



National Federation of  
CEMETERY FRIENDS

[www.fotdc.org](http://www.fotdc.org)

## Chairman's Ramblings

Welcome to all members old and new, at the time that I write this the sun is shining and the wet June seems but a memory.

We had to cancel the Thursday meeting in June due to the rain but managed to have a good session on the Saturday meeting. We started the clearing of the Rodway Mausoleum, but had to abandon part way through after discovering a bumble bee nest.

We will come back to complete this in the winter, when we will not disturb the nest.

The pollinators meadow has been increased in size and a smaller fence placed around it, which is a lot less intrusive, to mark out the area and to stop the contractors cutting it down.

If you have any suggestions on small unobtrusive fencing, please email me on [robertw@fotdc.org](mailto:robertw@fotdc.org).

We have produced a colour leaflet on the work that the friends are doing at the cemetery and if you would like copies to give to people you know, please contact Robert Colbourne at [rob-ertc@fotdc.org](mailto:rob-ertc@fotdc.org).

The large flower planter outside the unconsecrated chapel is looking wonderful, if in the area please take the time to look. We will be trialling a seed growing idea for next year, and I will be contacting you all in the autumn to see if you can help.

We will again be opening the conformist chapel, for Heritage Open Day on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2019 from 10am till 3pm and will be hosting a guided walk through the cemetery at 2pm.

There will also be child friendly Wildlife Trail where participants have to find animal sculptures amongst the gravestones from a series of clues, with a souvenir booklet to record your answers to take home and keep.

Please invite your family and friends, all will be welcome.

See you all soon.

*Robert*



**Trowbridge**  
Garden Centre



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# We few, we happy few, we band of brothers...

## Private Arthur Stanley Farr TR8/2024

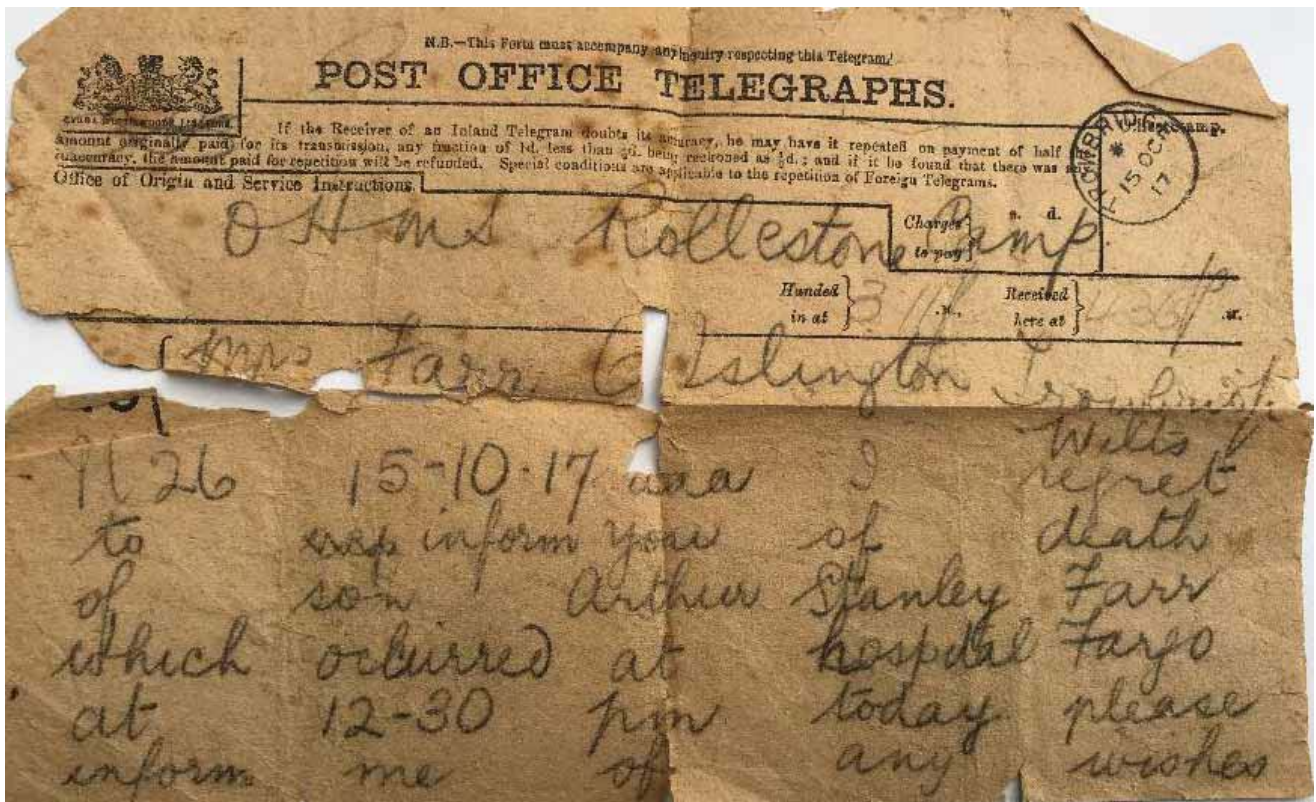
Aged 18 Arthur, known as Stanley, was employed at Wilts Insurance Committee's office prior to him enlisting in mid-1917. He was training at Sutton Veny, in the 37<sup>th</sup> Battalion Training Reserves.

