



Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery

Issue No 15

March 2014

Newsletter

Wind and water.



The cemetery after the gales was a sorry sight. Six trees had fallen onto walls and memorials. Branches and debris were strewn everywhere. In the weeks that followed, streams of water poured in from the road outside where neglected drains had silted up. This washed down over paths and banks eroding earth from tree roots and adding to the quagmire below. Even more alarmingly, sunken areas appeared on top of the chapel crag as flowing water widened fissures and cavities in the soft sandstone rock.



We have taped off this top area, put up water deflection planks by the main path and are pressing for urgent action from Kent Highways to unblock the drains.



But not all is doom and gloom. There were miraculous escapes by some of our favourite residents such as Sydney Smirke, Edward Hoare, the Cattleys and that great survivor, Henry Austen who stood unscathed in the embrace of a fallen sycamore. The trunks will be removed once the ground is drier. We shall then be able to assess better how many stricken memorials of lesser mortals will need repair. Angela Swain's gardening team have meanwhile made a huge difference



sawing off branches and clearing paths.

Tackling the paths

Even without the stormy weather, the grass paths have for some time been suffering badly from increasing wear and tear. The trial section of crushed stone installed two years ago past the Hoare tomb and our Jubilee seat replicates materials we know from an old photograph were formerly used for the main paths. Its unobtrusive well drained surface has worked well.

The Council are helpfully having a survey done for us so we can establish the drainage and materials that would be needed to reinstate the paths more generally. Our plan is to seek Heritage Fund money to help fund the work. This will not only maintain the historic path layout, and make it pleasanter for people to walk round enjoying their surroundings, but will also we hope by discouraging straying help to reduce the damage being done to verges, adjoining graves and young bulbs and flowers.



Partially cleared fallen trees frame the trial path

Spring planting

Those who have been to the cemetery recently will have seen the many spring flowers in bloom there, including newly-arrived cowslips.



To earlier plantings have been added camassias, fritillaries, eranthis and extended patches of coum album cyclamen. These are part of a spring flower walk in memory of one of our Founder Members, Michael Bridgeman who for six years formatted and printed for us all our booklets, posters, leaflets, picture displays and of course this Newsletter.



These pictures are some of Caroline Auckland's many beautiful studies at both Woodbury Park and its successor at Hawkenbury. She will be showing us some of these in her illustrated talk at our AGM.

Notice of Annual General Meeting 2014

This will take place at the Camden Centre on Friday 23 May at 7.30pm. Nominations are invited for the four Honorary Officers (Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary) and up to eight other Committee Members. These should be sent to the Secretary at Bridge House, Culverden Park Road, Tunbridge Wells TN4 9QX.

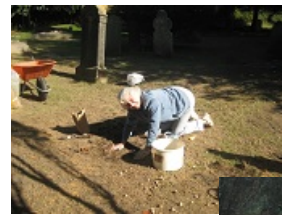
The AGM will be followed by *Elysian Fields*, a photographic presentation by Caroline Auckland

Winning ways



Last year our gardening team won two accolades. Once more their work led to renewal of Green Flag status for the cemetery - a national award of excellence. We are one of just four cemeteries similarly honoured out of all those in our region and one of some 40 in the whole of Great Britain. Not a bad achievement for our modest 3 acres.

Nearer home the team received a silver certificate in Tunbridge Wells in Bloom. Along with that came a gift of Volunteer tee shirts modelled here by some fashionistas. This year the WPC team are setting their sights even higher with an entry to Britain in Bloom. And here is a glimpse of what is involved in planting a spring flower walk



Dates for your diary

Friday 23 May : AGM followed by "Elysian Fields", a photographic study of some Tunbridge Wells Victorian memorials- Caroline Auckland 7:30pm Camden Centre

Saturday 24 May: Annual locally grown plant sale in partnership with Pepenbury 10am - 1pm St John's Church Green

Saturday 7 June: Launch of Hawkenbury Friends Group with guided walks and exhibition in disused Chapel 2pm-4.30pm Tunbridge Wells Cemetery

