



Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery: Newsletter No.18 Autumn 2023



Celebrating Our Cemetery's Sesquicentennial

After much research, planning and preparation, on Saturday 14th October at 2.30 the Chapel was opened – and completely filled – for the launch of this impressive volume:

'Our Beautiful Necropolis'
The 150th Anniversary of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery
1873-2023

The authors Carol Mellors (narrator) and Sue White (on projector) presented an entertaining introduction to the book. The capacity audience was royally entertained.

Following their presentation, we adjourned to the other chapel for the cutting of a celebratory cake (organised by Noreen O'Meara) and tea. It was a most enjoyable occasion on a perfect autumn day, when our cemetery was at its elegant best.

Priced at £10, many copies were sold on the day. We hope all *Friends* who couldn't be there – and many others – will buy this book and learn some of the fascinating details about our beautiful cemetery's past. Copies can be purchased from our website:

[Our Beautiful Necropolis. \(sumupstore.com\)](http://sumupstore.com)

A Bittersweet Occasion on 15th September



Photo credits: David Walter



Photo credit: David Walter



Photo credit: David Walter

On a perfect September morning, we welcomed once again the Tunbridge Wells branch of **The Royal Air Force Association** for their annual *Battle of Britain* ceremony. A good crowd attended as wreaths were laid at the memorial garden and a minute's silence was observed. This year there were no buglers, as the cadets were in school, but the Standard was paraded. Sadly, this was the last time this ceremony will take place, as the Association is disbanding due to declining membership. However, their impressive standard was marched into the Chapel, where it is to remain.

Heritage Open Days 2023

Once again, the Friends opened the Chapel on 9th & 10th September as part of the annual Heritage Open Day events in Tunbridge Wells. On the Saturday, the Chapels were opened for Carol Mellors' talk on some of the "Creatives" buried in our cemetery. A good number of visitors attended on both days to learn from the poster display about the variety of talented artistic figures from times past who are buried in the cemetery.



Gardening Team



The cemetery has again received a Gold Award in this year's *Tunbridge Wells in Bloom* competition, thanks to the hard work and commitment of our small but mighty team of gardening volunteers, the Council staff and contractors. Here is the latest update from the gardening team:

The late summer sun has kept the beds in the cemetery looking very colourful and are still giving much pleasure to passers-by. We have received many compliments on how lovely the beds are looking.

The Council Parks Department delivered around 80 plants for the Friends' beds and entrance beds plus more primulas for the Primrose Bed. Most have been planted and the team look forward to seeing some new additions to the beds next season. Work on the Primrose Bed is finished apart from some late weeding at the end of the month.

We were given some cowslips which have been planted at the back of the Paupers' grave in the hope next year we shall see them in flower along with the primroses.

We shall be putting in some tête-a-tête in the entrance beds to give early spring colour, and alliums will be planted in the hot bed in the hope that these will deter the deer from eating so many plants next year. We aim to form a shield around the bed to promote flowers further back in the bed.

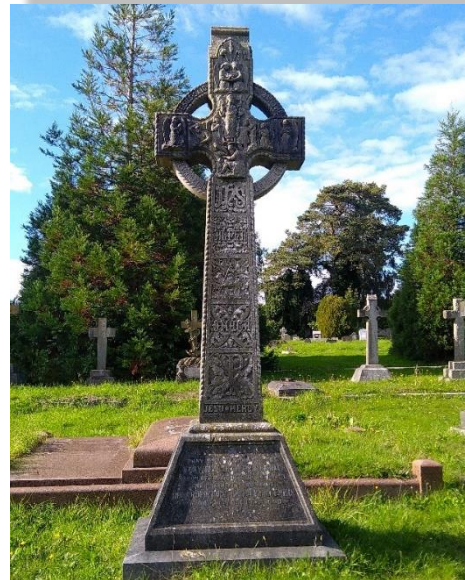
One of the team brought in their own mower to cut the grass around the beds, which made a big difference to the overall appearance of these areas.

Memorial Inscription Group

Our 'research arm' continues to transcribe the memorials in the older parts of the cemetery, and has welcomed a new member, just as a founder member is calling it a day.

Carol Mellors has decided that it's time to explore other avenues after nine years of deciphering tomb inscriptions, researching online and in local archives and writing an impressive series of booklets, culminating in the book that marks our cemetery's 150th year.

We want to thank her for her impressive contribution and wish her every success in her next venture.



Future Events

Annual Blessing of Catholic Graves: Sunday 5th November at 3pm

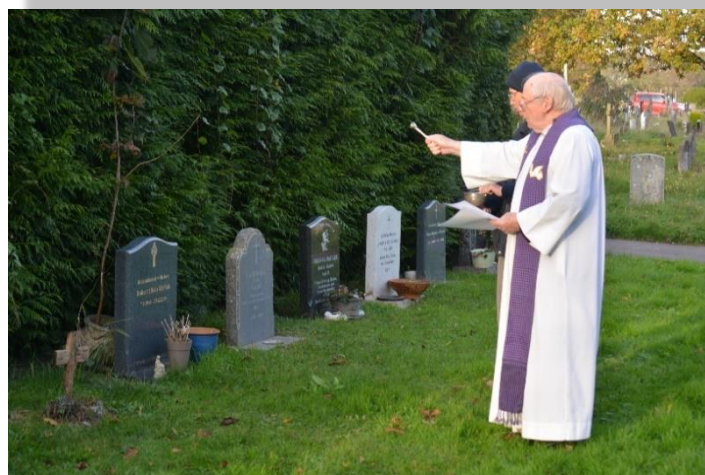


Photo credit: David Walter

Everyone is welcome to attend the annual blessing of Catholic graves, which takes place on the Sunday closest to All Souls' Day. Meet for prayers in the Catholic section of the cemetery near the Bayham Road entrance. Graves in other parts of the cemetery can be blessed on request. The Friends Chapel will be open afterwards for hot drinks and cake.

Remembrance Sunday: 12th November at 12.30pm



The Mayor, Councillor Hugh Patterson and representatives of other groups will lay wreaths at the four War Memorials in the cemetery on Remembrance Sunday. The Mayor will lay the first wreath at the Second World War Cross of Sacrifice in the Garden of Remembrance, followed by wreaths at the Civilian War Memorial, the First World War Cross of Sacrifice and the RAF Memorial. Everyone is invited to attend this Civic Event. Meet in the Garden of Remembrance, which is located close to the boundary with the Nevill Golf Club. The Friends' Chapel will be open afterwards for hot drinks and cake.

Annual Advent Carol Concert: Saturday 2nd December at 3 pm

We are pleased to announce that once again we shall welcome the **CREATE Community Choir** to lead our carol concert in the Chapel, with seasonal refreshments and a raffle during the interval. This year the concert will take place in the afternoon. Tickets cost £5 and will be available to purchase from the Friends website shortly. Numbers are limited, so early booking is advised. Any enquiries, please contact the Friends Secretary: Lynne Monckton on 07944 364622 or lynnemonckton@gmail.com.