His father, also called Arthur, had been fighting with the Wiltshire's for the last two years, was home on leave and sent a letter enquiring if Stanley could also get leave to come home.

On Monday afternoon on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 1917 a telegram was received by Arthur senior, stating that the lad was dead. Soon after another letter arrived, this time from Stanley, which had been sent on the 14<sup>th</sup> October. This stated that he hoped to be home the following day. On receipt of this Arthur started out for Sutton, hoping that a mistake had been made.



His fears were well founded, it being stated that his son had reported sick at 9am on Monday morning, and was taken to hospital at 12.20pm, where he died some 20 minutes later of double pneumonia.





## Whilst wandering around the Down Cemetery

Whilst wandering around the Down Cemetery, camera in hand, I came across a grave in the non-conformist area surrounded by remnants of tiles. After some scrabbling around in the undergrowth I had uncovered a range of small one-inch square mosaic tiles and some beautiful encaustic tiles. Having a love of ceramics, I was curious as to the age and origin of the tiles and set about some investigative work on good old Google.

Where to start? "Encaustic tiles". That resulted in so many results it was ridiculous. So, I started narrowing down the search "Victorian encaustic tiles", now that was better - fewer results. With a bit more thought how about "Victorian encaustic tiles England"? After a while scrolling through the images, I found what I was looking for, the perfect match for the terracotta and white fleur-de-lys four-inch tile. Jackpot.

You may be asking what an "encaustic tile" is? They are floor tiles with a pattern made of different colours of inlaid clay, a style that is often found in country houses, churches and cathedrals and also associated with Victorian and Edwardian houses' hallways.



The tiles in the Cemetery are made by Maw & Co, the makers stamp can just be made out on the back of the larger tiles. Dating the tile to 1852 or after when they produced the tiles in Broseley.

The company was formed in 1850 by George Maw and his brother Arthur when they bought an ailing tile business in Worcester. They

manufactured floor tiles and quickly gained a high reputation for their encaustic, or "Mock-Mediaeval", tiles. In 1852 they relocated to Shropshire to the Benthall Works at Broseley where they made use of the local clay as well as coal.

In the 1860's encaustic tiles became the height of fashion, Maw & Co were the first to use six and more colours, with mosaic tiles forming a large part of Maw's business. By the 1880's Maw & Co had become one of the most influential and important tile manufacturers.



At the height of the tile boom the company produced over 20 million tiles a year and published lavishly printed catalogues, an example of which can be viewed online at <https://ia600501.us.archive.org/23/items/patternsofmawcos00mawc/patternsofmawcos00mawc.pdf>

The fleur-de-lys design features on page 33.

Unfortunately, the recession at the end of the First World War and building restrictions and the closure of the railway in the decades following World War II were very detrimental for tile production and eventually the factory closed in January 1970.

