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## Editorial

First and foremost, at the EGM held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011, the membership voted unanimously to become a Registered Charity. Subsequently the Board went through the application process and, in quick time, the **Friends of Northwood Cemetery** became:

# Registered Charity no: 1143917

The benefits of becoming a Registered Charity are significant; we can reclaim the basic rate tax that would have been paid from gross earnings by UK taxpayers on subscriptions, sponsorships and donations backdated to our establishment in 2008! Whilst we are still gathering in the forms required by Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs, the total amount we are expecting to receive from 'the taxman' early next year should exceed £5,000.

Another big reason for becoming a charity is that we can now seek to attract donations and legacies/bequests without the donor, or the recipient (ie: the **Friends of Northwood Cemetery**), incurring any tax liability. There are those who have asked whether there is a mechanism for leaving a legacy in their Wills - and now we are able to give a positive answer. So we offer this as something, perhaps, that some of you may wish to consider.

But whilst all this has been going on 'behind the scenes' there's been much going on at the Cemetery itself - as those of you who are local are able to see. **Richard Day**'s report on the 'green' activities that take place on Saturday mornings is on page 3 and covers plans into the New Year. He could do with more volunteers so please give consideration to coming along and having some light exercise - with plenty of camaraderie!

But it's the east chapel that has had a lot of attention in these last three months. As we go to press all its windows have been restored (with just one pair waiting to be fitted) and all of these have newly painted metal grills to protect them from undesirables. Our grateful thanks go to the five sponsor families, of course, but also to **Dennis Bradbury** for the glass restoration work, **David Jones** (the one-man paint shop!) and **Robert Alder** (the stonemason) for gently easing the windows back into place and securing them.

Inside the chapel the internal walls have been repaired and painting them is 'work-in-progress'; this is a project to which **Sarah Salero** has rolled up her sleeves and undertaken - with a little bit of help from those who are a bit taller! We are hoping to finish this task by Christmas.



But the most visible activity has been the restoration of the stonework around the main doorway arch, which was in a very poor state of repair - and the oak doors themselves.

The picture shows **Robert Alder** painstakingly attending to the detail of the stonework. This work has been funded by an anonymous donor - to whom we extend our most grateful thanks.

There are other smaller tasks that are being undertaken - such as **Barry Sowerby's** repair of an internal door; **Tony Hayman's** bracing of two roof trusses; and Tony's filling in of inspection holes that were dug out last year to enable **Alan Gentry**, our structural engineering advisor, to see what foundations were laid over 150 years ago (there was no documentation!!!).

Turning to the east chapel, we have clad its east elevation - merely to hide the end-wall which was seriously unsightly - as you can see:



Before



After

So, with all this activity taking place on the east chapel, when will it finish? Well, we do have a target date in mind - Friday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2012.

Over this week-end there will be commemorations in Cowes of that dreadful night 70 years ago when the German Luftwaffe blitzed the town and the Polish warship, the *ORP Blyskawica* (undergoing a re-fit at J S White's at the time) defended the town so heroically. We are working with the *ORP Blyskawica Society* to hold a service of remembrance at the Cemetery to those who lost their lives that night - and it would be really good if it could be looking its best for the occasion. Further details will be announced in our February 2012 Newsletter.

**Jon Matthews**  
Editor

## Nature Conservation Report

During the last three months we have continued our clearance of selected trees, shrubs and bramble in Plots 7 and 8 (adjacent to the Cowes Medical Centre) - always with a weather eye out for nesting birds. We continue hauling brash away to the bottom of the Cemetery for disposal - although it will be noted that from time to time the piles of brash in our work area are quite big. We take great pains not to pile this where visitors might be inconvenienced - while at the same time ensuring that the grass can be cut.

There are some piles of logs available for the public to take but some of the smaller branches and trunks will be placed in habitat piles in selected places within the Cemetery and we would expect these to be left alone.

