

# National Federation of CEMETERY FRIENDS

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Editor: Ann Wilkinson

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## Beckett Street Friends welcome NFCF



The 2015 AGM hosted by the Friends of Beckett Street Cemetery was held in June at the Thackray Medical Museum in Leeds. It was attended by more than 50 members representing 23 cemetery friends groups and associates.

*Almost ready to start!  
Photograph courtesy of Lynda Kitching*

After a warm welcome from Alun Pugh, Chairman of the Friends of Beckett Street

Cemetery, attendees then heard from Sylvia Barnard, founder of the Friends and co-founder of the NFCF. This was followed by a presentation from museum curator, Lauren Ryall-Stockton, who spoke about the history of the building including its original use as the Leeds Union Workhouse which opened in 1861. We then went across the road for a guided tour of the cemetery which is situated opposite the museum.

Beckett Street Cemetery, founded in 1845 was one of the earliest publicly funded cemeteries in the country. Originally known as Leeds Burial Ground or Burmantofts, the site covers 16 acres and was designed with an Anglican section to the south-west and Non-conformist section to the north-east each with its own entrance, lodge and mortuary chapel. The chapels designed by local architects Chantrell and Shaw were demolished in the 1960s.

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The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the NFCF.  
All material by the editor unless otherwise attributed.

The cemetery is the last resting place of some 180,000 individuals including paupers from the nearby workhouse. There are many 'guinea' (or inscription) graves where the less affluent on payment of a guinea (£1.1s in old money) could give a loved one a decent burial in a communal grave with their name commemorated on a shared headstone.

By 1984, the cemetery was under threat of clearance by the City Council but faced with opposition the idea was dropped. It is now closed to burials and the Friends working with the site owner, Leeds City Council, help to maintain the cemetery, making it an attractive place for both visitors and wildlife.



*Two of the many guinea graves*

After lunch there was time for a look round the museum before the start of the formal AGM business. Details of the business meeting can be found in the minutes sent to NCF members.

Any members who have not received the minutes please contact the secretary: [gwyneth1@btinternet.com](mailto:gwyneth1@btinternet.com)

Thank you to the Friends of Beckett Street Cemetery for their hospitality on the day and also Arthur Tait who has stood down as NCF chairman after 12 years service. The next NCF AGM will be hosted by the Friends of Newton Road Cemetery, Newbury, on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

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## **Geology of Gravestones**

The geological trails in the six Oxford cemeteries described by Nina Morgan and Philip Powell in *The Geology of Oxford Gravestones* highlight the wide variety of rock types and geological features that can be seen in graveyards throughout Britain.

Price £14.99 plus p & p. See: [www.gravestonegeology.uk](http://www.gravestonegeology.uk)

## **Change of NCFE Chairman**

*The secretary Gwyneth Stokes would like to add a personal note to the Federation's thanks to retiring chairman, Arthur Tait.*

The NCFE having been without a chairman for several years, the AGM was managed by the chairman of the host group at the time.

I was particularly impressed when it was the turn of the Friends of Brompton Cemetery and we met Arthur. He inspired me to take advantage of the kindness and good nature of a very busy man to fill the vacancy - with great effect. Arthur helped set up the first committee, steered the NCFE through BCAG surveys and HLF questionnaires and advised workable compromises when the committee were undecided. So we have much to thank him for. We will miss him but are fortunate to have Robert Stephenson as the new chairman. Robert is a committee member and tour leader of the Friends of Brompton Cemetery, a trustee of Kensal Green Cemetery Friends and has given advice and support to other London cemeteries. He is a popular speaker in the south-east on funerary and associated topics.

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## **Notes from the Burial and Cremation Advisory Group (BCAG) meeting**

Geoffrey Seamark attended the June 2015 meeting of BCAG on behalf of the NCFE.

Following the recent general election, Michael Gove is the newly appointed Secretary of State for Justice with overall responsibility for matters of burial and cremation. Caroline Dinenage is the Parliamentary Under Secretary who will deal with the day to day management in this area. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) is required to present all previous agreements to the new Minister for approval of content, finance, conclusion and procedure. New thoughts and/or disagreements will require reappraisal and possibly fresh consultation. Thus BCAG is held in a state of limbo until these procedures take place.

