Dear Friends

At our AGM in April I remarked on what a busy year our first formal year had been, and looking forward now it seems that this year is also filling up with a multitude of proposed activities. “Our” chapel is now freshly painted with the old false ceiling removed and the stained glass window fully visible. The nearby toilet block has been refurbished, and our exhibition showing the history of the cemetery is being reaffixed to the chapel walls.

Our planned events are referred to elsewhere in this Newsletter, but meanwhile our core activities of inscription recording, historical research and gardening works continue in the background. We will soon be able to issue more fascinating publications concerning the cemetery and some of those lying there, whilst helping to ensure that the cemetery looks at its best.

At the AGM, I mentioned our “add another” initiative, whereby I asked every existing member to persuade at least one more person this year, be they friend or relative, to become a member of our Friends Group. The joining fee is modest, and Members can either volunteer in some practical way or simply support us from a distance. Please do help us with this initiative so that we can reach our current target of at least 100 members before March next year.

We have already had some brilliant spring days, despite our typically variable British weather, and more than ever those days help underline what a wonderful public asset our cemetery is, and how lucky we are to have such a beautiful and tranquil area so close to our town centre.

Best wishes to all

Bob Atwood
Chair – Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery
**Recent Events**

**May: Plant Discovery Walk**

**Ian Beavis** from Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery lead a walk through the Cemetery.

The walking group enjoyed a moment of rest on and around ‘our seat’ and enjoyed the view.

Below, to the left, is *Lasioglossum Laevigatum* (Red-backed Furrow Bee), a rather uncommon species which Ian informed us pops in occasionally in our area, this specimen is covered in pollen.

On the right, examining green-winged orchids in a secret location.

The **AGM** on the 2^{nd} April was followed by a talk “*Five Brave Men and True*” given by David Wakefield.

**Lieut Hugh Latimer**: Queens Own Royal West Kent, son of Dr Latimer (Mayor of TW 1919/20), killed on the Somme, 1 July 1916

**Captain John Cecil Ricks**: RAMC with the Medical Corps., Attd.9^{th} Battn, Yorkshire Regt. Died 5^{th} July 1916.


**Capt Albert Claude Dennis**: Queen’sOwn (Royal West Kent Regt.) Attd. 12^{th} Battn.Duke of Cambridge’s Own (Middlesex Regt.) Died 27 July 1916

**Lieut Faulkner**: RN: Lost at sea on the *Black Prince* at Jutland.

After the talk, Ann Bates led a tour to visit the graves which commemorate the five. Below, at the family grave of Capt. Albert Claude Dennis, a former Skinners’ and Tonbridge School pupil.
Friday January 22nd Talk “The Etiquette of Victorian Mourning” by Jo Wiltcher

115 years ago on the 22nd January 1901, Queen Victoria died after 63 years of reign. The long period of widowhood after the death of her husband Albert in 1861 had an influential effect on attitudes to mourning within Victorian society. On the evening of the anniversary of the death of Queen Victoria, Jo Wiltcher, head of Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery, gave a fascinating presentation on aspects of mourning answering question posed such as what was half-mourning, and did different rules exist for men?….. Here is Jo presenting items of memento mori to interested members of the audience, these included Whitby jet pieces of jewellery and hair accessories, plus items containing locks of hair worn as items of remembrance. These items are all from Tunbridge Wells Museum.

History Corner:

We are delighted to report that the Cross of Sacrifice is now very visible from the west. As gardening maintenance uncover a gardener’s grave.

Before & After

When you walk round the Cemetery on your next visit, you will notice a difference near to the WW1 Cross of Sacrifice. The overgrown conifer with a sideways stance has now been removed to reveal two headstones one of which had been completely hidden by its branches.
Research indicates the titled headstone is that of Mark May a gardener born in Shelstone, Bucks who was working in 1861 as an under gardener for the Earl of Stafford. Followed on in 1871 as gardener at Shelswell Manor in Oxfordshire, having married Hannah Haines from Bradfield Berks in 1862 at the St Pancras Parish Church, London, on the 1st of June. She was the daughter of an agricultural labourer and in 1861 had been a house servant with a rector's family. They had one daughter, Charlotte Hannah born 1865 in the Newbury District of Berkshire. By 1881 they were living in Tunbridge Wells at 3 Neville Bank, a cluster of cottages near the end of the Pantiles. Neville Bank is stated in the 1881 Census to be in the Parish of Broadwater, which of course in those days was in Sussex. At the time of the census she was away from home working as a monthly nurse for a doctor's family in Brenchley. Their 17 year old daughter Charlotte was a servant out of work and staying with her father. Charlotte was no doubt named after Hannah's mother Charlotte Haines

June Bridgeman and Peter Blackwell

SPRING GARDENING REPORT

The hard work put into the refurbishment of the Friends' beds has certainly paid off and with the recent warm weather and welcome rain which followed the plants are looking extremely healthy with some in bloom. A most pleasing result with better things to come in the following months.

