

FRIENDS OF LINTHORPE CEMETERY.

WILDLIFE AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT

2009.

During 2009 the Friends Group has tried again to bring to the attention of the local community the many assets of this established and interesting cemetery, placed in the centre of Middlesbrough. Although our membership is low we do have a dedicated number of individuals who try their best to introduce and educate visitors to the site.

The most fruitful contacts we have are the local Environment and Natural History organisations that are already very much aware of the importance of the site. We have had visits from individuals and groups from these clubs and societies not only to study the site but also to assist us in recording the wildlife.

This year one of the meetings organized by The Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership was held in the Hebrew Prayer House and later some members enjoyed their walk around the Linthorpe Cemetery & Nature Reserve, although the weather was rather inclement.

It is interesting to note that a number of our members are keen to improve their skills in recording and reporting what they see around the cemetery reserve, studying their own desired interests such as Birds, Wild Flowers, Fungi and Butterflies etc, etc: Others of the Friends are already deeply involved with the subject of recording, reporting and indeed are members of local Natural History groups, such as Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, British Trust for Ornithology, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Durham Wildlife Trust, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, Cleveland Naturalists & Butterfly Conservation.

The Friends of Linthorpe Cemetery are members of Butterfly Conservation and we hope that in 2010 the Cemetery will be accepted as a recording site for local butterflies & moths. We already record what is seen but for our own interest only.



A young Great Spotted Woodpecker seen peeping from a nest hole found in a tree in Linthorpe Cemetery in 2009.

During 2009 we have established the cemetery reserve as a counting site for breeding birds in the area and are currently taking part in a National Breeding Bird Survey which will be completed in 2011. The study and its findings are planned for publication in 2012 by the British Trust for Ornithology who are the main organisation used by the RSPB and other national organisations who require accurate and reliable information.

Although members of the Friends have been recording bird sightings and breeding activities for a number of years now it was interesting for others in the group to discover some new finds in 2009. Finding the nests of species such as Great Spotted Woodpecker and watching over some weeks until young were recorded was an exciting experience, Treecreepers are very secretive but a nest with young was watched as adults visited to feed young on a number of occasions. Obviously all this was done at a sensible distance so that the birds were not threatened or compromised in any way.

The Friends Group has already been able to demonstrate the effects of climate change through its monitoring of wildlife that has been lost as well as new arrivals. One of the best and colourful aspects of this has been our study and counting of butterfly species and thanks to our relationship with the towns Bereavement Services and Middlesbrough Council some improvements to the habitat have reaped a number of benefits, we hope this will continue so that more can be done to enlarge the butterfly population in the reserve.

During 2002 there was a species count of 10 while in 2007 a count of 16 proved that things were changing with butterflies such as the Speckled Wood being very common, however with a few poor summers the species have dropped a little with few sightings of Orange-tip, Common Blue and Ringlet and only one sighting of Holly Blue in 2009. The hedgerow that was planted a few years back is now beginning to mature and this will help in this direction with blossom in the spring and food for caterpillars but we need to plant more flowering plants and shrubs for the summer and early autumn months. We are hoping for some planting of a flower meadow area in the coming year.

Plans for the coming year include a survey of the wild flowers of the cemetery and we have been asked to survey lichens during the beginning of 2010.

As a small group we feel that we are doing as much as our numbers will allow but obviously there is more that can be done and can only be done with more involvement from the local community and an increased membership. The problem of membership will be addressed along with our improved Website during the coming year.

Peter D Grainger. Chairman.
Friends of Linthorpe Cemetery & Nature Reserve.