

Friends of Durham Woodland Cemetery

Chairman's Report

Welcome to our first Annual General Meeting.

The Friends of Durham Woodland Cemetery was born from a group who came together following the demise of the Durham Woodland Burial Trust. Without being drawn into commenting on the circumstances surrounding the liquidation of that organisation, the group were determined to do everything they could to try and ensure the continuation of the site for woodland burials. This was not an easy task!

Firstly, we needed to win the confidence of Durham County Council (DCC) and this was achieved, over time, through a series of meetings. This process resulted in an agreed set of common values and a joint approach to getting the site reopened. This is where the hard work really began.

Before the site could be reopened the site needed to be mapped to show the location of all of the existing burials and to show all of the burial plots that had been sold. The previous organisation had not mapped the location of burials and some were not located in the exact place they should have been. To further complicate the picture, some plots had been sold more than once and others had been placed overlapping existing burials or other sold plots. It is no exaggeration to say that this was an almost impossible task for the Council to complete without our help.

Our help came in the form of Stephen Robson. He put in innumerable hours to locate and map every burial and every plot sold and bring it all together into a cohesive and understandable plan. Make no mistake, we would not be in the position we are now, and it is unlikely that the Durham Woodland Cemetery would be open, if it were not for all the persistence and hard work Stephen put in.

So, with the first hurdle managed, there then came other big issues for us to take on. Each of us who had purchased and/or booked plots, through the previous organisation, had in effect lost any monies paid. Durham County Council were under no obligation to recognise our purchases. Working with the Council we were able to secure their agreement to recognise both our bookings and, crucially, the monies paid. There was a lot of work done by both Joyce Gregory and Stephen Robson in liaising with individuals and the Council to resolve specific issues. We also need to note the positive attitude, help and encouragement from Ian Hoult, Graham Harrison and Lisa Johnson from DCC.

There have been many other highs and lows on our journey so far but the next major step we made was to apply for and achieve Registered Charity status. We have to thank Charles Howden who joined us to take on this task and it is a testimony to his knowledge and experience that this milestone was achieved so quickly.

It is the nature of these reports that they look back at the year that has passed but I think that it is now important for us to look to the future. We now have a solid base and a good organisation but there are a number of things we need to do.

Firstly, we need to grow our membership. Membership of the previous organisation was restricted to those who owned plots but this is a very different set up. As a "friends" group, membership is open to anyone who has an interest in seeing the woodland continue as a natural, peaceful setting for burials and for people to visit. This may be because you have a plot booked, or because you have

a friend or loved one resting there or simply that you want to continue to enjoy the tranquillity of the natural woodland.

There is no doubt, the larger our membership, the louder our voice when we deal and negotiate with the council, and other bodies, in the future - so, please spread the word! We would also like to get more people involved so please get in touch if you would like to help.

Secondly, we will need to look at fundraising. It is one of our primary aims to help personalise the service/burial arrangements for anyone wanting our help. This is done in part by hiring out the lodge – which we have secured – and in part by way of volunteers and, where needed, paid support. The provision of all this incurs various running costs and we need to have funds to continue with this. There will also be other projects which we need to fund. Everything from maintenance to wildlife and environmental upkeep.

We have received a suggestion that it would be good to have some form or memorial on the site where the names of those buried could be marked. We have spoken to a local artist who is working on some ideas and, if members approve the idea, we will begin fundraising for this project.

So, in summary, we have come a long way but there is still lots for us to do and we need the ideas, help and support of all of the friends to deliver this.

July 2019

FRIENDS OF DURHAM WOODLAND CEMETERY

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT 1ST APRIL 2018 TO 31ST MARCH 2019

INCOME

| | | |
|---------------------|--------|---------------|
| RENT OF LODGE | 350.00 | |
| DONATIONS | 426.00 | |
| GIFT AID | 106.60 | |
| TOTAL INCOME | | 882.60 |

EXPENDITURE

| | | |
|--------------------------|--------|----------------|
| GROUNDS MAINTENANCE | 138.67 | |
| POSTAGE AND STATIONERY | 39.19 | |
| INSURANCE | 225.71 | |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | | 403.57 |
| NET PROFIT | | £479.03 |

BALANCE SHEET AT 31ST MARCH 2019

CURRENT ASSETS

| | | |
|---------------------|--------|---------------|
| CASH AT BANK | 450.29 | |
| CASH IN HAND | 100.00 | |
| SUNDRY DEBTORS | 106.60 | |
| TOTAL ASSETS | | 656.89 |

CURRENT LIABILITIES

| | | |
|--------------------------|--------|----------------|
| SUNDRY CREDITORS | 177.86 | |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES | | 177.86 |
| TOTAL NET ASSETS | | £479.03 |

EQUITY

| | | |
|---------------------|--------|----------------|
| NET PROFIT | 479.03 | |
| TOTAL EQUITY | | £479.03 |