Sunday 15 June: Minibeast safari with Dr Ian Beavis 2:30pm Meet at Woodbury Park Cemetery Gate

Sunday 27 July: Wiesbaden comes to Woodbury Park Cemetery -Brass ensemble concert 3pm in the cemetery (St John's Church if it rains)

Saturday 16 August: Outing to Abney Cemetery and Clissold House Details to be announced

Annual plant fair



Don't forget to put our annual Plant Fair on St Johns Church Green into your diary - Saturday 24th May, 10 am-1.0pm. We can foresee a hefty bill ahead for memorial repairs following this winter's ravages. So come along and buy healthy locally-grown plants to benefit WPC as well as your garden. We are planning to have an extra stall this year selling gardening bric a brac. Could each of you look through your garden shed and greenhouse to see what lurks there by way of disused tools or equipment, garden furniture or garden pots to supply this stall? NOT ordinary plastic or clay flower pots

please, nor gardening books, but pretty well anything else horticultural you think might help raise money for the repairs. If you contact Jan Holly on jan.holly@tiscali.co.uk 01892 864768, she will come along to pick up any items from your house.

History Notes

Once you have cleared out your potting shed, Jan has another task for you. This concerns one of our longest running projects - the painstaking work by a small group assembling mini-biographies of people buried in WPC. These "bios" are gradually building a picture of the people who lived and worked in the town during the Victorian years and run alongside the more in-depth stories published in booklet form. When completed they are available for public use in the newly refurbished local studies library, where more and more people are tracing their family's history, either personally or through the library staff.

There are now over 200 individuals in the WPC file, covering more than 50 surnames, thanks to the diligent efforts of the team, with many more in preparation.

The information gathered is from the Parish Registers in the library on film, and also censuses which are available from Ancestry. This facility is free through the library's own subscription on their computers. The bios are quite short –just 1 or 2 sides of an A4 sheet, and follow a simple set format. If you have an interest in a particular family name, or if you like putting together a picture of the lives of people from the 1800's do get in touch with Jan. You don't have to be a research genius. Just have an inquiring mind and a bit of time to offer.

The Chapel of St Sepulchre



Fiona Woodfield, archivist of St Johns church, in a fascinating talk in February about links between WPC and St Johns, told us how an 1890s issue of the parish magazine had revealed how Holy Trinity in the 1850s used the “chapel within Woodbury Park Cemetery” not just for funerals, but as a base for its outreach church work in what was at that time an ungodly northern part of its parish. Her guess was that this happened soon after Edward Hoare arrived at Holy Trinity in 1853, fired up by “*the bright and stirring days*” of his evangelical mission work as first incumbent of Christ Church in Ramsgate. Of which more below. This was before his committee had set to work establishing the new St Johns church and parish.

By the 1890s the work of St Johns had expanded greatly, involving separate Mens and Womens Bible classes, Sunday schools, a clothing club, blanket club, coal club, soup kitchen, recreational activities and sports. But no parish hall existed and ad hoc meeting places were used. Faced with a crisis when the Mens Bible class lost their venue, somebody recalled the cemetery chapel, “*little used now*”. The permission of the Holy Trinity vicar was obtained and the Bible Class got out paint brushes and spruced up the building decorating it with “*suitable texts*” - sadly we do not know what they chose. But what to call the new meeting venue, hitherto known as Trinity Old Cemetery Chapel? We don’t know who was the bright spark from the Mens Bible Class who came up with the witty suggestion “*St Sepulchre*”.

