**Charity Status Announcement**

In May there was a transfer of roles on the Executive Committee. David Wakefield took over the Minutes Secretary job, while Barry Melbourne Webb became Honorary Treasurer and Membership Secretary. Shortly afterwards Bob Atwood and June Bridgeman were made aware of a possible source of funds available to the Friends provided it was a charity.

A little research of the conditions to become a charity revealed that the Friends could register with HM Revenue and Customs as a charity for tax purposes. Our application was granted on the 19th August backdated to the 28th March 2015 - the date of the first Annual General Meeting when the constitution of the Friends was approved by the members. Apart from eligibility to receive charitable funds, the Friends can now reclaim income tax paid by members through the Gift Aid scheme. At the time of writing, sixteen members have signed Gift Aid declarations enabling the Friends to reclaim £2.50 for every ten pounds subscription or donation. If you would like to Gift Aid your subscription, please email the Treasurer, barry.melbournewebb@btinternet.com.

The Friends are also pleased to announce that they have received a donation of £200 towards the cost of restoring the William Brentnall grave (from Carol Anne Mellors) and a charitable donation of £4,321. We are extremely grateful to our benefactors.

**Barry Melbourne Webb**

**Heritage Open Days**

Our most recent event was on sunny Saturday 12th September. *History Comes Alive* was well attended by both friends and new visitors to the cemetery. The chapel was open with its now permanent history display to accompany the two walks offered by the Friends group. *Women, Writers and Widows* and *Some notable people remembered*. In addition postcards and greetings cards were available along with our first publication.

Alongside the chapel, the gardening team offered a beautiful collection of plants for sale. A culmination of all their hard-work most of which is quietly undertaken in tidying and replanting some of the graves of historical importance. Alongside planting up some of the small beds, they are also busy researching shrubs for planting throughout the year.
Important Announcement

We are very proud to present our first Booklet, A Walk round some interesting memorials which has now been published. Launched at the Heritage Open Days event, the booklet presents a short walk visiting twenty memorials and graves around a part of the cemetery near the chapel. A map is included alongside historical detail providing a fascinating insight into Victorian and Edwardian Tunbridge Wells Society.

The front cover depicts Lady Allison Fairbairn as painted by William Holman Hunt. [Currently on exhibition in Torre Abbey Museum].

Lady Fairbairn, surrounded by her children is presented as the archetypal Victorian Angel in the House (Poet Coventry Patmore) whilst her well-dressed children frolic in the beautiful surroundings of the grounds of the family estate. Silver tea urns, oranges and coral jewellery suggest family wealth and the tethered deer symbolize a taming of nature in true Pre-Raphaelite style. To read about this further and find out about a cross section of interesting individuals including soldiers, engineers, pilots and suffragettes whose histories have been researched and compiled by the Memorial Inscriptions Group please contact June Bridgeman, the Friends Secretary email: jbman@btinternet.com

Priced at £3 plus 60p postage - a fascinating read.
All proceeds go to support the Friends conservation work

Jottings from the Gardening Team:

Since formation of the Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery the Gardening Team have concentrated on the priorities for the year ie the AGM and Heritage Open Day when guided walks have taken place and the monuments/graves visited needed attention for the events. This has taken the form of tidying, cleaning stone and taking out weeds/brambles etc.

The team have also worked in conjunction with Peter Every’s team at the TWBC and an overgrown flower bed was designated for refurbishment, complete overhaul and replanting. Paving slabs were relaid making a base for a new bench which is now on the plot bearing a very nice brass plaque giving details of the Friends donation.

Opposite, the bench is viewed from both directions to indicate the vistas.
The flower bed will, in time, give a calm, quiet area for people to sit,reflect and enjoy the flowers and shrubs as they mature.
Summer Visit

The bed is situated near the childrens’ graves on the left hand side of the lower part of the cemetery. Certain graves have also been designated to the garden team to tidy and replant and these are now maturing and looking very good.

