



Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery

Issue No.7

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Newsletter

Jacob Bell: A useful and honourable life



The President of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (right) and the Mayor of Tunbridge Wells came to pay homage at Jacob Bell's memorial on 12th June, the 150th anniversary of his death in Tunbridge Wells. David Bushell, our Vice Chair, stood in for Angela Phillips, laid low with appendicitis but now making an excellent recovery.

First a 2 hour tour of various places in the town connected with Bell's last days in 1859. Then on to the cemetery to plant materia medica — some witch-hazels, and *gallina officinalis*, the historic "Apothecary's Rose". As a specific memento to Bell, the President of the British Society for the History of Pharmacy planted some campanulas and unveiled a plaque.

Among those present were descendants of Timothy Hickmott, the undertaker who handled Bell's funeral in 1859. There were also descendants of Canon Edward Hoare, Bell's rediscovered boyhood friend, who baptised him in Holy Trinity church just 5 days before he died. Philip Whitbourn located for us the exact spot where the font then stood, now occupied by an octagonal table in the café section for those who wish to offer a libation.

You can read the full story of Bell's last days, pieced together for the first time, in our newly published booklet *Jacob Bell: A useful and honourable life* (see page 3 below.) A portfolio of further photographs of the event by David Hodgkinson (www.sweetmoon.com) is on www.javajuce.co.uk/jacobbell150.

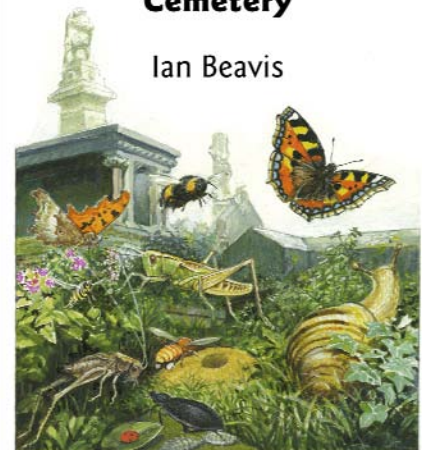
Walking with wildlife

Another new publication is *The smaller wildlife of Woodbury Park Cemetery*, written by Dr Ian Beavis and beautifully illustrated by Douglas Hall. Admire your *andrena*, marvel at your *machimus*, and love your *lepidoptera* while looking out for all six widespread varieties of British bumblebee to be found in WPC. And look with new eyes on those vital food plants like birds foot trefoil, sorrel, cocksfoot grass and nettles that you thought were weeds.

Our own local bird-spotters were very excited to see last month a ring ouzel, like the one shown here, outside Pegasus Court adjoining WPC. The migrant was snatching a moment of repose, quite possibly on its way from the Atlas Mountains to the Scottish Highlands. Ring ouzels are on the RSPB red list as at very high risk in Great Britain.

The Smaller Wildlife of Woodbury Park Cemetery

Ian Beavis



Another recent environmental event was Keith Palmer's informative wild flowers and grasses walk on 5th June, when we all concentrated hard on the ligules of some common grasses. Our mowing regime in the environmental plan means that these will not be cut till they have set seed at the end of this month. The present appearance is a little shaggy, but that is excellent for field plants and wildlife.

Green Flag inspection



This environmental plan was one of the things we explained to the Green Flag judges when a dozen of the Friends walked round with them on 29th May as they inspected progress since last year. We now await the outcome of their scrutiny. This picture shows the judges looking at some of the 38 stones we have repaired since last autumn.

Threats and opportunities

We took the opportunity to discuss with the judges some of the threats and opportunities at WPC. Thankfully, following representations from ourselves and others, the Council turned down a planning application for a jam-packed development at 9 Park Road right against the boundary.

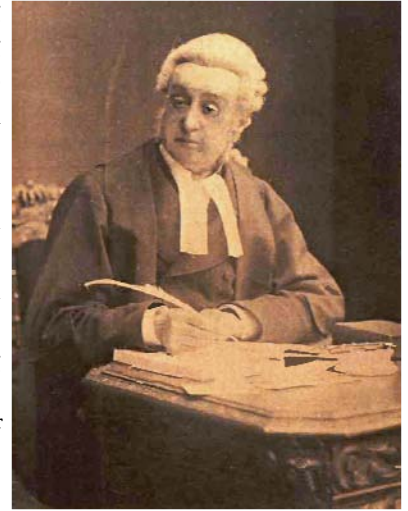


We have also discussed with Kent Highways the dire position outside the gates where thoughtless parking makes access a nightmare.

