

WILLOWBANK CEMETERY

4714 County Road #2 - PO Box 123 - Gananoque ON K7G 2T7 www.willowbankcemetery.ca

Newsletter Fall/Winter 2024

President's Message



Like most small volunteer run organisations, Willowbank Cemetery is gradually returning to a semblance of normality after the major disruption of the Pandemic Years. It should never be forgotten that our board is entirely made up of volunteers, without whom our beloved cemetery would not have remained in the control of stakeholders for these 168 years.

We would like to thank long standing board member, Stephen Heaton for his long service on the board of Willowbank Cemetery. Stephen was our president for several years and has been acting president while that role has been vacant. We are pleased to say that Stephen will continue in the position of Past President as a director on our board.

Leanne Crawford, a long-standing board member who acted as an administrator/secretary and most recently as president has resigned in order to move nearer to her son in Edmonton. Her skills and commitment to the well-being of the cemetery was always in evidence and she will be missed by us all. We thank her for all her service to

Willowbank Cemetery and wish her all the best in her new life in Alberta.

One of the most important tasks at hand last year was to recruit new board members, as several have indicated their intention to step down from their responsibilities or resign completely. Fortunately we were able to attract friends of Willowbank Cemetery with an interest in serving on the board, all of whom have some background or family history related to the cemetery. We are delighted to welcome Robert Burtch, Charles Kidd, Victoria Maitland and Tom Shillington to our board of directors. They have been doing an exemplary job in supporting our operations and making them run smoothly. We are pleased to announce that Charles Kidd has accepted the nomination for President and Victoria Maitland has accepted the nomination for vice-president. We are confident we are in good hands for the administration of Willowbank Cemetery as the board contains a good mix of experience and expertise.

In accordance with BAO guidelines we have installed a bulletin board to display consumer information such as contact information, price lists, and by-laws. For the past few years we were so very fortunate to have a diligent groundskeeper who kept the grass and grounds safe and attractive for cemetery visitors. Ray Baril has let us know that he is stepping down from grass cutting and we are sorry to see him go but wish him the very best in his retirement. We will be in search of a new grounds keeper for the 2025 season.

Our long-term goal is to have a tree replacement program so that this wonderful example of a Heritage Garden Cemetery will continue to delight all those who visit. Another goal is to pursue possible heritage designation for Willowbank Cemetery as a Cultural Heritage Landscape under the Heritage Act of Ontario. Such a designation would recognize the unique history of our cemetery as well as its beautiful grounds. We could also be eligible for special grants and other sources of funds based on this designation. We know that Willowbank Cemetery is a special place but we would like to share its history with the wider community. We plan to expand our social media presence in order to engage with a new generation who are interested in our stories from the past. We will also return to regular newsletter mail outs by email to keep our stakeholders informed. Next year should be a busy one for Willowbank Cemetery and we look forward to working together to move forward into the future with confidence.

Thank You, Stephen Heaton (Past President)

What's next for Willowbank?



We have some exciting news! We're in the midst of construction of a new columbarium. Our other columbaria are almost at capacity. To give you a sneak peak, here is a photo of what our new 48 niche columbarium will look like. It will allow Willowbank Cemetery to become more sustainable financially in the future. As fewer and fewer full casket burials are taking place, we must be able to accommodate the needs of a new demographic of interment rights holders. Please consider a charitable donation towards this project as a way of not only supporting the long term viability of Willowbank Cemetery as a Not-for-Profit organisation but also as a memorial to loved ones well into the twenty-first century. A plaque with the names of donors

will be added to the side of the new columbarium to show our appreciation for your generous support.



