

WESTMILL WOODLAND BURIAL GROUND CIC

NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Winter newsletter 2024

MEMORIAL LEAVES

We had a lovely session with textile artist Clare Davis from Abingdon in October who made our beautiful memorial tree hanging. The table was laden with threads, glues, fabric and fabric pens, intricate wooden stamps and a gleaming sewing machine.

Even those sure they would just be watching found themselves joining in. Many beautiful leaves were made and added to the hanging. There was conversation, tea and cake and often the comfortable silence of people concentrating on what they were doing occasionally asking for a pair of scissors or some pins, asking a question or telling a story. A lovely relaxed atmosphere gently facilitated by Clare who really believes everyone is an artist and so you find you are.

As we worked on our leaves I am sure all of us were thinking of the person it was for. I know it drew me closer to my friend Cathy at a time of year when many traditions

honour their ancestors and celebrate their memory.

Many of us did not finish so the plan is to bring them along to our next coffee mornings and complete them there if we have not managed to do so at home. We also thought it would be nice to have some more sessions with Clare and all her treasures during the year so maybe some of you who missed this one can come along another time.

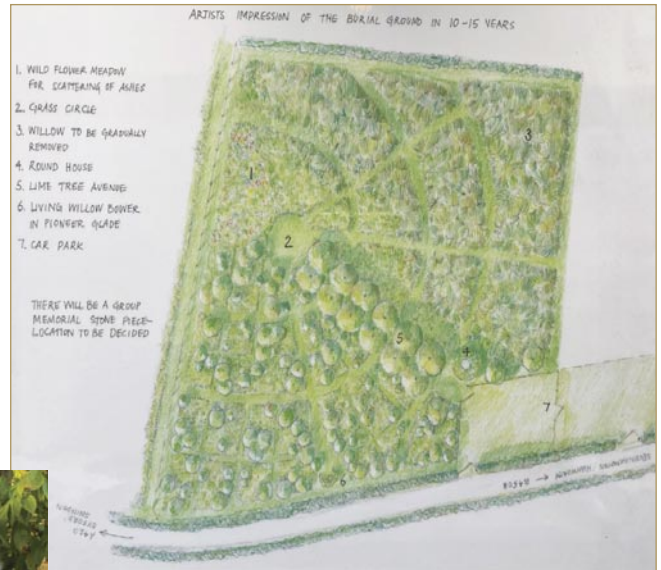
Thank you to everyone who came and made it such a special morning including Mary Read with her delicious scones and cakes. And a big thanks to Pam Spencer and Karen Read for keeping our coffee mornings running so well.



Planning for the future

- Design plan for the future of Westmill Burial Ground - Sue Smart

- Timescales: The expectation is for the burial ground to become less active over the next 5-15 years as it reaches capacity. The design needs to be flexible and low maintenance (ie. 'future-proofed')
- The vision for the site is that it would become an informal *mini nature reserve*, offering an oasis of calm, for the family and friends of those buried there, and also for anyone seeking a moment of tranquility. In view of this vision and the Westmill ethos, native plants will be used to provide year-round food and habitat for as broad a range of wildlife as possible.
- The existing layout of the site will be retained; the central avenue will continue to draw people towards the memorial stone, with colourful spring bulbs and wildflowers, as well as some additional native shrubs such as spindle bushes to provide beautiful autumn colour. We have already made a start with the snowdrop planting day earlier this year, and we will build on that in future years.



- The site looks out over White Horse Hill and the Ridgeway - this vista will be kept as it is, with just the addition of a few small native shrubs to soften the boundary and provide additional habitats for wildlife.
- A key requirement will be the addition of more seating around the site. Likely to be a mixture of simple log benches and an additional seat with a living willow canopy to provide some shelter on windy days.



Volunteer in the blazing hot sun

Colin is known to many of you for making wonderful birdboxes. We still have some available for use at home. Call the office.

However, he also does a range of other repair jobs for us and this summer went to enormous trouble to give our lovely bier a full overhaul. He had already repaired the pulling shaft but this time he took the wheels apart and went over every section finishing off with a coat of protective linseed oil. Thank you so much to Colin and Maggi who also lent a hand. The bier means so much to our

families and it is so important that it is in full working order when needed.

