



Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery: Newsletter No.20 Summer 2024

Echoes of the Crimean War
1854-1856 in the
Tunbridge Wells Cemetery



The Friends of
Tunbridge Wells Cemetery

Message from our Chair Dr. Janet Sturgis

Welcome to the summer newsletter which will help you to both catch up with an event that you might have missed, and to look forward to what is to come.

Our AGM this year featured the launch of our latest publication, *Echoes of the Crimean War 1854-1856 in Tunbridge Wells Cemetery*, with an accompanying interesting talk by its author, Mike Hinton. This and all of our publications can be purchased via our website and at our events. For the time being we will not be producing more publications, but we will continue to focus our attention on researching the individuals buried in the cemetery, through the efforts of our Memorial Inscriptions Group, who have recently recruited some new members.

There is still a long way to go in our attempts to restore our beautiful **Hogg Mausoleum**, but our newly established *Mausoleum Sub-Committee* has held a useful on-site meeting with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council personnel and we have gained some useful advice – including the possibility of assessing the state of the mausoleum's roof with the use of a drone.

The noble efforts of our gardening team continue. Their work has been somewhat held back by poor weather, but the areas of the cemetery that they care for are currently looking beautiful. The team would welcome new members who are interested in gardening.

Honouring the Dead of D-Day 80 Years On



On Thursday 6th June we held a brief ceremony in the Garden of Remembrance to pay tribute to those who had suffered and died on the beaches of Normandy 80 years ago. A small group gathered for a few words, the laying of a bouquet of English spring flowers made by Jo Hunt, and a minute's silence.



While it was a simple event, the breeze in the sunshine rustling the fresh grass and spring flowers emphasized how much we all owe to those heroes.

We then returned to the Chapel where there was a display of the research done by Ann Bates and Sue White about five young soldiers who died on or just after D-Day following their landing on the beaches of Normandy.



Tunbridge Wells Sea Cadets Annual Event



Photo Credit: David Walter

This event has now become an annual fixture at the cemetery, and this year was held on the evening of 21st May, attended by family and friends of the cadets and members of the Friends of the Cemetery. The event remembers Peter Fry, a fifteen-year-old member of the local Sea Cadets who died in tragic circumstances in 1943. Following his death his parents donated a trophy, the Peter Fry Cup, to the unit in memory of their son. The cadets and their band paraded in full dress uniform to Peter's graveside, where prayers, a reading and an address took place. The band then led the procession back to the chapel for the annual presentation of awards to the

cadets. This was followed by a most welcome cup of tea, sandwiches and cake provided by the families of the cadets.

Despite heavy rain it was once more a most memorable occasion where the cadets did themselves proud.



Gardening report



Working in the cemetery gardens was a real pleasure last year with a cooler climate than experienced the previous year, and it was possible to spend many hours there. The Friends and Council personnel were delighted to receive a Gold Award in the Tunbridge Wells in Bloom competition for 2023 and we hope to repeat this success this year.

So far this year the weather has been less kind with lots of rain

making the ground very wet indeed, with little gardening until around mid March and into April. Since then much has been achieved, especially in the entrance beds. There was a lovely display of tete-a-tete daffodils in early spring and the promise of some lovely new shrubs for this year. We do feel it is important to make a good impression with the entrance beds and with new planting this year the team expect to see a lovely summer display.

Recent work to the Primrose bed has made a great improvement and it is looking extremely good with new planting. Again the team have great hopes for a lovely summer display.

Work on the Friends' beds has seen a great improvement in the variety of planting and these beds too have new plants for this year. The roses which were put behind a guard to keep them from being eaten by the deer are looking lovely with plenty of flowers. The iris bed is in need of cutting back and replanting. They are getting past their best so will be dug up, cut back and replanted for next



year. The early spring flowers this year were very pretty.

The team have made lists of the most successful plants from last year and early 2024, and with a list of requirements for 2025 we look forward to more successes. So far this year the team are very pleased with the results of the hard work.

A request for volunteers has been handed into the office for their notice board and whilst there has been no response to date, with the warmer weather not far away it is hoped we may get some new recruits.



