

Friends of West Norwood Cemetery AGM

Saturday 15 October 2022 at 2.30pm in The Old Library, West Norwood.

Attendees:

Trustees: John Clarke (JMC), Deputy Chair in the Chair; Jill Dudman (JD), Hon General Secretary/Membership Secretary; Anna Long (AL), Hon Treasurer, Colin Berry (CB), Caroline Graham-Brown (CGB), Trustee (5 trustees attended)

Members: Imogen Long, Anthony Ashby, Mike Tuffrey, Rosemary Honey, Chris Vernon, Judy Harris, Steve Welburn, Abigail Davitt, Yvonne Barry, Liz Furness, Sandra Horne, Margaret Jackman, Bernard Winchester, Robert Holden, Nicholas Long. (15 members attended)

Visitors: Sally Strachey

1. Apologies

Trustees: Bob Flanagan, Tim Stephens, Victoria Solominides-Hunter

Members: James Slattery-Kavanagh, Roger Myhill

2. Declarations of Interest

Jill Dudman is a cremation plot owner. Nicholas Long is a plot holder

3. Minutes of 2021 AGM – Matters arising not covered elsewhere.

There were no matters arising. The minutes were proposed by CB and accepted unanimously.

4. Election of Trustees

One-third of the charity trustees are required by the Constitution to retire from office. Tim Stephens had carefully read through the Constitution and chosen the three members based on those rules. The following three trustees stood down, and presented themselves as candidates for re-election.

Anna Long
Tim Stephens
Victoria Solomonidis-Hunter

NL proposed the candidates be re-elected and the meeting accepted their re-election unanimously.

5. Chairman's Report

In the Chairman's absence, the Deputy Chair directed members to the Newsletter containing the Chairman's detailed report of progress during the year. The Deputy Chair noted highlights including the restoration of the John Hughes memorial and the placing of the Ukrainian flag; progress with St Stephen's Chapel; the completed restoration of the Richard Thornton family vault. Road repairs have been completed and the new entrance at Hubbard Road is expected to be ready in a year.

The Deputy Chair thanked the Officers and Trustees for their work during the year. He thanked the Cemetery Working Parties; and Madeline Brockbanks and Sue Williams for organising the gardening sessions and their success in winning gold in the London in Bloom contest.

6. Hon Treasurer Report – Anna Long

There was a small deficit on the year 2021-2022 of £425. Expenditure is stable and most of the income is from membership. There are more than adequate reserves. Covid had not had any significant impact on income or expenditure. Unrestricted funds are £30,151 restricted funds £9,562. There is a healthy balance sheet. The liabilities are 5-year memberships, where the income is spread over 5 years and lifetime memberships, where it is spread over 20 years. The accounts had been signed off at the last Trustee meeting on September 2022 and sent off to the Charity Commission.

The financial accounts were proposed by CB and accepted unanimously. The Deputy Chairman thanked the Hon Treasurer for her work during the year.

7. Membership/Tours Report – Jill Dudman

Current membership is around 400. New tour guides and volunteers have been identified and training is in place.

Tours began again in August 2021. The new Eventbrite booking system is working very well.

8. Twitter – Roger Myhill sent this report

Roger contributed the following report on the Friends' Twitter account:

Twitter followers have increased to a current total of 1,843.

The most viewed tweets during the last year included ones promoting the new Guidebook, the October tour and the January and May newsletters.

The tweets generating the most likes were about the Ukrainian flag being raised on the grave of John Hughes and information about the founding of Donetsk.

There have been many mentions of @fownc1837 in well-viewed tweets by other accounts such as Dulwich Local History, the Dickens Fellowship, Lambeth Archives, Helen Hayes, Loughborough Road SW9 history, the Norwood Society, Norwood Forum, Roger Bowdler, West Norwood Feast and the Cemetery Club. This illustrates how we interact with other social media users.

There was also interest in tweets about William Tite and Thomas Grissell, along with anniversaries relating to Mrs Beeton, Charles Spurgeon, Sir Henry Tate, William Leaf and Sir Joseph Barnby.

The Deputy Chairman thanked Roger in his absence for his ongoing work on the Friends Twitter. CGB commented that this engagement with his wide range of followers, giving updates about tours and other news about the cemetery is reaching well beyond the current membership.

9. Website – James Slattery-Kavanagh sent in this report for October 2022.

- At least 165 visits per day (~5000 visits per month)
 - 4000 real visitors per month
 - 20% of web traffic is cached
 - 4.4GB of data requested (0.9GB cached, our server handles 3.5GB)
 - 100 hacking attempts blocked
 - Google has indexed 129 pages and documents
 - Google Search clicks 3,840 per annum (3,201 from UK)
 - Google Search impressions 232,000 per annum
 - Google Search click through rate 1.7%
 - Search phrase "west norwood cemetery" 696 clicks, 13,722 impressions
 - Search phrase "friends of west norwood cemetery" 331 clicks, 411 impressions
 - Home Page 1,539 clicks, 76,897 impressions
 - Events Page 431 clicks, 9,552 impressions
 - Newsletters Page 135 clicks, 6,814 impressions
 - Click by Device: desktop 2,224 - mobile 1,407 - tablet 213
- (Data sources: Cloudflare, Google Search Console)

The Deputy Chair offered our thanks to James for his work and help in maintaining and developing our website.

