July 2021

FRIENDS of FLAYBRICK

Hello and welcome to summer.

Flaybrick memorial gardens are now in full bloom and arguably looking at their best. The volunteers have been back at work for quite a few weeks and are hard at work clearing overgrowth, raising tree canopies and path edging. Other works have been carried out as you will read later.
A big thank you to the grounds maintenance staff who have been busy keeping the gardens in order.
Ranger Neil has been 'run ragged' trying to keep track of everyone as the volunteer numbers have increased to around 15.
Behind the scenes, the committee have abandoned 'virtual' meetings and have returned to Tam O'Shanters farm for their monthly meetings.
A special mention to Lynne, one of our volunteers who has worked laboriously on cleaning the wrought iron gates in the chapel. She has now, after about two years, put the final coat of paint on them. They look great.
Now she has started on the main gates on Tollemache Road. Some people are gluttons for punishment!

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 and 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 walks 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 once 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.



MAJOR WORKS

Immediately after Easter, work began on the realignment of the railings around the chapel steps. This is a project we have been seeking to undertake since it was first proposed after our Centenary Remembrance Service in 2018, when the sight of several hundred supporters standing outside the railings while the service took place was far from ideal. When pupils from local schools attended the following year and the numbers increased to almost 500 we were faced with the same situation and something had to be done. Consultation with Wirral Council and Historic England ensued and having attracted funding from the 'Wirral Together' programme, we were able to proceed with the works, albeit over 2 years after the idea was first put forward.
We now see the completed work and what a difference!
Along with the unblocking of the chapel arches 18 months ago we have a larger area giving more flexibility of use with gates in front of the chapels at the top of the main avenue.
Further works are planned for early autumn when, working with the on-site team, we plan to improve the area surrounding the cross of sacrifice by forming a hard standing area avoiding issues with muddy grass in poor weather.

MEMORIAL PLAQUES

As well as the relatively new interpretation boards which can now be seen around areas of Flaybrick, there are several memorial plaques remembering people or events, usually accompanied by a commemorative tree.
One of the most recent plaques to be erected is one which remembers Claire Stapleton, a creative arts student and daughter of recently retired Wirral councillor, Jean Stapleton. Claire was a student at Wirral Metropolitan College in Withens Lane, Wallasey when she sadly died at the age of 18 in 1988.
Claire was such a well-loved student that the college raised funds to plant a pear tree in her memory within the college grounds. When the college campus closed it was agreed with Claire's family that the tree would be relocated to Flaybrick and sited close to a family grave in the non-conformist area.

The original plaque from the college no longer exists but our group spoke to Jean and agreed a form of wording that would be appropriate. Once the plaque and its stand were in place, we invited Jean along to see the finished article.



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Quick Response (QR) Codes

At the start of 2020 not many of us knew what a QR code (Quick Response code) was, but with the pandemic they became a part of our daily lives. The doors of pubs, cafes and nursing homes (and many other establishments) have them posted for us to register for 'track and trace'.
Well, we at Flaybrick decided that as people now know how to use them, we could utilise them to increase peoples knowledge about Flaybrick and it's hidden treasures!
As you perambulate the pathways of Flaybrick you may notice QR codes on posts adjacent to graves or in the information boards. If you scan the code with your phone and follow the link provided, you will be taken to the relevant page of the Friends of Flaybrick website. There you will find the biography and often a photo of the person in that grave and the fascinating story of their life.
The arboretum section is also being improved with information about the many and varied trees in Flaybrick. The codes are attached to the trees themselves.
All the QR codes and posts are in a trial phase so please excuse their appearance, but if successful they will be replaced by a more robust system.

We hope you enjoy finding out about some of the many people buried in Flaybrick.

A note on QR code readers.
You can download a QR code reader for free from the Google Play Store or Apple App Store.
Some QR code readers open the link automatically, others you will have to click the link but don't worry, it takes you to flaybrick.org, the Friend's website. Try it on the one above. It will take you to flaybrick.org.
(The NHS Covid QR code reader will not work.)



QR Code next to Mary Mercer's grave.

Volunteering.

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