

WESTMILL WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND CIC

NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Winter newsletter 2021

Our new administrator

As many of you will know Becky Norman who joined us in October and has settled in wonderfully well. I will leave her to introduce herself. everything here and getting to know everyone. I found out about Westmill Burial Ground after having my son 6 years



Hello everyone. I just firstly wanted to thank everyone who I have met and spoken to so far, for being so welcoming to me. Although I have only been working at Westmill for a few weeks, I can already

tell that the friendliness and community feeling of the place is nothing like anywhere I have worked before! I am really looking forward to learning so much more about

ago, as I had always thought about what I would like to happen after I die, but after having him, I realized I needed to put it all down on paper and let people know. I am always open with my children about what happens when we die, and the importance of our choices. They now love the idea that I am working in a place that I've told them about in the past and keep asking when they can come and see all the trees and flowers. I will definitely be bringing them up to see all the flowers that you have planted from the FFG day this November, when they are in full bloom and blossom.

New helpers

We have also recently gained a number of new recruits to the team of helpers alongside those we have been working with for some years. We will be updating the photos on the burial ground noticeboard and outside the office.

Amongst our wonderful team there is a chiropractor, teacher, counsellor, butcher, doctor, a dementia expert, several celebrants, a singer songwriter, a yoga teacher, an artist and others. What a varied wealth of experience



Some of our new helpers - Lucy, Jane and Karen

And there's more!

My brother died 3 years ago on 15 November. It just so happens that the Friends and Family Day falls around that time.

I am the only family member who lives in the West Country; my mum and sister live over in Essex so rarely get to visit his resting place. When planting during that first year, I had the idea to save some of the bulbs to send over to Mum with the idea that she could be connected to Westmill and my brother in some way. So each year when the Friends and Family Day comes around, I call my mum and read out the list of bulbs and she chooses the ones she would like planted at his grave. And each year, I buy a few extra and send them to Mum. She has a special place in the garden and tells me that when they started to grow last year in the Spring, she found it so comforting to know that the same flowers were growing above Paul. It gives her a warm feeling and she describes it as very comforting to have part of her son with her in her own garden.

Vicky Chanin



Our annual memoria gathering in September is a time to gather together and remember those who have died.

We make lanterns of the kind you see on the front page banner of this newsletter and sometimes people bring readings. This year along with the wonderful Mary Oliver poem In Blackwater Woods, Daniella Page shared this lovely piece of writing about her grandfather and Westmill. Thank you for letting us print it here.

Dear Grampy,

It is another time to remember your life and loss as we stand in this field today,

Four months since we reached a year without you on Tuesday the 18th of May,

When I think of these times I still struggle to understand how it happened because it still feels so confusing and sad,

But when I stand here I stand and remember all the memories that we once had.

This memorial is held at a place that makes me feel settled in the middle of this storm,

The breeze on my back and the sun on my face reminds me of the way you made my heart warm.

When I spent time at nanny's a week ago something felt missing as without you there was barely a sound,

But here without confines there is freedom and I feel you everywhere around.

The circle of plaques are a circle of love and whenever I see it I feel you are near,

The birdsong and fields are pretty and there is no room to feel alone in fear.

Although where you were laid to rest is overgrown I know you are there where nature is roaming free,

I would rather you were painless and peaceful even if it means you are not here with me.

Here is so different from the place we lost you and the darkness is replaced by our light,

As our family come here together the atmosphere around us reminds us you're hugging us tight.

The hut where we sit is quiet and there are pigeons that fly through the air,

You lay in a place where they gather knowing that they are still in your care,

The grass keeps on growing and life keeps on going just as you would have wanted it to stay,

When nature renews your memories are alight and we know that you won't go away.

This woodland in Watchfield gives meaning to your life and I will always love to sit with you for a while,

Remembering how free your spirit is here and seeing how it reflects your bright smile.

The wild flowers renews your love for us and the fields never allow your memory to cease,

There is no better place for you than right out here, among the Watchfield peace.