Trees For the Future

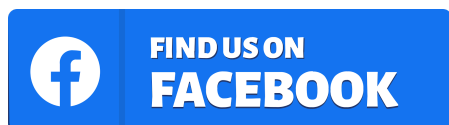
As you can imagine, a cemetery of Willowbank's age contains a great number of mature trees. Many of these magnificent specimens are nearing the end of their natural lives and many others have been damaged by pests and storms. We spend a considerable amount every year on tree maintenance by licensed professional arborists that must be done to ensure the safety of our visitors. This year we had to remove a massive White Ash in the southeast quadrant of the cemetery at a cost of \$3500, that had succumbed to Emerald Ash Borer. It was very sad to see it go as it shaded the surrounding area. Fortunately we do not have that many ash trees however, the ones we do have will have to be removed. We need to

begin planting a variety of new trees on a yearly basis to ensure the ambiance of this "Garden Style Cemetery" survives into the future. We have a source for new trees at a reasonable price, in 3 and 5 gallon pots up to 6 feet high that will grow into beautiful shade trees in the years to come. Won't you consider contributing to the tree fund to restore our forest canopy as a donation, perhaps in memory of a loved one? All trees are priced at \$100. We will ensure that your tree is planted in an appropriate site in the cemetery to be enjoyed for future generations. Please go to our website: www.willowbankcemetery.ca click on the Donate link or mail to Tree Fund Willowbank Cemetery PO Box 123 Gananoque ON K7G 2T7 Thank You





Speaking of trees for a new generation, it would be preferable to have the majority of our newsletters sent digitally by email or read/downloaded from our website. If you are currently receiving this newsletter by Canada Post won't you please consider this option? It would be a significant saving in costs for paper and postage. If you have not already done so, please email our secretary Robert Burtch at burtchrobert1@gmail.com and he will add your email address to our database. Special thanks to former board member, Doug Cowan who did an excellent job for many years as the editor for all our newsletters.



Did you know you can now follow us on FaceBook ? Check out our page and keep in touch at facebook.com/willowbankcemetery

Record of Internment

May 13, 2023 - Slack, Janice Mary
May 14, 2023 - Whaley, George Thomas
May 27, 2023 - Van Weelie, Hermina
June 1, 2023 - Wilson, Joan
June 28, 2023 - Lane, James Donald
June 28, 2023 - Chitty, Margaret
July 21, 2023 - Popkes, Bernice Mary
September 16, 2023 - Dickson, Debbie
November 3, 2023 - Kelsey, Kenneth Douglas
November 8, 2023 - Leakey, Stuart Donald
November 10, 2023 - Weaver, Leona Bernice

June 3, 2024 - Boulanger, Dorothy Ann
June 7, 2024 - Dennie, Robert Mark
June 14, 2024 - Hawley, Mark Anthony
July 13, 2024 - Morton, Myrtle Jane
July 17, 2024 - Houze, Dorothy Ann
July 28, 2024 - Hall, Donald Joseph
August 2, 2024 - Leakey, Paul Andrew
August 14, 2024 - Williamson, David
August 14, 2024 - Bruner, Henry Benson
September 17, 2024 - McNeill, Donna L.
October 16, 2024 - Bell, Richard Graham

Willowbank Cemetery would like to express our sincere thanks for your generous donations and bequests.

Gerald Garrah
Ron Garrah
Bonnie McCann
Charles Kidd
Raymond Baldock
Judith Adams
Arthur Silver
R. Larsen & T. McBean

Tracy McBean
Peter Townsend
Edward Dowd
Joanne & Peer Boerner
Evelyne Murray
Norah J. Bruner
Ronald G. Anderson
Vickie Clancy

Nancy Babcock
Aase Larsen
Judith Hampton
Elizabeth Bedford-Jones
Ronald & Sharon Anderson
Janet Hartel
Ena Gaudet
James Anderson

Willow bank Cemetery and the Rural Cemetery Movement
Presentation to Leeds and Thousand Islands Historical Society
April 15, 2024



Robert Burtch, Secretary of Willowbank Cemetery, gave a presentation to the Leeds and Thousand Islands historical Society on the history of our beloved cemetery in the context of the Rural/Garden Cemetery Movement of the mid-19th Century. Traditionally in Britain and its colonies, all burials took place in consecrated grounds such as the local parish churchyard. Of course in the very early years, families in remote areas who had no access to formal religion would have to bury their loved ones in private family plots. As communities grew and churches became more widespread, official graveyards were set aside for the needs of the congregants.

By the mid 19th Century in built up areas, there was a growing concern about overcrowded graveyards where bodies were buried only a couple of feet down due to lack of space for new coffins. By Victorian times, concerns about public health were growing especially after several serious cholera epidemics. It was widely believed that these diseases were the result of sickly 'miasma' emanating from decaying human remains.