Further research has revealed that the grave is that of a husband and wife called Isaac Besser (b. 1795 d. 1872) and Ann Miriam Besser (b. 1802 d. 1878). Their deaths tying in with the period when Maw and Co. were heading towards the height of the popularity. Two mysteries remain - who were the Bessers and how did they afford such an elaborate burial? More research required I think...

Rachael McDonald ( [info@fireside-dragon.co.uk](mailto:info@fireside-dragon.co.uk) )

# Nature's Corner

## Blackbird

### Turdus Merula

#### Description

The length of a blackbird is between 9 ½" and 11" with a wingspan of 13 ½" and 15" weighing 3-4 oz. They have a life span of about 5 years. The male has totally black plumage, with an orange bill and yellow eye rim. The female is grey-brown, with indistinct streaks on a lighter breast and a brown bill. Immature birds are similar to the female, but juvenile males have a black beak until the second year. Albinism is common on blackbirds with several showing liberal scattered random patches of white.



#### Distribution

Seen throughout the British Isles and Northern Europe, the resident population of Britain is increased in autumn and winter by migration of European birds. This bird is a regular garden visitor. They are easy to attract to your garden if you use ground feeders.

#### Nesting

Nesting usually starts in March with laying of eggs between March and April. 3-5 eggs are laid in the nest which are usually greenish and freckled with reddish-brown spots, but colours can vary and sometimes pale blue or even white.



Incubation is 12-14 Days with the female doing most of the sitting. It is normal to have several broods per year. The nest is well built and solidified with mud; dry grass is used to line the nest. The nests are often found in bushes, ivy, hedgerows or occasionally trees.

#### Food

The blackbird has a varied diet which includes fruit, berries, seeds, earth worms, insects, spiders and small molluscs. If you are trying to attract them to your garden then try planting Holly, Rowan, Ivy, hawthorn, blackberry, cherry and cotoneaster. If you have fruit trees leave some fallen fruit.

# Nature's Corner

## White Tailed Bumblebee

### *Bombus Lucorum*

#### Description

This is a large bumblebee, with the queen being 18-22mm long with a wingspan of 36mm and weighing between 0.46 and 0.70g. The workers are smaller than the queen with a length of 12-18mm and weight of 0.04-0.32g. The males are 16-18mm in size and differ in their appearance from the queens, with yellow noses and larger amount of yellow hairs. The bees have a short proboscis. The predominant colour is black with a pale-yellow band, a yellow band on the abdominal section and a white tail

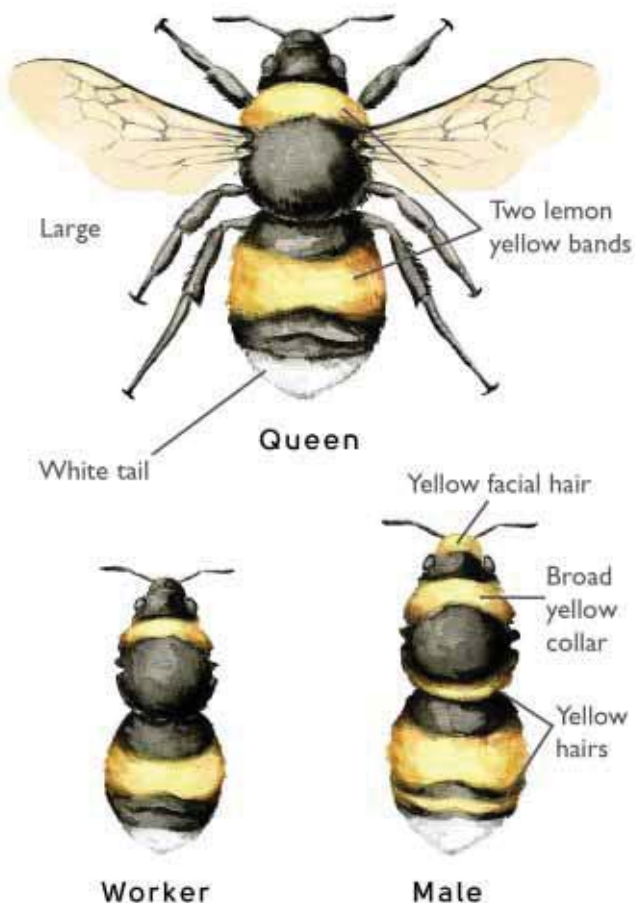


#### Nest / Colony

The nests can be found underground and can be very large, containing up to 400 workers. In the nest the queen makes a circular chamber, where she lays her eggs.

