

STONE STORIES



December 2020

£1.00 (Free to members)

Members newsletter from The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park



Including: Hidden Histories and the Influenza Pandemic of 1918 pg. 4; Winter in the Cemetery Park pg. 8; The Purpose of Ponds pg. 10; A Remembrance Day unlike any other pg. 17; and much, much more!



On the 25th October we were able to organise our annual fungus foray. This year it was led by the wonderful Dr. Mark Spencer.



Welcome to Stone Stories

Welcome to the winter edition of Stone Stories. This edition reflects a busy few months for The Friends despite the circumstances. We continue our work on reducing the height of buildings of Bow Common Gasworks development and the impact of shading on the Cemetery Park. We also welcomed our new Heritage Officer, Claire.

As this edition is being finalised we are hopefully just about to get out of lockdown in England. Once again, we wish all of our members the best and that the Cemetery Park (either in person or online!) can be used again to support your health and wellbeing.

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Welcome from the Trustees

Dear readers,

We have relished the summer and early autumn months as an opportunity to welcome volunteers and events back into the Cemetery Park - all with the correct levels of precautions of course! It was really important to us to reinstate our activities safely, so that people could enjoy being outdoors with us again. We have loved seeing our weekly Tuesday and monthly Sunday volunteer sessions fully booked, and to be able to offer Forest Schools for children over the school holidays. We want to say thank you to The National Lottery Heritage Fund for supporting us financially so we're able to put in place all the extra precautions and equipment.

We welcomed our new Heritage Officer, Claire Slack. It has been a long-term dream to have this role in The Friends, and we are thrilled that we have Claire on board. Claire will be spending the coming two years developing a conservation management plan for the site (thanks to funding from the Heritage Fund) and planning new activities to get the community involved in the heritage of the Cemetery Park. There will be opportunities over the coming months but please email Claire on claire.slack@fothcp.org for more information.

Back in spring and summer we held online talks on subjects from vegetable growing, grave symbolism and even local policing! With the darker nights these talks have also returned. We know for some people it can be difficult to access our online talks but for many others they have provided a welcome distraction and opportunity to connect with the Cemetery Park community.

The forecast for small charities remains precarious, as we continue to lose our regular income through corporate donations, fundraising and group activities. However, we are thankful for the financial and in-kind support we have been given. We have been grateful for help from emergency funds that support heritage sites, including the Heritage Fund, The Culture Recovery Fund, East End Community Foundation and Tower Hill Trust.

We have also been grateful for all the funds raised through our Crowdfunder. The appeal remains open and as we head into a difficult winter period, and we are grateful for your ongoing support as a member.

On a final note, we were sad to not be able to hold our regular Remembrance Day service this year, which has been growing steadily in popularity over the last few years. However, the memorials and Cemetery Park remain open for people to pay their respects at their own time over the coming months.

Take care,

Fran Humber, Chair of the Trustees

Heritage Hello!

By Claire Slack, Heritage Officer

Hello. My name is Claire and I am thrilled to have joined The Friends' team on the 14th of September in the role of Heritage Officer.

I'm new to working in the East End, I'm a Yorkshire lass by birth but have spent the last 5 years living on the south coast of Essex after a brief stint in Walthamstow way back in 2014. It was then that I completely fell in love with London and it's wonderful and varied history.

I myself have had a wonderful and varied work history, up until a few months ago I worked for Age Concern Southend where I spent three years turning a beautiful, Grade II listed department store into a thriving community hub. I have also worked in marketing, events management, fundraising and journalism and have even been known to host a radio show or two. I am currently in the final stages of my MA in Folklore Studies with the University of Hertfordshire and, when I have a spare moment or two, I enjoy going to gigs, watching horror films, writing and playing my ukulele.

Working at the Cemetery Park is a dream come true for me. I have always had a passion for heritage and nature. Ask me about my study on the folklore and preservation of Britain's ancient trees. I also have an interest in the rituals and traditions that have surrounded death and mourning from pre-history right through to the present day.

Over the next two years, I will be working with the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the rest of the FoTHCP team to create an in-depth conservation and management plan that will help to secure the future of Cemetery Park.



I'll be looking at how we can best renovate and restore some of our most well-loved monuments and tell the history of the park in an way that engages the whole community, as well as working to show even more people the wonderful opportunities that getting involved and visiting the Cemetery Park can bring.

