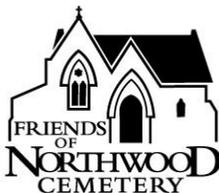


NEWSLETTER NUMBER 29



MAY 2015

Officers:

Chairman Jon Matthews
Secretary David Jones
Treasurer John Pullen

Other Trustees:

Richard Day Paul Fuller
Graham Lloyd Barry Sowerby

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Registered Charity no: 1143917

Editorial



A warm hello from your new Editor and a brief introduction and explanation of why Jon passed this role to me.

In a nutshell, Jon wanted to devote more of his time to the many other tasks required of him as Chairman and I agreed to volunteer.

Initially I was thinking more of secateurs, trowels and wellies - but here I am with pen poised wondering "what does the Editor do?" and "what do I know about Northwood Cemetery"?

I will do my best to learn about the Charity and, hopefully, meet some of you. Jon has provided bed time reading in the form of back issues that have been very helpful. I had no idea school children made visits to the Cemetery - what a brilliant idea; getting involved from cradle to grave.

A little about my background; I've been happily retired for five years, try to keep reasonably fit, like to dabble with watercolours and love holidays. I'm of Scottish origin and very settled on the Island. In fact, it was through discussions with Jon that my husband and I bought a burial plot in a really nice spot in the Cemetery.

I look forward to getting involved in "Friends" projects. Any help or suggestions you can offer in the way of articles that would be of interest to you will be greatly appreciated.

Jo Mckinnie

Editor

editor@friendsofnorthwoodcemetery.org.uk

Chairman's Report

After the frenzy of activity to meet the challenge of the **Heritage Lottery Fund's** February deadline to submit our 'Delivery phase' application, it was inevitable that some 'catching of breath' would take place during these last three months – and so it has transpired. But we did not let the grass grow under our feet and we've been out raising our fund raising profile – just nibbling away at what we have to do. To that end, thanks go to **Stella Watling** for her "*Loose Change boxes*" – which have raised **£266** so far.

We do have a regular (fortnightly) Wednesday quiz night at the **Cowes Ale House** on Shooters Hill in Cowes and that has, thus far in 2015, raised **£307**. So if you are local, and fancy a quiz night, why not get on down (8.00 for 8.30).

But the next key date is Friday 5th June when the HLF are visiting the Cemetery – including some of its people for the first time - to gain an appreciation of why we are so passionate about its virtue as a recipient of grant funding. By the end of June, the HLF will have made its decision and this should be communicated to us in July. The **Friends of Northwood Cemetery's** website will be one of the first places to look for news.

And so to the AGM; this is the formal notice that the Annual General Meeting of the **Friends of Northwood Cemetery** will take place at the **Kingston Arms** in Newport Road, Cowes on **Monday 15th June** at 7:00pm. Parking will be available in the Cemetery grounds – and it's only a short stroll from there down to The Kingston Arms.

The agenda will include the Chairman's and Treasurer's Reports (with a presentation on our application for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant) and election of Officers and Trustees.

In addition, it has been pointed out to us that the word **heritage** does not feature in our Objectives (these can be viewed on our website's Home Page). Since the Objectives form a part of FoNC's Constitution, these can only be changed by majority vote at a General Meeting. Accordingly, a motion to change the Objectives to:

- *To promote the **heritage and** preservation of Northwood Cemetery including its chapels, monuments and other standing structures for the public benefit.*
- *To promote and **maintain the** burial records of Northwood Cemetery for the public benefit.*
- *To promote the **sympathetic preservation** of the landscape, arboreta, flora and wildlife of Northwood Cemetery for the public benefit.*

will be put to the meeting. So please can we have your support at the AGM!

Jon Matthews

Chairman

Friends of Northwood Cemetery Competition Winners



Earlier this year we invited 295 pupils of Lanesend Primary School Cowes to take part in a painting and writing competition.

The idea was planned to coincide with our Lottery Heritage Funding project and the School's Year 2 study of the Cemetery.