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On grave reuse, the MOJ is referring back to the 2004 paper and is researching and gathering as many options as possible in order to present the broadest outline to the new Minister. Any fresh impetus will embrace previous research and the concerns of those in the industry; it will also place emphasis on bereavement and multi-faith issues and be presented to relevant parties before the summer recess.

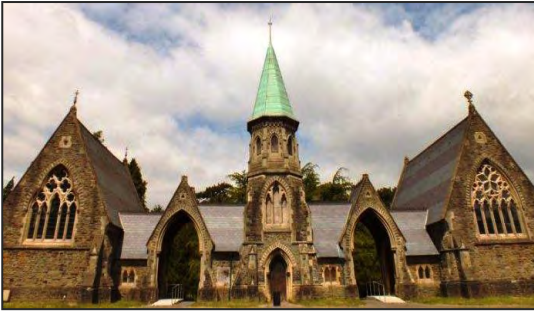
Provision of out of hours coroner's services is still presenting issues, mainly in London and primarily to those faiths which require early burial. In the west London area there have been complaints about difficulty in even making contact with the coroner's office. The MOJ said the latter could be directly linked to the appointment of a new coroner and the installation of a new team but these issues are being resolved. The former Minister, Simon Hughes, did meet with all authorities involved in funding the coroner's service with a view to producing a policy which would be satisfactory to all concerned.

The death of a child caused by a falling headstone in a cemetery in Scotland raised comments about overall safety but pertaining in particular to dilapidated Victorian graves. Though ultimate responsibility for the maintenance of a headstone is actually that of the owner, as the managers of most cemeteries, local authorities have the unenviable task of maintaining sites and are caught between the economic reality of continuing cutbacks and an indifferent but emotional public. Added to this are the pressing and increasing requirements of the Health and Safety Commission. Economic decisions mean safety is not always a priority and is even nonexistent in some cemeteries. The possibility of government guidelines was suggested.

A satisfactory agreement has been reached between England and Scotland regarding cross border transfer of cadavers and ashes. The Scottish government has had a procedure in place since March 2015 and with minor adjustments this has now been accepted by both countries.

A grand plan to map all green spaces within the UK has been partially funded by the new government. Once a definition of an open space has been agreed, Natural England and other concerned organisations will commission the Ordnance Survey to begin work on producing a definitive map which will eventually be made available to the public.

## Cathays' crowdfunding appeal for chapel funds



John Farnhill reports that the Friends of Cathays Cemetery in Cardiff are delighted that the Grade II listed cemetery chapels are well on their way to being fully restored and are already being used for community events.

The Bereavement Services division of Cardiff Council has worked over many years with the support of the Friends to secure funding, firstly to replace the roofs in 2009 and more recently for the windows, suspended floors and some of the internal refurbishment.

There still remains a fair amount of work to be carried out however, particularly in the non-conformist chapel, so Bereavement Services sought further finance through crowdfunding. This is when the public are asked to put cash into the proposed venture. Those seeking funds set up a profile of their project on one of the crowdfunding websites (in this case Spacehive); they can then use social media alongside traditional networks of friends, family and colleagues to raise money. The target is nearly £40,000 to be raised by 27<sup>th</sup> November.

See: <https://www.spacehive.com/restoration-of-cathays-cemetery-chapels>

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## Lister Lane Cemetery in Halifax recognised as a Significant Cemetery

The Friends are delighted to announce that this Grade II listed cemetery has been recognised as a Significant Cemetery in Europe by the Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe (ASCE). Now owned by Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council, the cemetery open from 1841 to 1963, became the last resting place of some 20,000 people including many who were prominent in the development of Halifax during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is hoped that the cemetery's 'significant status' will increase public awareness and interest in this historic site.

## **New bench unveiled at Lawnswood Cemetery**

by Ann Lightman

A bench in remembrance of those who died in the Great War was unveiled at Lawnswood Cemetery on 19<sup>th</sup> August. Funded jointly by the Friends of Lawnswood Cemetery and Leeds City Council Outer North West Community Committee, it faces onto the War Memorial near the new Adel Lane entrance.