If you'd like to find out more about the project, or have a story or two to share about your time at the Cemetery Park, please email me on claire.slack@fothcp.org.

Hidden Histories and the pandemic of 1918

By Diane Kendall, Trustee and Heritage Lead

While working on the Hidden Histories WW1 project, uncovering the stories of the 204 servicemen commemorated on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission War Memorial and buried in the Cemetery Park, we found many of the deaths were due to war-related injuries or proceeded by morbid conditions in which war conditions provide the crucial link or explanation.

Of course, a proportion of them died from diseases and complaints that civilians died from too. But possibly the saddest statistic we found, was the similar numbers who died from the influenza epidemic that had swept across Europe in the wake of the Great War, as died from war injuries. Many had recovered from the war injuries or had served their time at the front.

The 1918 influenza pandemic was the most severe pandemic in recent history, and unlike the pandemic of today there was little treatment. Antibiotics didn't really come into general use until the 1930s and would not in any case have been effective against influenza, as it is a virus. The medical records of Private Ede show what little there was available to fight this deadly virus. Private Ede left from Port Said on a hospital ship on the 19th January 1919, having been injured in July the previous year. He was discharged from the army on 3rd February 1919. Sadly, by the 15th of February he had been admitted to Bethnal Green Military Hospital, suffering from influenza with a temperature of 100°F (37.8°C). Although treatment of aspirin and brandy every four hours brought his temperature down, his breathing did not improve and by the 17th, unable to swallow the brandy or recognise his friends, at just 31 years of age Private Ede passed away at 3.15pm, having served 1 year and 310 days, of which 209 days were served as part of the Egyptian Force in the Middle East.

The following is an article by John Harris published in the East London History Society Newsletter in 1994, which shows the problems of the pandemic of 1918 on the home front.

Influenza epidemic of 1918 to 1919

In June 1918 the worldwide influenza epidemic reached Britain. It did not make much of an impact on the government, as this country had a long history of respiratory diseases especially in the working class industrial areas. After a short break the flu returned in November. This was not the usual strain of flu virus which, if caught meant retiring to bed for a few days with regular doses of aspirin. This was a very different virus, this was a killer. Many people could leave home in the morning to go to work, and would collapse in the street and had to be rushed to hospital.

The death rate was the highest amongst the 15 to 60 age group, whose stamina should have been strong enough to withstand this disease. Many victims were young girls who travelled daily by tram from Poplar to their jobs in the city. The symptoms were headache, cold, then death within two days.

In Bethnal Green, because of a shortage of timber, the undertakers ran out of coffins. The mortuary was full and a temporary mortuary had to be set up in Hackney Road (The Malthouse). People waiting to bury relatives began to make their own coffins out of any scrap wood that could be found, including orange crates and fish boxes.

In one week 100 burials took place at Bow Cemetery (now Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park), and many more had to be refused. Each undertaker carried out 20 funerals a day. For this reason the undertakers in Stepney and Bethnal Green were reluctant to make a journey to Manor Park Cemetery as this would wear out the horses. They all wanted burial plots reserved in Bow Cemetery. This led to friction between the two groups - including a fist fight!

The government suspended a law which stated no burials should take place after midday on Saturday. Burials now continued over the seven days. At Manor Park the army drafted in men to dig extra graves.

In a house in Abington Street, Bethnal Green, a person who died on November 11th was still there three weeks later. At Seabright Street, a child's body had been in the house for such a long time that it was in the advanced stages of decomposition.

Many factory and office workers were encouraged to smoke, based on theory that the fumes would kill the flu germs. All London cinemas and theatres had to be fumigated between performances, and some London Boroughs banned children from cinemas.

Hackney fire brigade could not answer any calls, as there were no firemen to man the engines. Of a ward staff of 30 at Hackney Hospital, only two were available for duty. The entire country was grinding to a halt. Fifty per cent of Metropolitan Police officers were on the sick list, telephone calls were restricted to two hours per day, as no switchboard operators were available.

In early 1919 the epidemic began to die out. The final death toll for the UK was 237,400. For the East End boroughs of Stepney, Poplar and Bethnal Green the death toll was 1,127.

The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park book *Hidden Histories* has been called an “*indispensable contribution to the social history of the East End*”, as it uncovers the stories of the 204 servicemen who lost their lives during the First World War and are commemorated on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission War Memorial and buried in the park.



Order your own copy of
Hidden Histories at
www.fothcp.org/shop.

