

# FRIENDS OF THE PARISH OF THE ASCENSION BURIAL GROUND NEWSLETTER



Autumn leaves (pre-Covid):  
volunteers clear leaves to help wild flowers, bees and butterflies flourish

## SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2021 ARE NOW DUE

Rates: £10 individuals (£5 concessions); £15 households; £25 corporate. Please send to James Clackson c/o Jesus College, Cambridge CB5 8BL. *It would be a great help to our Treasurer if you could set up a standing order using the enclosed form*

## DATES FOR 2021

*Working parties are on Saturdays 10am to noon.*

20 February, 20 March, 24 April, 22 May, 19 June, 17 July, 25 September, 23 October,  
13 November, 11 December

*There are no work parties in January or August*

To find out more about the Friends, become a member, or update your details, please email the Secretary of the Friends, [jptc1@cam.ac.uk](mailto:jptc1@cam.ac.uk) or write c/o Jesus College, Cambridge CB5 8BL

## Officers of the Friends 2019

*President & Newsletter: Alison Taylor*

*Secretary & Treasurer: James Clackson*



## Memorial Lettering in the Ascension Burial Ground

Eric Marland

The Ascension Burial Ground at the end of All Souls Lane in Cambridge is renowned as the final resting place of many famous figures associated with the University, but to those interested in the development of lettering in memorial art in the 20<sup>th</sup> century it has another reason to be treasured, for it houses what has been called the best collection of memorials by leading lettering artists in such a concentrated area in the country.

The earliest example is by the workshop of Eric Gill, who revolutionized British lettering in every medium. He is perhaps best known as a typographer responsible for many fine fonts still widely used today but he was a letter cutter for 25 years before he designed his first typeface, Gill Sans. His contribution to the Burial Ground is the headstone to Sir Francis Darwin (son of Charles). The sympathetic addition of his daughter, the poet Frances Cornford, is by another hand as Gill predeceased her.

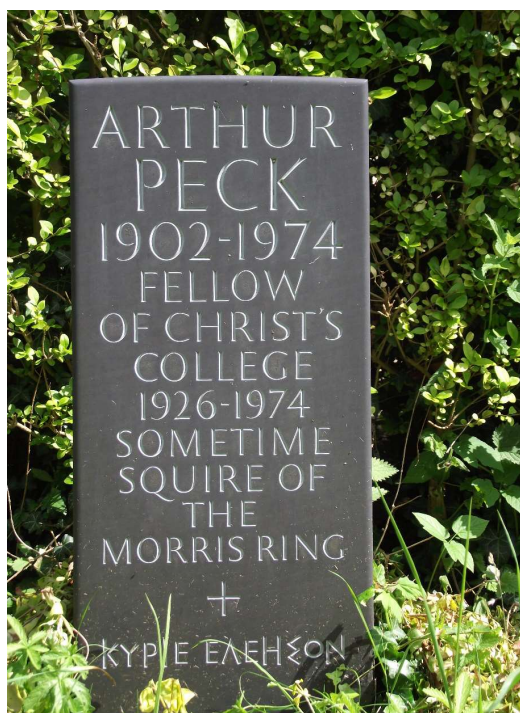


He designed nine other typefaces and was a prolific sculptor, engraver, illustrator, author and printer, employing many carvers to complete the stream of commissions which came through his workshop, some of whom became famous themselves. Amongst them was David Kindersley, who settled in Cambridge after WW2 and trained many letter carvers. The Burial Ground contains fine examples of memorials by the David Kindersley Workshop, amongst them the Gill-influenced McNair headstone,

with unusual prominence given to the wife's name, Marjorie.



Nearby is another unmistakable Kindersley memorial in Welsh slate to Arthur Peck, with subtly cambered top and tapered sides which elegantly accommodate the text carved in sans serif Roman to better complement the line of Greek at the bottom.





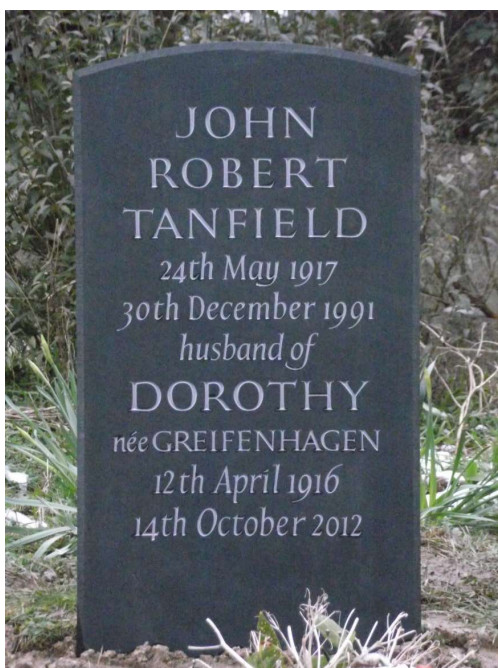
David Kindersley had many apprentices and assistants over his long career, some of whom also have work in the Burial Ground. Chief among them are Kevin Cribb, David Parsley, Mark Bury, Pippa Westoby and myself, as well as his widow, Lida Lopes Cardozo, who continues to contribute under the name of the Cardozo Kindersley Workshop (eg Jeremy Frank Maule's headstone).



