

Receptions

We are pleased to recommend The College Equestrian Centre who provide receptions after funerals. Their charges start from as little as £3 per head and they are willing to cater for your needs with a licensed bar and excellent facilities. You can visit at any time and even watch the horses and riders in competition. For further information please contact Patsy Bates on 01234 708400/1 info@keysoe.com. The College Equestrian Centre, Church Road, Keysoe, Bedford. MK44 2JP



Why are people choosing woodland burials ?

Cremation was illegal in Britain before 1884 and the Roman Catholic Church only authorised its use in 1963. The swing towards cremation came after World War II, when the Government and local authorities encouraged it as an efficient and convenient method of disposal instead of cemeteries. The cremation movement's campaign slogan was 'Save the land for the living'. About 70% of people now choose this method or have it chosen for them when they die.

However many people are now deciding for themselves that woodland burial is a better and more responsible choice. A crematorium is a sad impersonal place and we are increasingly aware of the damage which they cause to the environment. Cremation consumes energy and produces greenhouse gases, it also causes pollution with poisonous chemicals, such as mercury from dental fillings. Woodland burial is different in many ways. For example, over the past few decades wooden coffins have actually been made from plastic veneered chipboard or MDF, bonded with formaldehyde resin. When a woodland burial takes place, the coffin used is made from real wood, or another natural material. Whilst traditional cemeteries took away precious land, woodland burial actually creates green spaces with precious trees as woodland havens for wildlife. Perhaps the biggest difference is just the way that woodland funerals make everybody feel so much more uplifted on the day. Woodland burial is here to stay!



Treasurer's Report by Mrs Janet Day

The woodland has been operating for two months and we have carried all the initial starting costs thanks to generous support. We are grateful to individuals and churches, as well as the Diocese of St Albans and the Bedford North Methodist Circuit.

If you would like to become a Friend of the Trust, we are offering 5 years membership for £25. This will really help support the Trust and we will be delighted to send you updates on how things are progressing at the woodland. Please complete your details below and return to us, or contact our Administrator Linda Parry.

I would like to become a Friend of the St Albans Woodland Burial Trust £25 (5yrs)

If enclosing a cheque please pay to St Albans Woodland Burial Trust

Name

Address

These details will not be passed to any third party

Email

Telephone

Please Gift Aid my donations (Yes / No)

Please return to: St Albans Woodland Burial Trust. The Administrator: Mrs Linda Parry
St. Mark's Church Community Centre, Calder Rise, Bedford. MK41 7UY. Tel/Fax 01234 342613
Email: woodland@thisischurch.com www.thisischurch.com/woodland

Woodland Burial

The natural choice

St Albans Woodland
Burial Trust

Registered Charity No. 1118216

On behalf of the Trustees of the St Albans Woodland Burial Trust, I welcome you to the first edition of our newsletter, through which we hope to communicate with all of our Friends. If you have not yet registered as a Friend of the Trust, please do so, we can then keep you informed of developments at the woodland. Details of how to register are found on the back page.

I am delighted to report that our woodland was officially opened and consecrated on 7 June 2007 by The Bishop of Bedford, The Right Reverend Richard Inwood. You will know that consecration was crucial, we are now one of only two consecrated woodland burial grounds in England. We are also the only consecrated burial ground in this region which is available to the general public. At one time all churchyards in England were consecrated; this gave them the greatest protection available in English law and ensured that they were not built upon, or subsequently used for another unsuitable purpose. Increasingly this protection is being taken away on council and privately owned cemeteries. Instead leases are sold on grave space for a limited amount of time, usually between 30 and 70 years.

We all know that consecration does not make the soil more holy, but it does set our woodland aside as a special sacred space for ever. You can be assured that this woodland burial site will always remain as a natural woodland setting. It cannot be sold for another purpose and it will not fall into disrepair. Since the ground is consecrated by the Church of England as a sacred space, people who are buried here can lie in this land for ever, until nature runs its natural course. Consecrated woodland burial ensures that our loved ones really do 'Rest in Peace.' It is good to see the church making this new initiative, returning to one of our core principles in caring for people through death and bereavement. Of course we will show care and compassion to all people, without regard to race or religion. All of our volunteers are trained in bereavement counselling, because we take seriously the importance of offering the very best care to those who face death or suffer the painful loss of somebody they love.

It is appropriate in this first newsletter to say thank you to Mr Simon Bates of the College Equestrian Centre, for his assistance in making a gift to us of our beautiful two acre woodland, surrounded by 60 acres of countryside with planted trees. Our woodland can be accessed by public footpaths, however Simon has also agreed terms with the Trust to lease the access road and car park for a period of 999 years. The Equestrian Centre has proved popular with visitors to the woodland who enjoy refreshments whilst watching the horse shows. Please enjoy reading about the woodland and speak with us, or visit our website if you would like to know more.

