

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SIXTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF
THE FRIENDS OF HIGHGATE CEMETERY TRUST**

Held on Wednesday 24 April, 2013 at St Michael's Church Hall

PRESENT: John Shepperd (Chairman), John Caird (Vice-Chairman), Richard Morris (Treasurer), Penny Linnett (Hon Secretary and Minute-taker), Eddie Daley, Brent Elliot, Ian Kelly, Peter Knight, Alastair Martin, Ceridwen Roberts and John Waite (Trustees); Janet Wolf, Margaret Butt and the Rev Jonathan Trigg (Protectors); 38 FoHCT members

IN ATTENDANCE: Ian Dungavell, Lucy Robertson and Melanie Wynyard (Highgate Cemetery Ltd); Matthew Lewis (potential Trustee)

APOLOGIES: Adam Cooke, Maggy Meade-King and Richard Quirk

1. Approval of minutes of the fifteenth annual general meeting (2012)

The minutes were agreed and there were no matters arising.

2. Chairman's report

The Chairman gave his report on the activities at the Cemetery since the last AGM.

He commented the main event had been the retirement of Richard Quirk after 27 years of service and the recruitment of Ian Dungavell to succeed him in the expanded role of Chief Executive. A vote of thanks was recorded to Richard Quirk for his immense contribution. Ian Dungavell was welcomed and the meeting wished him well for the future.

Much had been done during the year to improve the visitor experience with the opening of the West side gates at weekends (following the introduction of the new inner gates), the unified ticket pricing for the East and West, the revamping of the East hut and the installation of toilets in the East Cemetery, the continuation of West side tours throughout the winter on weekdays and the online booking of weekday tours.

Communications had improved with the launch of a new website, which 23,500 users had visited in its first month alone, and Peter Knight had introduced a regular series of e-briefs to improve communication with volunteers.

Behind the scenes, a computerised book-keeping system had been introduced, a thorough review of financial controls implemented, our bank arrangements have been changed and a comprehensive overhaul of HR and other documentation is underway. A major review of the Cemetery's drains is also being undertaken.

Chapel events have continued with the Dickens bicentenary celebrated in March (together with several specialist Dickens tours) and the formal Chapel opening by Sir Andrew Motion in May. Sue Berdy was thanked for arranging a series of talks and

these will now be taken forward by the newly formed Events Working Group – all events and tours are listed on the website and booking is available online.

Work continues on the monument restoration, co-ordinated by the Landscape Committee and Eddie Daley; most notable was the work on the Otway vault.

Much needed attention has been given to the archives, thanks to funding received by the Pateman Memorial Fund. The Chairman confirmed that a full set of records relating to the Friends' work since 1975 exists; the next phase is to arrange for the cataloguing and storage of the archives, in full consultation with Malcolm Holmes, following which arrangements will be made for regular access by volunteers, Friends and other interested parties.

As regards the future, it is hoped that work will continue on the monument restoration plan and, once drainage problems have been resolved, on remedial work to the paths. A big project will be the preparation of a comprehensive conservation plan so that we can prepare a long-term strategy for the Cemetery which takes account of the potential loss of income from grave sales at some point in the future. Future plans will be considered by the newly constituted Board which will have its first meeting on 9 May, 2013.

Thanks are due to many – too many to mention: to the volunteers with their staggering enthusiasm and commitment, to the Friends for their general support and to the staff for all they do to enhance the public face of the Cemetery. Specifically the Chairman thanked Jean Ettinger and her team for all the work on the burial records and Lizzie Wells for her work on the newsletter.

The Chairman regretted the ill-informed and malicious criticism from afar of those who devote so much to the Cemetery and felt that, with so much positive change happening, we should all give ourselves a collective pat on the back and be proud of what we have all achieved.

3. Financial statements

Richard Morris presented the financial statements for the year – these had been circulated in summary form to all members before the meeting and full copies are available on both the FoHCT website and on the Charity Commission website.

John Shepperd announced that Richard Morris is stepping down after 18 years' valiant service on accounting matters and a vote of thanks was recorded for all that he has done.

4. Auditors

Hammonds were re-appointed as auditors, and the trustees were authorised to fix their remuneration, following a vote which was passed on a show of hands.

5. Election of trustees

The Chairman explained there were three vacancies and three people standing. John Waite was due to stand down after serving for three years and offered himself for re-election.

The Trustees had undertaken a skills audit and identified that they needed accounting expertise (following the resignation of Richard Morris) and legal expertise. They had advertised for a trustee with accounting expertise and interviewed the applicants, following which they were unanimous in recommending Matt Lewis as a candidate.

Adam Cooke is a lawyer living locally who impressed the Board with his knowledge and enthusiasm. Sadly he was unable to attend the AGM due to a prior commitment (which he had offered to cancel); however both John Waite and Matt Lewis were present and addressed the meeting to explain why they wished to be trustees.

6. Protectors' report

This had been circulated in advance of the meeting; there were no questions.

7. Any other business

Amongst the points raised in discussion were:

- the AGM should happen earlier next year, at 7 pm;
- consideration will be given to holding the next AGM in the Cemetery Chapel although some concern was expressed about the safety of the area in the evening;
- proxy cards should be lodged no later than 48 hours before the meeting, not four days before;
- there should be some further Dickens tours; and
- the events group should bear in mind the centenary of the First World War in 2014 when considering events.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded.