

## **2024 RHC Request for volunteers to adopt historic gravesites in Rye yielded a core team of four individuals.**

These four have reviewed the several conflicting lists of sites which were on file with the RHS, and consolidated all into one master listing for use going forward. There are 60 locations on our master list. This includes some which are located on Star Island and one on West Road which is technically in North Hampton.

Each of the sites has or will be visited by someone from this group. There are a few sites remaining to be confirmed with a visit and the team is continuing to complete this part of the project. Visits confirm the location, condition and new photographs are taken.

Caretakers who are looking after sites have been identified and we have their contact information. As more are confirmed, they will be added. Several sites are being maintained already.

There are several volunteers who have stepped forward to offer general assistance in clearing and maintaining sites as needed.

Gravesite cleanup day / projects for the entire group of volunteers to participate have been held during spring and fall. Four sites have been cleared by the group with more scheduled for 2025. Two of the newly cleared sites have been adopted by caretakers. We continue to look for new caretakers to maintain sites once cleared.

A hands-on workshop was conducted in June, 2025 in coordination with the New Hampshire Old Graveyard Association. Volunteers participated to learn headstone maintenance and other infrastructure needs such as fixing broken markers, righting toppled markers and dealing with sunken stones. This workshop was held at the Varrell family burial site at 300 Sagamore Road. Three headstones were returned to their upright position. Volunteers also repaired one of these headstones which had been broken into three pieces.

### **Long term goals are:**

To update the driving tour of Rye gravesites to include more locations. It has also been suggested that we create web links for each site which will provide the visitor with an easy way to see detailed information on that location should they be interested.

Obtain signage for the sites which are accessible by road.

Continue group volunteer cleanup days.

Promote adoption of a site to youth groups through Scouts, schools or other civic organizations. This could be a learning opportunity for them to do research on Rye history or genealogy.

Solicit Rye businesses to sponsor or adopt a site, which could be a way to provide funding for signs.

The listing spreadsheet of gravesites is a fluid document. It is posted on the RHC website page for access by anyone. Contact info or other sensitive data will not be included for public knowledge. Historical information documented by Louise Tallman is being retained.

Provide specific geo-location info to town offices so that these sites can be marked on the town tax maps. Some already are as indicated by a cross on the assessors map.