March 2021

FRIENDS of FLAYBRICK

Hello and welcome to spring.

At last the flowers are showing themselves, the sun is making an appearance and there is hope on the horizon for a beautiful and more normal summer. The volunteers have obviously been 'stood down' for the last few months, but I am sure they are ready for the return to Flaybrick.
As you will read in the Rangers report, he and the grounds maintenance staff have been busy during lockdown.
Behind the scenes the committee embraced technology and have been holding virtual monthly meetings via 'zoom'. This 'interweb' thing is marvellous!
We have plans to try and increase membership numbers and introduce a new information scheme into Flaybrick.
Some long awaited projects are also now coming to fruition and should hopefully materialise soon.
More to follow in the next newsletter.
So, for now, take care, get the jab and we hope to see you all soon.



Professor John Tarn

KStG, OBE, BArch, PhD, FRIBA, FRHistS, FRSA, FSA (Hon LLD 1999)

23rd Nov 1934 – 8 Nov 2020



A Personal Appreciation by the Secretary.

I am sorry to have to bring you the news that our honorary president died last November. I only heard the news in February and part of the reason for that was that he had retired to Derbyshire.
It was in March 2004 that I invited John to be our president. He readily accepted as he was convinced that the Friends of Flaybrick would be able to secure Flaybrick's future.
John was chairman of Riverside Housing

and head of the Liverpool School of Architecture, (Prof James Stevens Curl, widely considered to be the foremost authority on funereal architecture, was taught by him). Amongst several other active roles, I was particularly impressed that he sat on the committee for the maintenance of Liverpool's cathedrals. This enabled him to offer accurate advice to me over Flaybrick's problems but he was never able or expected to have a more active role because of his many other commitments. However, he did attend occasional events and in particular the European Cemeteries Conference which we had the honour to host in 2008. At Birkenhead Town Hall he welcomed local dignitaries and delegates from 16 countries. Later in the day I was amazed to find him washing up teacups in the kitchen! We are fortunate to have been amongst the many organisations to have benefited from his wise counsel and he will be missed by many.

FINDING OUT ABOUT FLAYBRICK

As we often remind people, there are over 100,000 people resting in Flaybrick, all mere mortals of course just like you and me, but many have a story to tell.
Many names stand out from the crowd; the founders of Birkenhead, the innovators and world renowned experts - Laird, Jackson, Thompson, Doodson, Roberts, Starbuck are just a few which immediately spring to mind. But there are of course many ordinary people who have a tale to tell. It is the research that is put in to uncover their stories which takes up a lot of time away from our on-site voluntary work at Flaybrick.
Many hours are put into researching on line newspapers, Google, Wikipedia, Ancestry.com and other sources to discover not only the interesting bits of people's lives but also their more mundane backgrounds. It is surprising too how many people approach us while we are doing our bit at Flaybrick and mention a family story; we always ask if we can add it into our database of course and never assume that we can.
Similarly a simple stroll around Flaybrick and the occasional stop to read a headstone will create interest. A quick Google once back home and before you know it, another story is ready to tell!
Our database which is most useful when we are preparing the guided walk programmes (remember our guided walks?!), is constantly expanding and with so many people resting here there is of course no chance that it will ever be complete. We have over 260 stories to tell at present and we have a couple of guided walks already prepared for when we are allowed back to some form of normality.
Keep an eye on our website (www.flaybrick.org), our social media platforms and on-site notice boards for details of when we will be able to recommence them.

CANON JOHN TALLON 1879-1941
(RC3/834)

Canon Tallon was a priest at Our Lady's Church in Price Street, Birkenhead. The Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, to give it its full name, was opened in May 1862 when the Bishop of Shrewsbury Bishop Brown said Pontifical High Mass. The church soon became established as a major part of the town and became accepted as a masterpiece of church architecture.
Situated in a prominent position overlooking Birkenhead docks the church stands out and during World War Two its location made it somewhat vulnerable. In

early 1941 up to the notorious May blitz, frequent bombing raids destroyed large parts of the waterfront. Birkenhead was often hit by parachute mines meant for the Liverpool docks.
On 12th March 1941, Canon Tallon had been ministering the last rights to people caught up in and fatally injured during a raid and as at last he returned to the Presbytery, it received a direct hit. Once the all clear was sounded the Canon, along with his housekeeper Catherine Ryan and housemaid Kathleen Creehan were reported missing.
The church itself also suffered serious damage and it was some days later before the bodies of all three victims were discovered by recovery workers labouring to clear the area. When his body was found Canon Tallon's rosary beads were still in his hand.
The church remained in a derelict state for some time and was not reopened until October 1951.



NEWS FROM OUR RANGER

It seems a long time since the volunteers were last working at Flaybrick; however the grounds maintenance team and I have endeavoured to keep up with work throughout the winter months and during the latest lockdown. New holly trees have been planted along 'Holly Avenue' in sections CE6 & CE7 and they mirror the mature hollies found there. Tree stumps were removed and some of the rhododendron stumps were taken down to a reasonable level with a chainsaw. The staff have also begun the task of reinstating fallen headstones in certain areas.

I have worked to top up the woodland path with chippings, pruned back some shrubs and potted some trees, Douglas Fir, Spindle, Ash and Yew, to hopefully plant out later with a school group. Lynn, one of the hard working volunteers, worked tirelessly prior to lockdown on preparing and priming the chapel interior gates. They will look great when the lockdown is over and she can get back to give them a final coat of paint.

On a less fortunate note, a number of our interpretation boards have been damaged and the notice board, near to the former sexton's lodge, has been totally burnt out. These will be reinstated as soon as possible.

Spring is just around the corner and there are signs around Flaybrick that wildlife is showing its hand. Very recently I watched a kestrel swoop down within feet of me and collect a worm from the mud. Brilliant! The daffodil bulbs, planted by the volunteers last year, are beginning to show and the bluebell leaves are starting to pierce the soil. Squirrels too are becoming more active and birds such as jays, wrens and

blackbirds are foraging for food. Woodpeckers are hammering on trees, especially in the RC section at the north end of the site.

I'm sure that the volunteers are itching to get back to work so that we can resume working towards retaining the green flag award at Flaybrick.

See you all soon hopefully,
Neil the Ranger.

Membership.

Membership is easy! Please support our objectives and renew your subscription annually. There are no further obligations unless you wish to take a more active role. The subscription is £7.00 per annum, (£3.50 if unwaged or retired) and due on 1st April each year.

MEMBERSHIP – Application/Renewal

There are now two ways to join the Friends of Flaybrick, either by post or by bank transfer.
To join using **post**, please complete the attached form and post to the membership secretary.

Alternatively

To join by **bank transfer**, email membership@flaybrick.org giving the following details:
your name,
address,
amount of membership,
amount of any donation if any.
Please include the following line if you would like to use 'Gift aid'
'I am a UK taxpayer and I wish to '**GIFT AID'** my Subscription/Donation.'

We will email you our bank details to enable you to make your payment.

Many thanks for joining Friends of Flaybrick and helping us to bring bring Flaybrick back into the community.

Volunteering.

The volunteers meet every Thursday and Saturday (lockdown permitting) at 10am by the chapel. Why not come along and get your hands dirty or just to have a chat?