Meanwhile, the up-grade of the entrance area inside the gates continues, helped by planting and some

reconstruction work by the Saturday working party, and a yew hedge planted by a "One Day Challenge" team from lawyers Cripps Harries Hall. They tidied up the area round the belvedere beside the chapel and in the process uncovered a hitherto unrecorded memorial stone to a clergyman's widow from Norwood.

They are also helping us repair the crumbling Cripps memorial to their founder William Charles Cripps and 4 of his little children. Three died within a fortnight of one another from diphtheria and another two years later from whooping cough. These were dreaded scourges of young children before the days of immunisation.



Murder most foul

BRUTAL ATTEMPT TO MURDER AT TUNBRIDGE WELLS.

On Saturday morning the inhabitants of the quiet town of Tunbridge Wells were thrown into a state of intense excitement in consequence of a rumour, which unfortunately proved true, that a woman, named Ann Lawrence, had murdered her child, about four years of age; and attempted to murder the man with whom she was living, named Walter Highbans. For some two years past the woman has been living with the man whom she attempted to murder, at No. 2, Ebuny Cottages, in the parish of St. John's, situated in a narrow thoroughfare, near the Harp Inn, on the Lew,

Another sad death of a little child buried in WPC had a more sinister cause. Jeremiah — known as Jesse — aged 4 has no memorial, but lies somewhere in the lower part of the cemetery. He was murdered in April 1866 by his mother with a razor at 2 Ebuny Cottages on what is today John Street.

Ann Lawrence, described as "of a somewhat slight make, but of a most determined and passionate countenance", was one of the last 2 women to be hanged at a public execution at Maidstone Gaol. At her express wish, Jesse's 6 months old half-sister was put into the Maidstone Workhouse at Coxheath. This seems unlikely to have distressed the child's father who already had a number of children by other women. When asked at the trial how old his daughter was, he replied he did not know what month she was born but thought it was before Christmas.

Hickmott pictures

A historic treasure that emerged during the Bell research was some Hickmott family pictures of Timothy and Amphillia his wife. Their memorial and names immediately catch the eye on the entrance path. Here they are. Note the unusual object Amphillia is holding to reflect her interests. Was she an early bird spotter?



Plant sale



Bargains galore and many unusual flowers and vegetables were available for eager customers at a plant sale on 5th June. The produce had been lovingly grown by some of the Friends, and raised over £500 for our funds. One keen helper is already planting seeds for next year. Do let us know if you too would like to exercise your green fingers to help our conservation work.

Publications update

Recent publications:

The smaller wildlife of WPC (£2)

William Willicombe – the Cubitt of Tunbridge Wells (£3.95)

Jacob Bell – a useful and honourable life (£4)

Others in print:

20 Noteworthy people commemorated in monuments set in WPC (£1.50)

The trees of WPC – a walk (rev. & illus. edn, £1.50)

The story of Clayton Stanford Willicombe (£1.50)

In preparation:

Clergymen of WPC: 1. William Law Pope and Henry Bishop

Either buy your copies at a meeting, or send a cheque made out to FWPC (adding 50p per item for postage) to the Secretary at Bridge House, Culverden Park Road, Tunbridge Wells TN4 9QX.

Dates for your diary

This autumn two of the authors are giving talks related to their pamphlets. In September Dr Philip Whitbourn, whose profusely illustrated *William Willicombe – the Cubitt of Tunbridge Wells* was published in April, is talking about Willicombe and other noteworthy Victorian builders of Tunbridge Wells. In November David Bushell is talking on *William Pope and his contemporaries* — please note the different day of the week and venue.