Not surprisingly there was a growing demand to have public cemeteries created in rural areas where the air was clean and the surroundings more salubrious. Where better to spend eternity than in the shade of lofty trees, surrounded by bird song amongst rolling landscapes. One of the major proponents of the Rural Cemetery Movement was a prolific writer named John Claudius Loudon. He and others like him, believed that 'garden cemeteries would mark the defeat of preternatural fear and superstition and would be beneficial in improving public morals, manners and taste, in cultivating the intellect, and extending virtuous and generous feelings.'

Mount Auburn Cemetery outside of Boston (1831) was the first to describe itself using the word 'cemetery', from Latin, meaning literally "place of sleep". This was in keeping with the desire to differentiate the new approach (reform) from the older, unhealthy "graveyards" or burial grounds. Due to its lovely meandering walkways through the trees and gardens it became one of the most popular places in the area for outings with families on a Sunday after church. Here we have the model of 'Heaven' as a garden. It was designed to be enjoyed by the living, as a way to pay respect to the dead, and provide spiritual support in peaceful uplifting surroundings. Many of these new garden cemeteries became popular tourist destinations, so much so that municipal governments were prompted to create the first public parks for citizens to enjoy.

On August 10, 1850 the government of Canada West enacted legislation for the establishment of "Public Cemeteries...near to, but without the limits of said Towns", so that individual companies setting up such cemeteries could avoid the expense and delay in obtaining a special act. Many were non denominational and not-for-profit organisations with any extra monies generated being put back into the cemetery for improvements. Creating a bucolic landscape was the important goal and this resulted in the term "garden cemeteries".

Locally, the old burial ground in Gananoque was on the hill on the east side of Church Street. It was at capacity and considered a health hazard in the growing village.

A general meeting was called by the elite of the town, mostly Church of England elders, on October 20th, 1856 to meet in the old schoolhouse on the corner of King St.E and Church St., to address the need for a rural cemetery for Gananoque with William Stone Macdonald as Chair. After lengthy discussions this meeting was adjourned until the following week in which a formal board was to be elected and prospective lot buyers would be expected to purchase shares. This meeting resulted in the following first official board of directors:

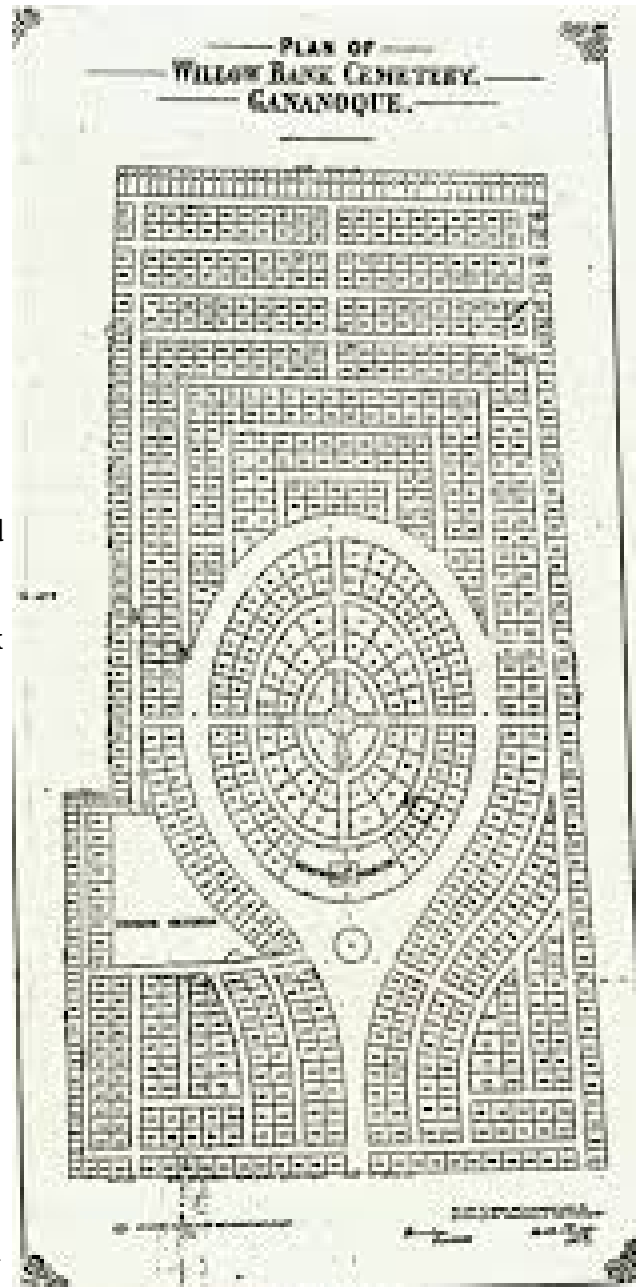
Dr.Richmond-President, Samuel McCammon - Secretary, D.F Britton as Treasurer. These directors along with William Brough, Samuel Rogers, Robert Brough, and a few others were given the mandate to find a new location for a cemetery.

