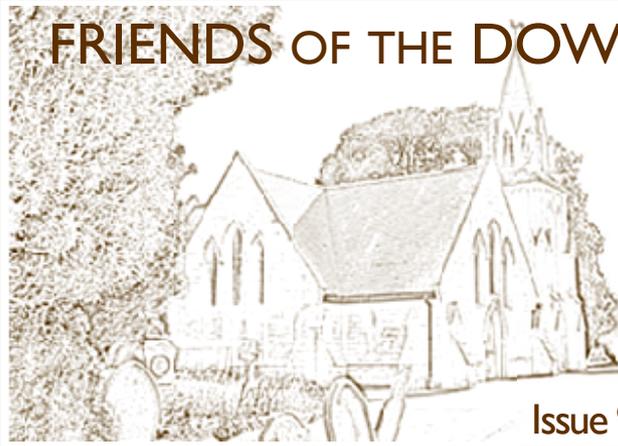


FRIENDS OF THE DOWN CEMETERY



Issue 9 Autumn 2020

Chairman's Ramblings



Welcome to our latest new letter, slightly smaller than normal, but nothing about this year has been normal.

Despite all the hardships that we have all endured this year, I still have some good news.

Over the summer months we have managed to complete the transcription of all the headstones on the non-conformist side of the cemetery. Now over the winter I will add this to our computerised database. If anybody is interested in transcribing any of the burial books at Wiltshire history centre (Chippenham) please contact me. The committee



has been busy over the lockdown period and can now confirm that we have received funding for the restoration of two of the Pre first world War

military graves and we hope to have this project completed before the end of the year.

Whilst in lockdown I took the opportunity to investigate future projects for the friends. I am waiting for



confirmation from Wiltshire Council for permission for planting of fruit trees near Roger Brown's Mausoleum and painting of the gates and railings, which should improve the entrance to the cemetery. I have also been getting quotes for the replacement gates to Roger Browns Mausoleum. The original copper gates where stolen some years ago, it would be wonderful if we could replace them. It will be expensive so will need to look at raising the money, but I am confident this is a project that we can achieve.

Hope you are all keeping safe and well.

Robert



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Let's Talk of Graves, and Worms, and Epitaphs. *Richard III W Shakespeare*

Have you ever wandered around a graveyard and mused on the meanings of the carvings on the headstones? Spotted reoccurring themes and designs?

I find the artistry fascinating, and the underlying skills of a stonemason impressive; one slip of the mason's chisel and the design is ruined. Sometimes the design reflects occupation, sometimes religious belief and sometimes the sentiment of those left behind. In times past there was many a grave without a headstone, with a paupers area devoid of markers for those buried there. The cost of the burial and gravestone being prohibitive to many, with illiteracy also a contributing factor. The graves that have a headstone may give us a small clue to the life that the interned led through the artistry of the stonemason.

Due to the hard work of the Friends of The Down Cemetery you can now see many more of the carvings exposed on the headstones as the ivy has been cleared, brambles removed and the area tidied. As you wonder around you will see the beauty of nature reflected in the carvings, with roses, ivy, lilies and acanthus leaves, together with angels and other images. These each have a 'textbook meaning', but might equally have been used because the person interned had a love of roses, or lived in an ivy clad house, or the family simply liked a design - we will never know. Different interpretations also can be applied to the symbolism or meaning of the carvings, and a search around the Internet provides a variety of meanings, some dependent on the country of origin, some on the period in which the gravestone was created.

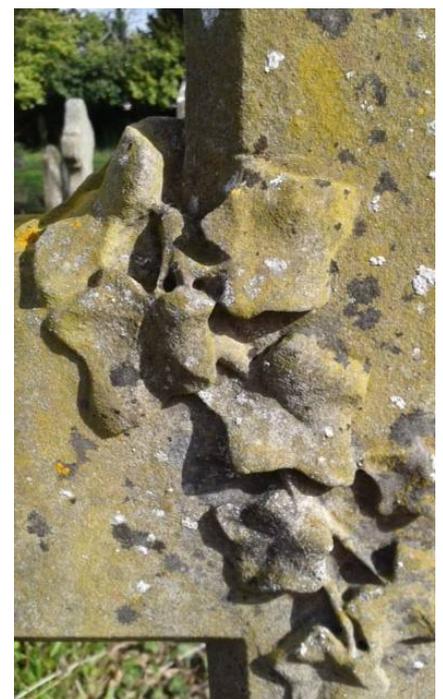
I explore here a few gravestones within the Down Cemetery.

The rose (above right) can signify completion and the brevity of earthly existence, whilst another source indicates goodness and innocence. Where a rosebud is used it can signify a youthful death.



The lily (left) is a symbol of innocence and purity.

Ivy (right) stands for friendship and also immortality but another source reports that ivy represents memories remaining evergreen.





Angels and cherubs have different meanings based on the pose of the figure. Cherubs represent innocence and can often be found on children's graves, a flying angel rebirth and resurrection, whilst angels in other poses can be used to suggest the guarding of the grave and spirituality or guiding the soul to heaven.

IHS "The sacred monogram" signifies a Christian grave and is the abbreviation of the word for Jesus in Greek. Sometimes it is regarded as an abbreviation of the Latin phrase meaning "Jesus, Savior Of Men" or *In Hoe Signovinces*. (right)



Whilst exploring the cemetery and referencing some of the sources used in this article I have, to date, found no examples of the following. Green Men which can be found adorning churches, but can appear on grave stones, they represent new life and life everlasting, often today associated with Pagan symbolism. "HTWSSTKS" is a Masonic abbreviation of 'Hiram The Widow's Son Sent To King Solomon', it is part of the third degree ceremony and would indicate that the grave is of a mason of at least this level. Whilst the owl represents knowledge and in Christianity it can show meditation due to it remaining motionless during the day or Christ, as it is all seeing.

All of this musing may, I think, make you curious about the deceased and the life that they lived.

Sources used: <https://headstonesymbols.co.uk>, <https://www.familytreemagazine.com/cemeteries/hidden-meanings-20-gravestone-symbols/>, http://www.bbc.co.uk/london/content/articles/2005/05/10/victorian_memorial_symbols_feature.shtml alongside general readings round the subject.

Rachael McDonald

WORKING PARTIES

Whilst it is impossible to predict what will happen in the near future with the COVID pandemic these are the dates for the future working parties.



Date	Activity
Thursday 12th November 2020	Working Party 10am - 12 noon
Saturday 28th November 2020	Working Party 10am - 12 noon
Thursday 10th December 2020	Working Party 10am - 12 noon
Friday 25th December 2020	Merry Christmas
Thursday 14th January 2021	Working Party 10am - 12 noon
Saturday 23rd January 2021	Working Party 10am - 12 noon
Thursday 11th February 2021	Working Party 10am - 12 noon
Saturday 27 February 2021	Working Party 10am - 12 noon

Due to the current restrictions, I will be sending out an email prior to the working party dates, to ask who will be attending. I will then allocate jobs to everybody and email them. I know this is a different way to work but until the current situation changes, we will have to work this way

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