Within the last quarter we have had visits from **Sue Blackwell**, a local wildflower expert who has done a survey of the wildflowers in the Cemetery. **Bill Shepard**, the Island's foremost expert on trees and known as "Mr Trees" (who is in his 90s!), has also given us his 'seal of approval' on our activities.

We have to decide what to do with the garden areas just inside the main gates in order to get them looking presentable. We have had several views from respected sources and have decided to plant a specimen tree in the centre of the garden in front of the Friends' House - a Judas tree - a kind donation from **Judith Betchley**.

We could grass this area over but then we would have problems with spring bulbs growing through grass - resulting in us being unable to cut the grass until the bulbs have died off, usually around the end of May. If any of our readers are keen gardeners and would like to offer an opinion, please either contact me on 01983 295927 - or come down to the Cemetery between 9:30am and 12:30pm on a Saturday morning.

As to the next three months we still have a lot to do in Plots 7 and 8 removing more dead bramble and overgrown shrubs, including Rhododendrons. It should be noted that the bramble and the shrubs will grow back next year and will be much better for the severe pruning activities underway - in the same way as gardeners prune back in their gardens.

All our work both in each of the plots, and around the periphery of the Cemetery, is aimed at reducing the overcrowding that has gone on for decades, resulting in many of the larger trees having dead wood - where they have been touching each other and have not been able to have access to sun and rain. The result is that all areas are much lighter - with long unseen grass and wild flowers growing back again.

Also, as a direct result of our work, it will be seen that headstones are getting cleaned naturally - which I think adds a 'feel good' factor for visitors to the Cemetery.

**Richard Day**

Nature Conservation Leader

## Easy Fund Raising

It's got to that time of year again when thoughts of present buying loom. Many of you will be buying Christmas presents on-line and every time you do you could be helping the **Friends of Northwood Cemetery**.

OK, admittedly it takes 5 minutes to register your chosen organisation but from then on it is easy peasey. Yes, It really is! Virtually all the UK's leading retailers can be accessed from [www.easyfundraising.co.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.co.uk) - so is it inertia, or fear of the unknown, that is stopping you from shopping? .



Next time you are buying on-line, before you do *please* ask yourself: “have I signed in through the **Easy Fund Raising** web-site?”. But remember to register your preference to credit their donation to the **Friends of Northwood Cemetery** before you hit the ‘go’ button.

## Thomas Jones

In Plot 1 Grave 2934 lies **Thomas Jones** who was a hotelier running, at one stage, both the Gloster Hotel on the Parade and the Fountain Hotel in the High Street. Thomas' grave is in front of the **Woodyear** vault just past the Friends' House on the left-hand side as you walk through the main gates of the Cemetery. Recorded on the same head stone is his wife **Maria** and also remembered is their only son **Brooke**, who is buried in the adjoining grave.



Thomas was buried on the 25<sup>th</sup> July 1876. Brooke, who died tragically young, was buried on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1882 aged just 27. Maria was buried on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1884.

**Thomas Jones** was born in Hackney and managed a very high class hotel, the Gloster, possibly the best in Cowes at the time - and it was conveniently close to the Royal Yacht Squadron. This hotel, previously Gloster House, owes its name to a visit by the Duke of Gloucester and his sister, Princess Sophia (children of George III) in 1811.

It was home to the Royal Yacht Squadron prior to its move to Cowes Castle in 1855. Many famous people stayed at the Gloster including in 1868 Lord Randolph Churchill, father of Winston Churchill and in 1871, during his exile, Napoleon III, Emperor of France, and his wife Eugenie stayed at this hotel.



Thomas had a good eye for publicity. When in 1864 during the official opening of the Green, generously donated by George Stephenson, no rooms had been allocated to the press. Hearing that they were less than pleased about this oversight, Thomas Jones stepped in offering to accommodate the press at the Gloster at his own expense.