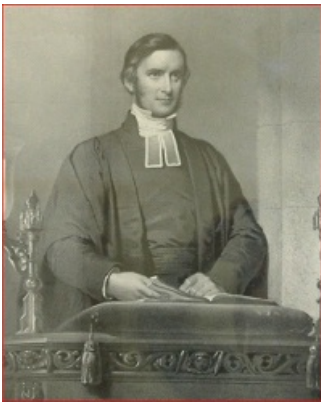
Edward Hoare’s old stamping ground



Our own annual sepulchral outing last summer, led by David Bushell, was to view some of the fascinating memorials in Margate Cemetery including those of Tennyson’s sisters. Lunch followed at Pegwell Bay. This painting by William Dyce in October 1858 must have been immediately snapped up by Jacob Bell because when he died in June 1859 at Summerhill House facing the Common, it was among his rich collection of art bequests. A lapsed Quaker, he discovered when accosted by Timothy Hickmott in Woodbury Park Cemetery that Edward Hoare, likewise from a Quaker family, was a

long-lost childhood friend. He was baptised by him in Holy Trinity church a few days before he died.

The third stop was Ramsgate, to visit Christ Church, where Edward Hoare served between 1847 and 1853. He had jumped at the offer to go from Holloway to Ramsgate where as he put it, “*The circumstances of the town were quite peculiar*”. The Vicar of St Georges had employed High Church curates, two of whom went over to Rome, and the “*amiable preacher*” at Trinity was so uninspiring that his flock were “*driven either into the dissenting chapels or into great unsettlement of mind*”.



In Christ Church pulpit

This memorial plaque in Christ Church where he spent six years of energetic ministry battling “*Romish perversions*” conveniently happens also to reflect how the interior of the building looks today.



St Georges crypt with its coffins had been inspected on the way there. This required certain health and safety precautions worthy of a cloud of polluted Saharan dust.



Pleasures to come

This year’s outing on Saturday 16th August will be to Abney Park Cemetery, dating from 1840, the first of the “Magnificent Seven” opened after London’s parish graveyards had - literally- reached bursting point. It contains some of Edward Hoare’s Quaker forebears.



Among many interesting burials here are William and Catherine Booth, founders of The Salvation Army. Henry Reid was their warm friend and patron and a lively account exists of his 1869 entertainment at Dunorlan of 1400 enthusiastic excursionists “*singing allelujahs*”. A vast open air feast was laid on but just as the gong struck, a thunderstorm broke and “*a very tempest of rain came down*” lasting for 2 hours . “*Everyone fled to the farm buildings for shelter, and filled them all- barn, cow-houses, stables, sheds, a commodious school-room or chapel, and some of the houses of the farm servants. But Mr. Booth was everywhere, looking into every place giving counsel, a word of direction, or a hint for arrangement, himself wet*

through and profusely perspiring with exertion and anxiety; but it was due to the active and wise care and generous preparations of Mr. Reed that so much could be done in so short a time to meet the emergency”

Our outing will include a visit to Clissold House close by, built by Jonathan Hoare and once home to the Rev Augustus Clissold, a Swedenborgian who ended his days in our Hawkenbury cemetery. Give your name to David Bushell if you want to go on this outing.

Mini bios surname index

Jan Holly has helpfully prepared for us the following list of names of Woodbury burials so far recorded in bios. Brackets shown after a surname indicate that only that individual has been researched. Similar spellings of a surname are included under one spelling

Abbotts, Akehurst, Amos, Apps, Arbon, Back, Barfoot, Barraud, Bayfield, Bell(Jacob), Bishop (Henry), Bond, Brodie, Burslem (3 young children), Catchpole, Cattley, Cheeseman, Crittall, Crosse (Latymer George), Davidge, Du Pre (William Maxwell), Festorazzi, Graydon, Grover, Hawley (James), Hopton, Hosmer, King, King (Watson), Langley, Lansdell, Lawrence, Otway, Pe(a)rch, Pinn, Pope (William Law), Pratt, Price, Puncker, Quinnell, Quint, Ranger, Rolleston, Scholes, Skead, Strange (Nicholas and Eliza), Swift, Thornton, Webster, Willicombe (William and Clayton Stanford), Woodfall, Woodhams.

In preparation are:

Al(l)corn, Aynsley, Down, Foard, Maynard, Neal, Walker

Meanwhile the task of checking and updating continues with all the existing bios. And we have a long list of other names for you to pick from if you want to get involved.

