for information about their family monuments after they have found their names on our website. Replying to these queries is always interesting for us because it involves a bit of detective work to locate the grave and photographing it and then finding out more about the deceased from their family. This gets fed back to the History Group who can open a file on a new name and begin a search if enough facts are known.



We believe our expertise, developed over many hours of scraping and brushing and spraying and lifting, adds considerably to the service the Friends offer to the community both locally and the far ends of the world. So spare a thought for Elizabeth, Deidre and Alastair, Jan and Sue, Ann and Sue, Hilary, Glyn and sometimes myself who quietly toil away unearthing long-forgotten treasures of information!

In Support of Ragwort...

Rita Gardner

During our cemetery rounds I've heard several people make negative remarks about ragwort—it's poisonous to grazing animals, it causes burning sensations on the hand and it spreads prolifically. One person had a positive comment – it is the only food source for the cinnabar moth. This moth is a beauty with its red hind wings and black border on the red fore wings. For diversity's sake in the cemetery, we need the existing ragwort.



Ragwort ensures a persistent food source for the caterpillar and larvae of the cinnabar moth and the foliage provides the base for the large number of eggs laid by the female moth. The larvae absorb the bitter tasting alkaloid substances from the plants, making them unpalatable to predators (an exception to this is the cuckoo which eats hairy and poisonous caterpillars). The later larval stages are black and yellow/orange stripe caterpillars which grow to 30 cm. They are voracious feeders and can strip large patches of ragwort.

Ragwort is a biennial. In the first year it produces leaves organised in a rosette. Initially, they are deeply green and dense (like cavalo nero leaves) and then open out looking more like curly kale. The plant flowers in the second year, produces seeds and then dies. The flower heads are in clusters; the yellow flowers are a disk and ray formation. The flowers provide a source of nectar and pollen to many species of bees, butterflies and flies.

Ragwort is unfairly demonised. It is usually avoided by grazing animals, but is a problem if it is hay in large amounts. Ingesting ragwort in small quantities does not usually cause illness. If large amounts are ingested over an extended period, the animal may develop liver damage. The alkaloid in the ragwort is not toxic; the poisoning takes place in the digestive system where the alkaloids are converted into their toxic form. These toxins are collected in the liver and excreted within 48 hrs. The skin irritation humans experience is a dermatitis caused by a different organic substance (lactones) rather than non-toxic alkaloids. Digestion is necessary to convert alkaloids to a toxic form.



The idea that ragwort is considered to be invasive might be fuelled by the effects on the plant as people try to eradicate it. Mowing prevents the plant from developing its seed; the plant reserves are retained in the root and it survives to grow another year. Pulling the plant by

hand leaves ends of roots which are capable of producing rosettes the next year. Its seeds spread 1-5 metres from the plant. It germinates in turned up soil (hence the reason it grows easily in pastures-horses eat the grass short and churn up the ground with their hooves when they run). Seeds landing in undisturbed grassy areas rarely germinate. In the cemetery it does germinate on the paths, but is this really a problem? I'm all for the ragwort if we can attract the beautiful cinnabar moth.

The Strange Case of James Pyke

Dave Clow

How is this possible? The Newbury Weekly News ran a report in 1909 of the funeral on the 17th August of James Pyke: well respected, Oddfellow, angler, worked at Dreweatt and Watson's sale rooms. The report told us that James was buried in Newbury cemetery, Rev. A. B. Barnes officiating.

So we started to check the details and enter him into the Individuals spreadsheet we maintain. But there was no mention of a gravestone in Mrs. Pattison's book and no entry in the Berkshire Burial Index (BBI) for Newtown Road Cemetery. Shaw Cemetery did not open until 1913 so he couldn't be there. We checked the whole of the BBI – no entry for Pyke in 1909. However he is in free BMD.

Issues of this kind can now usually be solved by looking in the Burial Accounts which are on Dropbox (i.e. The Cloud - aren't we modern?) But to our amazement the only burial on the day of Pyke's funeral was a woman! The only other missing entry in the Burial Accounts we have come across was the murderer Henry Martin buried by court order at midnight and presumably no money changed hands.

So what is going on? We have no idea! Maybe you can suggest what might have happened.

Note: Any Friend who wants access to our Dropbox which has the burial accounts plus a 1929 Kelly's of Newbury please contact me 01635 40188 for help.

Cricket and George Wintle

Brian Sylvester

George Wintle was a draper who ran his business from the Carolean-gabled building which is now Camp Hopson's¹. He died on 11th May, 1916 aged 73 and is buried in Newtown Road Cemetery (W86). His obituary, which appeared in the Newbury Weekly News on 18th May, will shortly be entered on to the Friends' website (Mar. 2016).

