

# Sun Rising News

The twice yearly newsletter of  
Sun Rising Natural Burial Ground and Nature Reserve

## Winter 2010-2011



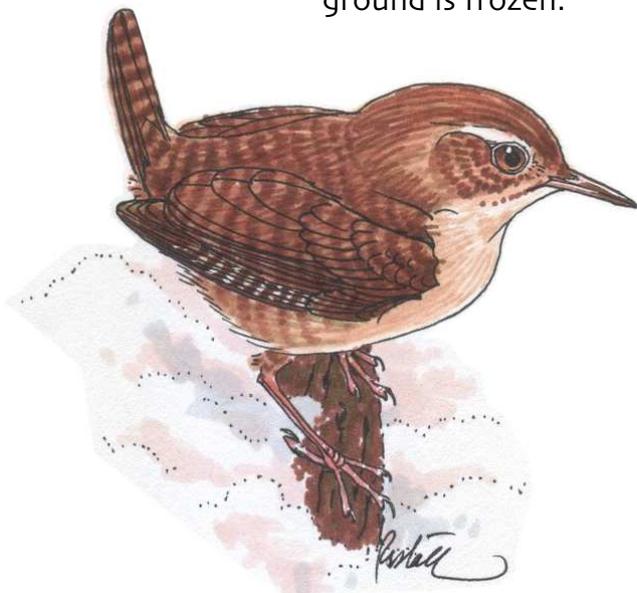
Welcome to the natural burial ground's newsletter for the winter and spring of 2010-2011. Published before Christmas, this edition is especially long in order to cover all our recent news, plus events for the first half of 2011. A pdf version can be found on the website.

### Tree Planting 2010

Weeks of very early frost and snow meant a significant delay in our tree planting this year. Emma was in touch with families expecting to plant trees in early December, and together they were able to take advantage of brief respites in the freezing conditions. We're glad to say that a good number were planted by Christmas.

As always, we have to work with nature. In 2008, for example, our tree planting was postponed because the weather was so warm: in late November the trees had not yet shed their leaves and settled into the winter's dormant period, so our nursery couldn't release them for planting.

When the weather is freezing, as it has been this winter, roots can be damaged if trees are moved. As a result, growers will not dig trees out of their nursery beds if the ground is frozen.



Although trees can cope with fairly severe conditions once they are snugly in the ground, trees planted into frozen earth are compromised from the start. Trees should be planted during the dormant season (between late November and early March most years), with broad leaved trees being planted before the winter solstice if possible.

We look forward to all the year's memorial trees being safely in the ground. It is always so exciting when the new trees arrive; the forty or so planted this year may be little saplings in their green tree guards, but they will soon be growing tall and strong.

### Lake or Pond

In October, a large pond (or is it a small lake?) was created in the low lying western corner of the site. This will be of enormous benefit to local wildlife. Initially the pond is being allowed to colonise naturally in order to ensure the most suitable plant and animal species become established there. This natural colonisation may be supplemented with planting at a later date, but we ask visitors not to introduce any plant or animal themselves.

The bank behind the pond has been seeded with wild flowers and grasses, with a few dozen trees planted on it over the winter. Once the ground has settled, there will be opportunities for families to plant memorial trees by the water. Let us know if you are interested.

## Nature Notes

During the winter months and especially when there is snow on the ground, there can be many more opportunities to see the tracks of foxes, hare, deer and badgers crisscrossing the burial ground. When a layer of snow covers the frozen pond, for example, it is easy to see distinct paths, not just of birds' feet but also paws. We are seeing increasing numbers of these larger mammals visiting the site and this trend will no doubt continue as the trees, shrubs, meadows and pond all mature providing more habitats for them to exploit.

When the plant kingdom is dormant, we continue to support the local bird population by providing food and water. Having received donations from a number of families, a second birdfeeder will be put in place – this one, we think, will be located near our memorial trees and cremated remains area. While our feeders are designed to be used by smaller songbirds like the tits and finches, you may well see larger birds such as the woodpecker on the feeder, and pheasants feeding on the fallen seed below.

We are hoping that this year we will see an increase in the number of birds utilising the nesting boxes that we have erected around the burial ground.

When they have young, birds naturally rely less on the seed provided in the feeders and more on wild food, especially on insects which provide the high quality nutrients that their growing chicks need. As the meadow area continues to develop, the insect population will grow providing the conditions necessary to support a growing bird population.

As the plant kingdom comes back to life in the spring, watch out for the arrival of new additions to the site's flora and fauna, especially in and around the pond. We are

also hoping that our new drainage will mean more bulbs flourish this year, with daffodils and snowdrops especially coming through. Because the bulbs planted are native species, not cultivars, and the conditions at the burial ground are a little more exposed, they tend to flower a little later than those in our gardens. We're always happy to hear from visitors when they've seen the first flowers – let us know!

## Dandelions

In the autumn it was necessary to treat an area of the meadow where dandelions were taking over. Although the expanse of yellow flowers and soft seed heads was beautiful, especially in the spring, they were suppressing the growth of anything else. Our decision was taken reluctantly, but a combination of weather conditions and poor drainage had resulted in a mono crop across a large area of the site. If necessary, the area will be reseeded in the spring, and with our new drainage system in place it is hoped that the grass in these areas will once again thrive.



## Wild Flowers to Plant

In order to ensure that the burial ground develops as a nature reserve, our Regulations state that nothing can be planted at the burial ground without permission. Indeed, now and then we do have to remove non-natives or relocate plants that too clearly outline specific graves.

