



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. 13, August 2020

Welcome to the thirteenth 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



Carisbrooke Cemetery

Where are we? (Tony Barton)

During most of the last three months we've been under full or partial lockdown, however, at the end of July it was agreed between the regular volunteers who help clear vegetation in the cemeteries that we would restart the sessions. For the time being the sessions are only open to the previously regular volunteers. So we have had two sessions in August.

Included in this newsletter is some 'interesting' (?) analysis of the burial information we have on the website from the Cemetery Burial Registers.

The Newport and Carisbrooke Community Council have installed an Armed Forces bench seat in front of Hero's Corner at Carisbrooke Cemetery Chapel.



WW1 seat at Carisbrooke Cemetery Chapel

We always 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.

Newport Cemetery (Rob Cain)

After a hiatus of some months (for obvious reasons) we decided to resume our activities at Newport Fairlee Road Cemetery. This was following a successful session earlier in the month at Carisbrooke Mountjoy Cemetery. The day, the 3rd Saturday in August, did not start too well as it was raining steadily when I left home. However, by the time I arrived at the cemetery it had improved and a small but enthusiastic and dedicated team arrived to see what needed to be done. We had agreed that we would observe social distancing while working and only use our own tools and equipment. We had hand sanitiser and face coverings ready should they be required. The layout of the cemetery obviously allowed us to spread out and work safely. The trees and shrubs had grown considerably in the time since our last visit so there was plenty to keep us occupied both on Saturday and for the foreseeable future. The weather was kind to us and the rain only returned towards the end of our session when we were preparing to pack up.



Headstone of William Lansley Cowdery (1864) and Elizabeth his widow (1880)

Hopefully, circumstances and the elements will allow us to continue to meet up regularly and continue our efforts to improve the look of the cemetery and gather information on the people resting there. There is a lot of information and photographs on the website.

Carisbrooke Cemeteries (Tony Barton)

The first Saturday session at Carisbrooke Cemetery was a fine, hot and sunny day, and we found that nature had started to reclaimed areas we had previously cleared. So we worked on an area we've previously worked on taking care to social distance and not sharing tools etc.



Three of the volunteers social distancing at Carisbrooke Cemetery

I also had an appointment with a visitor from the mainland who wanted help to locate his grandfather's, unmarked, grave plot. The help was appreciated and he intended to bring his 90 year old mother later in the week. Her father had died when she was young and she had never known where he was buried.

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

Sorry, not much to report about this quarter. I did do the butterfly count early August. The results are

- Meadow brown. 2
- Large white 3
- Gate keeper 3
- Common blue 6
- Burnet moth 3
- Small copper 1

We also had a Jersey Tiger moth which appeared a couple of days later.



Jersey Tiger moth

Mayors of the Borough. (Brian Greening)

Newport ceased to be a borough in 1974 and with it lost the ability to elect each year a town mayor. This honour throughout history had normally fallen to one of the town's leading businessmen and as the borough council comprised mainly of these gentlemen, who themselves elected the mayor, cronyism often came to the fore, and to be mayor on multiple occasions was not unusual.

A visit to St. Thomas church will enable the reader to see a board, listing all Newport's mayors as far back as 1607 when John Ridge assumed the mayoralty, a man who was given that same honour seven years later. Mayor making was the most incestuous of tasks. John Redstone was mayor on eight occasions whilst Sir Leonard Troughear Holmes, who lived at Westover Manor, was, not surprisingly, mayor eleven times - he was a most powerful man, to whom fell, before 1824, the task of nominating the local members of parliament, as well as deciding the constitution of the borough council. John Delgarno was mayor in 1795 and through the years assumed the role a further nine times. One of Newport's eminent bankers, Sir Richard Bassett, was related by marriage to John Delgarno, and he was Newport's mayor on no less than ten occasions. His son in law was Charles Bassett Roe who, following Sir Richards death, with a Mr. Blachford, took over the running of the bank and within a few years these two criminals had defrauded their Island clients out of over £130,000 by the time their crime was discovered in 1844.

