

## THE YEW TREE (*Taxus Baccata*)



**The Yew Tree immediately inside the Cemetery gates**

This is first in a series of articles on the trees of Northwood Cemetery.

The majority of the world's ancient Yews are in the British Isles and it is estimated that over 80% of these are in churchyards and cemeteries so local authorities and churches are the guardians of this ancient heritage - and we have our fair share in Northwood Cemetery!

As many Yew trees pre-date the churches and chapels with which they are associated it is interesting to reflect that the trees were part of pagan religious worship and many early Christian places of worship took over existing sites. As the sheep wandering around the chapels were often poisoned by eating the Yew it began the practice of building a hedge or a wall around the chapel to keep the animals out. This area was convenient for burials which led to the traditional churchyard and the Yews that we associate with it.

Although the girth is normally around 7 foot, but exceptionally up to 13 foot, it is described as a small to medium sized evergreen tree and grows up to 60 to 70 foot tall. Normally in cemeteries they are clipped and kept to manageable proportions.

A rule of thumb for determining the age is that every foot of girth equals 30 years of growth, although even this is not very accurate because Yews have the ability to stop growing (no-one knows why!) and to start again years later. Despite it being a very slow growing tree, the Yew is very long lived and most of the tree is toxic, which is why so many of them are in cemeteries which are generally enclosed areas and so easy to keep livestock out. The only non-toxic part is the red covering of the seeds. Birds can eat this covering and then drop the seed, which then grows in to another tree elsewhere.

In bygone days Yews were used for making longbows and were also popular for creating hedges.

Richard Day

## NEWSLETTER NUMBER 6

AUGUST 2009

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Chairman	Lora Peacey-Wilcox	Barry Sowerby	Tim Gladdis
Secretary	David Jones	Paul Fuller	Jon Matthews
Treasurer	Marie Gladdis	Graham Lloyd	Richard Day

Please address all enquiries to  
The Secretary, The Friends of Northwood Cemetery  
194 Newport Road, Cowes, Isle of Wight, PO31 7PU  
Tel: (01983) 298445

Email: [dave@friendsofnorthwoodcemetery.org.uk](mailto:dave@friendsofnorthwoodcemetery.org.uk)  
Website: [www.friendsofnorthwoodcemetery.org.uk](http://www.friendsofnorthwoodcemetery.org.uk)

### EDITORIAL

Thanks to the efforts of our conservation architect Peter Kilby, we have some outline plans and drawings of what we, the **Friends of Northwood Cemetery** Committee, would like to see as a future for the Mortuary building. The plans are based on the uses (for both the Mortuary and the Chapel buildings) which arose from the brainstorming session which we conducted and which was presented to, and supported by, the AGM in April. These were also reported in the May Newsletter.

We have discussed these plans with the Conservation & Design Team at the IW Council and have their agreement to them *in principle*. Now, we want to make sure that the short-term works for stabilising the Mortuary (and removing the safety fencing around it) which existed before we formulated our ideas are consistent with our longer term aspirations. So rather than going full steam ahead with those short-term works, we are reviewing with the IW Council the options in the light of our input.

So, I hope this bit of background addresses the question attentive readers of the May Newsletter will have had; why is the safety fencing still up when we said it was about to come down? The works have been put on hold whilst we liaise with the Council to develop a scheme which will achieve the goal of getting the building stabilised - and then restored - without any redundant work taking place. We did say this will be a long haul - and crikey did we get that right!!!

We are in a 'Catch 22' situation; the organisations which are most likely to give us the big grant we seek are those that only do so to **Registered Charities**. Simple then - let's become a Charity! Alas, not quite so simple; an organisation can only become a **Registered Charity** if its annual income exceeds £5,000. We did pretty well to get past £2,500 in our first year - but that is only half way there!

So, we're going for some smaller grants which, when we are successful, will count as income and take us over the £5,000 threshold. So that's what we are doing and all this, by necessity, is taking place behind the scenes.

A further matter to consider is our **Constitution**. We know we want to make some amendments to it as a result of discussions at the AGM. We have been advised that other changes should be implemented before we put it in front of the Charities Commission. So, we need to call an **Extra-ordinary Meeting** to consider the adoption of these changes and this will take place at the **Kingston Arms** on Newport Road on **Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2009**. Please accept this as the required notice of the EGM. The *proposed* new Constitution document will be published on the Friends' web-site by 12<sup>th</sup> September 2009 - so please keep a look out for it.

Meanwhile, there *are* ways you can help; if you are local, *please* pop into the new Sainsburys in the High Street and nominate the **Friends of Northwood Cemetery** as your favourite charity (with a small 'c') - there are forms in black, white and orange to do this. Secondly, if you have family in the Cemetery, then please ask anyone on the Committee to tidy up their grave and/or clean their headstone; we will gladly do this for a small donation - and thank you to those of you who have already instructed us in this regard. Thirdly, a big thank you to all those who supported the sponsored walk on 20<sup>th</sup> June; despite clashing with the 'Round the Island' race, we still managed to raise £666!