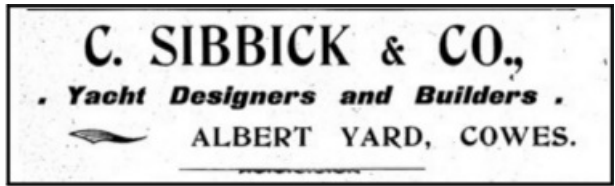
During his tenure of the Fountain it became "Jones's Fountain Hotel" (see photo above). The large sign would hit you in the eye when coming off the Red Funnel Steamer. It appears that he was known as "Thomas" at the upper class Gloster and as "Tom" at the slightly down market Fountain!

However he was not universally popular. He clearly upset some of the more unruly locals in 1869 when they burnt an effigy of him in the High Street. On Bonfire Night this effigy was firstly paraded around the town by a rowdy crowd. The procession ended outside the Fountain where the effigy of the unfortunate landlord was set on top of a huge pile of wood and shavings, made even more flammable by the addition of Stockholm tar barrels stolen from Ratsey's yard. Apparently **Thomas Jones** was chosen for this ignominy because he had upset local men who chose to parade through the town of an evening instead of using the Fountain Tap. The Police attempted to intervene and a real riot ensued. This is believed to be the last time a 5<sup>th</sup> November bonfire was held in the High Street.

This information was taken from "*The Pubs of Cowes, Gurnard & Northwood*" a new book published by **Cowes Heritage**, available from our Secretary **David Jones** on 01983 298445 or [david@friendsofnorthwoodcemetery.org.uk](mailto:david@friendsofnorthwoodcemetery.org.uk)

## **Charles Sibbick (1849-1912)**

Charles Sibbick spent the early part of his life in the building trade in which he rose to become a contractors foreman.



He was also interested in yacht design and construction and, in 1888 with the growth in interest in small racing yachts in the Solent, he decided to turn to small yacht design and construction for a living.

Based at the Albert Yard in Thetis Road, Cowes, he designed and built around 300 boats until the company went out of business in early 1903. Many of these were small racing yachts, termed *Raters*, but he also built a number of cruisers, the largest of which was 63 tons and over 60 feet long. His customers included the rich and famous of the day ranging from Princes and MPs to wealthy American businessmen. His boats were exported all around the world and some 20 of his yachts are known to still exist today.

Charles Sibbick drowned in January 1912 while rowing a small boat in the Medina River. The following is from the Isle of Wight County Press of 24<sup>th</sup> February 1912: "Few men were better known in the professional yachting world than the late Mr Charles Sibbick, who was 63 years of age. He attained considerable fame as a designer and builder of small racing yachts, his wonderful *Raters* being remarkably successful at English and Continental regattas.



Until the alteration in the yacht racing rules that practically revolutionised the design of racing craft, he was indisputably the premier designer of the type of racing yacht that made the name of Sibbick famous throughout the yachting world.

At one time he had a very flourishing business at Cowes, employing a large number of men.

He had served on the Cowes Urban District Council and was one of the founders of the Cowes Conservative Club. In his younger days he was a good cricketer and he had been secretary of Northwood Cricket Club. He was a lover of bowls and played with the Cowes Bowling Club. His tragic death has caused a great sensation at Cowes".

**Charles Sibbick** is buried in Plot 25, Grave 7494. **Martin Nott** ([martinnott@mac.com](mailto:martinnott@mac.com)) would appreciate any information or photographs relating to Charles, his staff or his yard.

**Barry Sowerby**  
Archivist

## Membership Report

We welcome these 6 new members since the last Newsletter was published and, unless otherwise stated, they live in the Cowes, Northwood and Gurnard area (Postcode PO31): **Ted Allen, Nora Fitton, Kay Hodges** (Beaworthy, Devon), **Michael & Carron Lane** (Brussels, Belgium) and **Roger Thornback** (Hornsby, New South Wales, Australia).