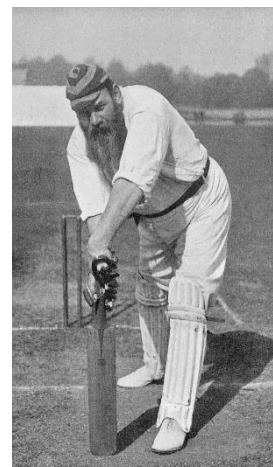
But my attention was drawn to the following extract ...

"His recreations were music and cricket. When in the Antipodes, he represented Tasmania against other Colonies in the inter-Colonial competitions. On settling down in Newbury he

became a member of the Club, ... He did not shine as a bat ... It was, however, as a bowler that he excelled.

One local experience is told of him. Playing in a match between the teams of Newbury and Kingsclere, Mr. John Porter had secured the two star players, W.G. Grace and his brother, E.M. Grace, both of them in the height of their cricketing career.

Mr. Wintle was put on to bowl for Newbury, and at the third ball took W.G's wicket for a duck, following it up by getting E.M. caught in the long field. Thus he had the distinction of disposing of England's two best batsmen during the same afternoon."



Well done George: no mean achievement!

Now cricket matches in those days were meticulously recorded (as they are today). Those records still exist and, thanks to the wonders of the world-wide web, can still be accessed. So, being curious about this referenced game, I had a poke around.

I was able to find that a match took place on **31st August 1880**² at the Recreation Ground at Kingsclere and the full details of the game may be found on:

<http://cricketarchive.com/Archive/Scorecards/338/338466.html>

Kingsclere won by an innings and 97 runs. Wintle is indeed shown as having taken two wickets; W.G. recorded as having scored *four* runs! Additionally W.G's brother – *his initials, shown as "G.F."* (Not E.M., a different brother) - was out for 61 having been stumped from Wintle's bowling, not "caught in the long field" as suggested.

Nevertheless, congratulations George Wintle: something to be proud of.

¹ For a picture, see Sue Hopson's "Newbury – A photographic record 1850-35" page 34 in the revised edition.

² http://cricketarchive.com/Archive/Events/5/Other_matches_in_England_1880.html

Dates for your diary

Here are some dates for you to put in your diaries for events over the coming few months.



Date	Event	Place
Saturday 16 th April 10am to 4pm	West Berkshire Heritage Roadshow event	West Berkshire Museum See below for Help required
Sat 30 th April & Sun 1 st May Mon 2 nd May Sat 7 th May & Sun 8 th May Sat 14 th May & Sun 15 th May	Open Studio Art Gallery 11am to 5pm on all dates listed.	The Chapel, Newtown Road Cemetery

Saturday 11 th June	National Federation of Cemetery Friends AGM	Phoenix Centre and Newtown Road Cemetery
Sunday 12 th June	Cemetery Welcome Day <i>Four Residents Resurrected monologues performed in the cemetery from 10.30am</i>	Newtown Road Cemetery
Saturday 3 rd August	Cemetery Welcome Evening	Newtown Road Cemetery
Thursday 13 th October Time to be confirmed	Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery AGM	St Francis de Sales Parish Hall, Warren Road Newbury
Saturday November 12 th 11am – 3pm	Remembrance Event Remembering those buried or with a memorial in the Cemetery who fell in battle for their country.	Newtown Road Cemetery

A Sad Occurrence – The Death of an Old Man

History Group article by Julie Goddard

An inquest was held on the Saturday afternoon of 30 November 1889 at the “Jack Hotel” on Northbrook-street on the body of Henry Hill, aged it is said 64 years of age, who had been found dead “in the squalor of his freezing and filthy house” on the Thursday previous.

Unmarried and in his sixties, he had been for most of his life a journeyman baker, a skilled occupation at which he was employed by the day at local bakeries.

For many years he had worked for the Heath family.

At some point he seems to have had a crisis after which he began to neglect his cleanliness, causing any possible employer he approached to refuse to take him on. Maybe after Mrs Heath gave up the bakery and he lost his secure employment. Or when Edward Heath died in 1885 this being about the time his lapse from cleanliness is said to have occurred. This could have puzzled him; he knew he was a good and skilled worker, but could not appreciate that no one wants a dirty smelly employee around a foodstuff which they intend selling. And baking is very much a hands-on operation. He began to wander round town asking everywhere for work. Usually bakers would send him away with a loaf of bread to sustain him.