We had some excellent exposure in the *Island Life* magazine in their June/July edition. To those of you not on the Island, this is a very high quality publication that is available free at many outlets over here. A two page illustrated article gave an account of the history of the Cemetery and the aims of the **Friends of Northwood Cemetery**. The magazine's publishers have kindly given us their approval to reproduce this article but it's too long to include here. However it is available on our web-site so, if you haven't seen it in its glossy form, take a look there. A big 'thank you' to Jan Toms, the author, who became a Friend of Northwood Cemetery as a result of her research!

Our Library exhibition has now ended but we will have a major presence in Northwood House between 14<sup>th</sup> October and 9<sup>th</sup> November at the **Cowes Heritage** organisation's annual exhibition - this year's exhibition will focus on the **History of Cowes Churches** (...including, of course, Northwood Cemetery!...).

## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Space precluded listing new 'Friends' in the May edition so we have some catching up to do. We extend a very warm welcome to the following people who have not yet been mentioned in earlier Newsletters. Unless otherwise stated, they all live in the local PO31 Postcode area of Cowes, Gurnard and Northwood. In alphabetical order, they are:

Ray Andrews, Charlie Arnold, John Ash (Shanklin), Anthony & Georgina Austin, Ann Avery, John Avery (Southampton), Karen Barnett, Mary Brinton, Malcolm Carter, John & Marie Ely, Richard Emblin, Tony & Jill Feist, Adrian Gallaher, Charlie & Pearl Gladdis, Heather Gregory, Neville Hallifax, Richard Hallifax (Sweden), Debbie Hayman (Twickenham), Diana Hayman (Newport), John & Barbara Herbert, David Hirst (Nevada, USA), Jackie Hunt, Peter & Sheila Hyde, Tony & Gladys King, Jerry & Cecilia Lange (Colorado, USA), Hank Leach (Michigan, USA), David Leach (Oregon, USA), Chris & Joyce Lord, Kate MacDonell (Ryde), Stanley Malone, Tony Martin, Den Meek, Stephanie Monk (Guildford), Karen & Mark Newton, Judy Obst (Mount Barker, South Australia), Noelle Peach, Alan & Hilary Pengelly (Sandown), David & Gina Perrott (Ashford, Kent), Sharon Ridgley (Newport), Martin & Carol Ritchie, David & Donna Robinson, Susan Row, Sarah Salero, Brian & Pauline Taylor (Bristol), Jan & Terry Toms (Freshwater), Ron Trevett, Paul & June Tribbick (Perth, Western Australia), Ollie Trist, John Vaughan (London SW11), Sue Walmsley, David Walters, Tanieth White and Jeanette Woods (Petersfield).

These bring the total number of paid-up Friends in our second year to **218** so 250 by the end of the calendar year should be well within our grasp. Please keep spreading the word - and remember Membership Forms can be downloaded from the web-site!

Jon Matthews

## Answers to the Quiz posed in the May 2009 Newsletter

- (1) In what year was the very first burial in Northwood Cemetery? **1856**
- (2) What was the name of the little boy who fell into a lime pit and died in 1905? **Don**
- (3) How many acres does the cemetery cover? **17**
- (4) What is the groundsman Bernie's surname? **Coleman**
- (5) How many people are buried in the cemetery (to nearest 1,000)? **17,000**
- (6) What is the most common surname of people buried in the cemetery? **Jones**
- (7) Which two members of the Committee of the Friends are *known* to be genetically related? **Lora Peacey-Wilcox and Barry Sowerby**
- (8) What year did the Crematorium start operations and the number of burials at Northwood Cemetery start to wane? **1961**
- (9) Which family were curators of the cemetery for over 50 years? **Gladdis**
- (10) Sir Phillip Hunloke, King George V's Sailing Master, was buried in the cemetery in 1947; what was the name of the King's yacht of which he was master? **Britannia**

## SIR GODFREY BARING (1871 -1957)



Sir Godfrey Baring is buried beside his first wife Lady Eva Hermoine in a double plot on the right hand side of the main path - very close to the roundabout at the top of the Cemetery.

Lady Eva Hermoine Baring died in 1934 and Sir Godfrey remarried in 1937. There were four children from his first marriage.

Buried elsewhere in the Cemetery (in Plot 24) are his parents, Lieutenant General Charles Baring and Helen Baring.

A Liberal, Sir Godfrey stood for parliament in 1906 - his victory ended a line of 25 Conservative MPs on the Island.

He was part of the radical government that, among other measures, introduced old age pensions. He was MP for the Island until 1910 and then MP for Barnstaple in Devon until 1918.



Sir Godfrey had a remarkable record of public service; as well as being the Island's MP, he was also Chairman of the Isle of Wight County Council for an unprecedented 51 years - from 1898 to 1949. Why he retained the post for so long is summed up by a subsequent Chairman: "Because the County Council thought that he was the best person to conduct their affairs".

He was also at various times the Island's High Sherriff, the Chairman of the County Bench, a Justice of the Peace, Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire and an Alderman of London City Council. He was also Chairman of the RNLI for 33 years and, in recognition of his public service, he was invested as a Knight Commander, Order of the British Empire (KBE) in 1952.

