**FRIENDS OF HYDE PARK CEMETERY**

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Monday 12th November 2018**

1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Andria Johns FoHPC Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and then summarised the format of the meeting.

1. **APOLOGIES**

None reported

1. **GUEST SPEAKER**

Andy Harbon – The Farm Boy and the Sewing Maid.

Andy told a fascinating true story from his own family history and showed a film highlighting the remarkable discoveries that were made.

1. **SECRETARY’S REPORT (2018)**

Read by Helen Slade (attached below).

 **5 TREASURER’S REPORT**

Financial Statements were circulated at the beginning of the meeting. A signed and bound copy examined by our accountants was available.

 **6 APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR FOR 2019**

Ashworth Bailey Limited, Chartered Accountants.

 Resolution – Approved (1st AH, 2nd RB)

 **7 COMMITEE 2018/19**

The positions for 2018/19 are as follows:

 Chair – Andria Johns (1st TP, 2nd AH)

 Vice Chair – Andy Harbon (1st HS, 2nd MB)

 Treasurer – Margaret Bark (1st LS, 2nd AH)

 Secretary – Helen Slade (1st SF, 2nd AJ)

1. **VOTE FOR NEW EXECUTIVE POSITION ON COMMITTEE**

Marketing Officer – proposal of Lynsey Slater – Approved and voted on. (1st AH, 2nd HS)

1. **ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Committee Members – Richard Bell

No other persons expressed an interest to join the committee.

1. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND QUESTIONS**

Tina thanked the friends for all their hard work.

Richard Bell promoted the Sandhouse charity and played a CD with two songs that had been specially written for the project.

 **MEETING CLOSED**

Secretary Report (Nov 2018)

At the beginning of the 2018 we were delighted to secure an environment grant from the Greggs Foundation. The foundation is a grant making charity which aims to improve the quality of life in local communities by distributing around £3 million per year to charitable organisations throughout the UK.

The funding we received was used to create a ‘Wildlife Corner’ in the south-western section of the cemetery as this area was an overgrown and untidy embankment slope. Low value vegetation was removed and existing wildlife-friendly plants were retained.

Volunteers from the Conservation Volunteers along with members of the committee helped to finish cultivating the area and then planted hundreds of young plants on the slope which in the New Year should be covered in wildlife friendly vegetation.

On behalf of the friends I would like to thank The Conservation Volunteers, [Greggs Foundation](https://www.greggsfoundation.org.uk/environmental-grant), and also committee member Lynsey Slater for helping us to obtain funding for this project.

During the year we were delighted to welcome back teenagers who are involved with the government scheme Nation Citizen Service.

In July and November groups of young people carried out excellent work in the Cemetery. Their activities have included rejuvenating shrub beds, weeding, mulching with wood-chip, litter picking, raising tree canopies and general tidying of the cemetery. My thanks go out to Andy, Richard and other members involved in making sure their visits were an enjoyable one.

Our connection to the NCS organisation is vital as not only does it bring in the man power needed for certain larger projects within the cemetery, but also gives the friends an important link to the younger generation.

With this in mind one of our main achievements this year has been the link that’s been made with the local XP and XP East Schools. They contacted us early in the year to ask if we would help them with a project they were studying regarding the railways and their impact on Doncaster. Our volunteers compiled a walk for them and Andria our Chair, showed them around these graves, telling them their stories and answering any questions the children had. The experience was a huge success and has led to the school publishing a book about the railways which the children have all contributed to. Through the success of this and with the children being enthused by the visit, the schools contacted us to ask if we could help them with a WW1 walk. This was arranged and Andria led the children to the graves of servicemen in the cemetery. Once again the experience was a positive one with the children and staff learning about Doncaster’s vital role during this time period.

The educational aspect is an area that the Friends would like to focus on in the near future. As shown with the NCS and XP School’s, the potential to educate and inspire is an exciting prospect and the hope is to be able to develop the cemetery further into a user friendly space for all.

I would like to say a huge thank you to our Chair Andria whom met and led the groups on several occasions and also liaised with the XP schools in her own time.

Our first guided walk took place in March 2018 with Phil a long standing friend and volunteer of the cemetery. Normally our walks relate to a particular topic but the Friends of the Museum had requested a walk for their members and this comprised of a general walk with a mixture of themes explored.

Over the year the friends have held 6 more walks including our annual Bat Walk with the South Yorkshire Bat Group. All the walks were well attended with some new subjects explored. I would like to say a huge thank you to all our volunteers and committee members who have worked hard on these throughout the year.

One of the lovely things about being involved with Friends of Hyde Park Cemetery is when we help people to find the graves of loved ones. This can often lead to revealing more information about a family history than they were previously privy to. We can also have families contact us from overseas and this year was no exception.

We were fortunate to have a lady visit the cemetery who now lives near Nashville, Tennessee and whose grandmother is buried at the Cemetery. We had the privilege of showing her the grave where not only her mother was laid to rest, but also her infant aunt.

