



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. 14, November 2020

Welcome to the fourteenth 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



Newport Cemetery after the grass in the old lower part was cut

Where are we? (Tony Barton)

Over the last three months we've 'suffered' from some poor weather and another lockdown, which has meant we haven't managed to do much work in the cemeteries. However the Bereavement Services contractors have been busy cutting the grass in the wild-life conservation areas of both Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries; so access to the older graves is now somewhat easier (but please take care to avoid rabbit holes and uneven ground etc.)

While looking in the newspaper archives for obituaries/funerals etc., it was noted that a number of past Newport/Carisbrooke people were not laid to rest on the island but were taken to the mainland either to be interred or cremated without memorials on the island. For completeness, it has been decided to add those we come across to the database.

Those of you living on, or with close connections to, the Island, are probably aware of Brian Greening and that he died suddenly on the weekend of 12th September. Brian was one of the better known, and most published of modern island local historians. In 2017 it was Brian who persuaded Cllr. Geoff Brodie and the Newport Parish Council (as it was then) to arrange a public meeting about the state of Newport Cemetery and this led to the formation of this informal group of volunteers, the Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries, working and recording burials in the local cemeteries. Brian did do some clearing of vegetation but his main involvement was in providing the stories of those buried there; some of which he contributed to the IW County Press with pictures of graves cleared by the volunteers. Brian will be missed by Island local historians in general as well as by this group.

We send our seasonal greetings to all and ask you all to keep yourself and family safe in these times of covid. Hopefully, 2021 will be a better year than the one just ending.

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)

We did manage to arrange a couple of clearing sessions at Newport Cemetery after the end of the first lockdown and our small but the loyal and enthusiastic team of volunteers found plenty of grave sites to clear and time was also found to transcribe some inscriptions and take photographs all of which can be found on our excellent website. Unfortunately with the new restrictions the November session was cancelled but we are hopeful of going ahead with the session in December, weather permitting.

Meanwhile, to while away the time at home, I have been indulging my passion for research into various topics which hold my interest. I subscribe to the British Newspaper Archive, part of the British Library, which can provide fascinating and interesting newspaper items on an almost endless range of subjects. For example, I searched under 'Newport Cemetery' and, limiting the search to 'Isle of Wight' (to eliminate the Newport in South Wales), items can be found on the purchase of the land to build and extend the cemetery, the consecration of the various sections of the burial ground and, as you would expect, reports of the deaths of Newport residents and the subsequent funerals and interments.

Among the more unusual items I came across were the following.

An article in the Isle of Wight Observer dated 6 November 1858.

The Newport Cemetery on the Fairlee Road promises to become the most interesting feature of the neighbourhood; a new footpath is now being made, corresponding with the one in King's-field, which will be a great improvement, and afford a good promenade for visitors. The planting of the ground is entrusted to Mr William Wilkins, nurseryman, of this town who has contracted to perform the work, and to supply a full collection of the choicest and best trees, shrubs, evergreen conifers, &c. The ground is in course of trenching, and appears well suited for the growth of the plantation, which in a few years time will form quite an arboretum including the most new and rare specimens from all parts of the world.

A letter to the editor of the Isle of Wight County Press and South of England Reporter dated 19 February 1891 from [Edward William Watts](#), regarding his daughter's grave, [Mary Milsom Watts](#).

Sir, On Saturday last my wife placed a few small bunches of snowdrops on our daughter's grave, which were stolen during Sunday afternoon, while the leaves were plucked out of an evergreen cross so as to leave the wood exposed. May I ask for space in your columns to draw public attention to this matter. On making a few inquiries, I found that stealing the flowers placed upon the graves in the Newport Cemetery is quite a common practice, and the opinion seems to be general that they are stolen to be worn as button-holes. Comment is superfluous. I am, Sir, yours obediently, E W Watts.

An item in the Isle of Wight County Press and South of England Observer dated 21 March 1885.