In the years that followed the honour of being mayor continued to be shared by the town's businessmen and many of the names will be familiar to older residents. Names such as Whitcher, Purkis, Pittis, Pinnock, Harvey and Mew. The only name of this group that survives to this day is that of the Pittis family who gained fame via Sir Francis Pittis, a man who was knighted by Queen Victoria and whose name continues today via the local estate agents. This family name appears on the list of mayors no less the eleven times.

Within living memory the Harvey family figured as town mayors in the form of Mr. A.E. Harvey who with his son Howard, ran a successful bakery and restaurant business in more recent times.

The family that shared this honour on the most occasions however was the Mew Family. William Baron Mew was one of the town's foremost employers in the 19th century via his brewery business in Crocker Street. He was certainly mayor on at least five occasion and other family members to assume this honour were Henry Mew, Thomas Parker Mew, and Francis Templeman Mew, each undertaking the role on at least three occasions.

It is difficult to be critical of this system of electing the mayor at that time as being such often entailed dipping one's hand into their pockets as well as having time to devote to all the civic occasions that entailed, something no working class man could consider at the time. William Baron Mew lived latterly at Polars, a large house at Staplers, that befitted his status. After a lifetime of service to the town he died in February 1887 and his funeral was one that matched his lifetimes work in the town. No less than ten mourning carriages left his home followed by a procession of one hundred of his employees. He was buried in Newport cemetery.

What is sad to see is how the graves of many of our towns leading citizens have been allowed to fall into disrepair. William Baron Mew is buried next to his wife, Frances, in Newport Cemetery and their graves are good examples of how neglect by the cemetery authorities through the years has resulted in trees establishing themselves around the graves and resulted in the virtual destruction of them. These graves are far beyond the scope of the Friends to do other than remove the overlying ivy etc.



William Baron Mew's and wife's graves in Newport Cemetery

The Countess of Clare, the lady who founded the Nunnery near Carisbrooke Castle is another example of a grave that needs more than a little TLC and one wonders why the Catholic church cannot take on the task.

The obituaries of most of those eminent people buried in our cemeteries have been transcribed and are available on the Friend's web site.

Although self praise is no recommendation it is only as the result of the small group of members of the Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries that many of the graves have been cleared of vegetation and saved for future generations, we hope, to appreciate.

The number of those buried (Tony Barton)

During a period of 'cabin fever' whilst under total lockdown, I thought I'd look at the records of those buried in the cemeteries over the years.

First I looked at the total numbers of burials over the years in the three cemeteries:



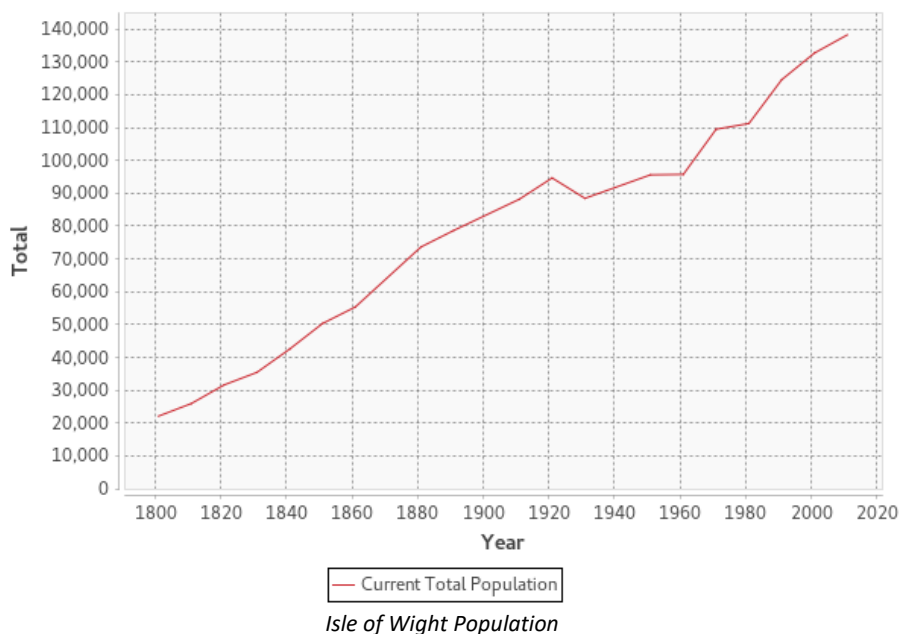
Number of burials - 1858 to 2000

There were a number of events which I thought might have had an effect on the number of burials over the years:

