



Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2023 ISSUE No 22

A BUSY SIX MONTHS



Big News

South & South East in Bloom competition results. The Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery, gained **Gold in the churchyard category**.

Woodbury Park Cemetery, has also retained its Green Flag status for 2023-24.

Earlier this Summer

The Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery in cooperation with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council financed the completion of the new path leading from the entrance down to the fountain and entrance border walls, which have been replanted. These improvements have made a surprising difference and many comments of appreciation have been received from visitors.

CAN YOU HELP US? We are always on the lookout for photographs and information about the cemetery. If you have anything to share with us, please contact David the secretary.



Gardening Team Report by Mike Higgins

Our dedicated and hard working volunteer gardening team meet, weather permitting, every Saturday afternoon at 1:30 to undertake general tasks around the cemetery. The aim is to protect the beauty of this historic site and encourage wildflowers and wildlife. Foxgloves and Honesty have recently been planted along the triangle wall, and 1,200 bulbs have been ordered to be planted later on.

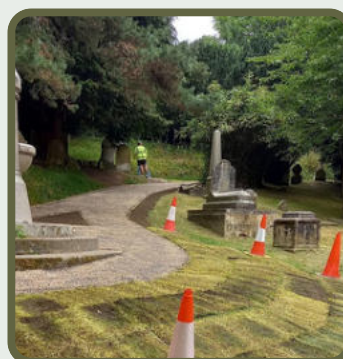
If you would like to help weeding, cutting grass round headstones, trimming boundary hedges, planting bulbs, **Why not become a volunteer and join the gardening team** on a Saturday afternoon. The team are easy to find in their green volunteer T-shirts.

Alternatively, why not “adopt a grave,” provide plants for a grave and take responsibility for its maintenance. See the grave for POPE which has been adopted. If you are interested please speak to a member of the gardening team or contact us by email?

Coming Event: The late Spring Plant Fair

Autumn is the time to divide plants for sale in the spring. Do any members have tools, pots or anything whatsoever connected with a garden?

Please contact us .



All links to websites are active, just click on them

Photo Credits :
Mike Higgins

Design: Jeanne Pope

Message from the Chair Margaret Ginman

It has been nice to meet so many of the Friends at events throughout the year and this newsletter shows just how active we have been on your behalf. Whether you are interested in Victorian history, ecology, gardening or just a quiet walk in the beautiful Woodbury Park Cemetery, this is the place for you.



Photo: Margaret Ginman & Jeanne Pope

A particular highlight for me was the Friends' trip to Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park near Mile End with great conversations with members both at the park and later in the day at the Savoy Chapel. Then there was the band concert when the Mayor bravely sat through the rain with us. The weather did not deter us from a lovely afternoon enjoying the music from the Wadhurst Brass Band. The Mayor also joined us for the presentation to the winners of this year's Jeffery Hale awards: Skinners' Kent Primary School - SKIPS. Now we are looking forward to organising the competition and events for the coming year.

I hope to welcome you to the autumn event on Wednesday November 22 at 7.30pm at St John's Church Hall. We hope you can join us for an evening of cake and a cuppa and short talks about Memorable Memorials – not just from Woodbury Park Cemetery.

Words for Woodbury Park Cemetery by Councillor Justine Rutland

Warmest congratulations to Woodbury Park Cemetery for winning a South & South East in Bloom Gold award. As a member of the RTW In Bloom committee, not to mention local resident, I am thrilled that Culverden ward's peaceful, green gem has once again been recognised. The judge praised the cemetery as a beautiful, historically important example of a mortuary garden; was especially impressed by all the work underway to enhance biodiversity; and noted how lucky the council is to have the proactive support, organisation and innovation of the gardening group and the Friends.

In July, at the end of the judging route, it was clear from their closing comments that the two In Bloom judges had been absolutely bowled over by the community spirit in our town. It was, in fact, very moving. Kasia, from TWBC Parks team, told me that when she heard there was to be a new Community Engagement award, she thought RTW should enter because 'We had a chance of winning it.' (And we did.) She explains, 'The judges notice people, and as every year goes by, community engagement adds more value. The awards are about horticulture but they are about people, too.' So, thank you to the Friends and everyone who helps look after, and raises awareness of, this lovely cemetery. It is hugely appreciated.

