



Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery

Newsletter No.17 Spring 2023

Our Cemetery is 150 Years Old!

We are looking forward to a busy 2023 as we celebrate the *Sesquicentennial* of this remarkable cemetery – an under-appreciated treasure of our town. Our major celebration – plans for which are taking shape - will take place in October.

Having said farewell to 2022 at our 15th April AGM, we began our celebration of this 150th year with an illustrated talk by Dr Janet Sturgis on:

***“Some Connections Between Two of Our Town’s Victorian Treasures:
Lansdowne Road and Tunbridge Wells Cemetery”***



Maintaining Our Exceptional Tree Cover

A major feature of our cemetery is the wide variety of trees it contains. When members of the famous Highgate Cemetery visited a few years ago, they expressed their envy of our trees which in their urban cemetery they could never hope to emulate.

Two years ago, after many of the conifers growing along the main avenue in the cemetery leading down from the chapels had been blown over in storms, a dozen great white cherry trees (*prunus* ‘Tai-haku’) were planted there.

The great white cherry is a beautiful tree, producing a mass of large single flowers in April which make a great contrast with the young copper-coloured foliage. As well as being lovely to look at, they are useful to wildlife as they are a source of pollen and nectar for bees.

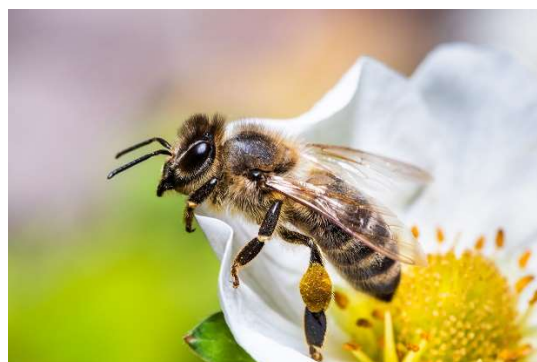
The story of the great white cherry is an interesting one. After many years' absence, the tree was reintroduced to its native Japan in the 1920s after a specimen was discovered growing in the garden in Benenden, Kent of ornithologist and plant collector Collingwood 'Cherry' Ingram, who was a leading authority on cherry trees.

This spring the young trees flowered well for the first time. In years to come we hope that they will provide a stunning white canopy to greet visitors to the cemetery.



Saturday 20th May, 2 pm: A Nature Walk with Dr Ian Beavis

This new venture will be an opportunity for TW citizens of all ages – but particularly youngsters – to learn about the variety of plants & creatures our cemetery harbours. Visit our website www.friends-tw-cemetery.org for details of signing up for this event or telephone **07944364622**.



Saturday 10th June 2-5pm

The Chapel will be open for annual *Cemeteries Week*, when all are welcome to meet, talk, and once again follow Carol Mellors' fascinating ***Angels Walk*** celebrating our various examples of that Victorian fashion in cemetery monuments.



Our Memorial Inscriptions Group

This group forms our 'research engine' into the hidden stories in our cemetery such as those revealed in the April talk. With the primary task of physically transcribing of gravestone inscriptions curtailed for the cold and wet winter months, the MIG have been concentrating on research for our next major publication: ***A History of the Cemetery*** to celebrate its 150th Anniversary.

We have also been finding out more about the interesting lives of some of our 'residents', and these are gradually being added to our website. These include **Edith Neild**, the first female member of the British homeopathic society, the appalling murder of **Bensley Cyrus Lawrence** in 1888, and the **Stebbing Family** of authors and entomologists.

If you would like to get involved in this research, details for joining are on our website:

www.friends-tw-cemetery.org/support-us