Their teacher **Sally Coppen** has been working with the children on a yearlong project of Northwood Cemetery and our competition and their enthusiasm for the project produced some striking work. They found the Cemetery of great interest and were fascinated by stories of people buried there.

From Back Left - Secretary David Jones, Teacher Sally Coppen, Chairman Jon Matthews
From Middle Left - Sky Savill-Thomson, Dolcie Rowling, Lauren Butcher
From Front Left - Lacey Wolton, Harvey Rann, Elayeha Jones

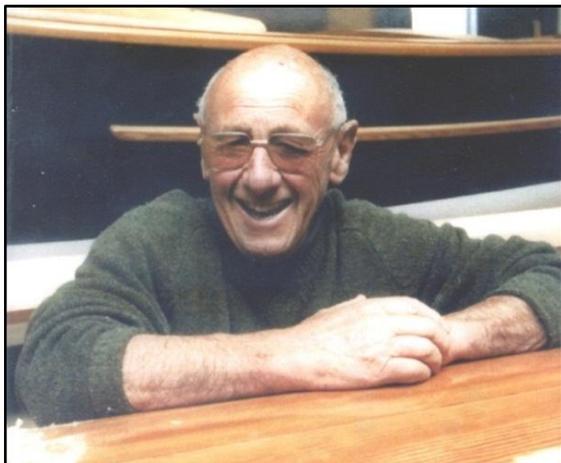
Lacey Wolton, six, won the art section with her impressionist view of the Cemetery painted in bright pastels. **Harvey Rann** and **Elayeha Jones**, both aged seven, were runners-up.

A poem about RAF Flight Sergeant Peter Maddox, a wireless operator and air gunner, who was shot down and buried in the Cemetery, was won by **Sky Savill-Thomson**, aged eight. Sky managed to capture the drama of the airman's final moments, seen through his eyes. **Lauren Butcher**, nine, and **Dolcie Rowling**, seven, were runners-up.

The winners and runners-up were all presented with wildlife packs by the **Friends of Northwood Cemetery**. Their pictures have also been framed and it is intended that they will form exhibits in the Heritage Centre which we hope to house in the West Chapel.

Jon Matthews
Chairman

Harrison Rowland (Harry) Spencer, MBE (1925-2009)



Founder of Spencer Rigging, Spencer Thetis Wharf and Thetis Engineering, this larger than life character is buried in Northwood Cemetery (Plot 39, Grave 10827).

This quote sums him up “When Harry Spencer talks, his eyes blaze vividly blue, his ears waggle, he blows out his cheeks and flaps his lips in the breeze.

As he rubs both hands over his shining pate, he sticks out his tongue and laughs”.

“No, I’m not extraordinary”, he says, “It’s just that if there’s something to be done, I’ll use my common sense and try to solve the problem. You see I’m not backward in coming forward”.

Many people in all walks of life would disagree; when it came to problem-solving Harry was extraordinary. At ease with royalty or commoner, his was a full and fascinating life.

There is only space here to consider a few of his many achievements. Leaving school aged 14 he entered an apprenticeship as a pattern maker at *J Samuel White* - by his own admission not a very good one.

During the bombing of Cowes on the night 4th/5th May 1942 he played his part during the bombardment, standing on a corrugated roof at Thetis Wharf (which he later was to own) wearing a tin helmet putting out fires with a garden hose.

After the raid Harry, in his rowing boat collected unexploded incendiary bombs, which he described as being painted green and looking like leeks sticking out of the mud.

Various jobs at sea followed, including delivering RNLi boats all round the coast. By 1948 he was a sailmaker aboard a troopship ferrying troops to and from Hong Kong, this allowed him to display and hone his many and varied skills.

Returning to Cowes in 1952 Harry got a job for a year in a Hamble sail loft, rowing there and back daily. After a spell of freelancing, turning his hand to anything, Harry was employed for 4 years by twin brothers R & W Clark.

In Harry’s words this is what happened next “The minute I quit *Clarks*, people started pouring rigging work onto me. Within a year I had five men working for me”.