The team are delighted to have been given the task of tidying the Primrose Remembrance circle and work has commenced in clearing the larger lavenders and splitting the clumps of primroses for replanting in the circle. This work is ongoing but is already looking very pretty and 'cared for' and promises to be quite spectacular next spring.

and beyond.

Jo Hunt and Felicity Brown

New Publications
Our new leaflet with details about the friends was launched this spring. Copies also available in the Cemetery Office situated inside the entrance to the Crematorium driveway.

Existing publications
Copies of both publications available from:

June Bridgeman,
Bridge House,
Culverden Park Road,
Tunbridge Wells,
Kent
TN4 9QX
01892 525578
jbman@btinternet.com

**Price £3 each (or £3.60 each UK postage paid)**
Cheques payable to: The Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery.
Copies also available in the Cemetery Office situated inside the entrance to the Crematorium driveway.

**Membership Renewal**

Membership is now due and the Treasurer would be delighted to receive any renewals.

The current annual subscription is £10. Any donation towards the work of restoring the memorials would be gratefully received.

Cheque made payable to The Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery.
Please send to:

FTWC,
32, Birling Road,
Tunbridge Wells,
Kent
TN2 5LY

**Please make a special note in your diary for:**

The Somme Living Memory Event to be held at the Cemetery on Saturday 9th of July, 10.30 for 10.45 am.

The Friends are taking part in the Living Memory Project, launched in April by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), to raise the awareness of the general public to the many War Graves of those who died here, in the United Kingdom, during WW1.

In particular, to the large number of men who died of their wounds received during the Somme Offensive from the 1st of July until the 18th of November 1916, a period of 141 days. On the first day of the Battle itself, almost 20,000 men died and another 30,000 were injured. It was the worst day in the long History of the British Army.

It is the aspiration of the CWGC to support 141 Community Events at Cemeteries across the country to raise the awareness and we the Friends, are one of the first community groups to accept the challenge to be involved.

There are 75 WW1 War Graves at the Tunbridge Wells Cemetery and in 1923 a Cross of Sacrifice Memorial was erected by the CWGC at a location that faces many of the Headstones.

The event will commence at 10.30am with marching music played by the Sea Cadet Reunion Band of TS Brilliant. There is a military expression 'To follow the drum' and all of those buried at the Cemetery did so. The music will assist those arriving close to the start time to locate the Cross of Sacrifice in the lower half of the Cemetery.

At 10.45am, the formal part of the event will begin. The focus of the event is to engage with the youth of the town and they will be represented by young people from the Senior Schools and Uniformed Organisations in our community. We must hope that in the years to come, the present younger generation will ensure the Fallen are not forgotten.

The Service will be conducted by the Revd Gareth Jones, the Minister of the Pantiles Baptist Church in Frant Road. Gareth is also the Chaplin to 129 (Tunbridge Wells) Air Training Corps having previously holding a similar position in Hampshire, before he came to Tunbridge Wells three years ago.

In 1914, St Mark's School in Frant Road was requisitioned and became a Military Hospital. The children were then educated in houses along
Broadwater Down and the Church Hall of St Mark's Church. When St Mark's Primary School moved to Ramslye in the early 1990's, the building was acquired by the Pantiles Baptist Church.

The Hospital had 53 beds, one operating theatre and was staffed by volunteer nurses. There were another 19 Volunteer Hospitals in the Tunbridge Wells area known as VAD's but the St Marks VAD was the only one named as a Military Hospital.

The Service will include the Last Post, a minutes silence and Reveille. Wreaths will be laid and will conclude at **11.15am**. Following the Service, a display of information about the Somme Offensive and its effect on the town, will be presented in the Friends Chapel. Refreshments will also be provided.

Each one of the CWGC Portland Stone Headstones will have a red sash ribbon placed upon it before the Service commences to highlight their location and to honour them. Some of the War dead were buried in Family Graves, so do not have a Portland Stone Headstone.

Please try to attend this special event and tell your friends, your family and the community groups of which you are a member what is happening on the 9th of July. It will of course be a great opportunity to raise awareness of the existence of the Friends to a wider audience.

**Peter Blackwell**

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**We hope to see you soon and do keep in touch by visiting:**

**Website:** foftwc.wix.com/foftwc

**Facebook:**
www.facebook.com/TunbridgeWellsCemetery

**Twitter:** TW Cemetery @FoHCTW

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Guest Editor: Caroline Auckland with thanks to Barry Melbourne Webb for proofreading.

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