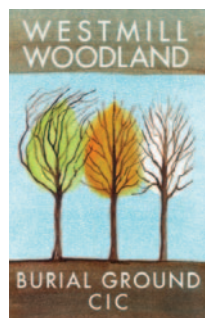




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WESTMILL WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND CIC

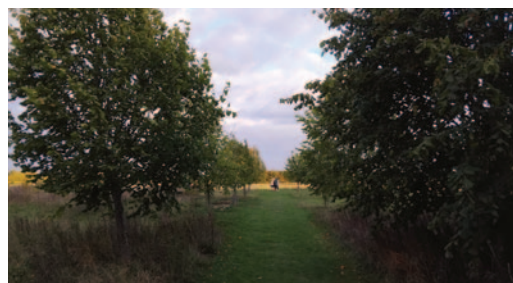
NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Winter newsletter 2025

NEXT PHASE FOR BURIAL GROUND



*At this years Friends and Family Group AGM the CIC outlined their plans for the medium and long term future of the Burial Ground. To ensure that everyone has a chance to hear them and to ask questions, we thought it might be helpful to have a **SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING** online to enable as many people as possible to come. This will take place on **Tuesday April 21st, 7-8.30 pm**. Please put this date in your diaries and we will send round a reminder nearer the time and ask you to register your interest.*



As you know our prebookings policy narrowed last year and by January 2027 we will not be taking any prebookings. Please get in touch if you have been meaning to make a prebooking and you currently qualify. We don't want anyone to miss out.

This is happening because the site is getting full and we want to allow space for some more seating and little glades and enable the site to gradually become an undisturbed nature reserve where we can all come and soak up the views and the peace it offers.

The CIC will remain in place managing the site with the four current directors and we hope the Friends and Family group will decide

to ensure that the FFG events can happen every year as usual. There was some discussion at the AGM about how this might work and the comparison was made between the administration of a school and the PTA. I find that a helpful way of thinking about it.

We want to know what you want the group to look like and whether a small group of you are prepared to pick up a little administration work to enable events to continue after 2026.

The office hours will be scaled right down from January 2027 to ensure we make best use of the money we have set aside for the future management of the site.



Bread of Heaven by Mick Gifford

My father died when I was three. The only real memory I have of him is from nine months earlier. He was standing in the covered yard between the bakehouse and shop that was our home, holding my younger brother in his arms. My brother was around six months old; I was two-and-a-half. I was facing my father's legs reaching up and wishing also to be in his arms. Emotion fixed the memory in my mind.

I don't remember the funeral. I think my younger brother and I were placed with an aunt. After his death, I slept in my mother's bed. I remember the smell of her perfume on the pillow.

I recall asking my mother where father was. "He's up in heaven with the angels." I asked when he was coming back. She answered equivocally, "We'll see him again, maybe, in the future." I did not catch her evasiveness, but I felt the emotion in her voice.

When I started primary school, my new friends asked about my father's occupation. "He was a baker?" "Was! What is he now?" "He's up in heaven with the angels." "Does he play the harp?"



I felt that God had been cruel. Surely I had more need of my father than He? And my mother a widow, with six children and a bakery to run. But at least we always had bread on the table.

Secondary school was easier. I had learnt the trick. "What does your dad do?" "He died. He used to be a Master Baker." Whatever the response: "It was a long time ago."

As a family we didn't talk much about father. The wound healed and left an invisible scar; yet there was a bruise that remained, forever tender, forever hidden. Oddly enough, my father played the zither, so I guess he would have been quite good at the harp.

Planning Ahead

At one of our coffee mornings conversation turned to planning ahead and a few resources were mentioned that others might find helpful.



Compassion in Dying - lots of free info and forms on their website.

Before I go Solutions a top to toe guide on how to leave your affairs in order. Jane Duncan Rogers, who set it up, wrote an excellent book of the same title. Also keeping the message in a bottle in the your fridge with medical details and wishes is very wise.

We have some in the office and the Lechlade Lions provide them. You put a sticker on your door so an ambulance crew know to look in case of an emergency.

We talked about lasting powers of Attorney and the value of stating your wishes regarding cremation or burial and I reminded everyone we have lots of useful books and resources you can borrow in the office. Do use them.

Sometimes we talk about recipes, plants, dogs and holidays and often we share memories of those who have died and how we are coping or not coping at that particular time.

Forget me not...

So many of us now are living with parents or partners who have dementia. As we know it takes many forms and affects each person uniquely but one of the great dangers for those with dementia and those caring for them is that it is easy to become isolated and feel that most people cannot really understand the profound daily challenges of getting through the days and the nights.

