

## Annual Service of Remembrance 4th November 2007



The chill Autumn night was ablaze with candles – visible reminders of light and hope and also a reminder of the warmth and love which emanates from Memorial Woodlands. A large number had gathered to remember their loved ones and to honour their memory. Some spoke of their experiences whilst others read from appropriate sources. Inspiring music from the choir contributed beautifully to the atmosphere of peace and tranquillity.

This year there was special remembrance of the life of the late William Denning who had been such an important and lasting influence at Memorial Woodlands. Many of those

present had reason to be grateful for his life and his ministry to the bereaved. A tree had been planted to his memory and at the close of the service people planted their candles around the tree in memory of both William and their own dear ones.

Prior to this we had heard one of William's favourite passages, St Paul's 'Hymn of love'. These words and the symbolism of the candles were the things which went with us as we left – the unbroken circle of candles reminding us of the unbroken circle of love which is stronger than death.

### Showcase: Flower Arranging

Memorial Woodlands works in association with Court Farm Florist, based in Winterbourne, because of their sympathetic approach to the Woodlands and their use of wild and country flowers. Wendy Paul, owner of Court Farm, explains what it's like to work at the Woodlands and shares her top flower arranging tips.

#### How long have you worked with Memorial Woodlands?

We approached them three years ago. We like to do a lot of natural arrangements and since Memorial Woodlands is all about nature, I thought it would be a good idea for us to work together. We work really closely with them now, ensuring that we provide exactly what the families have in mind. We are really lucky to work at the Woodlands, it's such a lovely place to visit all year round. Whenever we get stressed in the shop, we go there to get away from it all!

#### What is the most popular flower theme at the Woodlands?

We deal with a huge variety of flowers but on the whole, people at Memorial Woodlands are looking for a 'back to nature' theme. People often want to use flowers from their own garden

to give a personal touch and will bring them into us. Otherwise, if people want garden flowers but they don't personally grow them, we will always source them from somewhere – we have a local man who grows some for us in his garden or we go to the local markets. We try to use locally grown flowers wherever we can.

#### How did you get into flower arranging?

I was always a keen gardener and then I decided to attend a few flower arranging classes. Now I've owned my own business for four years. Being good at floristry requires experience but more importantly it's all about having a creative flair – you have to be able to combine flower types and colours that compliment each other.



## Thank You - Hilary Weston

We would like to say a big thank you to Hilary Weston for all the voluntary support she has so kindly given us over the past year. Hilary has been hugely instrumental in helping us build important relationships with various groups including Probus, Rotary and the Women's Institute, all of which we hope to be working with in the future. She has also helped to build relationships with many environmental groups such as the RSPB, Avon Wildlife and the Environmental Agency who are helping us to create a sustainable environment for the future and increase the number of wildlife species living in the Woodlands, already home to many. Hilary has also been working hard to implement a number of community initiatives such as getting the local community involved in conservation projects and researching the funding of a local bus service to help those without transport – a project which is still ongoing.

Thank you Hilary, for all of your hard work and support.

**If anyone would like to help Hilary please do get in touch with us on 01454 414 999, any help is always appreciated.**

Printed on Recycled Paper



# woodlands

## NEWS

Winter 2007/8

## Welcome to Woodlands News

Welcome to the latest edition of Woodlands News. We've created this newsletter to keep in touch with all the families who have supported us and with those whom we have built special relationships since our inception. Inside you will find information about what is happening here at the Memorial Woodlands and upcoming events that you may like to get involved in. Likewise, we are always delighted to hear from you so if you have any stories that you would like to share or anything that you would like to read about in Woodlands News, please contact us at: [feedback@memorialwoodlands.com](mailto:feedback@memorialwoodlands.com)

## Memorial Woodlands Takes to the Screen

### Is it appropriate to promote Memorial Woodlands on television?

That was the question everybody was asking when we announced that we were planning to promote Memorial Woodlands on the screen. But having heard from so many people who said they wished they had known about us before losing a loved one, we felt that this was the best way we could get our message across and tell people about the difference we can make.

It took two days of filming and many hours of editing to find the 20 seconds that were eventually broadcast on local television throughout June

this year and we are pleased with the large response. We are deeply grateful for the kindness and generosity of everyone who took part and were prepared to share their experiences.

