



Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery

Issue No. 13

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Newsletter

The Victorian scene

Two outstanding lectures lit up the Friends' winter days. The first was Philip Whitbourn's tour de force on *Charles Tattershall Dodd: Tunbridge Wells Victorian Artist*. The picture below is a typical one from the accompanying booklet, which is already becoming a collectors item. Two versions are on sale, at £3.50 and £6 to suit different purses. Same text and 59 delightful pictures and drawings, but the de-luxe version has 23 rather than 10 of them in colour. Don't miss your chance to snap up a copy — see our publications order form on the website www.fwpc.org.uk.



Grosvenor Road, from Grosvenor Lodge, water-colour 1860s.

Lichens and leaf-miners

Keith Palmer's fascinating talk on *The hidden world of Woodbury Park Cemetery* focussed in, literally, on the less visible beauties of lichens and leaf miners. Both abound in the cemetery. A follow-up field trip with him to Hawkenbury Cemetery has helped memorial recorders there to identify stones by their characteristic lichens. Keith has compiled a quick crib sheet for us to distinguish between those that prefer acid stones (sandstone, granite, slate) and those that prefer alkaline (limestone, concrete). Copies available from the Secretary.

The 2012 graveyard tour

This year's graveyard tour will be a walk in Hawkenbury Cemetery on 11th August to learn what has been found out so far from the memorials being transcribed there to create a data-base like ours. Unsurprisingly those commemorated share many common features with those in WPC. Soldiers, sailors and pillars of the Empire, professional men, affluent merchants and local artisans. We plan a lecture about some of the shared features with WPC in our winter programme.



Angel, with lichens, on a gravestone at Hawkenbury

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2012

This will take place at the Camden Centre on Friday 25 May at 7.30pm. Nominations are invited for the four Honorary Officers (Chair, Deputy Chair, Treasurer, Secretary) and for 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 an illustrated talk on *Sepulchral Symbolism* — see news item on page 2.

Grayson Perry

Brilliant news! The drawing which Grayson Perry generously gave us last year (see September issue) to sell for our memorial repair funds went for over £2350 net of sales tax and commission. He has invited those who escorted him round WPC to the unveiling of his Tunbridge Wells tapestry next month in London.

Other notable visitors

Welcome visitors have included the Council Leader and various other Councillors and members of TWBC staff keen to discover for themselves the beauties of the cemetery. We look forward to the Mayor's visit this month to celebrate the life of William Maingay, Russia merchant (see our March 2011 issue) whose tomb has now been restored thanks to the generosity of his descendants. It will be blessed by the Vicar of St Johns Church which the Maingays helped to found. Some fifteen family members are coming from various parts of the globe for the event which will include Russian poetry, a eulogy, and publication of a new booklet about his life and that of his family in Tunbridge Wells.

We also were delighted to have another visit from our local MP Greg Clark, a long-standing FWPC member, who was impressed by the progress that had been made. We took the opportunity to encourage him as our MP to remind himself as Minister for Communities and Local Government of the importance of planning safeguards not just for WPC itself but also its surrounding properties that protect its tranquillity and wildlife.

Further grave matters

An early WPC public lecture educated us about how to ensure our clearance and repair efforts benefited rather than harmed venerable stones. While few memorials in WPC merit formal listing on their own for artistic merit, their combination of shapes, motifs, lettering and grace are a world away from the monotonous sameness of most modern graveyards. Robert Stephenson, chairman of the Funerary Monuments Group of the National Association of Cemetery Friends is coming to our AGM on 25th May at the Camden Centre to give an illustrated talk *Sepulchral Symbolism — decoding the hidden meaning of graveyard monuments*. This is a topic that intrigues many members, so here is your chance to learn more.

Jubilee celebration

To add savour to your close sepulchral encounters, there will be some edible tombstones on sale at our Jubilee event on Saturday 23 June. These are just one of the imaginative products one group of stall holders is making. You will also find ceramic tiles (non edible) with WPC inspired motifs, craft books, handmade cards and boxes, feltcraft, paper crownmaking, Royal Face Painting, sketching and other creative events. More about this on the enclosed sheet and some ideas about how to get involved. Rope in your family and friends to display their skills, sell their wares and enjoy themselves in a unique year in all our lives. Whatever the weather.

Note too the Brass Band Concert on 15th July to honour the soldiers and sailors who through two Diamond Jubilee reigns have served Queen and Country.

FUTURE EVENTS

- Tues. 24th April; Thanksgiving ceremony at the Maingay tomb with the Mayor. 11.30am WPC;
- Sat. 19th May: Plant Sale, 10.00am to 2.00pm, St John's green;
- Fri. 25th May: AGM , followed by talk on *Sepulchral Symbolism — decoding the hidden meaning of gravestones* by Robert Stephenson;. 7.30pm Camden Centre;
- Sun. 10th June: Mini-beast Safari with Dr Ian Beavis, 2.30pm, WPC;
- Fri. 22nd June: Moth-trapping with Keith Palmer. 9.00pm, WPC;
- Sat. 23rd June: *All things bright and beautiful*, creative event. 10.00am to 3.00pm, WPC;
- Sun. 15th July: *Red, White and Blue*, brass-band concert. 2.30pm WPC (if wet, St John's church hall);
- Sat. 11th August: History walk,. Hawkenbury Cemetery, 2.30pm.

Keep an eye on our web-site, www.fwpc.org.uk, for updates on events.

