



Friends of Newport & Carisbrooke Cemeteries

www.foncc.org.uk



Volunteers helping to care for the cemeteries and record the lives of those resting there

Newsletter No. 12, May 2020

Welcome to the twelfth newsletter of the Friends of Newport & Carisbrooke Cemeteries. This is being circulated to all those who have expressed an interest in the Friends and others who we think may be interested. Feel free to circulate this to others who you feel may be interested in the Cemeteries.

Receiving this newsletter does not cost you anything nor commit you to anything, but if you don't wish to receive future copies, feel free to unsubscribe (just email newsletter@foncc.org.uk) - we won't take offence.

Past newsletters can be found on the website at:
https://www.foncc.org.uk/the_group/newsletters.php



Ox Eye daisies in Carisbrooke Cemetery

Where are we? (Tony Barton)

I don't think anyone would have thought at the start of this year that a virus would have had such an impact on our efforts to clear up the cemeteries, let alone our everyday lives. We've had to cancel our sessions and don't know when we will be able to recommence.

In the mean time, our volunteers have been transcribing newspaper obituaries and funeral reports with renewed vigour – we now have over 1000 on-line records.

We had received an invitation to display, for the third year, at the Isle of Wight Family Society One-Day Conference at the start of May; but, like so much, this event had to be cancelled due to Covid-19.

Rather than our usual review of activities within the cemeteries, in this Newsletter Rob and I are presenting 'Policing on the Island' and 'Symbolism of memorials', which, hopefully, you will find of interest.

Despite our limited activities due to Covid-19, we'd welcome your suggestions and help in bringing the Cemeteries etc. to the attention of the community - just e-mail (chair.foncc@gmail.com) with your thoughts.

Island Policing (Rob Cain)

I do hope that you and your families are safe and well in these extraordinary times and I look forward to when we may be able to meet up again and resume our cemetery activities. I am sure there will be plenty to do!

Whilst I have been largely confined to the house for the past few weeks I have been using the time to indulge in my great interest – researching the history of the police service. So, in the absence of anything to report on cemetery clearing matters I thought I would share with you something of the local policing history.

The Isle of Wight is of course part of Hampshire Constabulary and has been so since 1943. Prior to that the island had its own police force, the Isle of Wight Constabulary which had been formed in 1889 when it had broken away from the Hampshire Constabulary when the island was created as a separate administrative county. Hampshire Constabulary had been formed in 1839. Ryde had established its own borough police force in 1869 which stayed as an independent force until 1922 when it became part of the Isle of Wight Constabulary.

Newport Borough formed its own force in 1837. A local newspaper article at the time said:

“The Magistrates of the island have appointed a Rural Police of ten men to patrol the Isle of Wight with Mr Charles Allen, of Newport, as their inspector. The very many depredations which have been lately committed in the country districts of the Island, have led the magistrates to adopt this measure as one urgently required for the preservation of the peace and security of property.”

By 1853, Newport Borough Police was under the command of a superintendent, George Grapes. He had been born in Newport in 1804. In 1839 he was a constable in Newport and by 1847 he had been promoted to inspector. He retired from the police service in 1872 and died on 10 November 1879 aged 75.

He was succeeded as chief officer by William C Ross who resigned in 1881.

The next chief officer was Henry Blackwell who was born in London. He had been a draughtsman at the Science and Art Department in South Kensington. He served in the City of London Police and came to Newport in 1881 as chief officer, now titled chief constable. He resigned in 1888 when he was appointed chief constable of Shrewsbury Borough Police. He retired in January 1906 and died in April the same year.

The Local Government Act of 1888 required all boroughs with a population of less than 10,000 to amalgamate with the adjoining county constabulary. Many boroughs, Newport included, tried hard to resist any mergers. However, a local newspaper report stated that the Town Clerk said:

“If the island was made a separate county.....then the police rate would be less than 1 penny in the pound, so that by retaining their own police Newport would be paying 3 and a half pennies more in the pound than they would be called upon to pay... And yet the Corporation of Newport have actually petitioned the Local Government Board to be permitted to retain their own police. I am not unmindful of the interests of the Newport Borough police force. It is an excellent force and were it disestablished, the Island County Council would no doubt gladly avail themselves of the services of all its efficient members. But fancy a Corporation declining fiscal relief to the amount of some hundreds a year and fancy the ratepayers quietly acquiescing in it! Sentiment is all very well in its way, but were I a ratepayer of Newport, I should object to pay for it to the tune of three and a half pence in the pound”.