Fri. 26th June: Tree walk with Chris Reynolds
7.30pm, Woodbury Park Cemetery

Sun. 12th July: Children's mini-beast safari, with Dr Ian Beavis
2.30pm, Woodbury Park Cemetery

Fri. 4th Sep.: Moth trapping evening with Keith Palmer
9pm, Woodbury Park Cemetery

Fri. 25th Sep: *William Willicombe and other builders of Victorian Tunbridge Wells*. Talk by Dr Philip Whitbourn
7.30 pm, Camden Centre

Sat. 14th Nov: *William Law Pope and his contemporaries*. Talk by David Bushell
7.30pm, King Charles Hall, 3 Warwick Park

WPC Burials

4. Fanny Kemp (1795–1860)

The only grave in WPC with a carved angel is that of Frances Margareta Kemp, daughter of Charles Shakerley, High Sheriff of Cheshire. She had a colourful life — but then she came from a colourful family. Her brother scandalised the *beau monde* of Paris by eloping in 1819 with the 17 year old granddaughter of the Duc d’Avaray. As one contemporary put it:

Had he murdered three women, there could not be such an outcry; old and young, male and female, married and single, all unite in abuse of the poor lady. The French Dandies are in a rage that the prettiest girl in Paris should have run off with “un Anglais”.

The stormy marriage was to end in a high profile divorce some years later.

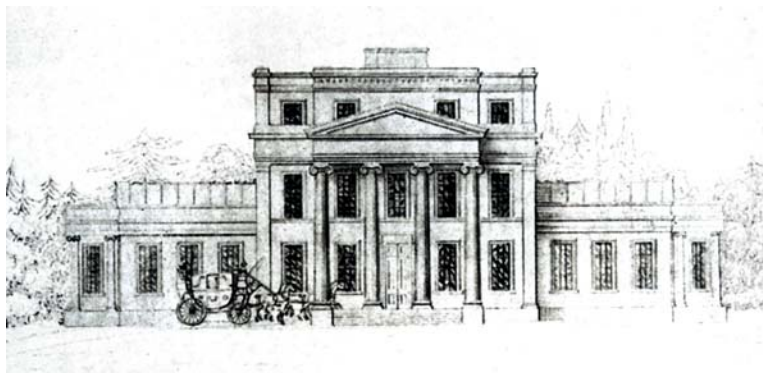
Fanny herself had married a young Irish landowner Vigors Hervey of Killiane Castle 3 years before her brother’s elopement, but she was widowed in her thirties. Her second marriage in 1834 was to Thomas Read Kemp, MP for Lewes, a rich widower with 10 children by his first wife. They lived in high style in his magnificent Sussex Square house in Brighton (the largest crescent in Britain) and in Belgrave Square, London. His money came from farmland which he had inherited and developed with handsome properties for the “truly affluent” at Kemp Town.

However by 1837 there was a sharp economic slump, like that of today, and Kemp had serious financial difficulties as the market for his luxury homes dried up. He fled to Paris with Fanny and their small son to escape his creditors. They lived there for the next few years in the fashionable rue du Fauborg St. Honoré, opposite what is still today the British Embassy.

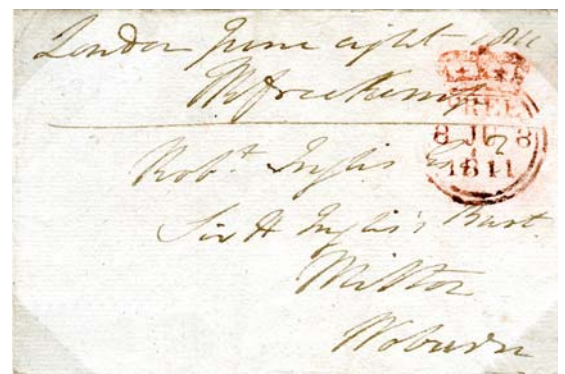
In 1844, in the tradition of Dick Turpin and Robin Hood, a writ of outlawry against him was pinned on the door of St Peter’s, Brighton (the huge Barry church dominating the entry to Brighton from Lewes). He died later that year in Paris and was buried in Père Lachaise cemetery. Frances returned to Brighton and a less tempestuous life in Sussex Square where, assisted by the recovery of the property market, she lived comfortably with her son by Kemp and six servants. Her last days were spent in Tunbridge Wells. The son installed a memorial window to her in St. Paul’s, Rusthall. Whether the angel on her tomb represents her long suffering character or the divine providence that steered her back to calmer waters, we have yet to discover.



Re-united at last: the grave of Fanny Kemp in Woodbury Park Cemetery and that of Thomas Kemp in Père Lachaise Cemetery.



Thomas Kemp’s house in Belgrave Square completed in 1834, the year in which he married Fanny



Kemp’s signature, used to authenticate his free frank on a letter to Woburn shortly after he first became MP for Lewes in 1811.