Common Spotted Orchids

In addition to the green-winged orchids and autumn lady's-tresses orchids that grow in the Garden of Remembrance, we are now starting to see common spotted orchids appearing in a few areas of the cemetery. We were particularly delighted to see one in flower recently on the grave commemorating William Vidler, who served with the Royal Marine Light Infantry, and who was the first Tunbridge Wells man to perish in the First World War, dying on 6th August 1914 while serving on HMS Amphion, which struck a mine and sank near the Thames Estuary.



Memorial Inscription Group Update



Despite the cold wet weather and the rapid growth of the grass, some transcription work has taken place, although maybe not as much as planned. Research however has continued into some of our 'residents'.

To commemorate D-Day, the group members researched some of the casualties who fell at this

time and who were connected with the cemetery – their parents being buried here. An exhibition outlining the short lives of five of these men was well attended.

Our next research project and exhibition will be on 'International Connections' and will take place on Heritage Open Days in September. Graves which show the occupant was 'of Moscow', or 'late of Dunedin, New Zealand' pique an interest, and subsequent research often finds a fascinating story. Sometimes it is difficult to find out why a person has been buried in Tunbridge Wells when there appears to be no connection. Digging into the past is detective work!



An Interesting Memorial



A memorial in a very prominent position close to the cemetery chapels is that of James Hill (1791-1877), his wife Alice Hannah and son William Henry. The inscription to James reads 'late of the Royal Mint, London'. Research shows that prior to 1809 the Royal Mint was situated within the Tower of London, but a new purpose-built mint was opened on Tower Hill. This building was flanked on both sides by gatehouses and another building housed the mint's new machinery. Several other smaller buildings housed mint officers and staff members. The entire site was protected by a boundary wall patrolled by the Royal Mint's military guard. James worked for the Royal Mint from at least 1843, living on the premises. He was a 'Weigher of the Queen's Moneys, Teller and Stamper of Money Weights', and the Senior Clerk at the Mint. There were 24 residencies housing Royal Mint staff.

When he retired sometime in the 1860's he moved to Ivy Cottage, Pembury, where he died in 1877. He had married Alice Hannah Anderson in 1831 and son William Henry was born in 1837, the youngest of their 3 children.

In 1860 William Henry was appointed assistant surgeon to the 35th (Royal Sussex) Regiment of Foot which was posted to India. A cholera epidemic began in Agra in June 1862 and 51 people from the 35th Regiment died, including William. He is buried in St. George's district, Agra and commemorated on his parent's grave here.

Alice Hannah Hill died in Tunbridge Wells in 1886 at the age of 90. She named her daughter Ann Heaton as one of her executors.



Featured Tree



There is only one horse chestnut tree (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) in the cemetery, a majestic mature tree that is estimated to be about 105 years old. It is situated in the far corner of the cemetery that is close to the boundaries with Bayham Road and the Nevill Golf Club. A beautiful sight at any time of year, it looks its very best in May when it is full of white flowers that are flushed with pink at the base. These flowers provide a rich source of nectar to insects. Two species of caterpillar feed on its leaves, which are a source of food to blue tits.

Horse chestnut trees are native to the Balkan mixed forests of South East Europe, including those found in Ukraine. They are a prominent feature in Ukraine's capital city Kyiv, and their

flowers are one of the symbols of the city. They were first introduced to this country from Turkey in the late 16th century.



Contact Us

Via our website:

<https://www.friends-tw-cemetery.org/support-us>

Alternatively email us at ftwc.sec@gmail.com or call us on 07944364622

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Future Events

Saturday 24th August – Moth Identification Morning.

Dr. Ian Beavis will identify the moths that have been collected overnight in a moth trap.

Saturday 7th and Sunday 8th September - Heritage Open Days.

The national theme this year is Routes – Networks – Connections. We have found some interesting international connections which we are currently researching.

Wednesday 23rd October – Fungus Walk.

Places are limited on our popular annual fungus walk, so booking is required for this event.

Date to be confirmed – Annual Blessing of Catholic Graves.

Everyone is welcome to attend this annual event, which usually takes place on the Sunday afternoon nearest to the feast of All Souls' Day, 2nd November.

Sunday 10th November – Remembrance Sunday.

This annual Civic event will see wreaths laid at the four War Memorials in the cemetery.

Saturday 7th December at 3pm – Advent Carol Concert.

Join us for an afternoon of advent carols and seasonal refreshments.

Refreshments will be served in the Friends Chapel at all of these events.

**Check our website and social media pages
nearer the time for more details.**