Newport duly became part of the Isle of Wight Constabulary in 1889.

Between 1839, when the Hampshire Constabulary was established and 1889 when the Isle of Wight Constabulary was formed, Newport was effectively policed by both Hampshire and Newport Borough which led to the unusual situation of there being two police stations in Holyrood Street, one for each force.

In 1889 when the Newport police officers became part of Hampshire Constabulary, they had to make one serious adjustment. As a report in a local paper revealed:

“The transformation of the Newport borough police into members of the Hants County Constabulary was consummated last Saturday, when the members of the force appeared before the magistrates and were sworn in as county constables. What is this that we hear – that the Newport policemen who have rejoiced in moustache and beard are to be shorn, perforce, of those brave hirsute ornaments? Too true! It is a way they have in the county!”

Note: Of those mentioned above, Charles Allen and George Grapes are interred in Newport Cemeteries – other senior policemen buried there include James Gibson (1896, Deputy Chief Constable) and William Ayres (1945, Retired Superintendent).

Monument symbolism (Tony Barton)

Symbolism of grave markers is somewhat inexact as people often choose sculptures which they just liked rather than for their historic symbolism. The samples and explanations given here are not exhaustive and reflect what seems to be the generally accepted interpretation.

Anchor – Generally in our cemeteries, an anchor is a straightforward acknowledgement of seamanship, or Naval service. Where those buried have no connection with the sea, an anchor typically symbolizes hope and often served as a symbol for Christ and his anchoring influence upon the lives of Christians.



Angels – Messengers from god, angels signify a divine or heavenly presence. They may indicate that the deceased was a very religious person, or they may be there in the hopes that they will help point the soul towards heaven.



Broken Pillar – Pillars usually symbolize a good, long life, but when they are intentionally sculpted to appear broken or unfinished, it can mean a life has been cut short. The two in our cemeteries are for individuals aged 62 and 75 years.



IHS – Is the abbreviation of Christ's name in Greek. "IHS" are the Greek letters iota, eta, and sigma. On some memorials the letters are clearly readable; on others the letters may be intertwined and not so obvious.



Celtic Cross – The cross appears as a standard Christian cross, with a circle around the place where the beams meet. The circle is meant to symbolize eternity. Celtic crosses often have "knotwork" carved into them. Knots in Celtic culture symbolize resurrection and everlasting life.



Cherubs – These childlike angels sometimes mark the graves of children.



Dove - The dove is a symbol of resurrection, innocence and peace. An ascending dove represents the transport of the departed's soul to heaven. A dove descending, as pictured here, represents a descent from heaven, assurance of a safe passage.



Growing plants – Each type of flower may have its own meaning. For example, lilies represent the resurrection, poppies represent sleep and rest, and roses represent youth, love, and beauty. Unopened buds which have not yet had a chance to bloom often adorn the graves of children.



Hands, clasped- Handshakes are about leaving — saying goodbye to earthly existence or a couple who hope to be reunited in death. The latter is the case in this photo, by the shirt cuffs: one appears to be a man's cuff/hand and the other a woman's. The person who dies first guides the other to heaven, according to the International Association of Cemetery Preservationists.



Hand, single – A hand with the index finger pointing upward symbolizes the hope of heaven, while a hand with forefinger pointing down represents God reaching down for the soul.



Masonic Symbols – The compass and set-square are a very recognizable symbol of the Freemasons.



Oak leaves and acorns – oak is a symbol of strength, honour, steadfastness and immortality. Furthermore, the acorn is a symbol of life, fertility and immortality.



Obelisks – An Egyptian symbol, the obelisk can represent eternal life, heaven, or even the rays of the sun shining down forever on the deceased.



Regimental badges – Regimental badges usually appear on the graves of Servicemen who died in service and also, sometimes, on graves of retired Servicemen.



'Skull and crossbones' – Found in Carisbrooke churchyard, the 'skull and crossbones' doesn't represent a burial for a pirate, rather it represents a skull and two thigh bones, believed to be the parts of the body required for resurrection. Its use goes back to medieval times but it had fallen out of favour by the early 19th century.



Trade symbols – These vary depending upon the trade of the person buried, but in our cemeteries there are obvious examples: Seaman, Wheelwright and Butcher.



Urns – Either three dimensional or carved in relief, Urns were used in Victorian times as a general funerary symbol to show mourning.



Wreath – As a circle with no beginning and no end, wreaths can represent eternity. An evergreen wreath represents everlasting life.



