

WESTMILL WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND CIC

NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Summer newsletter 2022

Opening up again!

How lovely to be planning a full year of activities again. We look forward to seeing you up at the Open Day this year which will include a wildflower foray and the usual talk about green burial as well as lots of information to browse and take away and of course tea and cake - it would not be a Westmill Event without that!

It is also timed to coincide with a guided tour at the community owned windfarm we set up many years ago now. You can get up close to the wind turbines and learn more about them and the solar park and take a listen to Field Notes if the wind is blowing strongly enough they will play you a lovely lullaby if you wander in amongst them.



Honeybee Conservation Group

Ron learnt about beekeeping when as a 12 year old evacuee he was sent from London to live in Oxfordshire.

There were hives at his new school and he was immediately captivated and has never looked back. He is now a recognized authority worldwide on protecting bees from Varroa mites. He says UK beekeepers were ill prepared when the mites arrived, so within four years the mites had found their way into nearly every beehive in England and destroyed the wild colonies.

As he says this is even more

remarkable given this parasite is blind and cannot fly. When Ron found them in his hives he also noticed that some of his bees had developed a unique grooming process to remove the mite from each other.

Ron swapped the queens over into with another colony and the same behaviour appeared in her 'new home' showing this to be genetically inheritable. He then initiated a Selective Queen Rearing programme to create more colonies which also developed the grooming ability.

This work is extremely delicate,



Queen bee courtesy of <https://wordpress.org/openverse/search>.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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Photo of Ron explaining his work to Chris Packham

labour intensive and involves artificially inseminating queen bees - work that requires a steady hand and the use of microscopes.

Ron proved that chemical controls are not necessary and built up very healthy disease free colonies which made it even more

heartbreaking when some people broke in and damaged nearly all his hives and burnt his workshops to the ground.

Ron refuses to give up and has managed to resume his conservation work with help from other beekeepers who had previously received his Varroa resistant bees. All of the work by Ron and his group is entirely voluntary and so important in terms of longterm conservation goals.

If you want to know more do visit Stanton Park and look at the hives and the information there. If you want to contribute to the fund by adopting a hive or going on a course then you may contact Ron on his cell phone 07737 400 515 or by email: swindonbeeman@gmail.com

We are honoured to have Ron as a member of our Friends and Family group.

The Pregnancy of Death – Erik Wilkinson

Reaching 70 some two years ago hit me with biblical force. Three score years and ten had a finality about it and forced the question - "how much longer do I have"?

I had until then felt so busy. Though I had been retired for ten years, I still felt time poor.

My father dying and my sense of moving up the production line to death became a motivation to review and change my life. Also came the realisation that I could have a day or a decade so my 'Pregnancy of Death' could be short - or long. Ideally, I will go to full term - physically, emotionally and mentally; strong in my partnerships and relationships having reflected on and learnt from my life. Hopefully also having developed a framework to face and approach death. Much work needs to be done!

I started to recognise some of the elements that I felt helped me to create a supportive



Portrait of Erik by Fred Barker

framework from pregnancy to death:

LIVING WITH DEATH: I felt the importance of embracing the end. My wife and I updated our wills and agreed to review it regularly. We went on a 'Planning Your Own Funeral' workshop with the coordinator of our local death café. <https://deathcafe.com/deathcafe/14045/> We agreed to complete Jane Duncan Rogers 'End of Life Plan' <https://beforeigosolutions.com/>

CROSSING THE GENERATIONS: Time needs to be invested in relationships - of all ages. I substituted writing minutes and supporting

groups during lockdown to sending each week over 52 weeks a practical joke to a six-year-old and a three-year-old.

Important for me also is that crossing the generations is not just within the family - e.g. 'Action for Happiness' events <https://actionforhappiness.org/talks>
The talks make me feel better - and link me with many across the world.

GETTING FIT: I recognised my responsibility to my loved ones. Being physically fit links to mental health and reduces the dementia risk. I have joined the local gym and go several times a week.

ADVENTURE: I felt the need to do something I had always wanted to do but hadn't. I bought a pump-up tent! - and christened it by visiting a small campsite in Wales whose USP was to bring an enormous Welsh breakfast to your tent. I have converted my Citroen Berlingo so that a camp bed fits in the passenger seat side and that there is space for my pop-up tent and my pump-up tent - for longer stays on campsites. I am going to Scotland to try all three forms of camping. <https://nearlywildcamping.org/>

SPIRITUAL: I wanted time to think - paradoxically one of the best You tube videos was by Eckhart Tolle encouraging us to get out of the head and use the senses to access the now.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzA2YyRs8XA>

- Let it unfold: Doing less was partly about facing myself without distractions - but also about positively embracing random opportunities. I followed up a recent talk on Compassion Focussed Therapy; bought the workbook and spent two days going through it. Compassionate Mind workbook

These are some of elements that for me make up my 'Pregnancy of Death'. Other elements will evolve I am sure and contribute to my transition through my post 70 pregnancy. Pregnancy brings new life forth; I am hoping that my pregnancy of death will all be about the (long!) journey.