- 1886 – The Prison burial ground was full and subsequent convict burials were usually at Carisbrooke Cemetery;
- 1871 – The House of Industry (Workhouse) burial ground was full and subsequent inmate burials were usually at Carisbrooke Cemetery;
- 1896 – The IW County Asylum was opened at Whitecroft and deceased inmates were sometimes buried at Carisbrooke Cemetery;
- 1918 – ‘Spanish’ flu epidemic.
- 1948 – The introduction of the National Health Service.
- 1962 – The IW Crematorium opened at the end of the previous year.

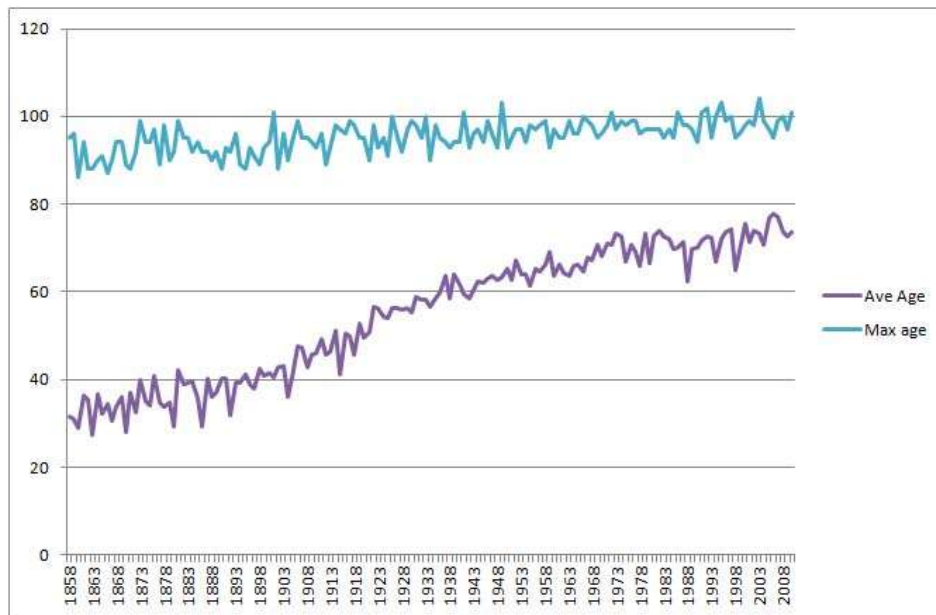
There’s possibly a peak in 1918 which might reflect the flu epidemic, and following the opening of the IW Crematorium there’s a definite downwards trend on the number of burials, but the other events don’t seem to show any significant effect.

There is a distinct dip in the 10 year rolling average after 1900 until the 1950’s. This might be something for someone else to look at in detail. An online chart of the IW population shows a dip from 1920.



http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10168405/cube/TOT_POP

A look at the average and maximum ages of those buried in the cemeteries shows the average age has increased over the years, as had the maximum age, although that’s only a relatively small increase – this supports the often asserted suggestion that those who didn’t die when young in the Victorian age, tended to live a full life. These changes no doubt reflect improvements in medical care and social conditions over the years.