Harry's fledgling company was doing work for *J S Whites, Fairey Marine, Groves & Gutteridge* and *Saunders Roe*. In the evenings he carved test tank models for *Saunders Roe*. The purchase of a towboat *Domino* added to the expanding firm's expertise.

In 1963 Harry worked on the pirate radio ship ***Radio Caroline*** and was up the rigging in all weather and hours. On one occasion his boson's chair got badly tangled leaving Harry struggling for hours trying to untangle himself. As the radio crew complained that they could not broadcast, even Harry had had enough.

Back in Cowes his companies went from strength to strength securing contracts across the world; whether rigging historic replica ships (such as the *Golden Hind* and the *Bounty*) or up tall towers and buildings, ***Spencer's*** were always up to the job.

Regrettably there is not enough space here to fully cover all of Harry's achievements; hopefully this will give a flavour of a remarkable man.

David Jones

Secretary

Ground Preservation Report

Those of you who walk down the Medical Centre side of the Cemetery will see that we are clearing the smaller trees by the path so that light can get in and regenerate the vegetation. At the same time we have attempted to clear the sludge so that the path can be used throughout the winter months – it was impassable this past winter. This is not a job that we can, with the tools and resources at our disposal, complete in a single year.

We have had challenges with the trees that were sponsored and planted (at the far end of the Cemetery to the main gates); the health of these has been the subject of much debate. Four of the seven trees have died - so we have had not one, not two but three 'tree specialists' give their opinion as to what has occurred and why.

Firstly, we are focussing on getting the three trees (a hornbeam, a small-leaved lime and a horse chestnut) that have survived into a healthy condition. We have piled in more support posts, used better strapping and surrounded the trunks with mulch rather than stone; we didn't get it all right from the start but there are good signs emerging now.

When we are confident that we have done all that we should do with these three trees then we'll replace the trees that have died and go through the same routine – but this can't be until the autumn as now is not the time to be planting.

Richard Day

Grounds Preservation Manager

Treasurers Report

The year from 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015 was dominated by the work to attract funding for the **Northwood Cemetery Heritage Project**. Details of the 'Development phase' of this project can be viewed at:

<http://www.friendsofnorthwoodcemetery.org.uk/heritage-lottery-news>

The Heritage Lottery Fund granted FoNC, in partnership with the **IW Council, £75,300** and this was expended within the fiscal year (we actually spent a bit less than this in executing the Development phase). A separate bank account was opened for the project which is in the process of audit.

Other income for the year (subscriptions, donations, sponsorships, fund raising, Gift Aid contributions etc) amounted to **£5,661.63**; non-project expenditure amounted to **£5,888.10** (both figures subject to audit); this comprised various items such as website maintenance, newsletter production, insurance, subscriptions, electricity, commissions, tools and volunteer refreshments. Thus expenditure exceeded income by **£226.47**.

Once again subscriptions formed a significant element of FoNC's income – for the 6th year in succession we attracted over **250** "Friends".

John Pullen

Treasurer

Membership Report

Subscriptions continue to be a mainstay of our regular income and, having just started a new fiscal year, collecting subs is once again a priority. But a big "thank you" goes to you if you are one of the 135 members who paid their dues before the end of April (and a big "thank you" goes to the 37 Life members as well!).

We are very grateful to **Sheila Caws** for looking after this aspect of running a voluntary group and we're sorry that her paid jobs have deprived us of her continuing efforts. Sincere thanks go to Sheila for her contributions. So if you are reading this and you'd like to take the role on, please do get in touch!

We ended the year ending 31st March 2015 with **253** members so there are still over 80 members out there from whom we'd love to receive their renewal subscriptions.

Since 1st April we have 3 new Life Members in **Brian & Noreen Buckett** and **Donna Robinson** (all Cowes) – and three new members: **Nick Clark** (Gurnard), **Malcolm Pinhorn** (Leominster, Herefordshire) and **Paul Bertie** (Cowes).