The director of the advert whose main interest is making documentaries was so impressed with what he was hearing and seeing that he suggested we ought to make a documentary on what is happening at the Memorial Woodlands. A documentary has now been created that shows what Memorial Woodlands really means to people that words alone cannot. Please contact us should you like a copy of this documentary.



## Going the Extra Mile for All Things Green

Carbon offsetting is one of the biggest ideas in the fight against global warming right now, and since the idea of an environmental legacy has always been absolutely central to Memorial Woodlands, we are working towards offsetting the carbon emissions of our funerals.

We've designated a special area where we have planted and will continue to plant trees to draw in harmful carbon dioxide gases and release oxygen into the atmosphere.

We have also developed a series of "eco" funeral plans which include environmentally friendly options such as willow coffins and horse-drawn carriages.

Recent research found that 64% of people liked the idea of being buried in a woodland or meadow near their home, yet woodland cemeteries are still rather rare here in the UK. Memorial Woodlands is the only one of its kind in the South West. We are

continually planting trees and the land is protected so that it can never be developed, ensuring the environmental legacy of anyone who plans their funeral with us.

Continuing our commitment to creating a sustainable environment, two of our directors with the highest mileage have acquired the most fuel efficient car in the world – the Audi A2 3L which achieves in excess of 100 miles per gallon therefore emitting the minimum amount of carbon dioxide.

Additionally we have implemented a new recycling programme in our office and reception buildings through ECT commercial who collect and recycle all our paper, cardboard and glass.



Printed on Recycled Paper



## The Perfect Setting for an Art Exhibition

At the beginning of September, we held an art exhibition of work by local artist, Neil Murison, to raise money for St Peter's Hospice in Bristol. Over three days, £650 was raised for their essential work.

Neil Murison was first elected a full member of the Royal West of England Academy in 1979 and today is the director of RWA's New Gallery. Although best known in the West Country, Neil's paintings can be found in the permanent

collections of such diverse organisations as Oxford University, the Bank of America, and the government of Portugal to name a few. His most recent paintings, which were on display at the exhibition, reflect his life-long love of the English countryside.

We would like to thank Neil for his continued support of Memorial Woodlands since its inception and to everybody who came along and helped raise £650 for St Peter's Hospice. We hope you enjoyed it.



## Local School Children Help Plant Indigenous Apple Trees at the Woodlands

In October we celebrated Apple Day by planting a variety of ten indigenous apple trees in Memorial Woodlands' grounds. Local school children from St Helen's CE Primary School in Alveston came along to help plant the apple tree varieties which are all in danger of dying out, including the Arlingham Schoolboy, the Berkeley Pippin

and the Gloucester Royal. The South West has a long tradition of growing numerous apple varieties, yet sadly many are now extinct. Luckily, there are groups that are working hard to get them back into our orchards and gardens and we are delighted that we have been able to play a part in this. Since the land is protected at Memorial Woodlands it can never be developed, making it ideal for propagating and preserving indigenous plant, tree and flower species.

Alongside the planting of indigenous trees, we also launched a regional search for the Forest Styre, a variety of apple which is now believed to be extinct. The Forest Styre was last known in the Vale of Berkeley in 1968, yet since graft wood was being sourced from the area in the 1880s and the tree is believed

to survive longer than one hundred years, it could well still be in existence. County experts have told us that the Forest Styre is well worth searching for and we are asking anyone who knows of a tree matching the Forest Styre's description to get in touch. The tree itself is identifiable by its enormous size, the butt of the trunk being larger than three feet in diameter. The apple is pale with a slight blush, a sunken eye and a short stalk causing it to sit close to the branches.

We would like to say a huge thank you to St Helen's Primary School and Robert Watkins at Lodge Farm Trees who very kindly gave up his time to help us plant the trees. If you think you may know of an existing Forest Styre, please write to us at: [feedback@memorialwoodlands.com](mailto:feedback@memorialwoodlands.com) or call us on 01454 414999

## Memorial Woodlands Appoint Female Funeral Director



In June we appointed Kathryn Bewley from Chipping Sodbury to join the Memorial Woodlands team. Kath, who has been a funeral director for over seventeen years, said, "Memorial Woodlands is certainly different to places I've worked previously, I'm really enjoying working with the flexibility of what we can offer families here.

"The Memorial Woodlands grounds are also quite different to what I'm used to. I've never worn trousers to work before, it was always skirts and heels, but a few weeks after being here I went and bought a pair of trousers and the thickest pair of shoes I could find because there's so much walking to be done around here!"