If you have any comments or responses Erik would love to hear from you - erikjohnw@gmail.com

Here at Westmill we believe there is real value in coming together for our annual events. We know when we come that everyone has their own story of loss and grief and that makes each one of us less lonely and self-conscious.

No-one is going to worry if you shed a tear or try to make you change the subject if you want to tell them about the person who died or how it happened.

There are many excellent books available to help us understand and work with our grief and sometimes you really need someone professional to talk to or a group that is meeting specifically to share experiences and offer support to one another.



Erik mentions some of these in his article and locally we have the excellent Shrevenham Bereavement Café (contactable via Rose-Anne O'Hare - 01793 784017) In writing my new book I have heard so much about the value of online support too for people bereaved by Covid. A book that talks in great depth about the value of shared grieving is Francis Weller's Wild Edge of Sorrow. He refers to the many losses we all face alongside bereavement - aging, change of life circumstances and the wider concerns of habitat destruction and the climate emergency. Weller believes that all of us need to unburden ourselves sometimes and get reassurance by being witness to each other's experience.

This is why we so value coming together as a group during the year. Most of our events are open to anyone who just might like somewhere to come whether or not someone they know is buried with us.

Only our Friends and Family Day is a private event.



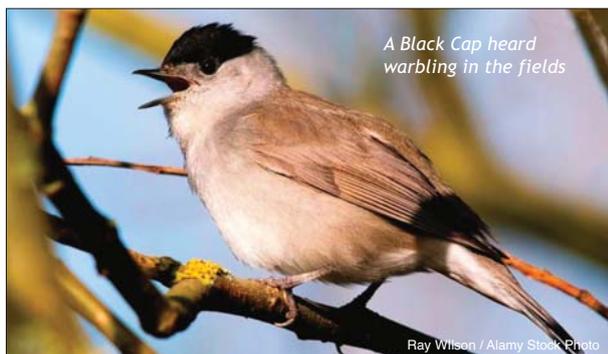
Favourite Shoes

People sometimes have very clear ideas about what they would like to be buried in or with and we love to hear about it.



It might be a favourite teddy bear, some precious love letters or, as in this picture, a much treasured pair of stylish shoes that the owner can no

longer wear in life but is determined to be dressed in again when she dies.



A thank you to all those who have donated to the burial ground in memory of people and to Colin Crook for all his wonderful birdboxes which we still have in stock for anyone who would like to purchase one in memory of someone to have in your garden. A big thank you to the contribution in memory of Jo and Palmer Newbould, wonderful botanists who are now buried here at Westmill. Thanks to the family of Matt Lowe for donating us pinboards for us to use for displaying photographs in the Roundhouse.

It is now very easy to donate via our website by going to the home page and pressing on the donate button at the top right. www.woodlandburialwestmill.co.uk

All articles written and edited by Liz Rothschild unless otherwise stated. List of contributors Ron Hoskins, Erik Wilkinson and Liz Rothschild. Design/artwork by Lee Hiom and Simon French

Dates for the diary

OPEN DAY Saturday June 25th 2-5pm

Talk by Liz Rothschild at 3pm about green burial Quizzes for children and adults and a walk to explore the wildflowers up on site at 3.30pm. Tea and cakes, a chance to browse our leaflets and chat to members of our Friends and Family group.

WESTMILL SUSTAINABLE ENERGY TRUST (WESET) OPEN DAY

Visits to the windfarm from 4-5.30pm. A guided 90 mins tour. Tom Lowe visit@weset.org

MEMORIAL GATHERING

Saturday 17th September - 5-7pm

Open to anyone who wishes to remember those who have died. From 5.00pm Lantern decorating and cups of tea, From 6.00pm Music, procession, readings and a memorial fire. Time for reflection. It will finish before sunset at 7.17pm

FRIENDS AND FAMILY DAY

Saturday November 19th 11- 3.30pm

11-1pm Plant trees and work on site, 1-2pm - Lunch - £5 a head booking will be needed nearer the time. An email will be sent out. 2-3.30pm - AGM - *We plan to hold this in person this year with the option to join us via zoom if you prefer not to come to Westmill yourself. You can come to all or part of the day according to what suits you best.*

Mission Statement

- To make death approachable.
- To help people plan for the end of their life.
- To enable people to ask for and get what they want from a funeral.
- To show that funerals can be personal and beautiful without being expensive.
- To support people as they grieve.
- To create a community of people connected to the burial ground - our Friends and Family group.
- To create a beautiful nature reserve by increasing the bio-diversity and providing a place of peace and relaxation for future generations.