St Paul's Cemetery, Halberry Lane. (Liz and Steve Priddle)

Because of having to both work from home due to Covid 19 we were hoping to clear brambles and tidy around the bushes and trees but as birds were nesting we did nothing to disturb them.

We have been watching the butterflies starting to emerge. In March the Brimstone appeared and we've also seen Peacocks, Red Admirals and Holly Blue. Also there seems to be more of the Orange-tip butterfly. We've been allowed to have one area of the graveyard left uncut so I can do the butterfly count in August.

Another area has been left so that a Grass Vetchling is able to grow - the grass like leaves are difficult to see but then a tiny crimson flower appears in June. A few have flowered early in another area of the cemetery. They seem to grow in just the south of England so we are very pleased to discover these.



We have also had a fox sunbathing near the house which has been due to the lack of heavy traffic because of the lock down. It was sunbathing for quite a while but we were unable to get a photograph.

Also because the grass cutting has been quite infrequent, the ox eye daisies have appeared. Lovely to see.



Alms houses within Newport (Brian Greening)

One hundred and fifty years ago life for working class families was extremely tough. Jobs were hard to come by and those that did were poorly paid and meant working long hours in all weathers. Thus by the time they had reached their fifties these heads of the houses were worn out. On top of this housing was often in slums or at the best sub-standard accommodation. None of this was helped by the fact that they had large families, (something, however, which they shared with the rich and famous.) Thus life for the working man was often short and it was not unusual for the man-of-house to die before his wife. Thus widows there were a plenty.

This was where a rich benefactor came in handy and around 1860 in Newport this was Mrs. Mary Pittis. This lady had built six houses on a plot of land opposite Pan Bridge that extended to the bottom of Pyle Street. These houses were to provide homes for twelve widows and during her lifetime Mary Pittis ensured they had a monthly allowance and in times of sickness were attended to. This fine lady died in 1869 and was buried in Newport Cemetery but she had lived to see her dream of helping poor widows come to fruition. The houses however were demolished in the early 21st century and, scandalously, the site is to this day a barren waste land waiting redevelopment.

In 1874, Captain and Mrs. Harvey, of Broadlands converted a cottage in Orchard Street as comfortable quarters for three aged widows. The house would have been demolished during a development in the area.

There were four more Alms Houses at the top of Newport High Street which were supposed to have been established in 1650 by Stephen Marsh. By 1870 they were dilapidated and uninhabitable so local mineral water manufacturer, Mr. Broadley Way, suggested they raise an appeal to rebuild the properties, the thinking being they could be of two storeys. Sadly Mr. Way would die and be buried in Newport Cemetery before the plan took off and as the appeal did not raise sufficient money the rebuilding only enabled single storey houses to be erected. This lack of money was strange for the properties were owned by St. Thomas Church, a body at that time that was among the wealthiest in the land. It was in May 1875 that a group left St Thomas church, led by the vicar, and headed by a fife and drum band, to arrive at the site at the top of the High Street, where hymns were sung and prayers were said before Mrs. Russell Richards laid the foundation stone, that can still be seen and read to this day. These are referred to as the 'Upper Alms Houses' and come under Newport Minster (St. Thomas's).



The Upper Alms Houses



The Worsley Alms Houses

Another group of Alms houses within the town are those in Crocker Street that date back as far as 1600, when they were owned by a Giles Kent. Upon his death they were bequeathed to the Worsley family of Appuldurcombe and became known as the Worsley Alms houses for (in 2020) "poor persons who are inhabitants of the area of the former Borough of Newport or of the parish of Godshill."

Memorial transcriptions:

Recording memorial Inscriptions in the cemeteries has been suspended for the time being due to the Covid crisis. However, new volunteers would be welcome when the crisis is over,

either as part of our clearing sessions or at times of their own choice – just email if you are interested chair.foncc@gmail.com .

The Website:

More pictures, updated grave plot maps, transcriptions etc. have been added to the website - it's an ongoing task 'forever'.

The small, dedicated, team of volunteers (with a couple of new members) are continuing to transcribe newspaper reports of the lives, deaths and funerals of those buried in the cemeteries. We now have over 1000 such research notes attached to individual records and listed alphabetically - see website [BURIALS/Research Notes](#).

We have received feedback, including from outside the UK, from family historian expressing their appreciation of the website including the newspaper transcription.

Future events:

Clearing sessions in the cemeteries continue to be suspended; details of when we resume these will be advised to those on our 'volunteer' list and will be given on our website (<https://www.foncc.org.uk>)

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