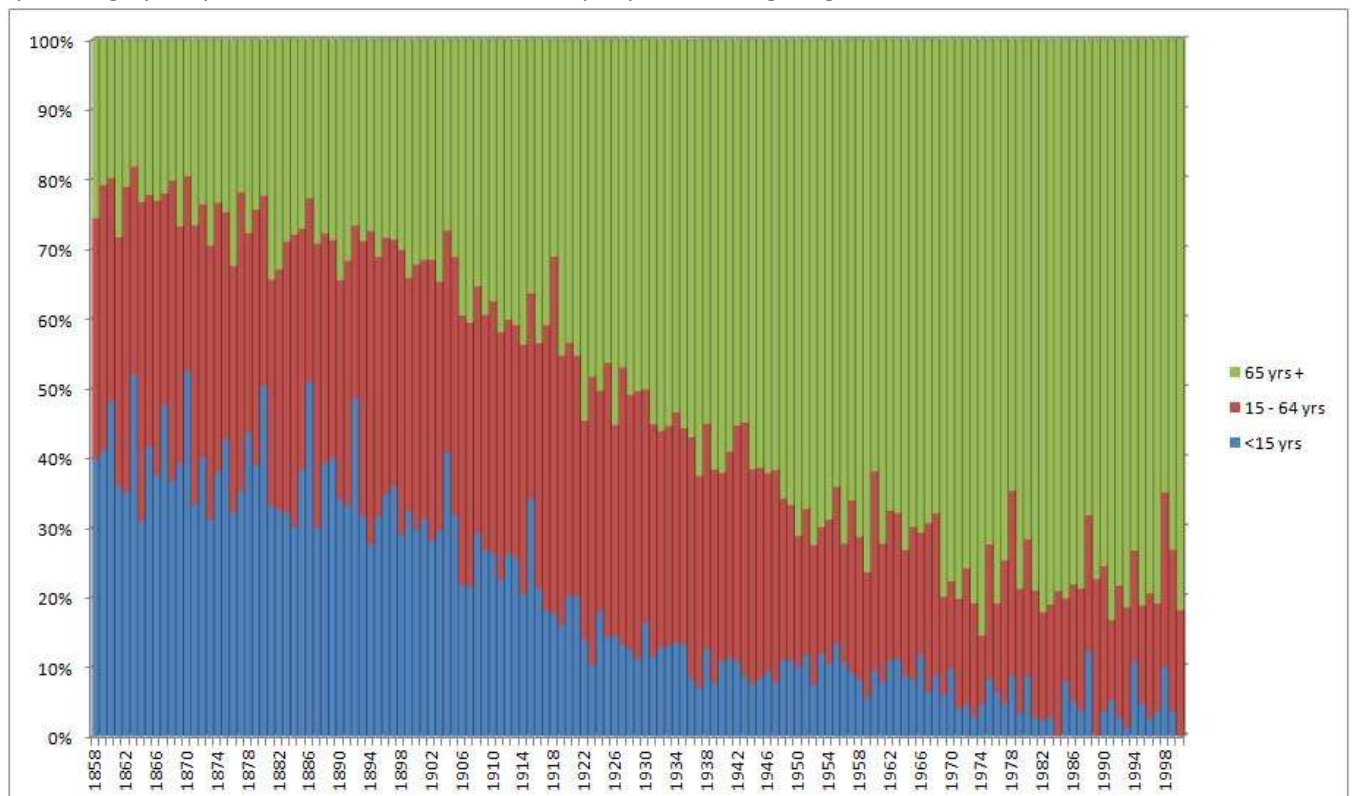
Average and maximum age of those buried each year – 1858 to 2010.

Looking at the yearly breakdown by the ages of those buried at the extreme years highlights the changes over the years:

Percentage of those buried by age/percentage		
	1858	1962*
<15 years	39.74%	10.92%
15 to 64	34.62%	21.43%
65 years +	25.64%	67.65%

**after 1962, the annual number of burials reduces and percentages became less meaningful*

The following chart shows the three burial age ranges for each year; although there have been some quite large yearly variations, the trend is clear – people are living longer.



Breakdown of burials by age percentage – 1858 to 2000

Memorial transcriptions:

Recording memorial Inscriptions in the cemeteries has been suspended for the time being due to the Covid crisis. However, new volunteers are welcome providing they are either in a 'bubble' or can maintain social distancing, 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 are continuing to transcribe newspaper reports of the lives, deaths and funerals of those buried in the cemeteries. We now have over 1150 such research notes attached to individual records and listed alphabetically - see website [BURIALS/Research Notes](#).

Future events:

Clearing sessions in the cemeteries will continue as possible with the regular volunteers.

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