Cost: £14.99 + P&P or
collection from the Soanes
Centre can be arranged.



Swedenborg Gardens' wildflowers

By Michelle Lindson, Community Outreach Coordinator

There's a large mound in Swedenborg Gardens which, prior to our work in June last year, was home to just a tiny patch of wildflowers. To improve the spread of wildflowers, we added crushed concrete fines to reduce fertility and smother fast growing grasses and nettles. A corporate group from Lloyds then did an amazing job helping us to sow and trample wildflower seeds into the crushed concrete fines.



The results this spring and summer were spectacular! Through lockdown I received lovely feedback from local residents and community partners who visited the park, saying how much they enjoyed the flowers.



One resident, Amanda, felt particularly inspired, and designed a card with a picture of the wildflowers on it! I received a copy of this card and still, 4 months later, it is in prime position on my coffee table (see photo).

In the card Amanda wrote: "Two positive things I will always remember from lockdown is the wildflower mound and, about 6 weeks into lockdown, we were walking through the Swedenborg Gardens and we came across a man and his two very young children.

We chatted to the man and he said his children hadn't left their flat for six weeks. Their faces were pale from not being outside but they looked thrilled to be out in the park, playing football and on their scooters! We saw them again last week and they were thoroughly enjoying Swedenborg Gardens and looked happy and healthy!"

Please email Amanda (e154designs@gmail.com) if you would like to order her cards. Prices are £2.50 for 1 card, 3 for £7.00 and 5 for £10.00 (inc. P&P). When you email, mention the Nature & Us project as Amanda has kindly said that some of the sale money will be donated to our Crowdfunder emergency appeal.

Photo credit: Amanda



Disconnected continuum

By Nelson Brooks, Poet in Residence

A strange year you might think
on the brink of economic uncertainty,
sickness run amok in our families,
but Gaia sees no change of pace
the growing seasons, have an immutable flow,
we reap, we sow, we watch the colours change
as storm winds batter,
fruits of many trees dispensed too early,
not yet fulfilling their promise.

Young children don't congregate any more
to conquer the conker,
as wiser heads raise fears for their safety,
Mother Nature showers us with bounty,
chestnuts prickly, but so tasty,
foragers switch seasonal gears.

In the park, as the days begin to darken,
the situated sages have seen it all the before,
the sinusoidal curve of the daylight hours,
the warm heady summer breezes,
chased away by biting northern freezes,
the trees, becoming bare and skeletal,
solidarity for the fallen,
they mount their winter watch
and wait for the first flurries of snow.

*Sculpture by Artist in
Residence, Louise Hildreth*



Winter in the Cemetery Park

By Terry Lyle, Trustee and Nature Lead

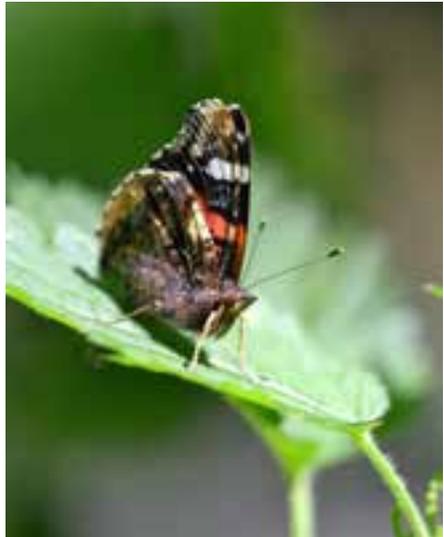
When is winter? Meteorologically defined it's December to February. But day length is much greater at the end, by 2 hours 40 minutes, though average temperatures are similar. I have my own definition. Winter begins when the great autumn leaf show is almost over, and it ends with the first big shower of flowers – snowdrops, winter aconites and crocuses.

Many years ago, The Friends accidentally slipped into a tradition of a “Winter Wander” on the 3rd Sunday afternoon in December, almost at the Winter Solstice. One of the things we do is look for things that seem to deny and defy winter. We often have a few of the very first Daffodil flowers, of the very early variety, “Rijnveld's Early Sensation”, a marketing name if ever there was one. One or two of our Hazels often have their “lamb's tail” catkins hanging by then. There may be a Bumblebee, even with the temperature quite low. The most likely place to see one is on a patch of flowering White Dead-nettle. The Bumble will be a queen, which mated in summer, emerging briefly from hibernation.

