

Facilities and Recreation Department Cemetery Division



A Pictorial Essay and Guide
to the inner workings of the
Forest Hill Cemetery
Derry, New Hampshire



Welcome to Forest Hill Cemetery. The Cemetery is owned and operated by the Town of Derry, New Hampshire. The Derry Town Council serves as trustees of this 35-acre cemetery.



As one enters the gates of Forest Hill, they can find themselves passing through time. The first sections we pass have graves that date back to 1729.



As we head toward the newer sections, we travel through decades of history. There are over 10,000 people buried here.



Maintaining the cemetery landscape is a daily job. Over the past few years, cemetery authority has not enforced the rules and regulations. There has not been a board of trustees to review the policies. The result has added additional maintenance work for the cemetery crew.



These gravesites are single lots in our newest section. It is very difficult to maintain this area due to the lack of space between lots and personal memento



The cemetery has earned the reputation of being one of the best cared for sites in the state. Credit goes to those town employees who maintain and operate Forest Hill. Mowers are lined up for the start of the day's grass cutting.



This garage bay is the cemetery maintenance area. The Staff does all their own maintenance on the equipment saving the town major expense. Note the jackhammer compressor in the background. This is used to break up frost in the ground for winter burials.



This is the body storage room. These caskets are awaiting spring burials and will be moved to other cemeteries when opened. Forest Hill is one of the few that bury during the winter. All the caskets stored here are non-residents.



This photo shows an average grave size, 10 feet by four feet (Note the round disc). This is a corner marker and they are located on all sides. In the older cemetery sections, bricks were placed in the ground.



All of the lots sold are ten feet by four feet. Family lots loose a foot and measure four feet by nine feet. The grave itself measures eight feet by three feet, three inches. The doorframe pictured is the matrix used to measure the gravesite. Larger burial vaults can limit the distance from the grave to the lot line by as much as four inches.



This is an example of a double lot, 18 feet by 8 feet. Note the matrix is on half the lot illustrating one grave. Also note that if we were to bury someone at this site, the flowerbed would be disturbed.



This photo illustrates the lack of space from the lot line to the actual grave. There is about four inches from the grave to the lot line.



We specify that all monuments are not to exceed 3 feet 6 inches in height, including the base. The length of the space varies on lot size. Unfortunately, we have never specified the width of the base. This has created problems when it comes to the installation of flowerbeds. As you can see, the flowerbed is only six inches out and then it is in the way of the matrix. We can promise the flowerbed to be up to 18 inches, but we will not be responsible if it has to be removed for interment.



The issue of shrubs has been a hot item. As seen in this photo, the shrub is located almost two feet from the base. Shrubs should abut the monument base. They should not exceed the height of the monument.



This is a single grave lot in the new section. As you can see, the area is very tight for space. Note the V.A. stone at the foot of the grave. Most cemeteries charge for this installation. We do not.



After we have measured our grave lot we probe the ground to be sure there is no vault where we intend to dig.



This gravesite is being prepared for a burial. The matrix is used to cut away the sod and for the backhoe template. The sod is saved for re-use.



The backhoe is brought in across plywood so it does not create ruts on any of the existing plots. The equipment setup is a careful maneuver with the lack of space

between monuments. This requires a great deal of skill by the backhoe operator.



The staff acts as spotters for the backhoe. The dirt is saved and piled on to sheets of plywood. You can see the short distance between the monument and the hole.



The grave is squared off to accommodate the vault. This is all completed by hand



Once the vault has arrived it is inserted into the gravesite. Compare the vault to our matrix.



With the vault installed, the crew drapes the site with the greens. The grave is lined so that no dirt will show. The casket-lowering device is then put into place.



With the greens and device in place, the crew now waits for the funeral. The greens and device will be removed after interment. Forest Hill is one of the few cemeteries in the state that provide the greens and device.



The funeral is over and the crew has filled the sight. The sod is put back, and with some assistance from Mother Nature the sod will turn green. From May 1, 2000 to May 1, 2001, 53 vaults have been interred.



In the past few years Cremations have increased at Forest Hill. This photo shows a cremation site. The site is two feet deep and two foot wide. One single grave

sight can accommodate up to six cremated urns. This saves the bereaved money as well as assists the cemetery authority with future space. From May 1, 2000 to May 1, 2001 there were 31 cremations interred at Forest Hill



Cremations are treated in the same regard as full vault burials. The only exception is the lowering device is not

needed. The cemetery crew is also responsible for disinterment and interments that don't require funerals. Last year we had three moves.



This dump truck bed has the fill removed from one gravesite. The photo shows large boulders and rock. With ledge, clay, and water we can only burry five feet deep. With rolling hills and a high water table, this makes winter burials very difficult. On some occasions,

we have had to cut through two to three feet of frost. Dealing with ground conditions such as these it is easy to see why we do not bury one vault on top of another or place vaults in a standing position



With less than two acres left of vacant space, we have begun our search for expansion. We still have room to accommodate our citizen needs for the next two to three years.



It is our hope that this photo essay has given insight as to what goes on here at Forest Hill Cemetery. We are proud of our cemetery and we will continue to work to preserve the dignity and peace that we are known for.

