

Friends of Hollinfare Cemetery – Chair's Annual Report – November 2019

2019 has been another very busy but successful and productive year for the Friends Group and together we have achieved so much.

- **Monthly Action Days** have continued to be well attended. We've welcomed new volunteers, who along with regular volunteers have willingly turned their hands to various practical tasks such as pruning, weeding, planting, grass cutting, brushing up and gathering leaves for composting. These regular tidy up sessions make a huge difference to the ongoing look and feel of the cemetery. This year we received large waste bags free from Benchmark to use at action days and they have also offered more should we need them.
- Throughout the year the Friends of St. Helen's Church provide our volunteers with much-needed **hot refreshments** during each Action day, which is much appreciated. Thanks to Marion for coordinating this.
- The **Grave Tending Scheme** continues to provide an excellent service, as well as raising funds for the group, thanks to the ongoing support of our monthly grave cleaners who keep the 30 graves in the scheme looking their best. Their regular commitment is much appreciated by relatives of the deceased, who truly value this support, especially those who live afar. Thank you to Sheila who continues to give her time to coordinate this so well and in such a sensitive manner.
- During early Spring further **Memorial Improvements** were made to Plot 6 with all memorials reinstated, giving a much better feel on entering the cemetery. Further funds have been allocated by the Friends Group to attend to further memorials in Plot 1.
- In June the ceiling of the **Friends storeroom** was re-plastered and painted and a new door fitted and painted thanks to funding from a WBC Community Initiative Fund and Parish Council funding. With these funds we were also able to install a new paved path to the storage bays.
- Throughout the year the cemetery has looked colorful and welcoming thanks to the 'green fingered' volunteers who have planted **Spring and Summer plants** in the front wall and pots and maintained the flower borders. Once again, we wish to thank local farmer Eddie Atherton for his kind donation of bedding plants.
- The **borders and external boundary fence** have received extra attention this year. Lots of pruning and shaping to holly trees and other shrubs has taken place, keeping them in good shape, as well as giving them a new lease of life and a healthy glow. Of course, our tools and equipment need to be in good working order to do this - thanks to Pete Higson for maintaining these and for coordinating the works.
- More **unvisited and unkempt graves** in certain plots in the cemetery have been weeded, webbed and golden gravel applied, to reduce further weeding and improve the look of the cemetery.
- Another fun and successful **fundraising lunch** was held in July raising money for future projects. Thanks to Anne & Neil McArthur for hosting the event once again and to all who provided the delicious food and raffle prizes.
- A **Heritage Board** now hangs on the outside of the storeroom wall for all to read, reminding us of the history of the cemetery and the people who have made the parish what it is today. Thanks to the Hamilton Davies Trust for funding this and for the volunteer time given in researching the content.

- Friends volunteers spent a lovely evening together in October at their **Annual Dinner** held to celebrate their achievements and enjoy each other's company outside of the cemetery. Thanks go to committee members Irene and Virginia for organising the evening and ensuring it all ran smoothly.
- In November the Friends were thrilled to see the long-awaited **Memorial** installed in the cemetery, after nearly 2 years in the planning. This beautiful stone memorial now sits proudly to the right of the cemetery entrance gates and is a fitting sculpture to all those, young and old, resting in graves unmarked and unvisited. Thanks go to our very generous benefactor for funding the memorial, to Sheila and Mandy for steering this ambitious project and to James Hilton stonemasons for creating such a lovely piece. Local builder Paul Dixon has kindly offered his time & skills freely to pave around the memorial which will complete the project.
- This year our regular volunteer Fred was awarded a **Shell Grant** of £350 which is an annual fund available to ex Shell employees who are pensioners and give at least 20 hours a year of their time volunteering. Thanks to Fred for bringing this to our attention and for the many hours he gives to keeping the grass in the cemetery so well-tended, which vastly improves the look of the cemetery.
- The **poppies** adorning the railings for a 2nd year running is a moving and fitting tribute to our local heroes, who are either buried in the cemetery or commemorated on the cenotaph, who gave their lives during the 1st and 2nd World Wars and other conflicts.
- The **Christmas wreath** made by Joan will once again be placed on the gates in December, welcoming visitors throughout the festive season.
- Of course, action days and projects would not take place without careful planning, organising and fundraising efforts and successful grant applications. Thank you to all members of the **Friends committee** for giving their time to do this and for the hospitality they show when hosting meetings and the friendly welcome they give to all our volunteers.
- The efforts and improvements made by so many volunteers never go unnoticed. We get lovely **verbal and written feedback** from visitors saying what a difference their hard work makes. WBCBS regularly express how valuable the work we do is and how much the cemetery has improved since the Friends have been involved. For the 7th year running the cemetery has been awarded the Green Flag, recognising and acknowledging the hard work of the Friends volunteers. The Friends committee continue to have a great working partnership with WBC Bereavement Services (WBCBS) who provide us with materials like gravel and bark as well as removing the large bags of ground clearance debris following Action Days. This year they have also carried out some tree maintenance works. With their continued support and funding we can look forward to making further improvements to the cemetery.

I am personally very proud of everyone who has been involved in improving the look and feel of the cemetery, including those who unfortunately are no longer with us - a heartfelt **Thank You** to all.

Mandy Eccles

Chair of the Friends of Hollinfare Cemetery