Councillor Anderson (on the left of the bench) performed the ceremony, cutting the ribbon after saying a few words about the significance of remembering the debt we owe to those who sacrificed their lives. He and representatives from the British Legion were welcomed by Janice Simpson, Vice-Chair of the Friends group (on the right of the bench, in lieu of the



*Photograph taken by Kate Vernon*

Chairman who was unable to attend). She expressed her thanks to the members of the Friends who were present and to Leeds City Council Bereavement Services who had obtained and positioned the bench and would shortly be affixing a commemorative plaque.

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## **Grazing sheep in cemeteries**

The Friends of Raikes Road Burial Ground in Skipton are looking at ways of maintaining the site other than scything or mowing and are considering whether to allow sheep grazing as a means of keeping down the foliage. The burial ground, approximately one acre in size, lies partially on a sloping terrain and is enclosed by walling. The Friends would like to hear from any NFCF members who have tried sheep grazing and what their experience has been.

Contact: Jean Robinson, [jean10alice@aol.com](mailto:jean10alice@aol.com)

## Chinese Monuments

from Walter Fung

This article is confined to monuments erected mainly in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. I am researching the early Chinese community in the UK and monuments can provide much information on the individual and the Chinese community at that time.

A good burial and being remembered are very important in Chinese culture. Ideally many of the earlier Chinese emigrants would have liked to have been buried at home in China. Accounts of the Chinese who lost their lives building the American transcontinental railway record that 'ship loads' of their human remains were taken home to China for burial in their native soil. A small number of Chinese men who died in England had their bodies stored for a time before being taken back to their home village for burial. These are exceptions and possibly many more may have wanted this but the cost would have been prohibitive.

Many of the early Chinese settlers in the UK were kinsmen or fellow villagers of those who went to the US; indeed, some came to the UK via the US. Most of these came from the same area of China, four counties about 50 miles west of Hong Kong.

Honouring parents, elders and ancestors is a deep rooted part of Chinese culture. The UK Chinese generally visit graves of dead relations on two festivals, Qing Ming and Chong Yang. Individual families may also visit graves on the anniversary of the person's death or on their birthday in addition, or instead, of the two traditional festivals. Qing Ming, meaning 'pure and bright' is always on the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> of April, whilst Chong Yang is the ninth day of the ninth month on the lunar calendar and the date will vary from year to year. Cemetery visits will usually be at weekends even if the actual date is on a week-day. There will be floral tributes and joss sticks and sometimes paper money will be burnt at the graveside. Some families may also offer fruit, usually oranges which are considered lucky. These procedures are probably traditional Chinese and strictly speaking not required by Buddhism, Taoism or Confucianism.

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Chinese are very flexible regarding religion; as some historians used to say, 'the three religions of China merge and overlap'. In fact, many of these procedures may follow a humanist or a Christian burial service.



*The photographs show four monuments, each one dedicated to all Chinese who have died in Britain. Left to right: Liverpool's Anfield Cemetery, Liverpool's Everton Cemetery, Cardiff's Cathays Cemetery and East London Cemetery*

Most monuments contain some Chinese characters and usually the Chinese name of the person in English e.g. Wong Ming. Many of the early arrivals married English women and some or even all of the writing may be in English. Most monuments will record where the individual came from in China. In Liverpool's Anfield Cemetery during the period up to about 1960, nearly all came from Guangdong province and a large number came from one county, Toisaan and many of these from one town Kwong Hoi (old Cantonese names).

A Chinese monument will generally have three columns of Chinese characters. Reading downwards, the left hand side column usually gives the date of birth, date of death and sometimes the date when the monument was erected. The central column, which will be in slightly larger characters will record the person's name and may also record the name of his wife, if she is buried with him. The wife's maiden surname name is also likely to appear. The characters on the right hand side, record the province in China, the county, the town or city and the village or rural district. This is only a generalisation; monuments will also include other items such as an epitaph, a quotation or even names of children.