STREET NOMENCLATURE

The expediency of naming certain streets in the borough had been considered by the General Purposes Committee and recommended, and the Mayor, Mr Ald Pinnock, and the Councillors George, Salter, Meager and Millidge were appointed a sub-committee to report and recommend to the Council as to the streets requiring to be named and the names to be adopted. The sub-committee subsequently met and made the following recommendations:

"That the road leading from Coppin's Bridge to School Lane, Barton's Village, be named Barton Road. That the street leading from Grove House on the south side of such road to the lane forming the boundary of the borough, be named Robin Hood Street, and that the two roadways on the east side of the last mentioned street be named respectively John Street and Green Street. That the road on the west side of Robin Hood Street be called Beech Road and the roadway leading out of such road be called Ash Road. That the roadway leading from the house called Fernbank, near Coppin's Bridge, to the Newport Cemetery be called Fairlee Road. That the road leading from Fairlee Road to Cross Lanes as far as the end of the road called Victoria Place be named Victoria Road. That the road leading out of such last mentioned road be called St Paul's View. That the road near St John's Church, known as St John's Terrace, and Terrace Road, be named Terrace Road and that the road near St John's Church, called Victoria Road, be named Albert Street. That the road leading from St John's Church to Shide Cross be named St John's Road. That the road leading from Shide Cross to Shide railway station be named Shide Road. That the road called Tinpit Lane be named Worsley Road."

And finally, a poem apparently written in Newport Cemetery by an unknown author, published in the Isle of Wight County Press and South of England Reporter, 6 March 1886.

LIFE TRIUMPHANT!

Resting near the flowing river
Resting 'neath umbrageous shade
Gone - but, ah, not gone for ever
here, in hope, our loved are laid
Here, in hope, till morning breaketh
Morning of unuttered joy
When the sleeping dust awaketh
Clothed with immortality!

Resting - yes, life's journey ended
Resting - yes, to weep no more
Joy and grief seem strangely blended
Pondering life's deep mystery o'er
Friendships sundered - tears and mourning
Earthly hopes and prospects fled
Why then why the graves adorning
Why with beauty, sorrow wed?

Rather let our loved, reposing,
'Neath the grassy hillocks lie
For the grave their forms enclosing
Will be emptied by, and bye
"Dust to dust," till voice supernal
Claims it for a higher sphere
Fashioned to the form eternal
Glory's impress hence to bear.

So I muse amid the sleeping
Heaven's own treasures lie below
Angel's o'er them, vigils keeping
For the heirs of life they know.
Darksome graves are not forever
Death his fiat soon will hear
Loved ones are not 'reft forever
Life shall triumph even here!

I hope you and all your loved ones stay safe and well and wish you a Very Merry Christmas!

Carisbrooke Cemeteries (Tony Barton)

We managed one session during the last three months due to poor weather on one scheduled weekend and the second lockdown preventing a session on another.

The Eldridge family of Newport. (Brian Greening)

(When compiling past issues of this newsletter, Brian was one of the last people I asked for a contribution as he always seemed to have something to-hand. But when he sent me the contribution for the August issue, he remarked that it was becoming difficult to come up with something so I suggested that he could start thinking about it - and a few days later he sent me this, his final, contribution – thank you, Brian.

After each name I've added dates of their birth and death, and a reference to where they were buried - TB)

For almost two hundred years the name of Eldridge has been to the fore in Newport's legal profession. James Eldridge (1808-1896, St John's) was born in Newport in 1808 and as was the norm in those days he didn't marry below his station for in 1835 he took as his wife Maria Pittis (1815-1888, St John's), the daughter of Francis Pittis, auctioneer (c1782-1832, Ch. Litten) (and sister of another Francis Pittis (1812-1889, Npt), who would later be knighted by Queen Victoria), another family whose name is still familiar to this day in the affairs of Newport. From this marriage came Robey Frank Eldridge (1843-1930, Caris), who was born in 1843 and the 1851 census shows him living at 35 Nodehill with his parents, his father being described as a practicing solicitor, a member of the local council and a man who employed three clerks in his business and a governess, a cook, a nurse maid and a housemaid in the family home, so obviously the legal profession was quite lucrative.

