

Protectors' Report 2012-13

We realise that many Friends do not know who the Protectors are or what is their role. Let us correct that. The precise details are listed in the Articles 47 & 48 which include: *The function of the Protectors shall be to ensure that the Trustees act in accordance with the Objects, and do not act in a manner likely to prejudice the welfare of the Cemetery. The 'Objects' are:*

- 1. to promote the public benefit in relation to Highgate Cemetery by any means appropriate and likely to preserve it as a place of historic and other interest and beauty;*
- 2. to permit the Cemetery (or such part thereof as may be available for the purpose) to be used as a public burial ground;*
- 3. to secure the repair, restoration and preservation of the Cemetery, its monuments and buildings and other artefacts and their setting for the public benefit.*

Once again we are heartened at the continuing improvements in the running of the cemetery. There seems to be a greatly increased energy pervading all sections. Much of this has stemmed from Fenton's report in 2012. As a consultant to the Charity Commission he emphasised the importance of having a clearer appreciation of the long term plans and a better understanding of the consequences of actions. He also emphasised the importance of communication between the different groups. This seems to be exactly what is happening. The arrangement of having the Chief Executive (Ian Dungavell) take on operational activities as well as helping the Board form future strategy has worked well, with his report to the Trustees, at the beginning of their meetings, being very helpful. The cemetery's long term plans are already being considered in considerable depth -this started with a summer meeting of two groups of Trustees.

It seems that the reduction in the number of subcommittees has worked well. Whilst retaining the Landscape Subcommittee, the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Pateman Memorial Fund Committee, smaller working groups involving volunteers have been set up to deal with single issues as they arise. An Events working party has continued the excellent work of Sue Berdy. The e- brief and the Newsletter continue to provide valuable information to Volunteers and Friends.

The continuation of the weekday tours during the winter has contributed greatly to the numbers of visitors who are enjoying the experience of visiting the cemetery, which in turn means there is an increase in visitor income. We are also pleased to see that the earlier start of the summer opening hours means that there are a greater number of visitors. In addition, during the summer there are some evening openings in the East cemetery and some evening tours in both the East and the West, all of which have been very successful.

Visitors now feel welcome to the West cemetery, in that they can go straight into the delightful chapel, either to wait for their tour or simply to browse over the books and any exhibition. The change is amazing and the new website has helped greatly.

We are also impressed at the extent of the thought being given to extending the number of burials, both full burial and cremations.

'Elected Trustees': when Trustees retire there are occasions when the Board then lacks a specialist skill. This has been effectively handled by the Board identifying the skills needed, thereby enabling the Friends to elect Trustees with the appropriate skills.

'Appointed Trustees': at present they are selected, where possible, from relevant organisations. The Trustees may like to consider widening their pool of appropriate people, by including those who have equivalent skills and experience, but are not members of specified organisations. This would involve changing the 'articles of association'.

The much-needed toilets in the East cemetery were completed. We are concerned to find now that drainage issues had not been properly investigated. Drainage issues have already arisen in other quarters. However it is felt, understandably, that the expense of a total assessment of the drains over the whole cemetery would not be justified and that it is most efficient to deal with the drainage assessment associated with individual projects - we hope before the problems arise.

With the introduction of new management in 2012 there was to be 'open tendering' for the larger projects. With the renovations needed for the North Lodge, we were concerned to find that 'open tendering' wasn't going to take place. We expressed our concern at this and fortunately that decision was reversed and the work on the North Lodge commenced.

The restoration work both on listed monuments and those imposing a danger to visitors has been progressing splendidly under the supervision of Ed Daley. Particularly noteworthy is the general appearance of about eighty monuments that are now standing proudly. The Landscape volunteers and the Landscape team continue to back up much of the monument work.

Finally, we would like to pay tribute to the excellent work of the cemetery staff, all the volunteers, the Board of Trustees and to the great generosity of the donors, all contributing to the survival of this magnificent cemetery.

MARGARET BUTT, JONATHAN TRIGG AND JANET WOLF
Protectors