10. Lambeth Local History Forum – Colin Berry and Robert Holden, Vice Chair, LLHF

Colin Berry agreed to continue as the Friends representative on the LLHF. This offer was accepted with thanks from the meeting. All of the History Forum meetings this year had been virtual meetings, and it is expected that this approach will be continued. Progress is going well on the relocation of the Lambeth Archive to 18 Brixton Hill.

Robert Holden is a long-standing member of the Management Advisory Group, where he represents all the owners of the 46,500 graves. He is also Vice-Chairperson of the Lambeth Local History Forum (LLHF). The LLHF publishes an annual walks leaflet, including FoWNC events, and organises the Lambeth Heritage Festival which takes place in September every year.

Lambeth Archives will be moving in 2023 to occupy the basement and half the ground floor of a new building on Brixton Hill. This new location has excellent transport links. The premises will be safe and secure, and protected from flood and fire. There will be ample storage space for the archives, a space for researchers and, most importantly, a display area where the Woolley Collection of Doulton Pottery could be displayed. It has been unseen for over 100 years. Charles Woolley, who assembled the collection, died in August 1922, and was buried at West Norwood.

11. Publications Officer Report – Bob Flanagan

The new full-colour guidebook to the cemetery prepared by the Chairman had been published and is selling well. Copies were available at the meeting, and all were sold.

13. WW1 Project – John Clarke and Peter Hodgkinson

Further details of the WW1 project and some of our discoveries were shared by John and Peter at the November 2021 meeting, and their physical exploration of the cemetery to identify surviving monuments and some new discoveries has since been completed. The work is now in the final stages of proof reading and checking. It is hoped the publication will be available in the next 2-3 months and will be 400 pages long including many illustrations and maps. Like Bob's recently published cemetery guide it will be printed in colour.

Contrary to what was reported at last year's AGM, it has been decided to publish the full version of our research and make the summary and further information (particularly photographs of the surviving memorials) available via the FOWNC website. Had this material been included in the publication it would have become unmanageably large and consequently more expensive to produce.

Peter contacted the webmasters at Alleyn's School and Dulwich College. In the case of Alleyn's School this was partly to clarify whether or not the loss of their WW1 webpages was temporary or permanent. It proved to be temporary whilst the School website was updated. The school has since added our images of memorials relevant to these pages, with appropriate acknowledgement to the FOWNC - see for instance the school's page on Leonard Libby at <https://ww1.alleyns.org.uk/boys-i-l/libby-lo>

Peter is still awaiting a response from Dulwich College, but we plan to share material with them in due course.

In principle, Peter and John have agreed to undertake a similar survey of WW2 commemorations in the cemetery, although this will not be as comprehensive due to the 100 year rule regarding service records held in The National Archives.

Robert Holden acknowledged the work carried out by John Clarke and Peter Hodgkinson on the fallen of the First World War, and was grateful for the assistance given to the Alleyn's School Archives. Robert is a former pupil of Alleyn's School. He recalled that the casualty figures for independent boys' schools like Alleyn's and Dulwich College were particularly high. Having been in the army cadet force at school, many joined as Second Lieutenants, often the first to go over the top. Thus they were cut down in great numbers.

14. MAG/SoMC/NLHF Project Report – Nicholas Long

The working relationship with Lambeth has improved, and progress on the NHLF projects has been made. Overall supervision of the HLF projects has been more effective. Most of the roadways works have been completed. Lambeth has delayed completion of the Hubbard Road entrance, while it makes adjustments to traffic and pedestrian movement on the street side to ensure safe access.

The majority of the work on memorials are in progress or about to start, undertaken by Sally Strachey's company, Sally is giving a talk after this AGM. There has been impressive progress with the Greek Hellenic Enclosure. Victoria Solominides-Hunter has identified further significant memorials and has made a successful start in finding funding for conservation work. Pan Pandelis has also been actively supportive with completion of a draft database - work is now in hand on collecting further biographical information with a view to publication at a later date.

There is a high level of local and political interest and support for an entrance in Robson Road. Because last year engineers reported that the wall in that area has no foundation, the cost of the entrance may make it impossible at reasonable cost. Parts of this section of the wall are held in place by ties, as it had collapsed in the past from time to time, and another section was also blown out by a bomb in WW2.

The final element of the HLF project is the redevelopment of the offices as the Visitors' Centre. The office staff will work in a Portakabin in 2023. The Project team has been increased to include Kim Hart, responsible for encouraging public use; Corinne Snow, Project Manager; Alison Plant, Capital Works Manager.

The cemetery's governance requires updating for present circumstances and agreement has been reached on a strategic partnership between the Council, Southwark Diocese and FOWNC. This has been stalled for a number of years, with little or no action from the legal department of the Council.

Revised Cemetery Regulations have been introduced, which permit arrangements for enforcement to ensure greater safety. For example, vans are excluded, with the aim of making theft of valuable historic assets harder but, as the Chairman has observed, there is little point without enforcement activity.

The recently-appointed Cabinet Member at Lambeth Council with responsibility for the Cemetery, Cllr Rezina Chowdhury, has found time to visit the cemetery. She appeared keen and positive about developments at the cemetery.

Nicholas Long thanked the Chairman for his considerable support during the year. He emphasised just how much time and energy the Chairman gives to the cemetery and representing the Friends' interests.

The Deputy Chair thanked Nicholas Long and the Chairman on behalf of the meeting, for their work on maintaining pace and progress with the various stakeholders throughout the year.

15. AOB

On behalf of the meeting the Deputy Chairman thanked the Chairman for his extensive work over the past very successful year.

16. 2023 AGM will be held on Saturday 21 October 2023 at 2.30pm in the Old Library, Knights Hill