



GRAVE HAPPENINGS



Oley Day of Caring 2018



Students and staff from the Oley FFA did another spectacular job of cleaning up the historic family burial grounds in their school district, along with members of BCAGP. You can see the whole day's worth of photos on our facebook! This annual event we call Oley Day of Caring has been arranged by teacher Jeremy Deysher, and has been a valuable program which combines community service and education. Three groups of students, each accompanied by a teacher, split up to cover approximately 20 burial grounds in one day. (continued on p. 8)



Right: Les Rohrbach guides a student to safely reset a tombstone in the Hoch burial ground.



- Contributors Staff/
Photos this issue**
- Mike Angstadt
 - Sean Brown
 - Karla Hummel
 - Les Rohrbach
 - Keith Schaffer
 - Anne Wagner
 - Rodney Wagner



Ground Penetrating Radar

Sean Brown

Family legend has it that there are four generations buried in the **Kutz** Family Graveyard; there are only three headstones, husband and wife, and one who was not a Kutz family member.

On May 15th the Kutz Graveyard in Maxatawny was surveyed by GPR (ground penetrating radar) by the Kutztown University Geophysics Department. This wonderful technology will potentially allow us to "see" underground, detecting disturbances in the earth, different densities, missing stones, and so we hope soon to



Quinn Kauffman, Nate Lottes, Tyler Sivak,
Dr Laura Sherrod

have some answers about how many are buried here. We were surprised they also took magnetometer readings which detect changes in the magnetic field that might indicate where metal fragments lie hidden or disturbed earth. The Kutz family was present to show their interest and support after spending time cleaning up the graveyard and making sure it was ready to receive the survey team. Karla Hummel was on hand to advise despite being on the mend from several day-of-caring related injuries.



Richard Kutz, Zane Ingram, Arlene Ingram, Janet Kutz and Karla Hummel observe at the Kutz burial ground



Les Rohrbach, Mike Angstadt, Karla Hummel and Kevin Cannon



Federolf-Bittenbender

The Kutztown University team returned on May 29th for the Hoch/DeTurk/Shenkel and on the 30th for the Federolf Bittenbender. At the former we hope to locate the graves and find evidence of a wall or fence that may have once surrounded the site as suggested by the old aerials. At the Federolf -Bittenbender several headstones need to be put in the correct places (historic aerials were not much help here as trees always kept the site hidden).



Willow Reichard and Quinn Kauffman

Thank you, Dr. Laura Sherrod and her team of university students for your hours of dedicated work. Thank you, Arlene Kutz Ingram and the other Kutz family members who came out to show their support and prepare the graveyard. Thank you Kevin Cannon and his wife for preparing the Hoch/DeTurk/Shenkel. I took care of the Federolf /Bittenbender.

We are eagerly awaiting for the results, so keep your eyes posted on the Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation's Facebook and Newsletters for upcoming details with results.

HOCH, RICHMOND TOWNSHIP



The long wall in the back has now been completely rebuilt. This is a large burial ground and more money must be raised to complete this project! Thanks to **David Schlegel**, the grass has been tended.

REAR WALL BEFORE



Aerial Research by BCAGP Archivist Sean Brown



This is an aerial photo of the Bitting at 1000 Greenway Terrace, Reading, from 1940-Apr-28:

The walls were 25 by 50 feet; it was denuded and razed by the property owners in 1954-1955; nothing remains. A fifteenth burial has been added to the list of 14 in *Epitaphs*, Pages 41-42:

Angeline Fisher, daughter of John Fisher, died 1854-Mar-13, aged 1y10m25d (*First Reformed Church Records*, Volume 7, Page 51, BCCHS Janssen Library Call Number CR FRC)

This aerial of the Hemmig Kurtz was taken 1951-Apr-26:

The land had been deeded to the Borough of Kenhorst in 1947 (DBV 1000, Page 566) with the restriction that the "premises be used only for borough, school, park and playground purposes." Only Hemmig a Family Marker and the crumbled remains of a wall that was once 49½ by 83 feet are left.



LETTER FROM LES



When we visit graveyards to cut grass, weeds, and whatever else is there, a few locations present special problems. One of the problems is Johnson grass, sorghum that may grow to 6 feet and is difficult to cut even with a string trimmer. It takes a good deal of extra time and string to clear a graveyard where we find Johnson grass.

And, in seemingly no time, it will be 4 to 6 feet again.