Only by seeing the name in Chinese characters can you be certain of his surname. Chinese words vary according to dialect and names are no different. The Chinese character for the name Zhou, (in Mandarin, now the national language) is pronounced 'Joe', but can appear in English as Chow, Chou, Chew, Chau, Chu etc. Chinese always write their surname first followed by given names. Sometimes a man will use his given name as the surname for his children in English, for example Mr Lee Ying may use Ying as his children's surname. Sometimes, the person will have an adopted English name, which could be official or unofficial, and this could appear on the tombstone. To ascertain his or her real identity it is important to see the Chinese writing on a Chinese tombstone. These practices make it very difficult for the genealogist, especially if they cannot read Chinese!

Many of the early Chinese in Cardiff came from the same area in China as the Liverpool Chinese, but studying the monuments in the East London Cemetery, it is evident that the early Chinese community in London comprised Chinese from a wider area of Guangdong province and from a wider area of China in general, such as Fujian, Guangxi and Guizhou provinces. Many of the early Chinese arrived in the UK in Liverpool, Cardiff and London and whilst of those that settled, many stayed in these three cities or close by, some moved to other parts of the UK, especially the larger towns where they set up businesses such as laundries.

The reader will appreciate how much can be learnt from monuments, not just the person's identity, but also information on whom he married and where he came from. In addition, the design, size and décor of the tombstone may also offer information. Please note that this short account only deals with the early Chinese community. During the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, very many more Chinese came to the UK from Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan. Later still, after the opening up of China in 1978, mainland Chinese began to come in significant numbers and this process continues today.

*If you would like to know more about the Chinese monuments in your cemetery, please email Walter, [walter.fung888@btinternet.com](mailto:walter.fung888@btinternet.com)*

## Opening and Re-dedication at Raikes Road Burial Ground

by Jean Robinson, Chairman of the Friends of Raikes Road Burial Ground, Skipton

The Friends of Raikes Road (formed in 2012) celebrated the end of their Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF) project by holding an Opening Ceremony and Re-Dedication Service on Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2015.

The weather was excellent for the day and following formal opening by Councillor Bell, Skipton Town Mayor, with the Chairman of Craven District Council present, Councillor R. Mason, tours around the Ground were conducted and light refreshments were served. In the afternoon, the Rector, the Rev. Veronica James, held a service to mark the occasion. The Ground is an overspill cemetery from Holy Trinity Parish Church in Skipton and the incumbent Rector personally owns the site. During the day, over 100 people visited the site to see the new path, interpretation boards and the work carried out to stabilise gravestones, funded by the HLF grant and £1,000 given by Craven District Council. One of the Friends had also donated a seat in memory of ancestors buried in Raikes Road. Plans are underway to look at formal open days (the Ground took part in the Heritage Open Days programme) in 2016 and ecological, archaeological and research work continues.



*Photographs top - visitors on one of the guided walks and below - Friends of Raikes Road with Rector and Civic leaders at the Open Day*

Raikes Road is a Victorian cemetery, opened for just 30 years from 1846 to 1876 and thereafter forgotten and neglected. It is now the only site of its type in Skipton still in its original, undisturbed state (although not without damage) but it offers not only an insight into the history of Skipton, but also has become part of the heritage of the town. The subterranean Mortuary, partially excavated last year, appears to be modelled on an 18<sup>th</sup> century ice-house and may well be the only – or

only remaining – one of its kind in the country. Rudyard Kipling's grandparents are buried there, along with people who have family connections to the Brontës, Beatrix Potter and Robert Burns.

Because the Ground has been so neglected this has allowed wildlife to flourish and the Friends aim to balance this inheritance with that of a cemetery. Water shrews, uncommon in this area, were found during a mammal survey and plans to repair an old stone-lined drain which runs across the site have been abandoned in favour of allowing the shrews to survive.

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## **Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe (ASCE) AGM and Conference in Romania**

report by John Moffat, UK representative ASCE

This year's event took place amidst the magnificent architecture of Bucharest and ran from the 27<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> of September. The event was really well organised despite the recent lock up of city politicians for corruption. As one local put it, 'The government has gone in for cleaning'.

