



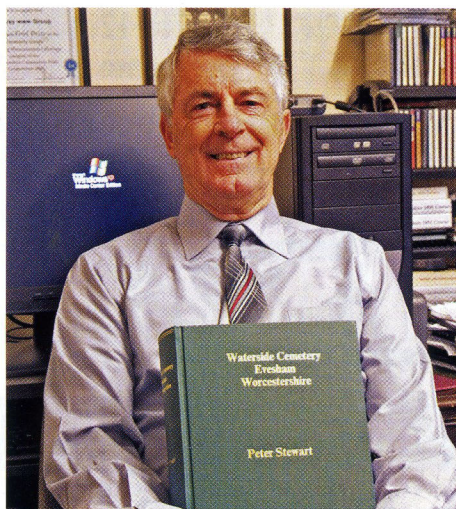
Peter digs up graveyard revelations

FOR genealogist Peter Stewart, recording and compiling the records of Evesham, Bengeworth, Hampton, Badsey, Bretforton, Hampton and Offenham cemeteries has been a real labour of love, as well as a solver of mysteries. The Waterside Cemetery records are contained in a fascinating, beautifully bound and illustrated book, which can be seen, along with Peter's other documents, in Evesham Library. Peter is still researching and updating his records. He tells Maureen Butler about his deep interest of family history and reveals some of the intriguing discoveries he has made in Evesham cemeteries.

PETER Stewart first became interested in family history more than 30 years ago when he set out to discover whether his wife's family, who also had the name of Stewart, was distantly related to his own.

"We were not related," explains Peter, "but it was the start of almost a lifetime of interest in family history, which lead on to helping others trace their own family histories and, ultimately, to the production of detailed books on our local cemeteries and graveyards."

Peter discovered that while many people knew where their ancestors were born or married, very few knew where they were buried. As he researched local burials, he became increasingly fascinated with the beauty of some of the headstones and, being a keen photographer, began to produce a photographic record of all he was studying.



"I soon learned that one must not always believe what is written on a monument," he says.

"Before considering recording what is in a churchyard, it is necessary to consult the burial registers first. Some publications will list all members of one family under the name of the husband, even if he has died young and the wife remarries and the daughters subsequently marry. Therefore the index listing them under the first husband's name will be incorrect."

Peter has also discovered that, in a large number of cases, a name on a monument doesn't always mean that an individual is interred in the plot, as in the case of the famous local historian George May's grave at Oat Street Chapel. His wife and daughter are both recorded on his headstone but his wife is not there, and Peter, so far, cannot track her down! ▶

The first churchyard Peter studied was Badsey, mainly because many of his wife's ancestors are there. He spent three and a half years working on his Badsey publication, which is currently being updated to contain more detailed notes on those interred there, including published obituaries.

The earliest grave recorded here is 1644 and the results of Peter's studies can be seen on the Badsey village website www.badsey.net or in Evesham Library, where the book is available for viewing.

His next task was to produce a burial index for Evesham Town Council from the registers for Hampton, Bengeworth and Waterside. This exercise took more than five years and resulted

in an index for use by the Town Clerk's office and another publication listing all interments in Waterside from 1875 to 2005 (and a supplement which includes all interments for 2006).

This particular book, which is beautifully illustrated with the author's photographs, gives all monumental inscriptions and the history of the cemetery, as well as the results of a study of all those interred as unknowns, with inquests and newspaper reports on those found dead in suspicious circumstances.

Some amazing stories have emerged from Peter's research, not least the story of 'Grace', whose memorial is a large granite stone, inscribed Grace Oct 4 1940. There is also the intriguing story of the travelling salesman who drowned himself in the river and who, until Peter discovered his true identity, was recorded as 'unknown'.

More recently Peter has been studying Offenham churchyard, producing an updated set of maps. He is currently working on a publication covering all interments at Offenham, including a photographic record of all the headstones, inside the church and out.

Some head stones are deteriorating rapidly, which makes Peter's research invaluable, others, he says, are in an amazing state of preservation. Among the oldest and most interesting headstones in Offenham is one relating to Anthony Buggin and his wife Elizabeth, who married in 1628 at the tender age of 14 and 15 and went on to have ten children.

Peter thoroughly enjoys his research into these past lives and much of his pleasure comes from the photography. "Headstones and monuments make such lovely subjects," he enthuses.

"And I like to bring these people, many of whom are forgotten, to 'life'. It may seem a bit morbid, but I like to think that the little baby found dead in a package under a seat in a railway carriage at Evesham sidings in 1909 is now remembered."