Another special problem is Ailanthus (tree of heaven), a tree whose roots spread and sprout new trees from the roots. Cutting one tree or all ailanthus in a graveyard does not eliminate them. New trees sprout from the roots and a year later the same site can again be filled with multiple trees.



Karla Hummel has taken a special interest in ailanthus and has received suggestions on what products to use and how to apply them from some farmers and orchard owners. As we work in graveyards in the future, we will attempt to rid them of this invasive tree and also Johnson grass when present.

In conjunction with ridding graveyards of these unwanted problems, we have begun experimenting with ground cover in two graveyards. If a ground cover establishes itself, our hope is that over time it squeezes out some of the unwanted growth we normally deal with and reduces the work required to maintain a site.

Les Rohrbach is President of BCAGP and very active in both the organizational aspects and the hands on "down and dirty in the graveyard" activities of the group. Les travels from Pottstown to his "roots" in Berks and is an avid hiker and genealogist.

*At this time of year there is a lot of weed removal and grass cutting to be done in almost every burial ground we keep track of. Few have a regular caretaker, so we try to fill in, taking turns where needed. **David Schlegel** takes care of multiples. There are also many other things going on!*

*The newer and younger members are able to bring us new technology. **Mike Angstadt** worked out an arrangement with Kutztown University for their classes to do Ground Penetrating Radar. We have talked about it over the years but never worked it out.*

***Mike Frankhouser**, one of our newest members, assisted us in the purchase of grass plugs to choke out the weeds, which went quicker than planned thanks to new member **Randy Van Fleet** using a gas powered auger to drill out the holes.*

We also have had a few people who needed community service hours to work with and sometimes it's a challenge, because while they are working we are right there too.

***Sean Brown** has been moving along quickly with verifying the information we have on record, compared to what we have now at the site. We are finding things on site we did not have recorded, and things we have recorded that are not on site.*

***Jonathan Antoine** joined last month and jumped right in on the physical part. We definitely need the younger member's physical abilities.!*

Our new members all bring something new to the group and there really is something for about everyone to do with this organization.

*This is a busy newsletter quarter, and without **Karla Hummel** to proofread, you would be struggling to keep up with reading my sentences without commas! This has been a busy couple months for her as well*

*with keeping up on abnormally high correspondence and communications. **Paul Schumann** also has had a lot of bookwork to do along with caring for the Barnet-Peter grounds.*

***Keith Schaffer** has been doing stone work as well as things like watering Zoysia grass plugs and checking out potential issues all around.*

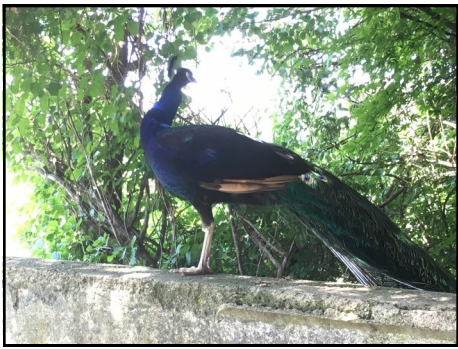
***Les Rohrbach** as President has done a wonderful job of keeping it all in line and orderly. He is at almost every single activity as well as making trips to pick up the mail, scanning and dispersing it to which member needs to have it. Under the leadership of Les, the group has expanded and moved forward in many ways. He keeps it all together and we have made a lot of progress!*

We could do much more and even get to things that may not be necessary, but would be educational, if we had the funding. But our contributions are not enough to do more than what is needed. We have talked about placing informative signs at some graveyards that are more visible. Our main object is to keep the graveyards intact and take measures to prevent them from being lost.

*If you are part of a family association or a reunion group of any of the burial grounds we keep on our radar, and wish to take care of some of the "niceties," we may be able to assist you in making that happen. Come to a meeting and we can talk! **Mike A** (yes we have **Mike A** and **Mike F** now) has some really great ideas!*



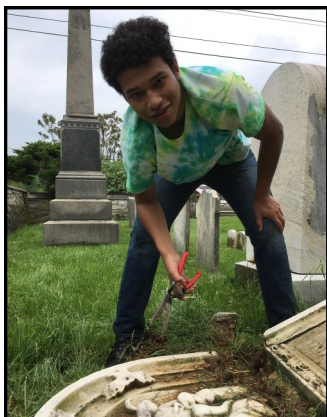
Anne E Wagner, VP
awagner615@aol.com



The **Koenig** burial ground is on the land that is also home to the historic Peacock Lock, Peacock Bridge and the current Peacock Bridge Kennels off Cross Keys Road in Bern Township. **Helga Bensing**, the property owner, tends this burial ground. Hand carved stones such as "W.D. 1761" are part of what makes this burial ground unique. We treated the stones with D/2 biocide, which will help preserve them as well as make them readable again. **Keith Schaffer** also reset stones.