On November 26th, his neighbours in Ashdown-court, (off Northbrook Street where Waterstones was sited until recently), had been worried when they had neither heard nor seen anything of him since the previous day, Wednesday, when Mrs Rebecca Bristowe, a neighbour had met him in the court and he had asked her for a cup of tea. She had been unable to supply him and he then had replied that he would go and ask “Aunt Osgood” for a

little money. Hannah Pike and Elizabeth Lailey had enlisted the aid of George Emman, a navy, but on knocking at Hill's door they had got no answer. Eventually a group of them broke in and found Hill stone dead, partly clothed and sprawled in a chair – his usual practice as he had no bed. The hovel was so filthy and reeked so much that the doctor who was called could not remain and had the corpse removed to the mortuary. His examination there caused him to give the verdict that he was of the opinion that Hill had died from "Pleurisy, accelerated by want of the common necessities of life and warmth." "The body was much emaciated....The lungs were diseased, but the other organs were healthy., but the stomach and intestines were empty and gave him the idea that he had no food for some time... There were no signs of violence or injury. The body was covered with vermin."

At the inquest, Mr. Samuel Cooper, of Northbrook street said that he "had a pecuniary interest" in the cottage and knowing Mr Hill's circumstances had not asked for rent for two years and had even done some repairs. Neighbour Rebecca Bristowe, a widow, said that she would occasionally make Hill cups of tea and wishing to be helpful, advise him to go to the Workhouse where he would be fed and kept warm. But he did not want to give up his freedom "There are too many masters there" he would say.

Henry Hill lived in the times before the old age pension, the National Health Service and all the benefits – such as visits from social workers- that we can claim today. While the physical work entailed by his occupation would have given him muscles and staying power, this would not be permanent and would decline rapidly when not in use. The life expectancy at birth of males born in 1825, according to official estimates, was that death could be expected in their forties – though that for bakers it was around 30 years because of the extreme physical effort that was needed to carry sacks of coal, meal and flour and also for kneading the dough for long periods.

At the inquest Charles Henry Osgood said that Hill was his cousin and was aged 64. It is doubtful whether Osgood actually knew Hill's correct age and the 1851 census states that the age the census takers were then given was only an estimate. It is therefore difficult to uncover Hill's origins. Descendants of Charles Henry Osgood, aged 30 at the time and a worker in a brewery, who claimed to be Hill's cousin, tell me, by email from Australia and elsewhere, that they cannot trace any of Hill's relations on their family tree. However, as has been reported, Hill had said that he was "going to see his aunt Osgood to "ask for a little money".

The jury at the inquest returned a verdict concurring with the doctor's findings, but adding a rider that "Deceased came to his death through want of the common necessities of life, accelerated by pleurisy".

The Coroner said that he would communicate with Dr. Woodford, the Officer of Health, and express the opinions of the jury as to the insanitary conditions of Ashdown Court, and "hoped that something would be done to improve its condition."

It might be pointed out that there were nine other cottages in the court with occupants who (in a list of 1883) seemed to have occupations and were not “down-and-out”. For example Mrs Bristowe worked in a laundry, Heath was a shoemaker, and Williams and Liddiard brickmakers.

The Coroner also agreed with the doctor that a mortuary room should be made available where a doctor could examine corpses and where a jury could view the corpse (in those days it was the practice for the jury to actually see a corpse for themselves).

Henry Hill was decently buried at the Cemetery on 2 December 1889 and an account of the circumstances of his death appeared in the *Newbury Weekly News* on 5 December 1889.

Helpers Required for Forthcoming Events

Maureen Hudd

You are cordially invited to participate in our first **West Berkshire Heritage Roadshow** event at the Museum on Saturday 16th April, 10am to 4pm. The aim is to give participants a platform to promote what they do and generally raise awareness of the importance of the local heritage. It's free and each group/organisation can have a table to promote their activities. Together I'm sure we can create an interesting and enjoyable public event. We will send out a separate invitation to everyone but **please make a note of the date and pass this on to others who may be interested.**

The Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery would like to be involved in this so if you can help please let Maureen Hudd know.

The **National Federation of Cemetery Friends** are holding their Annual General Meeting on 11th June 2016 and you – the Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery – are the hosts!!

We shall need all hands on deck that day and on Sunday 12th for the following tasks:

Saturday at Phoenix Centre, Newtown Road

- Welcomers, making teas and coffee Sat morning, help for visitors putting their displays up.
- Car park attendant.
- Members to make teas, coffees in afternoon after AGM.

Saturday at the Cemetery

- Member/s to open Chapel in morning.
- Tour Guides: Brian/Doug for CWG; Yvonne Paris for Introductory BUT we need to train someone to do Artists and Angels or Ros will do that and train someone else to do Medical Matters.

Sunday at the Cemetery

- Welcomers.
- Members to guide visitors to right place and set out Chapel.

Please make offers of help with times you are available to Maureen Hudd (e-mail maureen.hudd@btinternet.com or telephone 01635 30108)