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# Lancashire

## & North West magazine

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# Remembering loved ones in a special way

Andrew Harris reports on an idea which meets the needs of many people

It is sad but true that nothing much, except perhaps the passing of time, can lessen the pain of bereavement. Despite this, those bereaved have needs which can be met. Grief must be able to find an outlet and express itself. With cremations far outnumbering burials, gravestones are rare and macabre. An increasingly popular alternative is to dedicate a bench, table or tree to the departed. Of these a tree is far and away the most welcome tribute; it is a living thing providing a 'Life for a Life' – the name of the North West charity which has pioneered this way of remembering those we have lost.

'Life for a Life Memorial Forests,' was founded by Norman Armstrong-Kersh MBE in 1999 and now manages 29 memorial forests in North West England – see the plan and panel - and more in other parts of the country. The good it does extends well beyond memorial trees as otherwise neglected sites are made attractive, useful and cared for. Donations from those dedicating trees enable the charity to provide grants to support health and community projects. 'Life for a Life' has also spawned the 'Friends of the Forest' scheme which aims to allow schools, community groups and volunteers to create additional and much-needed habitats for wildlife within their memorial forests. Young people are encouraged to learn how the creation of woodland and forests benefits the planet. It is educational.

It is, however, memorial trees which help to meet the emotional needs of people and families who are bereaved. Vivien Hardaker, who lives in Oldham, lost her mum Valerie last February. Valerie was born in South Wales and wanted very much to return there for burial when her time came. Vivien duly arranged this but she and her family would struggle to visit the grave except rarely. The answer was to dedicate a newly planted tree to Valerie's memory in the Salmon Fields Meadow also in Oldham. Now Vivien and her family can remember their mum and grandmother in the beautiful ponded scenery of Salmon Fields which is a much less sad memorial than a tombstone.

Andrea Pavitt lost her husband Michael to cancer in 2010. ▶



Memorial trees help to meet the emotional needs of people and families who are bereaved



Michael was a recruiting sergeant with the Army and aged only 46. With three children - and the youngest just nine - Andrea was desperate to find a way of remembering her husband in a way that wouldn't traumatise her children. She dedicated a tree and a bench at Salmon Fields to her husband. The family live near Oldham so can enjoy outings to this beautiful setting when they can feel closer to the husband and father they have lost. There is sadness, of course, but their grief can express itself in a helpful way.

The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers recruit from the Bury area and have lost four Fusiliers in the last four years. Although none was on active service the loss for the families and the regiment was just as poignant. On Sunday 10th May 2015 Fusiliers James Wilkinson, David Collins, Tony Emery and Lee Rigby were remembered by the dedication of memorial trees at the Fusiliers Meadow in Whitefield which will grow in their memory. Your columnist attended the pictured ceremony. Family and friends shed tears for the accidents and attacks which caused their loss but there was also some satisfaction that their loved ones will not be forgotten.

The great majority of memorial forests and trees are non-military. 'Life for a Life' offer a choice of trees although English Oak, Scots Pine, Rowan, Silver Birch, Hazel and Common Alder don't all suit all sites. Standard, Gold Effect and Stainless Steel plaques are available for an inscription of up to 35 words. The service is completed by a modest ceremony when ashes - if available - can be interred with the tree to make it even more significant.

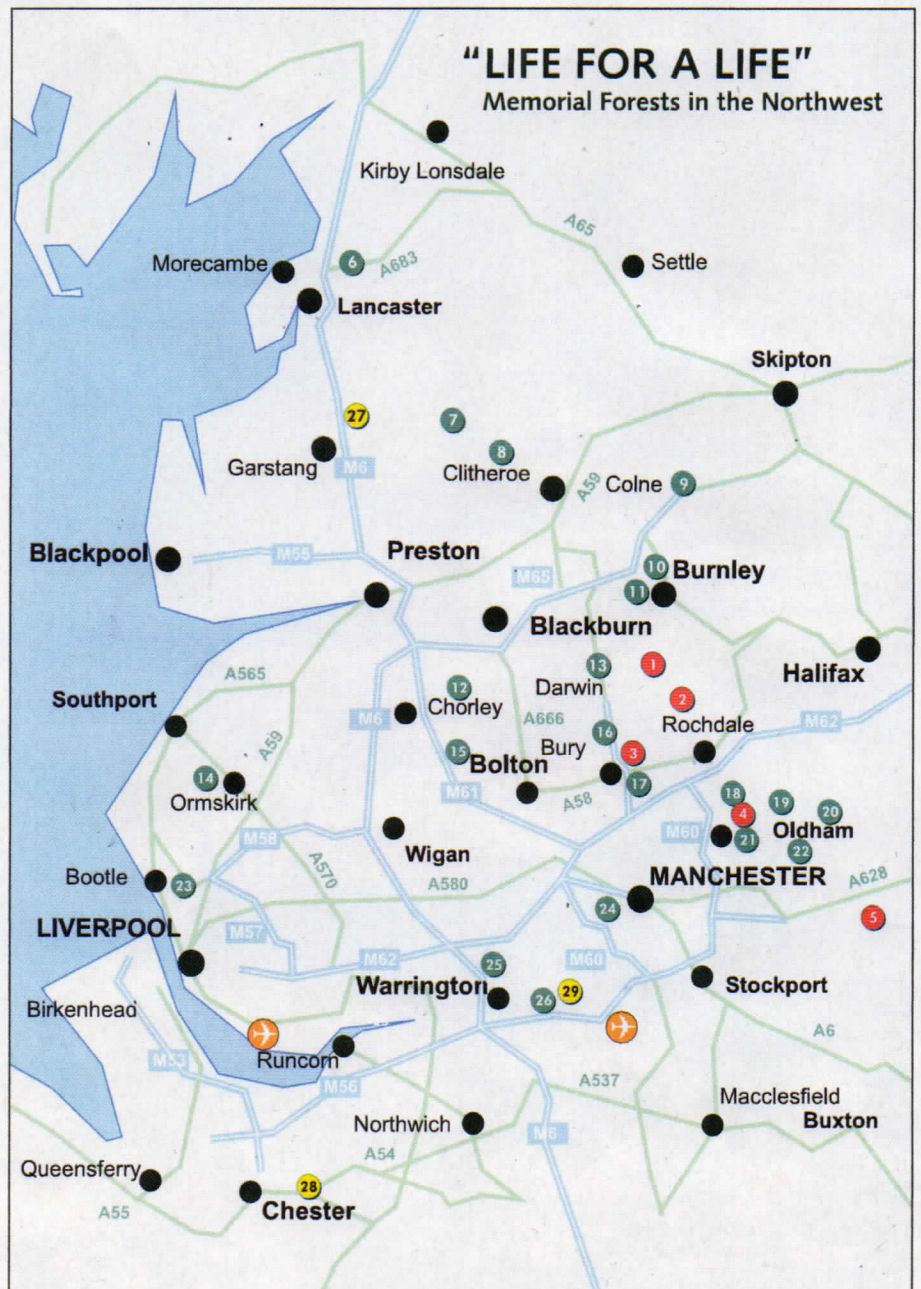
The charity also offers Books of Remembrance and Memorial Keepsakes as a reminder of the day when the tree was planted. All services are paid for by donations which meet outgoings and fund grants to benefit the community. The minimum donation is £595.