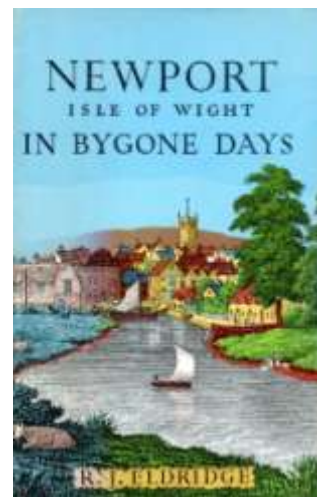
Later Robey Frank would have a brother, another James (1856-1948, Caris) – James the father with his two sons would later form the firm of solicitors 'James Eldridge and Sons'.

Young Robey Frank soon joined the family business and he married Harriett (1850-1942, Caris), the daughter of his late uncle the Rev. Robey Eldridge (c1807-1861, Caris) in 1873 and from this marriage came another Robey Eldridge, this one being Robey James (1877-1967, Caris). Robey Frank became deeply involved in Newport's civic life aspiring to be the town clerk and later as an elected member became mayor of Newport in 1884. He was mayor at the time Princess Beatrice, the daughter of Queen Victoria, was married and not only attended her wedding but took to Osborne House the wedding present from the people of Newport, that was an edition of the complete works of Shakespeare, essential reading for any honeymoon couple! He latterly lived at Watergate but remained deeply involved in the affairs of the town and it was he who proposed the building of the County Technical Institute and Seely Free library in Nodehill. He died in 1930.

If a man ever aspired to become more famous than his father it could have been Robey James Eldridge, who was born in 1877. He also didn't marry below his station and took as his wife Miss Agnes Way-Buckell (1888-1977, Caris) whose father was another eminent town solicitor, William Tucker Way Buckell (1851-1902, Npt). Both husband and wife, as well as being involved in the affairs of the town, were very sport minded and whilst Robey James played both football and cricket for Newport, the couple were both members of Newport golf and tennis clubs. Robey also excelled at snooker and billiards. How he fitted this all in is a mystery because he was a founder member of the Rotary Club, secretary of the Blue School charity, a trustee of Carisbrooke Castle museum, a director of the town's County Club and one of the founder members of the famous 1st Newport Old Guard Scout

troop. At the same time he was deeply involved in the affairs of St. Johns church and a director of Weeks Ltd.

However I believe his most lasting legacy was that of being the author of the excellent local book entitled, "Newport Isle of Wight in Bygone Days," that through the years has become essential reading for local historians. He died in 1967 and like the most of his family was buried in Carisbrooke Cemetery. The family had a close involvement with St. John's church, and a number were buried in that churchyard – when the grave markers were cleared from the churchyard in 1960's, only two were left, and remain today - both Eldridge's – James and Maria, and Frances, the first wife of James jnr.



(I don't know if Brian recognized the similarities between Robey James Eldridge and himself, but I see them both as Local Historians, both gave talks to island groups and both published their research.

'Newport in Bygone Days' is held in a number of libraries around the island - used copies are available on Amazon (as at 30 November), biblio.com and other on-line places (I'd avoid the paperback reissued version, mine fell apart!)

With the loss of Brian, we are going to need other contributions in future – so we would welcome any family stories etc. – TB)

Memorial transcriptions:

Recording memorial Inscriptions in the cemeteries has been suspended for the time being due to the Covid crisis. However, we did manage to do some during a session at Newport Cemetery and a few inscriptions have been transcribed from photographs of memorials.

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 1250 such research notes attached to individual records and listed alphabetically - see website [BURIALS/Research Notes](#). Smaller reports have been added to the individual records themselves.

As mentioned previously, while looking at the old newspapers we identified that some past Newport/Carisbrooke people were not laid to rest on the island but were taken to the mainland either to be interred or cremated without memorials on the island. These included such characters as Alexander Sharp (of the timber merchants), Owen Day (of the decorators' merchants) and Frank Morey (of the 'other' timber merchants, an authority on botany, geology and archaeology; whose body was cremated at Woking and his ashes were

scattered in Borthwood Copse, Apse Heath, which he had previously gifted to the National Trust.) For completeness, it has been decided to add those we come across to the database, currently there are some 45 'not buried here'.

Future events:

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

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