Anthony Funez does some trimming around broken tombstones so they are not damaged by mowers or weed whackers at the **Kirby**, while Anne Wagner trims back trees and brush. There are broken stones that will need repair. This is the small burial ground in Kirbyville along 222 that was moved to make room for the road in 1934. Kirby family members are buried there as well as some others that may have worked on the farm.



SET IN STONE

We've discussed a great deal about the stone used to create our county's historic tombstones, so let's begin to look at the finished products.

The basic components on local historic graves are the headstone and the footstone. As their name implies, footstones are placed at the foot of the grave and are often small copies of the headstone, with the same shape, but bearing only the initials of the deceased. (You'll find that many large cemeteries have moved or completely removed footstones to facilitate easier mowing. BCAGP always keeps footstones properly placed.) The upper portion, or headstone, is usually inscribed with a good deal of information about the deceased and frequently some symbolic ornamentation.

There are 2 common methods for setting local tombstones.



The most common method in the era of our graveyards was to simply create a slab or tablet, and then insert the lower portion vertically (plumb and level) into the ground. The lower portion is most likely considerably longer than you might envision. In fact, many slab headstones have as much of their bulk under the ground as they do above! This is necessary to support the stone upright through changing seasons of freeze and thaw.

The point where the upper half of the stone meets the ground is called the grade line, and is the most common point of breakage. In fact, breaking a tablet stone is surprisingly easy. The perimeter walls of burial grounds kept animals out – animals like cows that might rub an itchy shoulder on a headstone, which would snap the stone! We are careful never to lean on or put pressure on that ground line when we are working around or resetting stones. Since repairing such stones takes specialized (expensive) mortars and epoxies, we often reset the broken-off upper portion just in front of the lower piece, as shown (left).



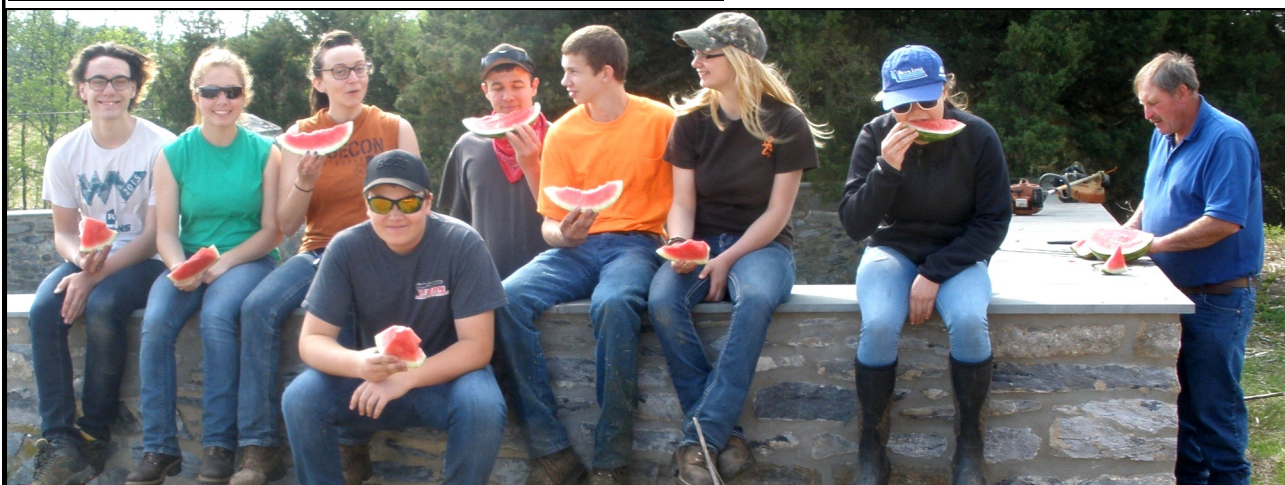
The 2nd method is to use a base with die cut monument. These feature a base with a slot into which the upper, inscribed portion of the stone is inserted. The upper stone may topple, or the tab may break off. Such stones can be up-righted or repaired.