Bumblebees are quite cold tolerant because of their fat, hairy, bodies. Butterflies are less tolerant, but you may see one in the middle of a mild, sunny, calm day. It will be one of the few kinds that hibernate as an adult, rather than as an egg, caterpillar or pupa. Most likely it is a Red Admiral, but Peacock, Common or Brimstone are possible. On a good day at the end of February, you might see several.

Different bird species gradually join the chorus of song. The Robin sings all year, except for a few weeks around August. Great Tits and Mistle Thrushes join from November. Blackbirds traditionally start on Valentine's Day but may sometimes be heard even in December.

If we do get severe weather, unusual birds may show up in the Park. Fieldfares, Redwings and even Waxwings, drawn to the relative warmth of



Red admiral; photo credit: Roger

the inner city.

Most trees and shrubs in summer are dense masses of leafage. Once bare, they reveal the distinctive form of their kind, both in the large and in detail. They differ from one another in the shape, colour and surface patterning and arrangement of their buds. It's not always realised that those buds are not formed during winter, but are fully developed when the old leaves fall, having been made in the summer when there is warmth and ample solar energy.

In winter, most trees and shrubs are bare and, lower down, there are plenty of dead stems from last summer's growth - Honesty, Wild Carrot, Teazel, Knapweed and Common Mallow among them. Many of them provide winter hiding places for small insects. The first three plants are dead, as they are biennials. But the next season's new plants are waiting, down among the grass, to rise up and flower in spring or summer. The Knapweed and Common Mallow already have their new leaves at their base. And everywhere in the grass there are plants which stay green all year, such as Ox-eye Daisy, Sweet Violets, Primrose and Lady's Smock. The Lady's Smock grows at its fastest in winter.



The Purpose of Ponds: Researching Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park's aquatic insects with Europonds

Text and photos by Liam Nash (Queen Mary University of London), in collaboration with Laura Sivess (Natural History Museum, London) for the Europonds project as part of the Freshwater Biological Association.

From the Arctic circle to the Azores, there are thousands of ponds across Europe, everywhere from Alpine wildernesses to inner city London. Great or small these blue oases provide essential freshwater habitat for a massive diversity of amphibians, insects, plants and more. Many people's first experience with nature is through ponds - enjoying an afternoon of pond-dipping for dragonfly larvae, or watching frogspawn develop into tadpoles. But ponds are not only important for these strange-looking, underwater creatures. They also hugely benefit their surrounding landscape. As with all things in nature, pond animals are tightly interconnected with their wider ecosystem, including that outside of their pond, on land.



Baby dragonflies (nymphs) live underwater but grow wings and leave when they become adults

Many pond insects, such as midges, mosquitoes and dragonflies, undergo metamorphosis, transforming from aquatic larvae to emerge as flying adults.

Well known is the mass mayfly emergence in spring, where millions of adults emerge just for a few hours to mate before dying. Anyone who spends time near water will be acutely aware of adult midges and mosquitoes, winged and able to bite us. But, as much of a nuisance as these animals are for us, they are a food source for many other species of bird, bat and spider. Ponds become "insect chimneys", attracting predators for miles around to eat these newly adult aquatic insects.

However, we understand very little about the importance of this food source. What factors influence it, and how does this vary in different environments?

Europonds is an exciting pan-European research project targeting these questions. Scientists from all across the continent are examining the impact that pond insects, as a food source, have on surrounding land animals. We are two London-based PhD researchers heading up the UK team. The Cemetery Park is a key site to investigate the benefit of emerging insects on urban wildlife.



Emergence traps at the Cemetery Park

Catching the insects as they leave the water is made possible with emergence traps, essentially floating pyramids of netting. After counting and identifying the insects, they will be sent to Austria for 'fatty acid analysis' to assess their nutritional value for birds and other animals. We'll also look out for the cast-off 'skin' (called an exuvia) dragonflies leave behind when they emerge, collect larvae using nets, and take some water samples to

build a complete picture of everything going on, in and out of the pond.

Ultimately, all the teams will share and collate their data from fifteen European countries carried out in autumn, winter, spring and summer. This will be used to determine how ponds impact their surroundings, what pond characteristics are most important and how this varies over space and time. Everything we find will be shared with The Friends, to see how their ponds, specifically, are providing food for their own wildlife. Each year The Cemetery Park attracts around 60 bird species, 30 butterflies and nationally rare beetles and spiders into the heart of London. It may well just be that the ponds are part of the reason why.