For families who do want to be actively involved in planting wild flowers, we have in the past given some clear suggestions.

We have been in conversation with the National Herb Centre at Warmington, just a few miles from Sun Rising. We are pleased to say that they've agreed to extend their range of wild flowers to ensure they have in stock plants suitable for the burial ground. Let us know if you'd like a copy of the list.

## Nature Reserve Burial Grounds

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## Memorial Plaques

Some visitors will have noticed that the newer memorial plaques are of a darker slate.

The original slate contains more calcium, which comes out over time causing the plaques to lighten. Polishing with slate oil brings out the rich colours again, but we have found the oil was attracting lichen into the grooves of the lettering. Exploring the options for us, our supplier found a new source of slate with a low calcium content. As yet, this new slate has been keeping its colour without slate oil. Over the winter, we shall watch to see how it weathers.

If the results are favorable we shall be in touch with families whose plaques are of the older slate. While we can't afford to replace them all without charge, we shall be offering replacements at a much lower rate to those who feel they would prefer the darker slate. If you've any queries, get in touch.

Some may also notice that the more recently installed memorial posts along the tracks and paths are a little broader, and the plaques fit more comfortably on them. We shall be replacing the older posts with the larger ones in the spring, one by one, starting with the posts that have the most plaques on them.

## Website and Blog

In November 2010 we launched our new website specifically dedicated to Sun Rising Natural Burial Ground. Those with internet access may like to find it and explore its pages - <http://sunrisingburialground.co.uk>.

The website provides information about our services. Our advice about organizing a funeral is now more comprehensive, including clear guides that can be downloaded and printed. There is also information for those wishing to inter cremated remains at Sun Rising. For those thinking about the future, our **Planning Ahead** pages include a simple guide to

drawing up Last Wishes. All our guides are available from the office on request.

The website also gives information about the burial ground and its surroundings. Our **Visiting Sun Rising** section offers guidance for families returning to the site, including a list of nearby pubs and hotels. We are looking for input from those with favourite walks in the local area: do get in touch if you would like to contribute to this page or any other.

Some may be interested in our new **Blog** called *Notes From Sun Rising*. This is a journal containing observations, anecdotes and photographs that we hope will be of interest, particularly for those unable to travel to the site as often as they would wish.

## Feedback Forms

As we let you know in the last newsletter, the Association of Natural Burial Grounds (ANBG) requires us to give feedback forms to families. We have always been in two minds about this: while some families are happy to fill it in and send it off, others have commented that they don't feel it appropriate.

We aim to work closely with the ANBG and your thoughts and comments are invaluable in our discussions with them, always aiming to raise the standards of natural burial grounds and the services we all provide.



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## Prices

Our prices at Sun Rising are rising in January 2011. Apart from when our grave digging service and slate engraver have raised theirs - and we've had to keep in line - our prices have stayed the same since we opened in 2006. The new prices are on our website, or you can get in touch and we can send you a copy.

## Events in 2011

### 26 March : The War Memorial

The first event at Sun Rising in 2011 is the official unveiling of our War Memorial. Dedicated to those who have fallen in conflicts, old and new, near and far, Sun Rising provides a place of deep peace in comparison to the horror of war. Near the Civil War battleground of Edge Hill, and the army base at Kineton where young soldiers are trained in bomb disposal, the memorial feels acutely relevant and important.

In October, the cairn was built, using the same Cotswold stone as the Roundhouse. Daffodils were planted and wild flowers sown around it, and in the winter we put in roses, dogwood, viburnum and birch trees.

Beside the memorial, you will find a horse chestnut. Although not strictly native (they came to Britain with the Romans), this tree comes from Hougemont Farm, the site of a deciding encounter in the battle of Waterloo. It was donated by Major David Sewell from Tysoe, for which we are most grateful.

On Saturday 26 March, at 3 pm, we shall be welcoming members of the armed forces, local residents and all who feel they'd like to come to the unveiling. Major General Tim Cross will be with us, together with BBC reporter Kate Adie, who has written a book about those involved in bomb disposal. We hope it will be a moving and beautiful day of thanksgiving and remembrance. You are most welcome to join us and be part of the day.



### 9 April : Spring Nature Watch

Our Spring Nature Watch date will this year be held on Saturday 9 April, when we shall be continuing the process of recording flora and fauna at the site. All are welcome, whether experts or amateurs. Do let us know if you intend to come so that, should we have to postpone for any reason, we can get in touch.

### 4 – 5 June : Summer Nature Watch and Open Weekend

Over the weekend of 4 – 5 June we shall hold our annual Open Weekend, with staff on hand to take tours and answer questions about Sun Rising and ethical funerals. It will also be our Summer Nature Watch.

### 4 June : Harp Recital

In the early evening of Saturday 4 June we shall be holding the first of a planned series of musical events in the Roundhouse: a harp recital given by the accomplished local musician Elizabeth Gray. We shall ask for donations for the recital, profits being given to the Friends of Sun Rising Natural Burial Ground and Nature Reserve.

### Wedding

You may like to make a note that we have our first wedding at Sun Rising on Saturday 25 June. This may sound unusual, but with the groom's father buried at the site the couple wanted his presence for their vows. We feel this is a beautiful expression of Sun Rising, and we are happy to welcome the couple and their guests. With so many coming to the wedding, you may wish to choose another day to visit.

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