

# FRIENDS OF BRANDWOOD END CEMETERY



Newsletter Issue No 2

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## THE CIVILIAN GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE



Walking the cemetery during the 'Poppy Project' to locate the scattered military graves we soon became aware, if only by the dates, that many of the family graves we were passing recorded a large number of deaths during 1939-1945. Further enquiries revealed that the Brandwood End Cemetery did in fact have many victims of 'The Blitz' with some victims buried in unmarked graves.

Initial research has revealed that in 1948, the then Ministry of Health issued a circular regarding the marking of graves in which civilian war dead were buried with assistance from the Exchequer towards the cost of memorials erected. In 1952, the Birmingham City Council decided to have the Parks Department design and layout memorials in the City Cemeteries containing civilian war dead who lay in unmarked grave areas.

Each memorial was to be comprised of, 'a garden surrounded by a wall or a hedge with a wrought iron gate inset. Upon the gate will be placed a bronze plaque indicating that the garden is a memorial to the civilian war dead of the 1939-45 war, and that the names of the dead are inscribed in a Book of

Remembrance situated in the chapel of the cemetery'. This was to cost £2,792; a very tidy sum in the early 1950s.

Well we have such a Memorial Garden and a Book of Remembrance which thankfully survived the chapel fire.

If you want to find the garden, walk along the main drive, pass the Mortuary chapels and the Cross of Sacrifice, carry on down the hill and pass by the Oak Tree Island, and there on the left is all that survives – the gate way with its wrought iron gate and the bronze plaque.

Well, this is not good enough; and so another project begins to restore the garden to its original design. With the help of a local horticulturalist, Pat Workman and her husband Steve, both active members of the Friends, we are in the early stages of planning the restoration of this garden and seeking funds to support this project. Watch this space.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Brandwood End Cemetery will take place on Monday 10th April, 2006 at St. Bede's Church, Doversley Road, Kings Heath commencing at 8.00pm. This is your opportunity to receive the Annual Report and elect the Committee for the coming year. We hope that as many "friends" as possible will attend. The annual membership subscription also becomes due on this date and further details will follow.

## POPPY PROJECT NOVEMBER 2005

### WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

There are 210 war graves from both World Wars within our Victorian cemetery at Brandwood End Cemetery, and there are many other memorials recording those Brummies who now actually lie buried 'in the corner of some foreign field' but were still proudly recorded by their relatives on family monuments and gravestones.

As part of our purpose in assisting in maintaining and restoring this cemetery, the Friends included a project involving these war graves and memorials which lie scattered throughout this large cemetery.



Many servicemen are buried at Brandwood End Cemetery, and indeed in other city cemeteries, as Birmingham was a major centre for military medicine during the wars. During the First World War, in addition to many small facilities in the grand houses on large estates, such as Highbury Hall in Kings Heath, there were four main military casualty hospitals in Birmingham: the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern General (3,500 beds) was located at the University of Birmingham; the 2<sup>nd</sup> Southern General at Dudley Road Infirmary (1,800 beds); the 1<sup>st</sup> Birmingham War Hospital at Rubery Hill Infirmary (1,000 beds); and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Birmingham War Hospital at Hollymoor Infirmary (900 beds).

Again during the Second World War the Birmingham area had major military hospitals, which included the No 7 Canadian Hospital at Marston Green.

'The Friends' project was simple, but particularly

poignant in this the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE and VJ days. Each known war grave was located within the cemetery and for Armistice Day, a small wooden 'poppy cross of remembrance' placed on each grave. Those service personnel with unmarked graves, many of whom are named on the Screen Wall around the Cross of Sacrifice in the centre of



the cemetery, were also remembered by their 'poppy cross' being placed near the Cross of Sacrifice. The crosses of remembrance were sponsored by the Co-operative Funeral Service who kindly made a donation to the Royal British Legion on our behalf.

The Friends will also be researching the history of the service personnel, and already several holders of the Military Medal awarded for acts of gallantry, have been identified so this is an ongoing project.

Some war graves are still regularly visited by relatives. However, while the Commonwealth War Graves Commission performs an excellence service in maintaining their war memorials, and poppy wreaths are always placed on the Cross of Sacrifice by the Royal British Legion and the City Council on Armistice Day, many of these war graves are no longer tended or visited; nor sadly remembered.

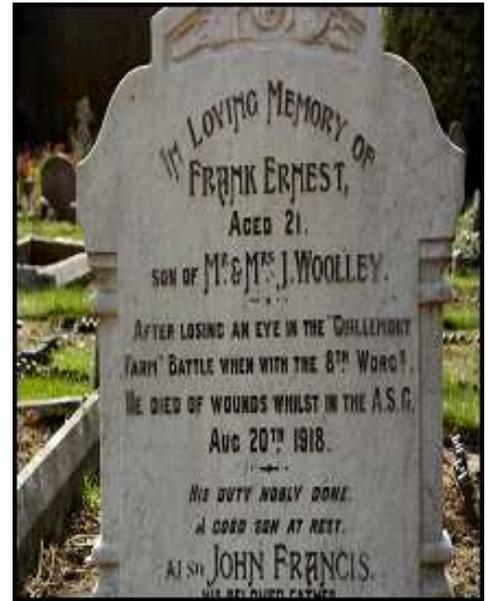
Many relatives have now moved away the area and many of the military personnel are buried far from their homes. For example there are graves of three Australians, two Canadians and two Polish servicemen within the cemetery.