There is no cure for it as yet but there is vastly more knowledge and understanding about it than there was when my own mother was diagnosed and quite a lot of support available if you know how to go about it.



This is where the local dementia groups can be invaluable and we have one not far away called *Highworth Forget me Not*.

They have a monthly musical memory café, love to move seated exercises, a weekly friendship support group, dementia friends sandwiches, sing along sessions and have done work at the allotment.

They meet in the Highworth Community Centre in The Dormers and at the Highworth Council Community Room in Gilberts Lane. For more information contact forgetmenot.highworth@gmail.com.

A friend of mine whose husband has quite advanced dementia finds going to her local group in Warwickshire an absolute lifesaver. She can talk about the highs and lows of life with fellow partner/carers and her husband enjoys meeting the people there too. They have also gleaned a lot of tips about financial support and strategies for coping. She is so glad they tried it as they were both doubtful they would find such a group any fun or find their place there. As it turned out they have made new friends and meet them at other times apart from the organised sessions.

The carers also support one another in ensuring they get the breaks they need because it can be so hard to look after yourself but it is essential in the longrun for everyone's sake.

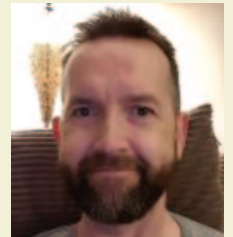
Farewell to Becky and welcome to Dan

This summer Becky moved to Warwickshire fulfilling a long held dream to live in that area. She has continued to work remotely for us and that has been working very well with Dan Gill, who some of you will recognise from helping at funerals, stepping up to cover for me when needed at the office.



Becky started volunteering at her children's school as a teaching assistant and found it very rewarding. She decided that is what she wanted to pursue next and I am delighted and sorry to say she has a post starting this month.

Dan is stepping forward with Becky's support to take on the managerial role. This does mean more contact time in the office again as he will be there 10-1 on Mondays and 11.30-1.30 on Fridays and he and Liz will be checking emails in between times and working closely together. We wish Becky all the best. She has been wonderful.



I know how much many of our families have appreciated her caring, efficient way of helping them and she has also modernised our office procedures and contributed good ideas, great photographs and a bright, determined way of sorting out any problems we had to deal with. Thank you Becky. I know how much Becky has always cared about children and they will benefit enormously from her support. She will begin with working one to one with a young autistic boy. Lucky him.

Dan comes with lots of office experience in the publishing world and has been a funeral helper for four years now so we are delighted he is able to offer us more of his time and make this transition as painless as possible.

Soul Food



This year on October 31st I made Soul cakes from an old English recipe traditionally eaten at this time. They were delicious - a bit like Welsh cakes and as I made them I thought about those close to me who had died.

Often these recipes like the Irish wake cake or Greek koliva are packed full of raisins to sweeten our sadness. I am going to do the same this Christmas. I shall cook something I know my ancestors would have enjoyed eating or that they prepared for me and so I will bring them to the table amongst us all and raise a glass to them.

I will be thinking of you all as you navigate this challenging time of year. Be kind to yourself. Give yourself time to do whatever you need to do to get through.

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.

Dates for the diary

COFFEE MORNINGS

Last Friday of every month unless notified of a change. 11-12 at Root and Branch.

Please note that the last coffee morning of the year will be on 19th December and Norah Kennedy is joining us again to do willow decorations. Come and join in or come and watch. It runs from 10.30-12.30. £6.50p to cover costs (No charge for under 14's)



Saturday March 28th - 11-12 - last planting of snowdrops and aconites down the avenue and in the glade

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday April 21st - 7pm - 8.30pm Special General Meeting of the Friends and Family group online to discuss the future of the FFG and answer any other questions about the next phase of the burial ground.

Saturday June 6th - 12 noon - A chance to look at wildflowers and help tidy up the memorial circle. Bring kneelers and tools for clearing grass back from the tablets. At 1 we will eat our bring your own picnic together.

MEMORIAL GATHERING

Saturday September 26th - 5.15pm (Sunset 6.45pm) Make a memorial lantern, hot drinks and cakes, fire and readings.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY DAY

Saturday November 21st - Please tell us if you plan to have lunch

11-1 - planting trees and caring for the site. Bring tools, wellies, thermos.

1-2 - Lunch at Root & Branch - £5.50 booking required

2-4 - AGM

Other events may be scheduled and announced via email

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 and Mick Gifford. Photographs Liz Rothschild, English Kitchen website, courtesy of Mick Gifford. Design/artwork by Lee Hiom and Simon French