All donations must be used to meet the three aims and objectives of the 'Life for a Life' charity. They are:

- To relieve the mental, physical and spiritual distress of people suffering from bereavement or loss, particularly through the provision of memorial trees in memory of their loved ones.
- To promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment by the creation of such forests, woodlands and gardens.



Rev. John Findon and Colonel Mike Glover dedicating memorial trees to former fusiliers





#### Crook O'Lune Memorial Forest

• The relief of sickness and suffering by the provision of grants and/or equipment to other charities, hospitals and hospices provided that in so doing the trust shall not relieve any local authority, relevant health service trust or other body of any statutory obligations.

If you are a bereaved person or family and feel that this form of memorial may help you, 'Life for a Life' invite you to contact them on [info@lifeforlife.org.uk](mailto:info@lifeforlife.org.uk) or by calling 0161 624 2299. You can also visit the website [www.lifeforlife.org.uk](http://www.lifeforlife.org.uk)

The charity also need to hear from public bodies and developers who can contribute the use of land for planting Memorial Forests. 'Life for a Life' does not own the land it uses but manages and insures it under the terms of an agreement which benefits all the parties involved. Redundant land can be put to good use and developers can provide a community benefit – at no cost – which can often make a nearby development much more acceptable to the community - and the local planning authority.

Although 'Life for a Life' has pioneered Memorial Forests and accounts for most of them, another location near Lake Windermere is owned by 'Your Tree Memorial Forests' whose details can be seen by visiting [www.yourtrees.co.uk](http://www.yourtrees.co.uk) Thanks to 'Life for a Life' our region has a rich choice of Memorial Forests in beautiful locations. The attraction is summed up by their explanatory line: 'Love Someone, Miss Someone, Help Everyone, Plant a Tree, It's for Life.'

• This article is dedicated to my colleague and friend Alison Morris who is coming to terms with the loss of her father after a long battle with cancer.

Andrew Harris FRICS FCIM is a chartered surveyor who has chaired land-based charities.

#### 'Life for a Life' Memorial Forests in the North West

1. Watergrove Reservoir nr Rochdale
2. Cowm Reservoir nr Rochdale
3. Woodgate Hill, Bury
4. Dr Kershaw's Hospice, Oldham
5. Torside, Upper Longdendale Valley
6. Crook O'Lune, Caton nr Lancaster
7. Beacon Fell Country Park, Bowland
8. Stocks Reservoir nr Slaidburn
9. Wycoller Country Park, Colne
10. Crown Point nr Burnley
11. Dunnockshawe nr Burnley
12. Nab Hill nr Chorley
13. Turton Reservoir, Blackburn
14. Ormskirk Memorial Forest
15. Marklands Reservoir, Horwich
16. Dunsters Farm Meadow, Bury
17. Fusiliers Meadow, Whitefield
18. Tandle Hill Country Park, Royton
19. Meadows at Strinesdale, Oldham
20. Dovestone Reservoir & Indians Head
21. Salmon Fields Meadow, Oldham
22. Calf Lane, Greenfield/Mossley
23. Thornton, Liverpool
24. Wythenshawe Park, Manchester
25. Mersey Meadow, Warrington
26. Sow Brook, nr Lymm Golf Club
27. Scorton Country Park nr Lancaster
28. Chester Memorial Forest
29. Partington, South of Manchester

The plan shows these full, available & future sites as red, green & yellow respectively