

NEWSLETTER 2010

YEALMPTON WOODLAND BURIAL ASSOCIATION



WELCOME FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to our fourth edition of the Yealmpton Woodland Burial annual newsletter. We have had a relatively calm year, during which we gained another 54 members of the Association. Woodland burial is becoming much better known as an option for people to choose. We have taken part in two academic surveys of woodland burial organisations – even the government seems to be interested in it as a viable small business for landowners. The possibility of a more natural type of burial appeals to an increasing number of people. This may be because of a reduction in alternatives. Many churchyards have become full and municipal cemeteries sometimes have restrictive rules that do not suit everyone. Cremation is still much more common than burial, especially in towns and cities, but, again, people are much more aware of the adverse environmental impact of cremation, possibly due to the adverse publicity associated with pollution from incineration.

We planted our first trees at Lower Heddon in 2003. Some species have thrived, whereas others have struggled with the cold winds that blow there. In the coming months we plan to undertake an audit to get a more systematic assessment of tree happiness. We would also like to access information on the relative environmental impact of burial and cremation, as this is one of the questions we are often asked, especially when we speak to the press.

I hope that you enjoy the newsletter. Do contact us if you would like any more information: 0773 980 6898 (mobile phone) enquiries@woodlandburial.org.uk
Linda Durman, Honorary Chairman

KEEPING THE BURIAL GROUND CLEAN AND PLASTICS-FREE

Our Association has very few rules for its members, but we do try to keep the burial ground free from plastic that is not bio-degradable. We know that many people attending a funeral at the burial ground, will not be aware of the Association's rules or, possibly, of the environmental damage that plastics can cause. This is one of the reasons we placed the information board by the turning circle. It includes the words:

‘We aim to reduce the environmental impact of burial and ask that coffins be made of softwood or other renewable or recycled material. We ask that no embalming fluids, flower oasis or plastic be brought onto the burial ground.’

We welcome the innovation and diversity people bring when tending and personalising a grave. We know that all items placed on and beside graves have been chosen with love and care, and may have great meaning, and so leave everything in place for a while immediately after each funeral. However, we do sometimes arrive at a point at which we need to remove a plastic item from a grave. If this happens, we will ask you to contact us to let us know if you would prefer to collect the item or for us to dispose of it.

Dogs are not really allowed at the burial ground, but we tolerate them if kept on a lead. We have had instances of dog fouling, so please clear up after your dog if necessary. This is a public place, and it is important to protect any visiting children from the risk of toxicara infection. Toxicara canis is a roundworm infection affecting almost all puppies soon after birth. They then pass on the infection to soil and grass when they poo, and this can survive for years in the soil. If a child touches infected soil or grass, they can become infected themselves. At first the infection may be mild, and difficult to diagnose, but toxicara can lead to meningitis, epilepsy and blindness. If children are infected, they are more likely than adults to suffer serious illness. I'm sure you will all agree that it is not worth the risk. Once soil is infected, there is no sure way to make it safe again. Prevention is the only answer. We trust that these policies will keep everybody happy, and will maintain an ecology friendly burial ground.



MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

As a 'not for profit' organisation we endeavour to keep our subscription charge as low as possible for as long as possible. The subscription has remained unchanged for three years, and a decision to increase the subscription is not taken lightly. We are facing additional costs next financial year as a result of an increase in rates and maintenance costs. For that reason we intend to increase the present subscription from 1st April 2010. This will not impact upon present members, but if you know of anyone who has contemplated joining YWBA, you may wish to let them know that they can save money by doing so by the end of March 2010.

COFFIN MATERIALS

Many people believe that a coffin made from hardwood, such as oak, is not the best use of such a slow growing resource. At Yealmpton Woodland Burial, we encourage use of a coffin, urn or shroud that has been made from a more bio-degradable, recycled or renewable source material such as soft wood, willow, bamboo and felt. Cardboard was the first alternative available, but has not proved very popular. In the last few years, many new providers have brought sustainable alternatives on to the market, so that there is now a wide range of coffin and burial caskets available.



Water Hyacinth coffin

Willow and bamboo coffins have been used successfully for some time, and now wool and sea-grass are some of the materials that have been added to the list. More recently we have become aware of the water hyacinth which is a powerful aquatic plant and is woven to produce a graceful yet resilient casket. Sometimes referred to as the 'golden plant', in its natural environment the water hyacinth grows rapidly forming a dense mat across water surfaces. The stems of the plant are woven around a frame resulting in the production of beautiful coffins. Many of the products using alternatives to hardwood appear on our supplier leaflet. We do not supply coffins or caskets, and have not performed quality checks on the suppliers named. We provide the leaflet purely to make it easier for people to find a sustainable alternative to hardwood.

SWINE FLU

On 29th April 2009, we were contacted by the Bereavement Services and Cemeteries Manager, Exeter City Council. He asked all burial ground and cemeteries in the county to indicate how many burials we might be able to cope with in a day, if swine flu became a killer epidemic. Their worst case scenario was that we would have to cope with as many burials in a ten week period as we would usually have in a year. This was not something we had thought about before.

Our immediate reaction was one of concern, because our prices are so competitive, that we might become inundated with requests. We met with the emergency planning team for Yealmpton, and had their support in trying to reserve Yealmpton Woodland Burial for local people.

We explained this to the county officer and also that we are a community association run by volunteers which would have to be taken into account. As things turned out, it was not necessary to engage County wide full emergency procedures. In fact, during December 2009 and January 2010, demand has been lower than in recent years

NATURE NOTE

We are always very mindful of our impact on the environment and in order to reduce our carbon footprint we continue to use nature's most natural mowing implements — sheep. North Country Cheviot crossed with Blue-faced Border Leicester known as Mules — the sheep are often to be seen beyond the stock-fencing. Whilst there is still the necessity for occasional use of a petrol-driven mower, the sheep are given the opportunity to roam freely doing what they do best.

BURIAL GROUND SECURITY

At the time of setting up YWBA the committee felt that security of the site was an issue that should be addressed. Our concern was, and still is, to avoid fly tipping, unauthorised parking and improper use of the burial ground. For this reason the gate giving access to vehicles is padlocked, although pedestrians can always walk in through their gate. All members and/or their representatives, are advised of the combination number.

Unfortunately, there are occasions when the vehicle gate is found closed but unlocked, and this is causing concern. If you look in the adjacent field, you will see a large mound of tree waste just inside, that was fly tipped there last year. If this were to happen at Lower Heddon, it could impair arrangements for a funeral. So please ensure that the gate is locked on departure. We will really appreciate your cooperation on this.

{ 'OUR CONCERN IS TO AVOID FLY TIPPING' }



NOTICE AND AGENDA FOR THE AGM 29TH APRIL 2010 AT YEALMPTON COMMUNITY CENTRE AT 7PM

1. Minutes of AGM 2009
2. Honorary Chairman's Report
3. Honorary Treasurer's Report
4. Resignation and Re-appointment of Honorary Officers
5. Next year's AGM 29th April 2011, same venue at 7pm

We are still awaiting the standard Government Document from the Charities Commission to proceed with Charitable Status approved at the 2008 AGM.

PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW EMAIL ADDRESS

enquiries@woodlandburial.org.uk