## POPPY PROJECT NOVEMBER 2005

### FACTS AND FIGURES

- 189 individual graves scattered throughout the cemetery each have a poppy cross of remembrance
  - 35 individuals named on the Screen Wall around the Cross of Sacrifice each have a poppy cross placed below their names
  - 20 poppy crosses encircle the base of the Cross of Sacrifice
  - 40 poppy crosses are placed in cross formation to the North, East, South and West aspects of the Cross of Sacrifice
- 284** Poppy Crosses in total were placed by The Friends during this project.



### THE FRIENDS GO WORLDWIDE

For your information we now have a Website on the World Wide Web, so for those of you on the Internet try:

**[www.fbec.org.uk](http://www.fbec.org.uk)**

This website will not replace the Newsletter but is there to increase the flow of information. Importantly, it helps us to spread the message that the Friends of Brandwood Cemetery (FBEC) is an active community group, and keeps our main aims in the public view locally, nationally and internationally.

The Website contains pages on: News, Events, has downloadable Membership Forms so you can encourage others to join us; Picture Galleries and Links to similar sites.

### CEMETERY WATCH - ILLEGAL DUMPING

It seems we must become a version of Neighbourhood Watch so, Cemetery Watch begins as of now!

If you see anyone dumping anything like tyres or old refrigerators in the enclosed work area opposite the Superintendents Office, please take their vehicle registration number and then let the Cemetery Officials have that information - anonymously if you wish, but let us stop this practice.

To dispose of these tyres and refrigerators takes money from the Cemetery's budget which could be used for far better matters.

Be aware, watchful and report such activities - let's nip this activity in the bud!

### LITTER PICK

“As part of the forthcoming Lent Initiative, Anglican Churches have been asked to undertake an act of kindness to the local community. The Rev'd Andy Delmege, Vicar of St. Bede's Church, Brandwood, and his congregation, have suggested that this be in the form of a Litter Pick in Brandwood End Cemetery. This kind offer has been gratefully accepted by the “Friends” Committee.

Therefore, the third Litter Pick will take place on Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2006, from 10.00.a.m. to 12 noon. An Environmental Warden will be present, complete with black refuse sacks, pickers, etc.

Please join the “Friends” Committee and members of St. Bede's congregation. We will meet at the Superintendent's House at 10.00 a.m. You will be more than welcome and greater numbers should result in a very clean and tidy Brandwood End”.

The “harvest” from the second Litter Pick was approximately half that of the first which means that we are definitely making an impact.

## MORTUARY CHAPELS – UPDATE



**So you have heard a lot about: Poppy Projects, Memorial Gardens, Litter Picks and Websites, but wasn't this all about the restoration of the Mortuary Chapels?**

Of course, the restoration of the Victorian Mortuary Chapels remains the major long term aim of the Friends. However, what we all have to remember is that this will be a long journey and we must have patience.

We all know that much of the damage to the building was caused by neglect after the fire, and that this neglect should not have occurred. That said, the Friends is all about going forward and not wasting time looking back; what has happened has happened, and there is nothing we can do can alter that. We cannot rebuild anything by standing on soap-boxes bemoaning the past – to succeed we must look forward.

As an Organisation we have taken the first and important step of placing the Mortuary Chapels, their history and condition very firmly in the wider public view. They are no longer something just known locally to us, but now they are known to the wider public – and people do care that we care.

As a result of the increased interest the City Council commissioned Urban Design to undertake a Structural Safety Review of the buildings, which is an essential step in the process. Once we can secure the buildings, then we as the Friends can instigate an architectural review, required to assess what needs to be done to restore this beautiful Victorian heritage.

All this **MUST** be done before we can even consider applying for Heritage Lottery Funding, which will be essential for any restoration/repair **AND** importantly, before we can make that funding application, we also need to construct a 'Business Plan' as to how we, as a community, intend to make use of these buildings in the future.

This is just a thumb nail sketch of a complicated process so that you can appreciate that this is a long term project; it remains the central plank for our existence. The journey will be a long one but well worth it in the end.

## PATRONS

We are pleased to announce that Professor John Hunter FSA has agreed to become a further Patron of the "Friends". He is an internationally renowned archaeologist, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquities and one of Her Majesty's Commissioners for Ancient Monuments (Scotland). He has been involved in Church Architecture for some time.