KARLA HUMMEL

BerksEpitaphs@gmail.com



2018



Day of Service

Zoysia Grass



Our volunteers spend many hours mowing, weed whacking, ripping out brambles, and fighting poison ivy in graveyards. Our ideal would be to have groundcover that is historically accurate, visually appealing, and less demanding to maintain. We decided to research and test various options.

Our first attempt has been to plant test patches of Zoysia grass in two sites, the *Schneider, Oley*, and the *Heckler Esterly, Exeter*. Zoysia is a creeping grass that has proven effective in choking out many weeds. Both disease and insect-resistant, it can withstand the highs and lows of local temperatures, and isn't too particular about sunlight. Best of all, although it spreads quickly, it grows slowly in height, reducing the need for mowing and upkeep.

We planted hundreds of 2" to 3" plugs, using an auger to dig holes and then hand placing the grass. Keith Schaffer placed barrels of water at each site to facilitate the daily watering that is required for several weeks as the Zoysia takes root.

If you are interested in gardening, we'd welcome you to the Groundcover Committee. Contact us!

Karla Hummel



Keith Schaffer, Mike Frankhouser, Ron Smith cut grass plugs, while Randy Van Fleet augers out holes. Jonathan Antoine, Les Rohrbach, Anne Wagner and Karla Hummel Plant plugs while Mike Angstadt waters.





Our Mission



We strive to preserve and maintain the historic Berks County graveyards in Eastern Pennsylvania. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Historic Burial Places Preservation Act (1994) provides for the preservation of historic burial places, tombs, monuments and gravestones and imposes penalties for violations. Research supports the existence of over 300 historic graveyards in Berks County of which approximately 120 remain with some sort of visible surface evidence. The BCAGP is working aggressively to preserve these historic grave sites for future generations.

**THE NEXT BOARD MEETING OF BCAGP WILL BE AUGUST 19TH
2PM OLEY LEGION HALL. MEMBERS AND INTERESTED PARTIES
ARE ALWAYS WELCOME TO ATTEND.**



Congratulations to JACOB GULDIN

**The 2018 recipient of BCAGP Jacqueline B
Nein Award. We give this award each year
to one senior student who has worked with
us on Oley Day of Caring, selected by the
staff of the FFA program at Oley High
School. It is a small token of our apprecia-
tion for this program we have come to
depend upon to prepare the burial grounds
for visitors over the
Memorial Holiday season.**



JOIN OR DONATE TODAY!

If you're not a current member, please join us in preserving and maintaining our historic graveyards. If you do not wish to be a member at this time but you are interested in contributing support for a specific graveyard, please indicate that graveyard on the form below. We also appreciate contributions to the general fund.

MEMBERSHIP FORM - 2018

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

PHONE: _____

\$ _____ Annual Membership, Individual \$15; Family (residing in the same household) \$25

\$ _____ Annual business or municipality membership, \$35

\$ _____ Donation earmarked for the *Association General Fund*

\$ _____ Donation to be used for the _____ gravesite

\$ _____ Donation to be used in _____ municipality

Total Amount enclosed

Date _____

Mail Checks to: B.C.A.G.P., PO Box 3707, Reading, PA 19606

Membership runs a calendar year January to December. Membership dues paid after October 1st will be applied to the next membership year. This form is also available on our website in the internet edition of the newsletters which can be printed.

The official registration and financial information of Berks County Association of Graveyard Preservation may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Berks County Association for Graveyard Preservation is a registered 501 (c) (3). Please check with your tax advisor as to the deductibility of your contribution.

Please check our website www.bcagp.org
for meetings times



PO BOX 3707

READING PA 19606



WWW.BCAGP.ORG



BERKS COUNTY ASSOCIATION FOR GRAVEYARD PRESERVATION

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David Schlegel Michael Angstadt Ed Gensemer

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"Grave Happenings," is a collection of member contributed articles written to keep everyone advised of recent and on-going preservation activities, BCAGP needs, and incidental graveyard related material. We are always looking for items of interest and are open to suggestions on future content.

Permission to reprint any materials herein is granted provided they are printed in their entirety and that BCAGP's author is cited.

Our newsletters are archived online on our website.

Don't forget to check our facebook for updates and more photos!

Check the www.bcagp.org website for internet edition newsletter archives in full color!