Although 104 delegates attended from 18 countries, the UK turnout was low. Stalwart supporters Emer and Geoffrey Seamark were unable to attend due to illness, leaving only myself and Ian Dungavell, (Highgate), present. This left me a little nervous as the presidency and the steering group were up for re-election in the AGM. However, although there were a lot of changes, I was re-elected as UK representative for another four years. Lidija Plibersek of Slovenia was re-elected as president. Other business was the approval of applications for significant status membership and I was pleased to be able to support the application of Lister Lane Cemetery, Halifax.

Also a presentation was given on the mobile guide ARTOUR, which enables users to edit their own cemetery guides for mobile users.

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With translation into no less than 5 languages the conference looked into, 'Foreigners in Cemeteries'. Dr Ian Dungavell delivered a presentation, 'How Britain fell in love with Pere La Chaise' which showcased considerable original research. Also impressive was the presentation from Julia Holloway on the Protestant cemetery of Florence. Of course the conference would have been incomplete without a presentation on the Protestant Cemetery, Rome the home of Keats and Shelley which was well delivered by their guide Nicholas Stanley Price.

After the conference the delegates were treated to a boat ride to a gala dinner where they were entertained by traditional Romanian dancing.

### **Date for Dublin next year**

At the end of the AGM I spoke about the speaker programme for next year's conference in Dublin, which now includes two prestige speakers: Professor JS Curl, the author of several classic cemetery texts and Ian Hussein, Head of Commonwealth War Graves North West Europe. This will take place from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2016 at Dublin Castle.

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## **New Members and Associates**

### **Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery**

June Bridgeman, secretary of Woodbury Park Cemetery Friends, has now helped set up a group for Tunbridge Wells Cemetery and is also their secretary. Tunbridge Wells Cemetery, owned by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, opened in 1873 and extended over the years to 23 acres.

It is still a working burial ground with available landscaped space and also a site of Kent and Sussex Crematorium Memorial Inscriptions Group formed 2011. A linked pair of chapels are set in the centre, one of which is redundant. Last year, however, they were allowed to clean up the inside and use it on a day licence for the launch of the Friends, with an exhibition covering history, people, beautiful memorials and ecology. The exhibition was repeated for the recent Heritage Open Day and ideas are being developed for further cultural uses.

Contact: June Bridgeman, [jbman@btinternet.com](mailto:jbman@btinternet.com)

See their website: [foftwc.wix.com](http://foftwc.wix.com)

### **The Friends of Ponsharden Cemeteries, Cornwall**

The Jewish Cemetery and the Dissenters Burial Ground lie side by side between the parishes of Falmouth and Penryn. Originally founded in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries they went out of use in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century becoming neglected, overgrown and vandalised. Some measure of protection was conferred in 2002 when two of the oldest headstones in the Jewish Cemetery were Listed and both cemeteries were Scheduled. But it was not until each cemetery found enthusiastic volunteer guardians – and united as the Friends of Ponsharden Cemeteries - that fortunes were reversed. Now with the support of Falmouth Town Council and Historic England they are working to restore the cemeteries. They spent two years clearing vegetation, recording and researching, collecting, sorting and re-assembling fragments of gravestones until they felt it safe to invite the public and were able to have their first well-attended Open Day. A proposal has been prepared with estimates for the project to restore the cemeteries. (Details are in an illustrated leaflet from which these notes are taken).  
Contact: Anthony Fagin, [fagin909@btinternet.com](mailto:fagin909@btinternet.com)

### **The Friends of Roundhay St John's Church, Leeds**

The goal of the Friends of Roundhay St John's is to protect and preserve for the public benefit the integrity of the property of the church (now owned by the Pentecostal City Mission Church) and the burial grounds. Though located in a Conservation Area it is at great risk due to a mixture of mismanagement and neglect, and the very diverse group of Friends is unified by a shared concern for the future of the church and its grounds. The church divides these into the North Graveyard, dating from the 1930s, and the South Graveyard which is original to the church building, 1826, and large crypt.

As the owners take no interest in restoration, volunteers have worked hard to improve the North and our now tackling the South and fighting the owner's idea of demolishing the tombstones and making a grassy slope! The South side includes many notables from the city of Leeds, including Lord Mayors, ancestors of the Duchess of Cambridge and WW1 graves. Secretary Caroline Feeman, though resident in the United States, returns regularly to her Leeds hometown.