## ARCHIVIST'S REPORT

Transcription is close to completion with *all* burials (up to 2008) more-or-less finished; there are still some 'indecipherables' to tackle - and the Minister Officiating has still to be completed (I took the view that this was not priority data and it could be added later).

We do have a significant new feature to announce in the Burial Records search facility. We have added some new links to the Results screen ([Picture](#), [Headstone](#), [Obituary](#) and [Notes](#)) to enable us (that's you as well!) to contribute additional material. These links will only appear if there is data to display - and right now there is very little available.

However, you can see what I mean if you search on MATTHEWS in 1928 where you'll see that William Alfred has all these links present.

**So, please send or e-mail to me any photograph or text document that you would like included with the name of the person to whom this new information should be attached** (any photograph or original document posted to us will be returned).

Another new addition to the web-site is an article on the development of Northwood Cemetery since 1856 - detailing the various extensions that have taken place in the intervening years (though it grew to its current 17 acres in 1933). You can find this on the History page but for those of you who do not have access to the Internet, I can post a copy to you; please call the Secretary, David Jones, on 01983 289445 with your address - and then wait a couple of days for the postman to arrive!

The transcription of the Burial Board Minute books is continuing but it's hard work on the eyes and very time consuming. However, thanks to the efforts of Margaret Elsdon in Haverhill (Suffolk) and Andy Wood in Solihull we have completed the period 1855 to 1900 and these minutes are now available on our web-site.

Barry Sowerby



**F.L.Lloyd**  
Funeral Directors, Bridge Road, Cowes



**Dignity**  
CARLING FUNERAL  
SERVICES

01983-293716

*Funeral Director : Mr. John Wall*



**24 Hour professional caring service offered  
by our dedicated local staff**

Part of Dignity Funerals Ltd - A British Company



## MEET THE COMMITTEE - RICHARD DAY



Richard moved to the Island in the 1970s when he married Ros; he worked at Siemens Plessey/BaE for nearly 33 years until taking early retirement in 2005. He then worked part time for Sainsbury's in Newport until retiring for good in March this year.

Richard is the Chairman of Gurnard Parish Council and a member of the IW Council's Ethical Standards Committee. He has also been the Chair of the Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils - and is still a Tree Warden.

Since moving to Cowes last year, he has become a member of the Cowes Community Partnership and a Friend of Northwood Cemetery - helping both organisations with nature conservation projects.

His hobbies include reading, Star Trek and nature conservation and it is through the latter interest that he is able to bring such expertise to the Friends of Northwood Cemetery as Nature Conservation Leader.

## NATURE CONSERVATION REPORT

Six months into our Nature Conservation programme, I can report that very good progress has been made, despite having only a handful of volunteers. On most Saturday mornings since early January we have had between two and six people labouring to clear excessive growth from the area in front of the Chapel - and latterly in 'Plot 1' (on the left hand side). My thanks go particularly to Karen Graves for being the volunteer with the best attendance record; her efforts are very much appreciated.

Since the major effort to clear and turf the front area, we have made inroads into Plot 1 - working anti-clockwise round the plot from the corner adjacent to the Chapel. Before any work is undertaken, all decisions relating to what we are cutting back, or down completely, are agreed by the Nature Conservation sub-Committee (myself, Jon and David)

Originally there were around a dozen Yew trees planted but, with self-seeding, there are now in the region of sixty. Many of these are crowding themselves and other trees out. So a number of the smaller Yews will have to go along with other self-seeded shrubs and trees. We have already removed one Yew and are in the process of cutting down another. This has had the effect of dramatically increasing the light into Plot 1 and we hope that a lot of wild flowers will emerge in these more open areas next year.

Finally, on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> August, Cowes Firemen kindly came into the Cemetery and removed most of the dead ivy from the upper limbs of Morinda Spruce in the new lawn area that were beyond our reach. This beautiful tree can now be seen in all its glory!

Richard Day



**A panoramic view of the Cemetery entrance since the recent nature conservation work - showing the new lawn and the exposed Morinda Spruce on the left**

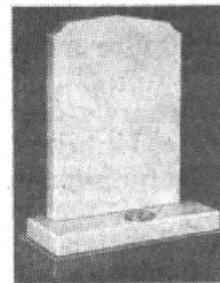


The grounds of Northwood Cemetery are an area of Cowes that has a very rich natural history.

So why not view it as **your** very own local nature reserve with an abundance of wildlife - including our prized red squirrels and other mammal; birds, butterflies, flora and fauna.

To anyone who sees it merely as a final resting place, let us invite you to broaden your outlook and recognise it as a living treasure that we can all enjoy - in life as well as thereafter.

## WIGHT STONEMASONRY LTD



MEMORIALS UNDERTAKEN  
BY ISLAND STONEMASONS  
CLEANING AND ADDITIONAL  
INSCRIPTIONS  
STONE WORKSHOP, DINGLERS FARM  
YARMOUTH ROAD, NEWPORT  
TELEPHONE: 01983 522701  
FAX: 01983 522553