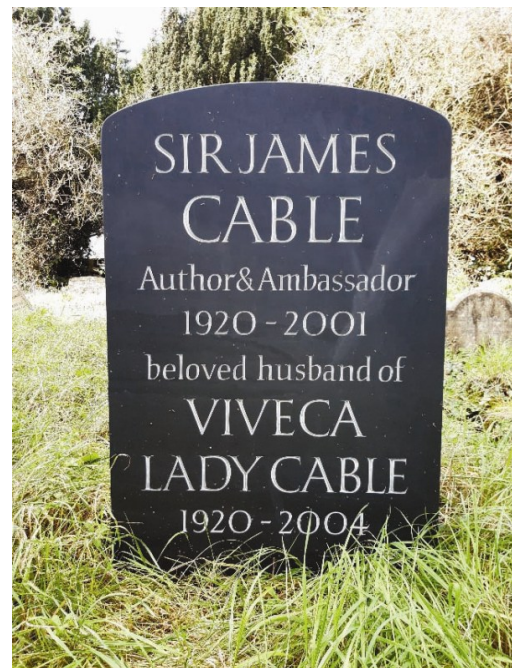
Another Kindersley apprentice was his son Richard, also now a leading letter cutter, whose former assistant Tom Perkins carved three headstones for the Burial Ground. The one to Gillian Von Isenburg is, like the other two, carved in sandstone with unpainted letters and is best appreciated just after noon on a sunny day when the light rakes across its face, creating shadow in the deeply cut letters.



The former Kindersley assistant with far the most memorials here is Keith Bailey, whose letters I have had to copy on several headstones in order to maintain the same style for additional epitaphs (eg John Robert Tanfield, followed by Dorothy).



In contrast, the one I did with painted letters in Welsh slate for Sir James and Viveca Cable, next to it, is legible in all weather and makes an interesting comparison in legibility when we teach letter carving courses in the chapel most summers.



## Butterflies and Dragonflies of the Burial Ground

Liz and Richard Hall

In 2008 when we retired we had time to spend observing butterflies, and where better than somewhere on our doorstep. The Ascension Burial Ground is a haven for wildlife which has been carefully managed by the Friends under the watchful eye of Rod Ailes since 2001. Over the years we have seen 20 different species, listed below, and this year for the first time several Small Heath butterflies were sighted. Sadly 2020 was the first year the Large Skipper didn't appear, but it should be stressed that we have never seen all 20 species in the same year.

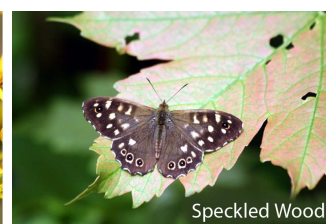
Essex Skipper	Large Skipper
Brimstone	Large White
Small White	Green-veined White
Orange-tip	Small Copper
Brown Argus	Common Blue
Holly Blue	Red Admiral
Small Tortoiseshell	Peacock
Comma	Speckled Wood
Gatekeeper	Meadow Brown
Ringlet	Small Heath

The Burial Ground also has dragonflies and damselflies, often seen basking on head stones. They include:

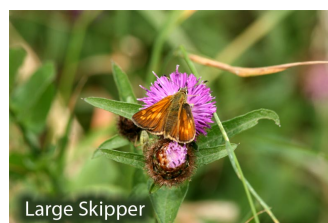
Emperor dragonfly  
Southern Hawker dragonfly  
Ruddy Darter dragonfly  
Common Darter dragonfly  
Migrant Hawker dragonfly  
Common Blue damselfly  
Large Red damselfly



Small Copper



Speckled Wood



Large Skipper



Large Red damselfly

## President's Piece

Alison Taylor

2020 has been a chaotic year for the whole world and those involved with the Friends of the Ascension Burial Ground feel relieved that we have been able to continue and develop our work without hardship, even if tasks had to be minimised and social gatherings abandoned to keep everyone safe and legal. This year was going to be something different anyway, for we knew the Burial Ground was full and must be closed to further burials (Janet Bunker, Newsletter 2019). This meant that responsibility passed from the Parish to Cambridge City Council. Happily, the City is well used to looking after churchyards and cemeteries and welcomes the involvement of Friends, as it does at Histon Road and Mill Road cemeteries, so the core of our work can continue and should expand. Our loss was Rod Ailes who, since 2001, has cut grass, written our Management Plan and directed the Friends' monthly workparties in clearing graves, planting trees and raking up vegetation, in order to improve the Burial Ground's rich wildlife and the accessibility and legibility of its graves. At last he was allowed to retire but is still a welcome volunteer at work parties.

It is now City workers who now trim grass and prune trees, while energetic and enthusiastic volunteers undertake conservation tasks and clear graves. The other loss is Martin Boyle, President of the Friends since 2015, who has stood down, pleading advancing age at 88, although he and wife Mariette are still excellent at clearing graves. Thanks and goodbyes to Rod and Martin, and voting for a successor, should have happened at the AGM on 25 March but had to be replaced with resigned phone calls, and I became President.

In partnership with the City Council aspirations for 2021 include a new website, revival of public tours, talks and educational visits, more volunteers, more graves made accessible and legible, better signposting, publication of Mark Goldie's updated *Necropolis*, more surveys and research and a higher profile all round. Meanwhile, the essential preservation of the Burial Ground as a haven for wildlife and a rich historical resource will never be forgotten.