Every burial uses our bier these days and we are very grateful. We also so appreciate all the generous gifts of time or items that people have donated. We gained a lovely wooden table last year, more pump flasks, some lovely mugs not to mention help at funerals and events and



gardening skills. The list goes on. It makes all the difference to us as we try to keep our charges to a minimum here at Westmill.

In the flow

I was quite suddenly moved to tears driving into Faringdon recently when listening to Radio 3. They had just played Crossing the Bar sung by the Spookymen's Chorale.

The original poem was written by Lord Alfred Tennyson and I loved the setting when I first heard it many years ago. A listener emailed in because it had reminded him of his childhood. He grew up in Liverpool and his father was the captain of a pilotboat.

The tradition there is that when a riverman dies their ashes are taken out close to the sandbar and then just as the very moment when the high tide starts to ebb the ashes are released so they can cross the bar out to sea.

This deep connection with the rhythms of nature, intimate knowing of the land and the water and honouring of a life dedicated to the sea seems utterly perfect to me. In case you don't know it here is the poem.

Crossing the Bar

*Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,*

*But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.*

*Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;*

*For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.*

Awards at Wiltshire Treehouse

I was asked to hand out the award for volunteers at the Wiltshire Treehouse ceremony at Zurich this year. I was delighted to attend as it is a charity very close to my heart.

I was the first chair and saw it transition from an incredible initiative led by two midwives at the Great Western Hospital to the fully fledged charity it is today. So needed when 1 in 30 children will experience a close bereavement every year.



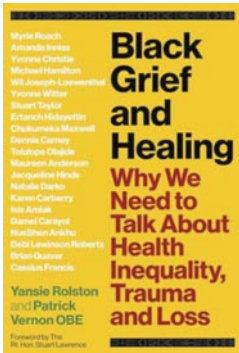
We cannot protect our children from death so we have to guide them through bereavement with honesty and emotional support and that is what Wiltshire Treehouse with the support of Child Bereavement UK does so well.

We also have a good range of books in our library to help you talk to children about death and are always happy to offer advice and suggestions.

www.wiltshiretreehouse.org.uk
01793 987105



Black Grief and Healing



Black Grief and Healing - Why we need to talk about Health Inequality, Trauma and Loss edited by Yansie Rolston and Patrick Vernon OBE

I felt extremely honoured to be asked to write a review for a very important book which was published this autumn.

It is a book of stories and poems and commentary about black people's experiences in the UK. When you think that our models of bereavement support have for many years been based on white middle class middle aged American women you begin to see that many groups will not have been served well by them.

In addition, as a black person in our society your experiences will be different in so many ways due to many systemic inequalities.

There is so much for all of us to learn here in this varied and powerful book.

Give yourself time to allow the mixture of feelings the festive season brings when you have been bereaved.

You may need time alone or to be wise about who you choose to be with. Look after yourself.

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 Sue Smart. Photographs courtesy of Liz Rothschild, Sue Smart and Shutterstock. Design/artwork by Lee Hiom and Simon French

Dates for the diary

CRAFTY COFFEE MORNINGS



20th December - 11-12.30 - Norah is coming back again! She is going to come along and make willow starts again. Make a fistful and put some on your grave and take some home with you. Very easy with Norah's brilliant teaching and great fun. Everyone

who thought they would just watch last time got the bug and joined in but you can still just come along for the company and the coffee.

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

PLANTING SNOWDROPS AND ACONITES Saturday March 15th - 2.00-4.00pm

Planting snowdrops and aconites in the green ie plants not bulbs - bring gardening tools and a thermos

JUNE SUMMER WORK SESSION

Followed by introduction to the plants and insects at Westmill - TBC

MEMORIAL GATHERING

Saturday September 27th - 4.15-6.15pm

(Sunset 6.45pm) Make a memorial lantern, hot drinks and cakes, fire and readings.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY DAY

Saturday November 22nd Planting, lunch and AGM

Other events may be scheduled and announced via email

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.