



# Friends of Newport & Carisbrooke Cemeteries

[www.foncc.org.uk](http://www.foncc.org.uk)



*Volunteers helping to care for the cemeteries and record the lives of those resting there*

## Newsletter No.10, November 2019

Welcome to the tenth newsletter of the Friends of Newport & Carisbrooke Cemeteries. This is being circulated to all those who have expressed an interest in the Friends and others who we think may be interested. Feel free to circulate this to others who you feel may be interested in the Cemeteries.

Receiving this newsletter does not cost you anything nor commit you to anything, but if you don't wish to receive future copies, feel free to unsubscribe (just email [newsletter@foncc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@foncc.org.uk)) - we won't take offence.

Past newsletters can be found on the website at:  
[https://www.foncc.org.uk/the\\_group/newsletters.php](https://www.foncc.org.uk/the_group/newsletters.php)



*Carisbrooke Cemetery*

### Where are we? (Tony Barton)

Our activities continue clearing vegetation from graves in the cemeteries and adding information to the website.

I've received a number of queries related to burials at Carisbrooke St. Mary's churchyard, I'm looking into the feasibility of adding records to the website where there are grave markers in the churchyard.

With the coming of the end of the year, people often make resolutions or plan to do things in the New Year – so why not think how you can contribute to our efforts?

- We would always welcome new volunteers willing to join in the clearing sessions – first Saturday at Carisbrooke Cemetery, third Saturday at Newport Cemetery – check the website for details.
- You could survey and record the wildlife in the cemeteries – possibly on a month by month basis to record the changes through the year.
- If you can't (or don't want to) help with working in the cemeteries, why not transcribe some newspaper reports? We can e-mail you appropriate cuttings, which you can transcribe at your own pace, then return them to us to add to the records. If you have relatives buried in the cemeteries, we would try to find family related cuttings.
- If you have family stories or pictures for those buried, we'd be happy to receive these to add to the records.
- We've started a small 'History' section on the website which currently includes a small selection of local pictures and street directories. If you have an interest in local history, we'd be pleased to receive your suggestions to expand this section. Possible topics which come to mind are: Inns, Pubs and Beerhouses, schools, the history of individual streets/buildings/businesses – but we are open to any local history contributions.

So with the end of the year approaching, consider how you could contribute, we'd welcome your suggestions - just e-mail ([chair.foncc@gmail.com](mailto:chair.foncc@gmail.com)) with your thoughts.

## **Cemetery clearing sessions:**

### **Newport Cemetery (Rob Cain)**

In recent months, when I have arrived at Fairlee Road cemetery for our usual 3rd Saturday clearing session, I have walked around the grounds and looked at the tremendous amount of work our small, but dedicated team of volunteers have got through and the large number of memorials which have now been uncovered and I begin to think that there cannot be many more plots left to clear. Then my eye is drawn to a clump of shrubs or a heap of brambles or maybe when the rest of the volunteers arrive one of them suggests an area which they have seen that we have not been to before. Take the case of George Aaron Sheaf. When I first saw this plot it was a low lying area of ivy, shrubs and brambles and I wasn't even sure there was a gravestone to uncover. However after several hours work by the team a large double plot was revealed. The headstone unfortunately had fallen face down and it is not practical or safe for us to try and turn it over but the plot is now there for all to see and details of George Sheaf can be seen on our website.

Interestingly, when we first uncovered the stones they were quite dull in appearance but over the next few weeks, after exposure to the air and elements they have been naturally 'cleaned' and look quite dazzling. This is also the case with other memorials we have uncovered over the years. Further research into this burial has revealed that it is shown in the cemetery Register and Map as being in Consecrated Section G which would put Mr Sheaf in the same plot as a married couple who appear unrelated to him. The research notes on the FoNCC website also show that his funeral was held at the Victoria Methodist

Church which would probably infer that he was interred in the Unconsecrated Section of the cemetery together with his wife, son and daughter-in-law. We do not only clear away the vegetation, we also clear up queries and solve mysteries!



The Sheaf family plot, before and after clearing, Newport Cemetery

Another example of a grave that has recently been cleared is that of George Henry Blake, a local butcher. Photographs of this memorial and other photographs of memorials throughout the cemetery, together with lots of other information can be found on our website (<https://www.foncc.org.uk>).

The recent winds have caused a number of large branches to break off trees in the original cemetery; unfortunately these have broken at least two 19<sup>th</sup> century headstones.

### **Carisbrooke (Mount Joy) Cemetery (Tony Barton)**

The team of volunteers continue to clear vegetation from graves and memorials at Carisbrooke Cemetery on the first Saturday of each month. The gale force winds at the beginning of November caused that month's session to be cancelled.