Charles Royden
Chair St Albans Woodland Burial Trust





Scenes from a Woodland

On the 7 June we were pleased to welcome The Right Reverend Richard Inwood, representing the St Albans Diocese and The Reverend Martin Hounfield from the Methodist Church to consecrate the woodland. Present at the occasion was Mr Lee Coley, responsible for arranging all the legal contracts on behalf of the Trust. We were joined by Trustees, ministers, members of the public and other friends. It was a special pleasure to welcome The Venerable Malcolm Lesiter, one of the original team who worked for many years to establish woodland, when he was Archdeacon in the Diocese of St Albans.



The excavations to lay a road and car park at the site went well and we now have access for all vehicles to the woodland. This development was only allowed to be carried out following a full archaeological survey.



In accordance with our environmental concern, coffins which are made of natural products are used. This includes wood and wicker. Grave digging is undertaken by our professional contractor using a small mechanical excavator. We have been delighted by the careful dignified manner in which graves are dug. We have also established the practice of revisiting graves to level soil, rather than creating large mounds of earth to allow for settlement. In keeping with best environmental practice, only single depth graves are used.



The Trustees have authorised the provision of oak cross markers for graves and also carved memorials, such as the one shown opposite. We were honoured that the first of these memorials was erected by the family of Mr Victor Farrar. He had served as architect in our team as we first sought to identify a site for our woodland and plan the principle of burial in glades.

The Trustees have also agreed to allow the dedication of a tree in memory of somebody who has died, together with an oak plaque. Several of these can now be seen at the woodland. The Trustees are soon to agree the provision of memorial benches and we hope that these will be donated and made available on site for visitors.



Introducing Mrs Linda Parry - Administrator

The first contact most people have with the Trust will be with our Administrator Mrs Linda Parry. As well as recently becoming a grandmother she has been devoted in helping the Trust become established. Linda has experience of working with bereaved families and provides a caring support to families making arrangements.

As part of my role as administrator for the St Alban's Woodland Burial Trust, I have been visiting the woodland at Keysoe over the past year and there have been many changes. The beauty and serenity of the area never ceases to uplift my spirits and recently, during the spells of good weather, I have been able to stand and appreciate my good fortune in being a part of this whole venture. I have met with many people as they make arrangements following a bereavement, I am also privileged to be able to assist people considering arrangements for themselves and we have now also taken a number of reservations.

The woodland is ready for us to consider how we can best develop this area as a place of special natural beauty and a haven for wildlife. We are delighted to have welcomed Mr Chris Rose, Forestry Consultant, to help us develop our plans. It is exciting to be at the start of something so special and unique. The Trustees are taking great care to ensure that the woodland is developed in a way that will establish it as a most special place.

In the past couple of months we have had 4 burials, 5 interments and 6 reservations. We have also dedicated six trees in memory of loved ones. Commemorative plaques will be placed by the trees in the near future. Reservations cost £325 and this covers half of the charges of burial at the time of death. Some people have chosen to pay all of the cost now, this means that there will be no burial fees to pay at a later date. We are grateful to people who make reservations because it allows the Trust to repay our loans and avoid paying interest.

I have felt privileged to offer help to people facing the most traumatic event of their lives, the loss of a loved one. I have spent some years previously working with the bereaved and I am engaged in ongoing training as a counsellor. The Trust takes seriously the need to offer compassionate support to all who come to us. We respect people of all different cultures, and beliefs and the woodland is open to people of all faiths, and no religious faith at all. We simply ask that any graveside ceremony be dignified and respectful.

At present there are many birds in the woodland, including Tree Pipits, Pied Wagtails, Willow Warblers, Chaffinch, Swift, Pheasant, Partridge and Hawks. We have named the first glade Skylark as this was the first bird to be identified there – you can't fail to hear their song. You are welcome to visit the site and enjoy walks in 60 acres of surrounding countryside, dogs are always welcome. You can access the car park until 6.00pm every evening. I hope, like me, you will visit often to enjoy the natural beauty of God's creation. During the day time you can also visit the College Equestrian Centre for refreshments, the bar is often available and a cafeteria. You may also be fortunate to see the magnificent horse jumping or show events which take place regularly. Our website www.Thischurch.com/woodland is kept up to date and you can also contact us by phone or Email. I look forward to speaking with you and appreciate opportunities to hear from friends.

Linda Parry