



2021 NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends

We have just had our first Open Day of the year on Easter Sunday which was a beautiful but cold Spring Day, and it was good to see so many visitors enjoying their first visit to the Cemetery. It was good also to hear the merry sound of money clattering in to the donations bucket!

This newsletter is intended to bring you all up to date with some of what has been going on since the last newsletter in 2019. If you haven't been to see us recently we hope that you will come along one Sunday and remind yourself what a special place our cemetery is.

CHANGES ON THE COMMITTEE

Many of you will know that Tony Cavill retired from the Committee at the end of 2020. Tony was one of the original stalwarts who had been involved with the Friends since their inception in 2002 and had recently been our Chairman for many years. In addition he had regularly contributed to the maintenance of the cemetery in many various ways, some of which we are only finding out about now that he isn't doing it any longer! We all owe Tony a very considerable vote of thanks.

Pete Jaggard has taken over from Tony as Chairman, which he is managing to do in addition to all the other tasks he undertakes, principal among which are maintaining our Facebook pages and greeting our visitors almost every Sunday throughout the season.

Jean McCormack is our Head Gardener, ably abetted by Alison Mayall.

Also Dolly Handford has been appointed Treasurer following the retirement of Brian Norman.

ASH DIE-BACK

If you are a Somerset resident you will be aware of the devastation that has been caused by Ash Dieback and the cemetery has not been immune from this problem. A significant amount of our trees have needed fairly drastic attention and some parts of the cemetery are looking quite different now. This work has created a significant disposal problem, but a succession of bonfires has reduced the task to manageable proportions. In this we received significant help from a number of local schoolchildren as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award programme.

FINANCES

We are fortunate that, when we are closed, the type of activity we are involved in does not usually incur much in the way of costs other than routine maintenance (e.g. the cemetery's Autumn haircut) and the fixed charges (insurance etc). This has meant that although we were closed for much of last year, our finances have managed to stay in reasonably good shape, although the cost of the tree surgery has been an unexpected additional burden. So our thanks to all of you who pay your regular Friends subscription by Gift-Aided Standing Order. Please keep the money flowing – we cannot do without it! If you feel particularly generous, perhaps you could consider increasing the amount of your Standing Order?!

THE GARDENS

Jean and her team have been working hard to keep the cemetery looking at its best, and to realise the long-term plans which I detailed in my previous Newsletter. In particular they have made an excellent start in the coppice in the bottom S.E. corner of the cemetery which has now been opened out.

We have realised that we are not providing enough seating, particularly at the bottom end of the cemetery where visitors could do with somewhere to rest before tackling the steep hill back up to the Chapel. We therefore plan to acquire a bench or two which should alleviate the problem a little in the short term, and if there is any Friend who would like to donate a bench in memory of someone this would be warmly welcomed.

We now have an on-site toilet facility – of the composting variety – currently for the use of volunteers and the occasional visitor who gets caught short.

All our plans for work around the cemetery depend on our being able to find and motivate volunteers who are both willing and able to turn up regularly. Our gardeners now meet every Thursday (weather permitting) and if you would like to be involved, or you know of anyone who would like to get involved, do please come along either on a Sunday or a Thursday and have a chat.

OPENING TIMES

We are normally open to visitors every Sunday between the beginning of April and the end of September from 11.00 am to 4.00 pm, and occasionally on other days as well. Details are kept up to date on our website <http://www.mendiphospitalcemetery.org.uk/> or on our Facebook pages [@mendiphospitalcemetery](#).

COVID regulations mean that currently we cannot allow visitors into the Chapel, but we are hopeful that if the lockdown is eased as expected in mid-May we can open up the Chapel again.

FACEBOOK

We try to keep up with modern trends in communication, so you will not be surprised to learn that our Facebook pages ([@mendiphospitalcemetery](#)) are kept fully up to date and that we now have almost 4,000 followers!

FUTURE EVENTS

MUSEUM EXHIBITION

ADVANCE NOTICE: We are collaborating with Wells Museum on a major exhibition of the life of the Mendip Hospital, featuring the stories of patients and staff through photographs, artefacts and displays. This has already been postponed twice and is now scheduled to run from 5th June to 10th July this year, but keep your eye on the local press for confirmation of these dates nearer the time.

TALK

Also postponed from last year is a talk in St Thomas Church by Paul Thorner who was *inter alia* an Administrator in the Mendip Hospital. It is now hoped that we can reschedule this too for June or July this year.

AGM

Normally all charities are required to hold an Annual General Meeting which must be open to the general public, but the Government have relaxed the regulations while the pandemic lasts. Last year our AGM was a virtual one but please note that the AGM minutes and the accounts for the previous year can be sent to any Friend on request. If possible we are currently planning to hold our AGM on the same day as Paul Thorner's lecture – further details will be circulated nearer the time.

John Slater
Secretary