Joseph Henry Giles (1860–1934)



'Joe Giles', originally from the small hamlet of 'Itchen Ferry' near Southampton, lived at 26 St Andrews Street in Cowes and is buried in Plot 32, Grave 8805.

As a young man, Joe served on sailing ships owned by the **Ratsey** family - bringing coals to Cowes from the North of England.

Joe was never happier than when at sea which developed into a routine that found him as a fisherman in winter months and crewing on racing yachts during the summer.

Being unable to read or write (and, perhaps, more surprisingly a non-swimmer) did not stop Joe from becoming a first class yachtsman with an exceptional knowledge of the Solent tides, currents and seabed topography.

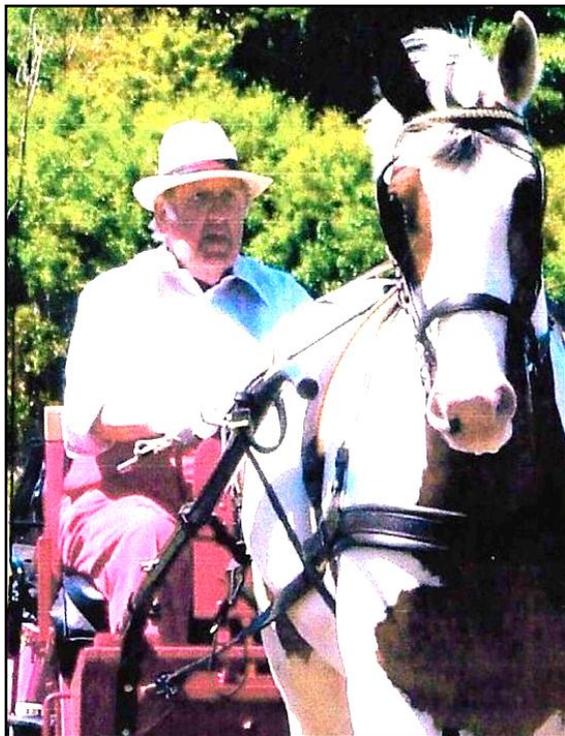
He enjoyed the challenge of yacht racing and being afloat for most of a day was considered normal.

His seafaring knowledge found him becoming engaged as a Pilot by many well-known racing yacht owners and ultimately led to an appointment as Pilot to King George V's own yacht *Britannia* in 1920 where he became well acquainted with the King's helmsman, **Sir Philip Hunloke**. He held this position right up until he 'crossed the bar' in November 1934.

Barry Sowerby
Historian

**Please support the
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
on Monday 15th June 2015
at the Kingston Arms at 7:00pm**

David Charles Biles (1935-2015), MBE



David Biles - on his beloved horse "Duke"

It was with great regret that the Trustees learned of the death of **David Biles** at his home, Somerton Farm (adjacent to Northwood Cemetery), in February.

David was a Life member of the **Friends of Northwood Cemetery** and the first such that we have lost.

A keen horseman from an early age, he first went riding in a basket seat when he was two years old – and amassed many trophies from gymkhanas.

Somerton Farm has been in the Biles family since the late 1940s; David, who was a native of the Isle of Wight, and his wife Diana (who died in 2013) moved into the farm in 1961.

David became a much loved and well known farmer, horseman and cattle dealer on Island.

He was appointed High Sheriff of the Island in 1988/1989 and, in 2000, was awarded the Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) by the Queen for his services to farming.

Not surprisingly his interest in the Cemetery was occasioned by being the adjacent landowner (at the far end from the Chapels) and the upkeep of its boundary fencing (which is included for replacement in our Heritage Lottery Fund application).

In my frequent meetings with him he always showed a sense of humour that made him a popular after-dinner speaker and raconteur – with a sparkle in his eye and a joke seemingly for every occasion.

He is buried in the Cemetery (Plot 38, Grave 11082) with his wife Diana near the 'top' roundabout; his final resting place is within sight of Somerton Farm.

Jon Matthews