Recording at Hawkenbury



The small team working at Hawkenbury Cemetery for the past two years recording inscriptions has now almost completed the block lying between the burial chapels and the crematorium. The standard form for each memorial is more detailed than that used for Woodbury Park 30 years ago, in order to give a fuller account of style, materials, condition and artistic merit.

As at Woodbury, research is also in hand on some of the interesting people recorded. Unsurprisingly there are many family links between the two cemeteries which operated in parallel for over 60 years, and both Friends Groups will be doing all they can to help one another.



If you would like to help with the recording work at Hawkenbury, where many thousands more memorials await transcription, the Inscriptions Group would be delighted to hear from you. The work is done in pairs in your own time, on individually allocated sections. Sue Brown and Ann Bates will be conducting history walks there on 7th June when the new Friends of Hawkenbury Cemetery will be officially launched, and Ian Johnstone from High Weald, will lead a nature walk. Watch out for the Friends of Hawkenbury Cemetery website which will be going up soon.



WPC Burials

12. Charlotte Smoult and Anna Maria Coombs (1764-1856 and 1794-1877)

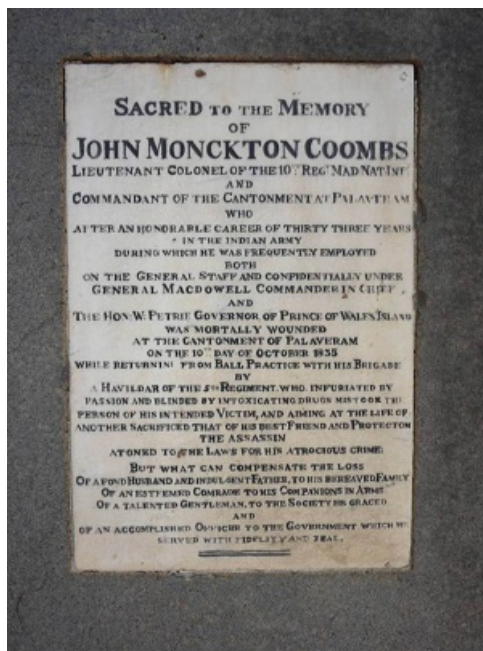


The ledger stone recording the burial in 1856 of Charlotte Smoult, widow of William Smoult of Newcastle, and in 1877 of her daughter Anna Maria, widow of Lt Col John Monckton Coombs of the Madras Army, was one of the first to be repaired by the Friends.

William Smoult's 1796 memorial in St Nicholas Church Newcastle, erected by "*his afflicted widow Charlotte*" records his death at the age of 38, "*a worthy native of this town, who after a long residence in Bengal, returned with Health much impaired in the year 1794*". He had gone out there as a clerk then as



attorney and after a number of lucrative Supreme Court posts assisted by the goodwill of his kinsman Sir Robert Chambers, turned his hand to commercial speculation. Charlotte was left on his death with 5 young children, Anna Maria having been born just before they left Calcutta.



Anna Maria like her mother married into the East India Company establishment, and found herself a widow with 4 young children after her husband's spectacular murder by one of his soldiers. Nor were these the only family tragedies. Charlotte's eldest daughter - another Charlotte- and her husband Lieut. William Paterson, still both in their twenties, had died in India of cholera within a few days of each other in 1819. This was shortly after she bore their first child, William Smoult Paterson, whose upbringing was thereafter shared by the Patersons and his grandmother.

The Paterson connection links the Smoults with two other Woodbury Park cemetery families. General Martin White, another East India Company veteran, shown here as a young man, lies close by with his wife Frances. His sister Eliza was Lieut Paterson's



mother, and grandmother of Henry Yule, whose grave is near the cemetery entrance. Henry Yule married General White's daughter, his second cousin Anna Maria. He later married as his second wife Mary, the daughter of his old Bengal friends Judge Fulwar and Mary Philadelphia Skipwith, buried a few yards further along the top path. He thus has the distinction of lying within earshot, not just of one, but of two mothers- in- law.