Have you ever wondered what Victorian burial customs were like?

By Jeanne Pope

Our AGM in June was celebrated with our guest speaker, a former committee member, Brian Kempster, who gave us an illustrated talk on Victorian burial customs. Brian's family consists of four generations of funeral directors. Founded by his great grandfather in 1882 and followed by his grandfather and father. Brian joined his father in 1962.

He has many documents, archives and ledgers that detail almost every aspect that a funeral director would have to entertain, from the price of the material to be used to the style of the coffin, mourning attire, horse-drawn carriages, and memorial photos.



The Sister's Grave" 1857, by Thomas Brooks (1818-91)



Hathi Trust Digital Library and The University of Chicago Library [LINK](#)

Brian's talk was fascinating and fact-filled, full of humour, empathy and historical knowledge. He explained that Victorian life was deeply entwined with death, not separate. Mourning was a lengthy and elaborate process. If life had been hard, death was going to be better, at least visually. It was costly for families, who would save most of their lives for this moment, where the whole neighbourhood would be involved.

Costs aside, a Victorian funeral was steeped in tradition. House curtains would be closed and the mirror would be covered with cloth, just in case the deceased's spirit would not become trapped. It was also thought that looking into the mirror in the house of the deceased would mean YOU would be next. To prevent bad luck, all clocks were stopped so that the spirit could leave and not be time-bound. Of course, there was so much more to Brian's talk, and we thank him for bringing alive the art of the Victorian dead.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- **Wednesday 22 November at 7.30 pm**
St John's Hall: talk - Memorable Memorials.

2024

- **Saturday 20 April: Plant and Craft Sale, St John's Church Green.**
- **"AGM and Talk" Thursday 23 May at 7.30 pm at the Camden Centre".**

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS WALK - SEPTEMBER 17 2023

On Sunday 17 September the Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery took part in the annual Heritage Open Day festival. Happily the rain held off until the walk had finished! Emma led a well-attended walk around the cemetery based on the 2023 theme of 'Creativity Unleashed'. She gave an introduction to Woodbury Park and the stonemasons that so skilfully created the memorial symbolism we see on the headstones and memorials.

Visitors also heard about some of the creative people who lie in the cemetery such as the celebrated artist Charles Tattershall Dodd, the miniature painter John Cox Dillman Engleheart and Tunbridge Ware maker William Fenner. Thank you to those who joined.





**CHARLES TATTERSHALL
DODD 1815-1878**
Introduction
by Emma Vidler

The round-topped headstone of celebrated artist Charles Tattershall Dodd stands in Woodbury Park Cemetery. His works of scenes in and around Tunbridge Wells provide valuable record of the locality at a time of rapid change. Born in 1815 into a family that dominated the artistic life of Tunbridge Wells for more than a century, his vignettes and landscapes include delightful scenes of London Road, Culverden Down (and its windmill), Southborough church and Frant Forest (Hawkenbury).

Trees, rocks and rustic buildings were Tattershall Dodd's favourite subjects, all of which were in plentiful supply in the area. He travelled to Wales as early as 1840 and whilst asking for water for his paints at a farm in Dolgellau he met, and subsequently married, the farmer's daughter, Jane Owen.

He exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1847 and 1859, while living with his mother at Mount Pleasant Terrace, on the site of Hooper's store. Subjects were local scenes such as Ightham Mote and Rusthall Common. Tattershall Dodd died on 27 November 1878 at Grosvenor Lodge, now 72 Grosvenor Road. The notice of his death in *The Courier* for 4 December included a poem written by Mary Turner:

*Never more in shady valley,
Forest glade or mountain side,
Shall the fairest inspirations,
His poetic pencil guide*

To learn more about Tunbridge Wells' remarkable artist, [Philip Whitbourn's book](#), is available to purchase through our website.

We are delighted that Andrew Bailey, a FWPC member, has written about his research into Tattershall Dodd's oil painting of Rusthall Common.