After a time they concluded that most available land immediately around the village was rocky, heavily wooded or swampy and the only suitable property that could be purchased was 3 miles west of the settlement. Fortunately the site consisted of well drained sandy loam, had a gentle slope to the south and fronted onto the King's Highway. All these factors made it well suited for use as a cemetery.

There was already a private cemetery on part of the property known as the Lloyd cemetery and graves from the burial ground on nearby Lyndsay Point were moved to the new site.

At a meeting of March 18, 1857 the directors agreed to pay John Bowie 71.17.6 pounds sterling for 5 and $\frac{3}{4}$ acres of land which the committee selected. They agreed to pay Bowie 16.3 pounds sterling to have the property fenced. On June 10th of that year Canada West adopted decimal currency. Willowbank Cemetery Company stock was set at \$800 to be subscribed by potential buyers at \$5 per lot. At a meeting in November 1858 , the paid subscribers chose their lots with the largest subscribers getting first choice. Over time many but by no means all of the human remains at the old burial ground in Gananoque were re-interred at Willowbank . The Gananoque Cemetery north of the town would not be developed until almost 4 decades later.

A plan of survey dated May 1875, was accepted by the Board of Directors on July 31, 1877. Additional strips of land were added to the north and west sides of the lot. The plots were surveyed along a central lane which divides into a circle around the hill in the centre of the lot. The Willowbank cemetery that we know and love today was the result of careful planning and with the intention of being a place of beauty, where families could remember their loved ones in a peaceful, idealised natural environment. Willowbank is quite possibly the smallest 'Garden Cemetery' in the list of such notables as Cataraqui in Kingston, Mount Pleasant in Toronto and Mount Royal in Montreal.





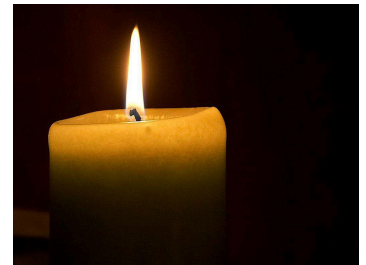
Willowbank Cemetery Memorials

In remembrance of your loved ones, please keep our beloved Willowbank Cemetery, a charitable organisation in mind.

We would appreciate anyone making a donation in memory of loved ones as an option in your choice of charitable giving.

Please go to our website at www.willowbankcemetery.ca and go to the Donate link. OR you can reach us at our mailing address:
PO Box 123-Gananoque, ON-K7G 2T7

We would also ask you to consider us in your estate planning by remembering us in your Will. There can be considerable tax advantages to charitable giving with careful estate planning. Imagine the comfort of knowing that this special place of remembrance will continue to be administered in a sustainable manner for years to come. You are invited to connect with board member Tom Shillington for a confidential discussion about your legacy options. You can reach him at: **613 849-6091** or by email at tom@limestonefinancial.ca



Willowbank Cemetery Board of Directors

PRESIDENT/REGISTRY OFFICER

Charles Kidd

VICE-PRESIDENT/ WEBSITE

Victoria Maitland

TREASURER

Glenn Cowan

SECRETARY/ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Robert Burtch

CEMETERY OPERATIONS OFFICER

Greg Owen

SALES OFFICER

Jim Douglas /Tom Shillington

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Robert Burtch/ Stephen Heaton

DIRECTOR

Shirley Clark

DIRECTOR

Gary Bullock