Kath now assists the Memorial Woodlands team in all areas of funeral directing, using her extensive experience in the business to advise and support the families who come to us to plan a funeral.

## Memorial Woodlands Launches Funeral Plan

In June this year Memorial Woodlands launched its own funeral plans. Many people who have visited the Memorial Woodlands have said how important it is for them to have their funeral arrangements securely in place, yet few people really know how to go about it.

A question we frequently encounter is; what is a prepaid funeral plan? Well, simply put, a 'funeral plan' is arranging the details of your funeral in advance, and if you elect to pay for it in advance then it is a 'pre-paid funeral plan'. However, the majority of funeral plans currently available are designed around an archetypal funeral geared to the cremation process, and are usually associated with specific funeral directors and the generic services they offer.

There are two benefits in establishing a pre-paid funeral plan at Memorial Woodlands. The first lies in being able to design your own funeral knowing that it will take place according to your wishes, and the worry of arranging a funeral will be taken away from your family.

**// The funeral will take place according to your wishes, and the worry of arranging a funeral will be taken away from your family. //**

The second benefit is financial, and should not be ignored. A purchased funeral plan is fixed at today's price, paid either in full or by instalments. Prior to the funeral your money is securely held and protected by the Memorial Woodlands Funeral Plan Trust and a large proportion of these secured funds will be invested in securing land.

This is in keeping with one of our prime objectives of developing more protected woodlands sites. Since we first opened, people from many parts of the country and abroad have visited us and have said that they wished the Memorial Woodlands were available to them locally. When a funeral takes place, funds are released from the Trust to the Memorial Woodlands, and the proceeds are used to create more sacred woodlands around the country.

**// The proceeds are used to create more sacred woodlands around the country. //**

**Our particular funeral plans have evolved through our experience of working with people and we value your opinions and thoughts about this subject.**

**It is our intention to write to all of you with details of our funeral plans. However, we are conscious of what a sensitive issue this can be, and ask that you will take the time to complete the enclosed freepost card so that we don't trouble you with unwanted mail.**

### What is different about the Memorial Woodlands Funeral Plan?

- **Freedom to plan your funeral in the way that you wish**
- **Takes emotional and financial pressure away from your loved ones**
- **Secured at today's price regardless of future price increases**
- **Helps create sacred woodland sites for future generations**

## William Denning in Memoriam

The much loved William Denning passed away earlier this year. He is greatly missed by the Memorial Woodlands team and those who grew to know him so well.

William Denning first came to the Memorial Woodlands in 2003 when he was asked to be a celebrant by a friend who had lost his wife and who did not want a church service. William had heard about the Memorial Woodlands and after visiting told his friend that he thought it was what he was looking for. After the service, Memorial Woodlands founder Christopher Baker asked William if he would be prepared to act as a celebrant for other families. William said that he had in fact retired, but would be prepared to help occasionally. This occasional help developed into a major commitment on his part.

Together, William and the Memorial Woodlands team formulated ideas about how services could be conducted. Allan Armstrong, Funeral Directing Manager explained, "William and I talked for hours on end about how Memorial Woodlands could provide a service that would meet people's needs. We both

strongly believed that this meant involving the families in the planning of the funeral service, rather than just being an event for them to attend.

"With William's life long experience, we were able to turn our services into a central part of what Memorial Woodlands stands for. William always gave families the time they needed – central to the Woodlands thinking, and he genuinely cared for them, keeping in touch with them both prior to the funeral service and afterwards. He was an extraordinary man, much loved and deeply respected by all who knew him."

One of William's many initiatives was starting a bereavement group that meets monthly at the Memorial Woodlands. His intention was that it should be a self help group that was not dependent on him. His vision proved successful and, as he hoped, is continuing to help the bereaved.

William was a remarkably compassionate man, truly a pleasure and a privilege to work with, his contribution to the Memorial Woodlands is immeasurable.

## Do you know About Thornbury in the Past?

We are keen to do a future feature about Thornbury in the past and we need your help! If you know anything interesting such as the origins of Thornbury place names, the families who lived here, the trades that were popular, or you have any stories, records or photos you would like to share with us, we would love to hear from you. Please write to us at: [feedback@memorialwoodlands.com](mailto:feedback@memorialwoodlands.com)