A map of all the ponds being sampled as part of Europonds (map: Google)

Spiders and beetles in the Cemetery Park

By Edward Milner, spider recorder

Numbers of species in both groups continue to climb, so that now there is a list of 160 spp (species pluralis – the Latin abbreviation for multiple species) of spiders and 471 spp of beetles recorded in The Cemetery Park.

Spiders

In the 12-month period April 1st 2019 to March 31st 2020, altogether 2594 spiders were collected by various methods: searching, sweep-netting and pitfall-trapping, slightly fewer than last year's catch of 2918. They represented 77 species (43%) of the total list that now stands at 160.

As was the case last year, four new spiders were found. An adult female *Nigma puella* was found with an egg-sac on the underside of an oak leaf during a spider foray on 3 August. A single female of a newly recorded tangle-web spider *Cryptachaea blattea* was trapped close to The Soanes Centre in September. This synanthropic (associated with human habitation) spider was first recorded in Britain only in 2015, but seems to be spreading rapidly and has already been reported from Cornwall to Edinburgh. The other new records are three small money spiders: *Pocadicnemis pumila*, *Mermessus trilobatus* and *Lessertia denticelis*. All three have also been recorded in nearby Mile End Park. The most abundant species was *Pachygnatha degeeri* (771 individuals) which made up only 29% of the total. As I suggested last year, the habitats are becoming more settled and mature; this is reflected in the very low numbers of pioneer spiders seen; just 44 individuals of the 5 commonest pioneers.

Beetles

The beetle recording has caught up since last year and while the present total is 471 spp, I fully expect it to reach 500 in a year or two. Fourteen new species were recorded between April 2019 and February 2020; there may even be one or two further new ones in the March 2020 collection that have yet to be identified. The newly recorded species comprised three ground beetles (Carabidae), including one Nationally Notable (i.e. scarce) species: *Acupalpus exiguus*, two rove beetles (Staphylinidae), two ladybirds (Coccinellidae), one clown beetle (Histeridae), one scarab (Scarabidae), three leaf beetles (Chrysomelidae), one ant-mimic (Anthricidae) and one weevil (Curculionidae). The scarab is *Othophagus medius*, a dung beetle normally associated with cow dung or sheep droppings; in urban areas it has apparently become adapted to rely on dogs. Its presence in The Cemetery Park suggests there are sufficient irresponsible dog-owners to make it worth its while; no-one else may notice, but dung beetles have a keen sense of smell!

Bees in the Cemetery Park, 2019

by Mark Patterson, bee recorder

Unfortunately, there are no 2020 records due to Covid, but we know 2019 was a good year for bees - 50 species were recorded in spring and summer at the Cemetery Park, including several nationally scarce and threatened species.

The early spring of 2019 meant bees were on the wing from February onwards. Early bees included the common eight Bumblebees and *Andrena* mining bees. *Andrena scotica*, the chocolate mining bee, continues to be the most numerous and prolific of the solitary bees within the Cemetery Park. Their large population in turn supports generous numbers of *Nomada* cuckoo bees which parasitise the mining bees' nests.



Chocolate mining bee;
photo credit: Mark

We had the first confirmed breeding of the nationally rare Brown-banded Carder Bee in 2019. Two newly emerged queens were filmed and photographed feeding side-by-side on Kidney Vetch blooms in late May, and on numerous occasions in June and July workers were observed foraging. All sightings were around Scrapyard Meadows, Green Way and Chalk Mound. This species is nationally rare and a UK BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) priority for conservation.

A larger population is found in the nearby Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and breeding attempts occasionally occur on the Isle of Dogs. The species requires a mosaic of connecting habitats over an area of 10 square kilometres to support viable populations, so it's vital that local habitats are maintained to support the species.

Red-girdled Mining Bee, a nationally scarce species and lawn weed specialist, also had a good year. Many were seen on Speedwells, Ground Ivy and Selfheal in grassy areas of the Cemetery Park. The areas outside the Soanes Centre and the Chalk Mound have become particularly good for them. Meanwhile they seem less interested in the woodland edges, where they used to regularly be seen on Stitchwort.

Another nationally scarce species having a good year in 2019 was the Large Scabious Mining Bee. This is our largest mining bee, quite a bit bigger than a honey bee and one of the most specialised bees found in the Cemetery

Park. It is monolectic, meaning it collects pollen exclusively from a single plant, in this case Field Scabious. Females carry the bright pink pollen on large baskets on their hind legs. Numerous specimens were seen and photographed along Scrapyard Meadow in July. This bee has benefitted enormously from the excellent habitat creation work undertaken throughout the borough. The Cemetery Park links the Mile End Park populations with those found at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. All three sites have an abundance of Field Scabious.