Another contact we had this year was by a relative in Australia whose great uncle served with the Royal Flying Corps and who was killed during the first WW. Even though we have featured Anthony Steel Caldwell on previous guided walks, through added information and photographs from the family we were able to tell his story in more detail. The grave itself is in a poor state and so the family have shown interest in having this repaired. I am happy to say that the family have contacted the friends recently to say that they are coming to visit us in August 2019 to see where Anthony is buried. It will be 100 years since a family member has visited the site so I am sure it will be a very emotional experience for all involved.

While we take people around the site on guided walks we do like to show them our current grave restoration project. In the past we’ve had great success in having the graves of Patrick Stirling and the Pickering families restored and in 2018 we were pleased to launch our next project, restoring the grave of Sir Charles Norris Nicholson.

2018 celebrated the centenary of Votes for Women and so it was important for us to have this grave restored. Sir Charles was a supporter for the right for women to vote but also was involved with helping the war wounded during WW1. Our committee member Lynsey was able to contact a living relative who is also called Sir Charles and we were delighted to hear that he is eager to help us with the restoration. This will also include a visit to Doncaster in the not too distant future.

While the restoration of this grave is ongoing the friends have been able to possibly find another grave to focus on in the future. It has come to light that the cemetery is the final resting place of a Corporal John Daniel Robinson who was involved in the Charge of the light brigade.

John died on the 23rd May 1890 aged 56 of Pneumonia and is **buried in an unmarked grave in the cemetery. Within the cemetery there are many people who are buried in unmarked graves here but through the work of the friends this can be rectified and the stories of these people can finally be told.**

**In the past we have has great success in this area and a fine example of this was when the unmarked grave of music hall star Harriet Vernon was discovered. Not only were we able to tell her amazing story but also it helped forge connections through the family whom originally were not aware of each other.**

Since April 2010 the friends have held monthly volunteers’ work sessions at the cemetery. In March this year we achieved the 100th such session and In addition to this, four specially arranged litter picks have occurred in recent years. Alongside this we were to take part in the Great British Spring Clean though the Beast from the East had other ideas! The work mornings are a great way in helping to maintain the cemetery and to get members of the public to get involved with the site. I would like to say a special thank you to Richard Bell who through all weathers has attended the vast majority of these throughout the 10 years of the friends being involved.

Hyde Park Cemetery as you can see is not only the resting place for over 56,000 people but is also a green space area surrounded by urban living and industry. Because of the location of the site many people use this space as somewhere to relax on a sunny day, a place to walk around during their lunch hour or somewhere to get away from the hustle and bustle of the urban sprawl. Also this area is an important haven for many varieties of wildlife. The friends are aware that this place is an area for all to use and to explore but it is sad to see this being tested by certain individuals who will use the site for their own gains and unfortunately this year we have had instances which have threatened to undermine all the good work that we’re trying to do. Throughout a portion of the year we have had a spate of rough sleepers within the cemetery that unfortunately attracted less desirable persons within the grounds. Alongside this we have had major issues with the large bins that were placed around the cemetery. Unfortunately these bins have either not been emptied, been routinely destroyed by fire or have be abused by local businesses and members of the public. The good news is that after a lot of consultations and communication with relevant organisations, the homeless people have now moved on which in turn has seen a dramatic change in the state of the cemetery. Also we are finally nearing an agreement with DMBC on the way forward with the bin situation. We hope that through working together we can move forward in helping maintain and enhance the site for all to enjoy.

Once again we have been involved in supporting and attending the local Heritage festival and family history fairs within Doncaster. These events are always well attended by the public and other local voluntary organisations and are a great way for all to network and learn from each other ways of promoting our causes. With this in mind we also have held a few talks this year to various establishments and this is again something that the Friends would like to expand within the coming year.

As many of you will know 2018 has been a very special year in relation to it being the 100 anniversary of the end of the First World War and also of the formation of the RAF. At Hyde Park Cemetery we have many commonwealth war graves but we also have many individuals that are mentioned on family graves that are buried in other cemeteries throughout the world. Over the last 4 years the friends have led many guided walks relating to the two wars and as a mark of respect this year we took on the task of placing a cross on every registered CWGC grave within the cemetery. We hope that this is a fitting tribute to those individuals that are buried here.

Alongside this I had the great honour to attend the remembrance service in London on 11th November and to be part of the People’s Procession. As a volunteer with a friends group I was inspired to get involved with this amazing event and as a mark of respect and remembrance, was able to take a wreath with me which was laid at the cenotaph. On this wreath was written: ‘In memory of those who served and gave their lives in all wars and who are named within Hyde Park Cemetery, Doncaster’.

The friends have led me to personally meet some truly remarkable people and to widen my knowledge of the world around me. To be part of something, helping to educate and positively change a mindset is truly a wonderful thing and I encourage all of you to get involved in your local organisations as you just don’t know where it will lead to.

Finally I would personally like to thank you all for making 2018 yet again a very successful year and I’m looking forward to the positive changes we can all make in the coming new year.