Heroes of WPC

Hidden heroes of WPC are the faithful band who ever tend and plant. Their numbers have dwindled recently with “retirements” and departures from the town, so we should greatly welcome help from anyone who can spare a couple of hours on the odd Saturday. Tasks allocated according to abilities. Some of our helpers have made a point of “adopting” a group of graves and focussing on these, while others prefer a collective planting effort such as a big snowdrop planting this spring. Following on from the sowing of a wild flower meadow last autumn steady planting of suitable varieties is part of our programme to develop and enhance the environment of WPC in ways that will foster its special range of wildlife. It currently looks a treat.

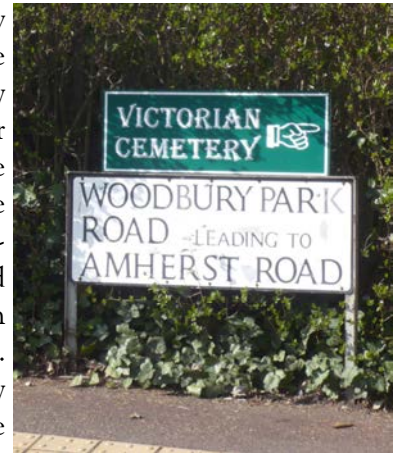
Angela Swain on 01892 541881 is also still seeking contributions of perennials for the annual plant sale on Saturday 19th May. Why not cast your eye round your garden for overcrowded clumps- there is still time to pot up a few items to gladden others hearts.

Another hidden hero is David Stevens, who was so fed up with noxious dog excrement he adopted the role of keeping the bag dispenser constantly topped up. To mark his very practical and welcome contribution we have made him an honorary member of the Friends for a year.



Helping the public find out more

Have you seen our new direction sign? We hope it will encourage many more people to discover the cemetery. And we greatly welcome the TWBC imminent substitution of a new and better information board at the entrance. When our visitors weary of strolling around, we plan to make it easier for them to rest their legs while admiring the view from the top of the cemetery on a new bench we are commissioning to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee.



Urgent Action call

Not so happy is the recent appearance of a lumpen chattering photographic booth in the Library and Museum lobby. This blocks off the public information boards that we and so many other voluntary town organisations have long used to advertise fundraising and other voluntary events. KCC have ignored all the Tunbridge Wells organisations and members of the public who rely on this, the only public information board in the town.

Losing this publicity site is a bad blow to our efforts to widen public knowledge and enjoyment of WPC and get more helpers involved. Do please go into the Library and lodge a formal complaint (we are told there is a complaints book available at the desk). Press your local Borough Councillor and your County Councillor to intervene on behalf of Tunbridge Wells people.

WPC Burials

11. Commander Charles Friend RN, 1793-1867.

Charles Friend was 12 when he joined the Navy. He was the 13th child of Mary (Curling) and John Friend, ships chandler. Both parents came from long-established Ramsgate boat-builders and traders. By 1812 he was mate of the frigate HMS Active and promoted Lieutenant for gallantry fighting Napoleon's ships in the Adriatic. His Captain James Gordon later became Admiral of the Fleet and is thought to have been the model for the Hornblower novels.

In 1815 Charles's brother Matthew was lieutenant on HMS *Bucephalus* taking Napoleon to exile in St Helena. It was exactly 25 years later when General Middlemore, (see our issue No 8) oversaw the return of Napoleon's body to Paris.

Charles sailed the seven seas, including mapping the South American coast and when he retired in the 1830s was given a well paid Admiralty post in Cork with the rank of Captain overseeing assisted emigration to the colonies, especially Canada and Australia. The emigrants from Cork were a mixed bunch of willing colonists paying their way, soldiers with their families, women coaxed or driven by hardship to seek a new life in countries where females were in short supply, and convicts being transported for life. A typical Government advertisement in Limerick announced "The Colony of New South Wales is willing to take under the system of female emigration moral, industrious country servants under the age of 30 years and to pay the entire cost of the journey". Candidates were interviewed by the Emigration Agents and their parish priest.



HMS Active and HMS Alceste sink La Pomone.

Less scrupulously, orphanages and "houses of correction" were combed for candidates as young as 14 or 15. Captain Friend was in 1836 joint signatory of a typical letter of guarantee about the human merchandise "the utmost care and judgement has been used in their selection (the female emigrants) and we hesitate not to recommend them as industrious. virtuous. and alone desirous to earn and prosper in a foreign land. that subsistence denied them at home." A subsequent Admiralty Inquiry found this economical with the truth. Some had been "collected from the Street and Workhouse of Cork without reference to character and hurriedly put on board about an hour before the ship got under-weigh".

Captains received £17 per female delivered safely after the 4 month journey whose hazards included diarrhoea and worse, sunstroke, pneumonia and scurvy as well as shipwreck and sexual harassment by crew and fellow travellers. Matters were not helped by the sanitary conditions. One ships surgeon charged by the Admiralty to attend to passengers health, comfort and morals reported "Nothing is more calculated to fulfil the intention of these instructions than the substitution of proper water closets for the disgusting and beastly soil pans especially in female convict ships".

Charles Friend's role included chartering and inspecting vessels and manifests and conducting inquiries into accidents. Ships had to be properly victualled and Admiralty correspondence shows this was no mean task during the Irish potato famine. He persuaded the Government to release some of the "indian corn meal" they had imported from America to feed the starving poor, (called Pitt's poison by the locals) to make up the shortfall in staple foodstuffs for emigrants voyages. He then had to make secure milling arrangements as flour was regularly heavily adulterated by profiteers.

It is not known why Charles Friend was buried in Tunbridge Wells rather than his home town of Ramsgate to which his widow Elizabeth returned after his death. Perhaps he was simply one of those drawn there by the charismatic Rev Edward Hoare who had a special understanding of sailors lives and had previously made such an impression at his thriving new church in Ramsgate.



Irish emigrants.