

## **Friends of Hollinfare Cemetery – Chair’s Annual Report – Nov 2024 – 2025**

Since our last AGM we’ve had another busy and productive year thanks to our kind volunteers who attend our 11 action days throughout the year. Our volunteer attendance per month has been maintained throughout the year with an average of 18-20, which enables us to achieve a great deal in one action day and keep on top of the huge task of maintaining the cemetery. My thanks also to those individuals who kindly choose to work in the cemetery in between action days. I am always impressed and inspired by the passion and energy that all our volunteers bring to the cemetery. We are always in need of new volunteers so anyone who can lend a helping hand will be made most welcome!

Our thanks to Pete, our Secretary, for given direction to the volunteers as to how they can actively help and have a productive morning, and for ensuring the tools and equipment are in good working order. Earlier this year we purchased a new mower, which was funded by the Hamilton Davies Trust and one of our existing mowers was also refurbished. Most importantly, Pete, along with Joyce, ensures the volunteers receive some well-earned refreshments every action day. For the past year our breaks have also been accompanied by a welcome tray of cakes from the kind family who turn up each month laden with goodies for the volunteers as a way of saying thanks.

Our thanks to Sheila for continuing to coordinate the Grave Tending Scheme this year and for communicating with the relatives of the 30 graves in the scheme, many of whom express their sincere gratitude for the time and care given to their loved ones memorials. This role is undertaken by our merry band of grave cleaners who do a fabulous job. The scheme along with donations to the group is extremely important in bring in much-needed funds for our projects.

Our thanks also to our Treasurer John who took on this role last year. John is keeping the finances in good order and has introduced online banking which will hopefully make the role easier going forward.

Of course we all love a social event, and I’d like to thank Virginia and Irene for once again taking on the role of planning our annual dinner and for also taking charge of the raffle at our annual fundraising lunch. Both our events were well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by all. Our thanks to Anne & Neil McArthur for opening up their lovely garden and home for the 11<sup>th</sup> year running to host our annual fundraising lunch.

Thank you to all our Friends committee members who give their time to attend our committee meetings and contribute to planning future projects, reviewing ongoing ones, and discussing maintenance tasks for action days. Our thanks to Hamilton Davies Trust for giving us free use of a meeting room for our 3 meetings this year, and to the Community Hall Committee for free use of the hall for our AGM.

As previously hoped, our plans to paint the front gates and old perimeter fencing were unfortunately not followed up this year, due to funding restrictions. WBC Bereavement Services (WBCBS) are looking into the possibility of engaging a Warrington based company to paint the front gates and old front railings in Spring 2026, as part of the company's Corporate Social Responsibility initiative. Hopefully this will come to fruition. We continue to enjoy a good working relationship with WBCBS and have welcomed the presence of Julie or Paul as their input at our meetings, and prompt response to any concerns or queries, really does help improve communications.

Our main project this year has been to continue with memorial improvements. This has been a slow process, but we hope that the engagement of Chris & Craig Memorials for the phase of works currently taking place in Plots 2 and 3 will prove to be the start of a smoother and speedier process going forward. This is a rolling programme, and therefore works will continue to be implemented as funds allow, and agreement from the committee is given. Unfortunately, WBCBS are unable to financially support further memorials, but I hope that their offer of materials and free use of gantry equipment will enable a reduction of costs that will reflect in future quotes from the stonemasons.

We mustn't forget Eddie & James Atherton for once again providing bedding plants for our pots and front walls that have again provided a colourful welcome for visitors.

We do 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. Unfortunately, I was unable to apply to the Shell Community grant this year as they no longer offer this grant. This will leave a substantial income loss – having been £1,300 last year. We will look to hold a Grand Raffle next year and engage local businesses in providing some big ticket prizes.

Going forward we need to make a concerted effort to publicise the group and seek out new volunteers. If anyone can help to distribute a poster or two around the district then that will be most helpful. Being on Facebook is something we may need to consider.

I'd like to close by saying thank you to all current volunteers and supporters of the Friends group who all help with our aim to 'Improve the Look and Feel of the Cemetery'. What a difference this year and the past 15 years in operation have made. I feel very proud to be a Chair of such an active and friendly group. I will also never forget the huge contribution made by our fellow volunteers and friends who are no longer with us, they certainly left their mark on the cemetery and on us. 15yrs ago we took on the enormous task of making a difference to what was then a foreboding and unwelcoming cemetery. Today we can be very proud of how welcoming the cemetery is and what we have achieved together.

Mandy Eccles (Chair)

04.11.2025