MAUREEN BUTLER

Photography by Peter Stewart



*To the Memory of
Mr Anthony Buggin of this Parish
& Elizabeth his wife
who both are laid together here to rest
Till the Resurrection.
She was Daughter to Mr Robert Martin
of Evesham
Love & Marriage made them one
in the bud of youth
when He was 15 shee but 14 years old
Anno Dom 1628
Married 53 years
Blessed with ten Children (6 Sons 4 Daughters)
Five of which they mourned for dead
before them & laid two Daughters
Elizabeth & Mary in this Grave.
Five others surviving were
the Comfort of their age.
She died first (viz) Nov. 3rd 1681 Aged 68 yrs
They lived together long
Death did not long divide them
He lingered but till he attained the
Psalmists period of man's age
Three score years & ten
And then gave up the Ghost
Feb y' third An Do 1682
His Amicable & Affable disposition Rendered*

*The Wording on Anthony Buggin's monument
at Offenham.*



A mystery solved

HE was found, at the end of July in 1895, in the river on the Bengeworth side of the Avon. Police Sergeant Yarnold had been alerted to a large pile of clothes on the riverbank; a coat, a hat, and old carpetbag containing 12 boxes of pills and ointment and herbs – and a halfpenny, carelessly laid on top of the cap.

"It at once struck him that someone was in the river," ran a report in the Evesham Journal and Four Shires Advertiser of August 3, 1895.

Accompanied by a PC Johnson, the sergeant uncovered a body from the river some six yards from where the clothing was found.

The newspaper report continued: "The legs were tied together just at the top of the laced shoes, around the ankles with a piece of string, and above the knees the thighs were tightly tied together with a handkerchief.

"The arms were also tied with string across the chest; the left arm being partially at liberty."

In the man's pockets were found three shillings and six pence and a letter in which he wrote: "I thought it time I finished. I thought I would get under the water. But do not believe me to be insane because I know what I am do now (sic)."

The jury eventually returned a verdict of suicide whilst of unsound mind. One of the jurors, not named in the report, remarked that if the man had been sane he would have spent all his money before drowning himself.

Local people referred to the man, a purveyor of pills and potions, as 'doctor', who specialized in curing gout. But no one knew his name.

A local fellow, Thomas Taylor of Cowl Street, said he was Thomas Jones, aged 69, but with nothing to corroborate this, the man was interred in unconsecrated ground at Waterside Cemetery as 'unknown'.

Now, 120 years later, Peter Stewart's detective work has finally revealed the man's true identity.



The gateway to Waterside Cemetery, where Thomas Burgundy lay unidentified for 120 years.

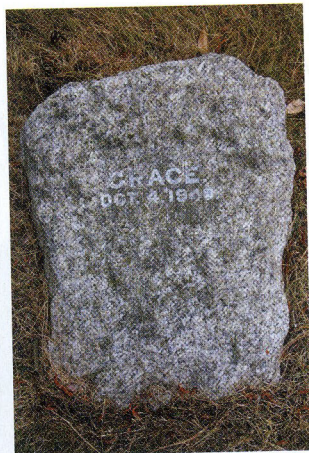
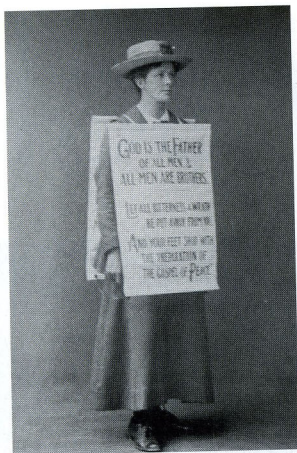
He researched police journals at the Worcester Records Office and could discover no evidence of identity, but there had been reference to the man having a family in Cambridgeshire, so he approached the Cambridgeshire Family History Society.

This led to the discovery that the poor man was actually a Thomas Burgundy, who was baptised at St Mary's Church, Whittlesey, on June 20, 1830. "He was also present there as an 11

year-old on the Whittlesey Census returns," says Peter. "But he is not recorded on subsequent census returns.

"I am happy that after my own enquiries, this unknown person in Waterside is, indeed, Thomas Burgundy who was born in 1830 in Cambridgeshire."

Now the Waterside Cemetery Records have been amended and details of Peter's findings passed to the records office. ►



Grace's story

SHE was born Grace Hawkins at Bilston in Staffordshire in 1880 and became a talented artist in London before moving locally, where she died at Blackminster.

Her memorial in Peter's book on Waterside Cemetery reads: "With the passing, on October 4th 1940 of Grace Hawkins, in her sixtieth year, the Animal Welfare movement lost one who stood four square as an advocate for humanness. Founder and honorary secretary of the United Humanitarian League, Grace Hawkins realised to the full the all encircling principle and oneness of life – and was responsible for most of the Humanitarian League's literature. It is significant that Grace Hawkins, who spent her life serving others, human and sub-human, should have departed this world on the very day dedicated to St Francis of Assisi – and with the 'little poor man' also should declare: 'I have done what it is mine to do'.

Grace Hawkins was laid to rest on October 8th as a member of the Society of Friends."