That brings the total number of members to 251 for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 (so, for the third year running, we have attracted over **250** "Friends"). Of these 251, 15 are Life Members.

On behalf of the Board may I extend a very warm "thank you" to these Friends for their continued support.

### **Jon Matthews**

Membership Secretary

## Cemetery Plan

Often we refer to the Plots within the Cemetery - so here is a reminder of the numbers given to those Plots.

When using the Grave search facility on the Friends' web-site, the map opposite will tell you in which of the 45 Plots the Grave is located - by highlighting the appropriate Plot in **green**.

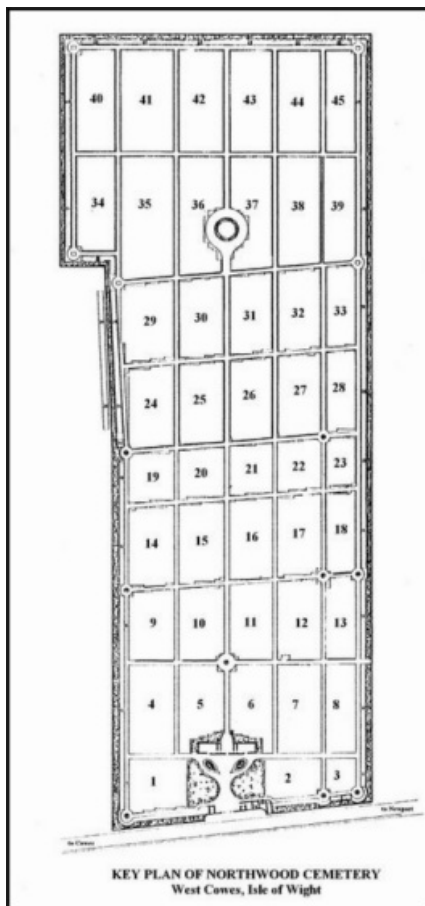
But it doesn't tell you where *within* that Plot the Grave is located.

**Nick Boyland** who, with his wife **Tina** is one of **Richard Day**'s regular volunteers on Saturday mornings, is on that particular case and we hope to be able to address this requirement early in the New Year.

Watch this space in 2012!

**With Best Wishes for  
a very Happy Christmas  
and a Healthy New Year!**

**The Board of Trustees**



## Sponsor a Memorial Tree

The **Friends of Northwood Cemetery** has received the go-ahead from the Isle of Wight Council to plant ten trees, bordering on one of the empty plots at the top of the Cemetery. These trees will be available for sponsorship to provide a memorial to loved ones - and the cost of the sponsorship of a tree will be £100.

The Board have decided that memorial plaques will be positioned in a showcase close to the main entrance of the Cemetery rather than on the trees themselves - so that they are not exposed to the elements (and vandals - a sad reflection on life in our times). In addition to a plaque each sponsorship will have a Certificate Pack and a record will be published in a Book of Honour which will be on display inside the east chapel.

The saplings which we intend to plant (in the Spring of 2012) will include broadleaved species such as *Alder*, *Ash*, *Beech*, *Silver Birch*, *Lime*, *Field Maple*, *Oak* and *Willow*.

So, if you would like to dedicate a tree *or* you wish to know more about the memorial tree initiative *or* you would like to select a species from those listed above, please contact *either* **Paul Fuller** (on 01983 289595) *or* **Richard Day** on (01983 295927).

## The Judas Tree (*Cercis siliquastrum*)



The Judas Tree, the tree now planted in front of the Friend's House, is one of a number of different species of *Cercis* (which are often referred to as Redbuds).

It is a small tree reaching up to 15 meters in height and comes from right across the globe.

There are two common theories about its name: firstly that it was in evidence

where Judas Iscariot hanged himself; and secondly that it was named after the region of Judea (now known as the West Bank of Palestine) where the tree is commonplace.

In Spring, before the leaves form, the Judas tree has a profusion of magenta pink flowers as are well illustrated in the picture above.