Contact: Caroline Feeman, [ukcaro@yahoo.com](mailto:ukcaro@yahoo.com)

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### **Friends of All Saints Graveyard, West Bromwich**

Volunteers came forward in 2014 to help restore the graveyard of the 'Old Church' after Malcolm Glass put photos of its derelict state on a local media website; he had seen an elderly gentleman struggling to attend a grave. With the support of the Vicar and his team they have dealt with the weeds and overgrown shrubs with some success but now hope to buy tools with recent donations. They also planted 1000 daffodil bulbs – another generous gift. They have a busy Facebook page: Friends of Old Church Graveyard.

Contact: Jean Fletcher, [Jean.fletcher@wates.co.uk](mailto:Jean.fletcher@wates.co.uk)

### **Friends of Anfield Cemetery, Liverpool**

Anfield Cemetery is one of the largest in Europe with 141 acres; a working cemetery owned by Liverpool City Council. The cemetery is Grade II\* and has 12 listed memorials. Opened in 1865 with three chapels, now one remains but is in poor condition as are the catacombs. The Friends now aim to get the cemetery off the Historic England At Risk register and build an international heritage and visitor centre by 2025.

Contact: Paul Senar, [p.senar@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:p.senar@hotmail.co.uk)

See photos on their website: [friendsofanfield.com](http://friendsofanfield.com)

### **Friends of Adlington Cemetery, Lancashire**

The Friends are part of the Adlington District Heritage Society and are setting up this group to care for the cemetery which was opened in 1875. It is still a working cemetery of some four acres, owned by Chorley Borough Council.

Contact: Stuart Clewlow, [saclewlow@yahoo.com](mailto:saclewlow@yahoo.com)

### **Stroud Town Council**

Stroud Cemetery is a Victorian cemetery of six acres with the new section still open for burials. As well as featuring interesting monuments of eminent local citizens, the old section of the cemetery is a Local Nature Reserve, famous for its lichens and insects. Stroud Town Council manages the cemetery on behalf of Stroud District Council and are hoping to set up a Cemetery Friends.

Contact: Helen Bojaniwska, Town Clerk, [clerk@stroudtown.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@stroudtown.gov.uk)

See cemetery leaflet:

[http://www.stroudtown.gov.uk/documents/newsletters/stroud\\_cemetery.pdf](http://www.stroudtown.gov.uk/documents/newsletters/stroud_cemetery.pdf)

## **Members News**

A selection of news and events from Members newsletters and websites

### **Belgrave Cemetery, Leicester**

In June, the Friends received a group award as part of the 2015 Belgrave Volunteer Awards in recognition of their valuable contribution to the neighbourhood of Belgrave through voluntary work. Their Chair, Dorothy Marshall received an individual award.

### **Hyde Park Cemetery, Doncaster**

Over the summer, a group of young volunteers working on their National Citizen Service have been helping to transform an unloved corner in the cemetery into an attractive garden area.

The Friends have also submitted an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding to install a new war memorial in order to record in one place the names of 109 men commemorated on family graves who lost their lives during military service in the two world wars.

### **Margravine Cemetery, London**

Each year the Friends enter the 'It's your neighbourhood' category of RHS – London in Bloom. After achieving good results in all three qualifying sections of community participation, environmental responsibility and gardening achievement, they were this year judged 'Outstanding' for the first time.

### **Northwood Cemetery, Cowes, Isle of Wight**

It was announced at the end of June, that the Friends had been successful in their Heritage Lottery Fund/Big Lottery grant application and have been awarded £1,685,100 towards their heritage restoration project.

### **Southampton Old Cemetery**

In October, the Friends were delighted to receive a generous donation of Bulldog tools from Fred Foot, Marketing Manager of the Rollins Group.

## **NFCF contact details**

A list of members is available from the Secretary

### **Chairman**

Robert Stephenson  
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[chairman@cemteryfriends.org.uk](mailto:chairman@cemteryfriends.org.uk)

### **Vice Chairman**

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[vicechairman@cemteryfriends.org.uk](mailto:vicechairman@cemteryfriends.org.uk)

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