We are still working to clear the branches of the large tree above the main roundabout – if not for the cancelled November session, we would probably have completed that particular task.



We have observed that some of the memorials we've previously cleared now show signs that they need another visit to remove recent ivy growth etc. which we'll get around to after finishing the current site.

The recent high winds have brought down one of the large fir trees in front of the chapel; luckily it fell in such a way that the roadway wasn't obstructed and no headstones were damaged. Winds often dislodge flowers etc which have been left on graves and when I see such while walking around the cemetery I try to restore them to the appropriate grave but it's not always possible to identify where they came from.

## Characters buried here (Brian Greening)

### *Two Telephone Operators of Newport and district*

I recently came across an article written in January 1878 telling how on a Monday evening of that year Queen Victoria had the telephone demonstrated to her at Osborne House by the inventor Alexander Graham Bell. It included the bizarre form of one lady, a Miss Kate Field, singing the "Cuckoo Song," down the line and her encore became the singing of "Coming through the rye."

Contact was made as far away as London and the Queen expressed herself delighted with the results.



Alice Niblett and her mother  
(Mary Ann Niblett)

It was as the result of this invention that two Island ladies gained employment in the years to come as switchboard operators, namely **Miss Florence Austin** and **Miss Alice Niblett**. By 1912 although things had moved on, to make a connection from one's home you had to lift the receiver and ask an operator to connect you with the person you wished to speak to by giving her the telephone number. She would then connect you by placing a cable into the switchboard and a link had been made. Florence was one of those pioneer lady's that sat in a room to the rear of the old, main Newport Post Office in



the High Street, and provided this service. Sadly she would not live long enough to move into the purpose built exchange that was opened in 1938, the building still existing to this day in Crocker Street for she was to die much too early at the age of just thirty seven in 1912 and her obituary records her funeral taking place at Newport Cemetery just before Christmas.

Alice Niblett was well known in the village of Chillerton where her parents ran the local post office and she, like Florence, became the local switchboard operator, Alice doing the job for around thirty years. There was a time when there were just two telephones in the village, one in the Westmore families house and the other at Gatcombe House, home to Sir Charles Seely. The means of making a call had changed little and one story tells of how Sir Charles lifted his receiver and asked Alice to connect him with a London number. It should be pointed out that an operator could, should they desire, listen in on a call and it is said that some way into his call Sir Charles said to his contact, "hold on, I think somebody is listening to our call," at which Alice is alleged to have said, "I'm not Sir." True or not, an amusing tale. Alice died in June 1953, aged just fifty four, and was buried in Carisbrooke Cemetery.

A short tale that tells us of just two more residents of our Newport cemeteries but they took with them a couple of stories that add to our local history. I am told that when the Newport Exchange opened in 1938 the number of switchboard operators had increased to eight.

### **Memorial transcriptions:**

Memorial Inscriptions continue to be transcribed and added to the website; this might be attractive to new volunteers (although possibly in the Spring) either as part of our clearing sessions or at times of their own choice – just email if you are interested [chair.foncc@gmail.com](mailto:chair.foncc@gmail.com) .

### **The Website:**

More pictures, updated grave plot maps, transcriptions, inscriptions etc. have been added to the website - it's going to be an ongoing task 'forever'. There are currently over 6750 records with images of grave markers and/or transcriptions

The small, dedicated, team of volunteers are continuing to transcribe newspaper reports of the lives, deaths and funerals of those buried in the cemeteries - currently there are over 750 such research notes attached to individual records and listed alphabetically - see website [BURIALS/Research Notes](#).

The database on the website of cemetery burials is based upon transcription of the Cemetery Burial Registers made available to us by the IWC Bereavement Services – we've limited the burials to those which occurred pre 2001. Also in the database are records for people who are recorded on grave markers although not buried there – these include

victims of the two world wars, family members who died elsewhere or were cremated at the island's crematorium.

As we record grave-markers etc., we are finding a few discrepancies with names, ages and burial locations from the registers. Unfortunately there are no original plot maps available for Carisbrooke Cemetery, which might have helped in some respects but where such anomalies can be resolved with confidence, the website reflects what we consider the 'correct' information.

These discrepancies come to light when a headstone is being added, or where someone queries a record; so there are bound to be other discrepancies in the 'untouched' records.

### **Future events:**

Clearing sessions in the cemeteries continue to be held, Carisbrooke Cemetery on the first Saturday each month, Newport Cemetery on the third Saturday each month (but not June at Newport). Full details, and any updates can be found on our website (<https://www.foncc.org.uk>)

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Fallen branch at Newport



Uprooted tree at Carisbrooke

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