The garden team meet as and when convenient and spend around two to three hours per session. It is quite informal, most rewarding and the team would welcome anyone who would be interested in joining the currently small group of three. There is much to be done and a larger group would be most welcome. The work is not too arduous; most enjoyable and a chance to be in the open air, in peaceful surroundings and gives excellent exercise.

Come and join the team, you would be most welcome.
Jo, Felicity & Rose

William Brentnall Restoration

When MP Greg Clark visited the cemetery in June 2014 at the launch of the Friends group, he remarked with relation to William Brentnall “It would be a fitting tribute to his memory for the Council and Friends to get together to restore the monument of this man who did so much for the health and well being of thousands of Tunbridge Wells people”.

The flower bed will, in time, give a calm, quiet area for people to sit, reflect and enjoy the flowers and shrubs as they mature.

Come and join the team, you would be most welcome.

Jo, Felicity & Rose
A storm in 2014 resulted in a tree collapsing onto Brentnall’s grave which damaged his memorial. Greg Clark will be joining the Friends again and family representative Carol Anne Mellors together with Parks and Cemetery staff and the Burslem’s Stone Mason who has carried out the repairs to Brentnall’s memorial. Greg Clark will be planting a winter flowering cherry for visitors to enjoy in future years. Please join us on October 16 at 10.30 meeting at the Victorian Chapel.

William Brentnall (1829-1894) Town Surveyor and Railway Engineer was also responsible for the layout of the cemetery. Originally from Derbyshire he went to Brazil to work on the Dom Pedro Segundo Railway 1855-1858. Grace’s Guide to British Industrial History reports that he came to Tunbridge Wells in 1870 as the Borough Surveyor and Waterworks Engineer. His Tunbridge Wells Career extensively improved the distribution and sewage facilities of the water supply to the town. He designed Grosvenor Bridge and the town’s recreation grounds and also many of the Town Hall offices.

**Remembrance Sunday**
**November 8th**
Wreath laying followed by a lecture in the Chapel on Gallipoli organized by the British Legion. More details to follow when finalised.

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**January 22nd 2016** at The Camden Centre
Entitled *The Etiquette of Victorian Mourning*
there will be a talk by Jo Wiltcher from the Tunbridge Wells Museum on aspects of Victorian Mourning clothing. This is a repeat of the talk given to the Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery many years ago but we thought it such a fascinating subject that it was worth a repeat visit especially as we have members who may not have heard this before. As always friends who are not members are most welcome. Opposite is an example of a mourning card.

**Saturday April 2nd 2016** AGM 14.30 followed by a talk in the Chapel on Thomas Cripps,[1809-1888], Tunbridge Wells Nurseryman with a passion for fuchsias and Clematis.
Letter from the Chairman

Dear Members and Friends

Six months have passed since our first Annual General Meeting, and what a busy six months it has been! I won’t list everything we have done here as you can read about it elsewhere in this Newsletter, but rest assured we haven’t been sitting on our hands!

Since becoming a Charity we have been able to receive certain grants and other gifts which would not have been available to us before, and we have already bid for and received our first grant which has significantly increased our funds. Whilst not as rich as Croesus, we do now have a sounder financial base to move forward.

Your Chair has continued to work closely with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and was recently invited to attend the Council’s Bereavement Project Board meeting. This enabled a lively and constructive exchange of views on the future maintenance and development of the cemetery. We will continue to work with the Council to ensure that our views are heard, and that we have an opportunity to encourage and assist any programme of future improvements. We continue to occupy the unused chapel which now contains a permanent exhibition covering the cemetery's history, with the intention that other displays on specific themes will be added from time to time. Together with the Council, we are working on a plan of building improvements, and hope that the chapel can be opened to mourners and to the general public more often in future.

As always, we are looking for more Members and for active Volunteers. It doesn’t matter what your skills are - somehow we will always be able to find a use for them! So, please encourage friends, neighbours and relatives to join up - all are very welcome.

I look forward to another successful six months

Best wishes to all

Bob Atwood
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