Our memorial tree

Hangin in the main office is this lovely tree created for us by Clare Davis, an artist based in Abingdon. The invitation is to create a leaf to go on the tree in memory of the person who is at Westmill. We can also just write the name and dates on a leaf if you prefer to do it that way. We have some leaf templates you can use and you can make up your own shape. This story of making a leaf for us shows what a beautiful process it can be for those who are grieving.

of her that still lives on. Sometimes I paint and draw using some of her art materials. It makes me feel more connected to her, although I would not say I was the most artistic person. However, I know that she would be happy to know that I am developing that side of myself, and being the pragmatic person that she is, happy in the knowledge that her vast amount of materials are being put to use.

I was devastated when I unexpectedly lost my mum Debby Turner April 2018. She was my soulmate, best friend and partner in crime!



When life got tough and challenging, a hug and simply spending time with her would make everything feel better.

I could spend forever trying to describe her personality. Down to earth, but also could be quite alternative, a very kind loving person always the peace maker, but she also had a cheeky rebellious side!

She was also very artistic, and had a workshop in the garden where she pursued various creative projects, painting, printing, working with fabrics and embroidery. I must admit that

when she was alive, I did not pay too much attention to her artistic pursuits, I only really knew her as my mum not as the artist.

My mum's workshop still remains as she left it. I often like to simply sit there looking at her art works, it is like a part



I noticed the Tree of Life in the Westmill office when I went in with my Dad not long after Mum died, to arrange her funeral. I knew immediately that I wanted to make a leaf to put on the tree in memory of her. It took awhile before I actioned this idea. I noticed when going through one of Mum's sewing boxes that she has made a tracing of a leaf. I made a

photo copy of that tracing of the leaf and cut out the shape of the leaf. I used this to cut

out a leaf shape from some of her green felt she kept in a fabric

box. I then got some golden thread from her embroidery box, and embroidered the veins of the leaf, and then

embroidered her name. I had the feeling that if Mum had seen me creating this leaf that she would be shocked! As I really

was not very good at sewing, or perhaps I should say had no interest and could not be bothered to apply myself to it. I must say that I am not sure what she would have made of the quality of the stitching!

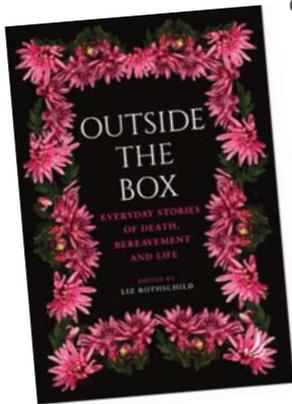
However, it was literally a labour of love, and I found it strangely relaxing and it was satisfying to know I was somehow continuing on with her work. I will probably never be as enthusiastic about sewing as she was. However, it has giving me a taste for perhaps exploring further the world of arts and crafts.



A request for Covid Stories

As many of you know my book 'Outside the Box – Everyday Stories of Death, Life and Bereavement' came out in 2020.

Now I have been asked to edit another book of Covid stories. There will be several chapters on bereavement by Covid, impact on frontline workers, positive things to emerge from Covid and medical experiences around Covid. If you have any stories or know of anyone with something to tell me I would love to hear from them. Contact me on lizrothschild@phonecoop.coop. They can be two sentences long or up to 500 words but not much longer unless you want me to read a full version and then discuss some cuts with you which can work well.



Copies of my first book are available in the office or can be purchased from PCCS with free P&P or from independent book stores, Waterstones and Amazon.

<https://www.pccsbooks.co.uk/products/outside-the-box-everyday-stories-of-death-bereavement-and-life>

<https://uk.bookshop.org/books/outside-the-box-everyday-stories-of-death-bereavement-and-life/9781910919637>

Our grateful thanks...

to all friends and family who have donated to Westmill during this year. We particularly remember Palmer and Jo Newbould, Una and Sally Rivaz and Anne Marie Gane.

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 Becky Norman, Caroline Turner, Daniella Page, Vicky Chanin, Liz Rothschild. Design/artwork by Lee Hiom and Simon French

Dates for the diary

Our plans may still be subject to change due to Covid so do check nearer the time.

OPEN DAY Saturday June 25th 2-5 including flower walk, talk on green burials, tea and cake

MEMORIAL GATHERING

Saturday 16th September - 5.30-7pm -
Details tbc in summer newsletter.

a time to gently remember those who have died together

We will inform members of our Friends and Family Group and update the website with more details once we know what will be allowed.



We know this can be a very difficult time for many of you and hope you find the right way to look after yourself over the seasonal period.

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.