This is one of the first species of bee to emerge from hibernation and can be as early as February. The queen can usually be found flying around looking for a suitable hole for a nest. The workers emerge sometime between late march and mid may.

The male can be seen (in august) flying in a low patrolling circuit depositing pheromones on the grass to attract the newly emerged young queens. The new queen's mate with these males and hibernate so they can start the colony again next spring.





# The wild flower meadow at the Down Cemetery



The wildflower meadow



Bumble Bee



Damsel Flies



Ten-spotted Ladybirds and Ladybird Larva (above)

Thanks to Bob Bray, member and photographer

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## Diary for Summer and Autumn 2019

Date	Activity
Thursday 8 <sup>th</sup> August	small tree cutting
Saturday 24 <sup>th</sup> August	Open Crypt
Friday 30 <sup>th</sup> August	Bat Walk starts at 7.15pm
Saturday 7 <sup>th</sup> September	Trowbridge County Fayre
Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup> September	small tree cutting
	Chapel open from 10am -3pm
Saturday 14 <sup>th</sup> September	Historical display about Royal Horse Artillery accident
<b>Heritage Open Day</b>	Guided walk 2pm - Meet at the conformist chapel
	Wild Life trail
Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup> September	mowing wildflower meadow
Thursday 10 <sup>th</sup> October	general clearing on right side of cemetery
Saturday 26 <sup>th</sup> October	general clearing on right side of cemetery
Thursday 14 <sup>th</sup> November	small tree cutting
Saturday 23 <sup>rd</sup> November	general clearing
Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup> December	small tree clearing
Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> December	Happy Christmas
Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup> December	No meeting

We meet at the Non-Conformist Chapel. The sessions run from 10:00 until 12:00. If you are only available to make part of the morning, we still look forward to meeting you.

## The Committee

<b>Chairman</b>	Robert Wall	<a href="mailto:Robertw@fotdc.org">Robertw@fotdc.org</a>	01225 777266
<b>Vice Chairman</b>	Lynn Drewett		
<b>Treasurer</b>	Dom McDonald		
<b>Membership</b>	Robert Colebourne	<a href="mailto:Robertc@fotdc.org">Robertc@fotdc.org</a>	
<b>Secretary</b>	Jenny Wall	<a href="mailto:jenny_wall63@hotmail.com">jenny_wall63@hotmail.com</a>	

## How can you help?

We are always looking for more volunteers to help with the following:

Cemetery Gardening, Gravestone Transcription

History Centre Research, Computer Processing

Nature Conservation, Grant Applications and Fundraising

If you know of anyone who may be able to help, please ask them to join.

## A Warm invitation to become a friend of The Down Cemetery

The Down Cemetery is a grade II listed Victorian cemetery, opened on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 1855.

The Friends' aim is to assist the council in keeping the cemetery as something that the town can be proud of. Our mission will be to clear overgrown graves, transcribe headstones (before inscriptions are lost to erosion), photograph all headstones, plot graves and make this information available to the public.

We will be looking at ways to conserve and repair graves and mausoleums with our partners, James Long.

Nature conservation is also a large part of our aims, including bird feeding and nest sites, bat boxes, hedgehog boxes, wildflower meadow and anything that we can do to enhance the cemetery as a wildlife haven.

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.....

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Individual membership costs £2.00 per year (year runs January to December). Corporate membership is £6.00 per year.

Please return the completed form to:

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Trowbridge  
Wiltshire BA14 9AT  
[robertc@fotdc.org](mailto:robertc@fotdc.org)

This newsletter has been produced by the Friends of The Down Cemetery. We would welcome contributions for future newsletters.