Field scabious; photo credit: Barry

Clover Blunthorn Bee was again seen in the Chalk Maze. This is a locally scarce bee favouring chalk habitats rich in clovers and Birdsfoot Trefoil.

2019 saw the launch of the new Tower Hamlets Biodiversity Action Plan and the bee monitoring at the Cemetery Park has helped to form the new actions within the plan for pollinators in the borough. Here's to more bees!

Bow Common Gasworks development

By Kenneth Greenway, Cemetery Park Manager

You may be aware that for several months the Friends have been leading a public campaign (www.fothcp.org/gasworks-campaign) seeking a dramatic reduction in the height and scale of a St William Homes LLP development. They are proposing to build 1,286 new homes on the Bow Common Gasworks site, on the south-east edge of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park.

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets Strategic Development Committee met on the evening of the 2nd December to decide on the planning application for the Bow Common Gasworks. We had our 3 minute opportunity to object. What I said in objection is copied below:

My name is Kenneth Greenway and I've worked as the Park Manager for the Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park for 18 years. As a charity, we care for and manage the beloved Cemetery Park. Most of our work is financed by our own fundraising efforts and supported by a modest Service Level Agreement for £31,900 a year from Tower Hamlets Council.

I speak this evening on behalf of the Friends charity, our members, trustees and the supporters of our public campaign; including 230+ people who wrote objections letters to the council and 12,353 people who signed our petition.

We would like to note that we continue to object to the mass, size and bulk of the scheme in its current form as we feel that it is insensitive to its local natural and historic context and conservation area setting.

We'd like to recognise the efforts of the development team, who've listened to our concerns and worked with us to amend their plans since March. We feel that this model of open conversation and negotiation between conflicted



stakeholders should be replicated.

However, we have a duty of care to the Cemetery Park, our users, local residents and local wildlife. The site is a Local Nature Reserve, a site of Metropolitan We feel that any decision must seek to mitigate the overshadowing, light, noise and air pollution of the final development and throughout its construction through enforceable conditions.

The events of this year have only served to highlight the importance of access to public greenspace and nature close to home. The Cemetery Park is the only garden or wild space that many local residents can access. The dramatic increase in population created by the development will put unsustainable pressures on our work as a charity and on local TH green spaces in general if not sufficiently mitigated for.

The overlooking from the new blocks will benefit new residents, but will completely and permanently change the feeling of sanctuary from the city currently associated with the Cemetery Park.

In summary, we continue to feel that a reduction in the height and scale of the buildings would be necessary to mitigate the detrimental impact of the development on local residents and wildlife.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of our concerns and objections.

The Council's decision was deferred. The Committee want more precise info and greater policy compliancy around housing mix, further discussion on the mitigation package and light pollution. So, while we do consider this a win of sorts, we do feel it will likely be passed at its submitted height and density. There was concern expressed for the Cemetery Park, it's just a shame that we're unlikely to see any further reduction in height and massing.

We have also formally responded to the Council around the Mitigation Package and whilst we acknowledge that the offered mitigation package could support our work, we consider that the funding currently offered will not necessarily mitigate the full impact of the development on the Cemetery Park.

Thank you for the continued support. We will let you know when a new meeting is planned by London Borough of Tower Hamlets to resolve their concerns.

A Remembrance Day unlike any other

By Penny Williams, Heritage Team volunteer

November is an important time for the Heritage Team as Remembrance Day is a key date in the year. The War Memorial becomes a focal point and the Cemetery Park becomes part of the National Commemoration. Or at least it has been for many years, but not in 2020. Due to COVID-19, we had to put on hold our usual Remembrance Day Service, but we still 'remember them'.



Remembrance Day Service 2018; we usually have a crowd of people.

Some of the Heritage Team were at the Cemetery Park on Remembrance Sunday this year, as it was our regular memorial recording volunteer day. It was also a beautiful day to enjoy the sunshine while observing the 2 minute silence. It was strange to do this without the usual service, crowd of people and visitors laying poppy wreaths on the Memorial, but everyone felt it was important to observe the tradition. The Master of The Royal Foundation of St Katherine, who's performed our Remembrance Service for the last few years, recorded a message this year and a wreath was laid on behalf of the Friends.