Photo Credit:
Andrew Bailey



Rusthall's Changing Landscape by Andrew Bailey

A lovely oil painting (c.1850) by Charles Tattershall Dodd (1815-78), in the reserve collection at the Amelia Scott, captures a pleasing and semi-rural scene. The clouds are racing across the sky, the wind is bending the branches of the trees, and sunlight falls through gaps in the clouds to give strong contrasts of light and shadow.

This painted landscape is very much in the topographical tradition, as it depicts an actual place, on the northern edge of Rusthall Common. The large building on the centre left has been identified by Dr Ian Beavis, research curator at the Amelia, as Two Yews Cottage, which is still standing. It has the date 1571 on the main chimney and is probably the oldest building in the Tunbridge Wells area. Using a map of Rusthall dated 1850 – kindly shown to us by Dr Beavis – we can also identify two of the other buildings. The redbrick building to the left of Two Yews Cottage is the parish workhouse, which was pulled down in 1900. The group of structures on the far right of the picture were a farm called Streele's Farm. In the foreground of the picture, we can see a group of sandstone rocks, so typical of the local landscape, and in the far distance, on the horizon, there are the North Downs.

If we visit the same location today, we can see striking changes, with Two Yews Cottage being almost the only thing remaining. It is not possible to view the Cottage from the same spot that Tattershall Dodd viewed it because he was at a much higher vantage point and the scene is now completely hidden by trees. A nearby information board put up by the Tunbridge Wells Commons Conservators tells us that much of the Common was originally heathland, used for grazing animals, but has now been taken over by scrub and woodland. We can see a man herding cows in the foreground of the painting. The dusty-looking track traversing the scene is now a busy road, on the route of the 281 bus conveying passengers between Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall.



Tunbridge Wells History and Genealogy - A Family Story by Emma Vidler



Photo Credit:
Emma Vidler

Henry Hobday
1834 – 1867
Arthur Hobday
1862 - 1868
Maria Hobday
1835 – 1921
Frank Hobday
1863 – 1886

Four members of the Hobday family rest in adjacent plots near to the fountain in Woodbury Park Cemetery, husband and wife Henry and Maria, and two of their five children, Arthur and Frank. The Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery recently commissioned Burslem stonemasons to repair and clean the headstones on both plots and reinstate the footstone that marks Henry and Maria's plot.

The family lived and worked in the St John's area of Tunbridge Wells with Maria later moving to Pembury. Sadly, when she died aged 86 in 1921, her husband and all of her children had passed away, the last in 1897. Her daughter, Edith (d.1861 in Faversham), and two sons William (d. 1897 in Camberwell) and Harry (d. 1892 in Pembury) are buried elsewhere.

The Hobday's connection to Tunbridge Wells started around 1867 when they moved to St John's Road living opposite today's Sainsbury's Local. On 14 November 1867, Henry, aged 33, died of Pulmonary Consumption (Tuberculosis). He was buried in Woodbury Park Cemetery on 20 November. He was a draper throughout his working life as were two of his sons, Frank and Harry. This left Maria to raise her four sons on her own and she did not remarry. Following the death of Arthur nearly a year after Henry, by 1871 she had moved her surviving sons (William, Frank and Harry) to Church Street, Upton cum Chalvey, now part of Slough, Buckinghamshire, where she worked as a milliner.

The family had returned to Tunbridge Wells three years later and Maria traded as a draper and silk mercer from 22 Grosvenor Road for at least seven years. In December 1879 the Kent and Sussex Courier commended her saying "in Grosvenor-road the display of millinery and articles of female attire was left to Mrs Hobday, whose windows were very nicely arranged".

Maria had moved to 'Dedham', 9 Upper Grosvenor Road, by July 1881 and likely retired. By 1889 she was living at 'Curlblows' (now 'Queens Folly') in Lower Green Road, Pembury, where she lived until she died over 30 years later on 8 May 1921 aged 86 of Senile Decay and Heart Disease. She was buried in Woodbury Park Cemetery on 12 May.

Her home and all of its contents were advertised for auction in the Kent and Sussex Courier of 3 June 1921. The sale was to be carried out by Wickenden & Sons at 12 o'clock on 22 June and included "superior well-made household furniture, Axminster and Brussels carpets, a fine-toned Pianoforte, house and table linen, silver plated goods and gardening and other tools".