

Friends of Hollinfare Cemetery – Chair’s Annual Report November 2023 – 2024

Welcome all to our AGM 2024

Most of you will know each other from the Action Days, but I’ll just introduce those you may not know – Rebecca / Julie

Since our last AGM we’ve had another productive year thanks to our kind volunteers who attend our 11 action days throughout the year, and also thanks to those who kindly choose to work in the cemetery in between action days. Our average attendance per month remains about 17-20, enabling us to achieve a great deal in one action day and keep on top of the huge task of maintaining the cemetery. I’d like to extend a warm welcome to the new volunteers that have joined us in the past year – Maureen and Sheila. We are always grateful for the extra helping hands and I am always impressed and inspired with the amount of drive and energy all our volunteers bring to the cemetery, all with a smile on their faces.

Of course the Friends group cannot operate without a committee, and our committee, as well as being hands on volunteers, also give their time to attend 3 meetings a year. These are useful for ensuring that tasks for action days are well thought through and planned so that volunteers can be productively engaged at action days. Thanks to Pete for coordinating the tasks and ensuring tools and equipment are in good working order and also, along with Joyce, for ensuring refreshments are provided for the workers.

Our thanks also to Sheila for continuing to coordinate the Grave Tending Scheme, for which relatives of the bereaved express their gratitude. As Sheila says in her report, the scheme also brings in much needed funds, which have totaled £9,086 since it started in 2012.

Meetings are also a time when we plan social events, and I’d like to thank Virginia and Irene for taking on this role admirably again this year, both were well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by all. Our thanks, once again, to Anne & Neil McArthur for opening up their lovely garden and home for our fundraising lunch.

New for this year was the task of liaising with contractors to get quotes for painting the old railings and gates, these are now in thanks to Linda for taking on the job - we hope to progress with this project next year.

Thank you to Pete, Liz and Marian for freely hosting our committee meetings in their homes, and also to the Community Hall for affording us the use of the hall for free for our AGM.

We continue to enjoy a good working relationship with WBC Bereavement Services and have welcomed their attendance and input at our meetings. Good communication and a prompt response to any concerns or queries on an ongoing basis are very important to successfully achieving our aim of ‘Improving the Look and Feel of the Cemetery’, and the success of any projects that fit into that aim.

Our main project this year has been to continue with memorial improvements. Whilst the committee know this is a slow process, we do agree it is important to keep this as a rolling programme as it does have a positive impact on the look and feel of the cemetery as graves are repaired and headstones reinstated. As you can see from the Treasurer's Report our bank balance is looking healthy, but this takes into account approximately £6k payment due when Plot 1 memorials are completed, and another lump sum earmarked for the next phase of improvements in Plots 2 and 3 which we will be getting quotes for soon and hope to start in the new year.

Another project this year was to install 2 new benches for the use of volunteers at action days and for visitors. These were funded thanks to a successful grant application to Hamilton Davies Trust and the Rotary Club of Irlam and are being put to good use.

We do, of course, need to keep looking to raise funds through grant applications and other means to be able to do projects and replace or buy new equipment, which we will aim to do. You can see from the Treasurer's Report the success we've had this year.

Thanks to a recent successful grant application to Hamilton Davies Trust we now have a new leaf blower and will be purchasing a new mower in the new year sales.

We mustn't forget the local businesses who continue to freely support us with bedding plants and bulk waste bags, so our thanks to Eddie & James Atherton and Mike at Benchmark (now Jewsons).

As many of you are aware our fox and cubs sculpture had a facelift this year. For a moment we thought they were going to get lost in a white Christmas, but thanks to Mike Givens and Rachelle's time and artistic skills they are looking revived and handsome once again.

I'd like to close by saying thank you to all current volunteers and friends, and to also remember those who have gone before us. In 2010 we set off on a path to making a difference to what was then a foreboding cemetery. Today we can be very, very proud of how welcoming the cemetery is and what we have achieved together.

Thank You and keep up the great work!

Mandy Eccles (Chair)

12.11.2024