Every name on the Memorial has a full story, even if it's difficult to locate all the details. The Heritage Team published the 'Hidden Histories' book of the men of the First World War (www.fothcp.org/shop) and we are hoping to start a similar research project into the men and women who died during WW2.

One group is particularly interesting but will undoubtedly prove even more

elusive than the homegrown men and women. Due to the Cemetery's proximity to the Docks on the Thames men from around the Globe found themselves in need of a final resting place during the Wars. Four seamen from the Netherlands Merchant Navy are buried in the Cemetery;

Kapiteins Jorgen (Captain's boy) Tamin died 14th March 1942 unknown age

Stoker Arie Glimmerveen, died 1st November 1940 age 37 years

Stoker Yen Fat died 7th September 1940 age 40 years

Assistant Machinist Herbertus Marinus Boender died 10th March 1941 age 24 years

Apart from details on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website little else has so far been found about these men. Apart from 24 year old Herbertus Boender. He was born in South Sumatra, Indonesia (a Dutch colony since the days of the Dutch East India Company) in November 1916, and he served aboard MV Abbekerk as an Assistant Machinist, which was the equivalent rank to Assistant Engineer.

On 7th September 1940 the Abbekerk (www.msabbekerk.nl), a 18 month old fast merchant vessel which either sailed independently or as part of a fast military convoy, was bombed and sunk during an air raid on London. The ship was raised, repaired and returned to active service in March the following year. Having survived the air raid, Boender died as a result of an accident while the ship was berthed in Shed 4 at the King George V Dock, North Woolwich. He was buried in Grave Number R.4638 on 13th March.

Finding out more information will prove challenging – I'm learning Dutch which might come in useful!

Since completing the 'Hidden Histories' book project, the Heritage Team have not been idle. We have researched various aspects of the history of the Cemetery, such as the lives of local publicans in the area, murder cases which hit the headlines in the local papers, wills of some of the richer residents, or the owners of the English Heritage listed graves.



Our next BIG project is a book to mark the upcoming 180th anniversary of the Cemetery's opening. The Team has been researching the original Company and its 11 Directors, the specific details and rules about the physical laying out of the site, the English Heritage listed walls and the lost chapels and mortuary. We have also been looking into Victorian funerals in general and the local firms in and around Bow who dealt with the details of a funeral.

Although fascinating to research, it is not just a case of skimming the internet with a cup of coffee. We're more likely to spend a whole day and end up with absolutely nothing. Most documents were not considered 'worthy' of storing and, in the days before digitalising, the accumulated paperwork would have filled a medium sized warehouse. The Heritage Team has recently spent hours trying to locate the original legal Parliamentary Bill which granted permission for the setting up of the Cemetery Company and established the detailed provisions for every aspect of its formation. While the original is sealed up in an archive, further investigation will have to wait.

Although some of us have limitless time to spend on Cemetery-themed research, the current situation is proving frustrating. While archives and record offices are closed, or are limiting access, it is difficult to find anything. But that doesn't mean we'll be giving up - we will keep you posted!!



Website of interest: www.londonremembers.com

Keep in touch!

Our staff will be in the park to take care of the site when we can, and we look forward to seeing you there soon, or at our online talks.

As a member you help support the park and get discounts on selected events and courses. **Help us out further, and give membership to a friend or family member!** Visit fothcp.org/member to find out more, or to discuss gift options, contact us at contact@fothcp.org.

Less than 25% of our funding comes from Tower Hamlets Council. We rely on our generous, passionate and loyal volunteers, members and donors for the rest. Please help us to keep the Cemetery Park a safe haven.

Any support you can give, be it making a donation, sharing the campaign or simply looking out for the park in our absence, is greatly appreciated!

To be kept up to date on news, learning and events, please visit: www.fothcp.org/stay-in-touch where you can sign up to our mailing list and find links to follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Follow us now and find out all about our festive 12 days of fundraising!

Thank you from all of us at The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park. We look forward to seeing you all again soon!

In August we were able to run our Forest School sessions. While we had to adapt to allow for social distancing and to prevent the sharing of equipment, all the children had a great time.



Since August we've been welcoming back volunteers and recently we began our Friday fortnightly sessions at Fairfoot Road Woodland. This is a new site we're developing just the other side of the C2C line along our southern boundary.



The Friends wish you a Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year!