

## Chairman's Report

for the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017

Without doubt these were the most active twelve months in our short 9 year history!

The year started with the first use of the Gazebo, at the southern end of the Cemetery, by 40 children from **Lanesend Primary School** who planted 1,000 bulbs in the Natural Burial Ground. The Gazebo was built to provide a facility for families and friends to say goodbye to loved ones in both the **Natural Burial Ground** and the **Muslim Burial Ground**; as was demonstrated it is also a venue for educational visits by accompanied school children.

Landscaping works were also undertaken and date palms and olive trees were planted in the Muslim Burial Ground.

Then in May the main construction contractors, **G J Banks (IW) Limited**, set up camp to start the monumental task of restoring both chapels - and the works continued throughout the year.

In the first instance, and to address the subsidence issues that had become evident, concrete piles were inserted around the chapels - some of which extended to a depth of 15 metres! Corresponding piles were also inserted inside the footprint of the chapels and pairs of piles were then 'bridged' by encased steel beams to form the supports on which the entire weight of both chapels now rest.

As the summer drew to a close some complications in the ground conditions were encountered; these resulted in a redesign of the piling system and, as a result, a further 3 months were added to the year-long project schedule. However, and importantly, costs were contained within the contingency provisions of the Project and it has remained within budget - if not within timescale.

Elsewhere in the Cemetery selected memorials have been restored, paths have been better defined with wood chippings and volunteers continued their clearance work to reveal headstones that hadn't seen the light of day for decades.

At the 2016 AGM in June **Richard Day** and **John Pullen** swapped roles; Richard became our Treasurer and John took over management of the conservation team and its work in the Cemetery grounds. **Peter Almond**, a former Chair of Governors at **Lanesend Primary School**, was elected Vice-Chairman at the first Board meeting thereafter.

New volunteers have joined the conservation team who meet (weather permitting!) every Saturday and Wednesday mornings; amongst the most regular newcomers are **Marian Lamsley-Jones** and **Roger Williams** and I am delighted that Roger has subsequently joined the Board of Trustees.

Also in the year we hosted 6 visits from the Isle of Wight Council's Restoration Justice Officers who bought young people volunteering to work with us as part of their penance.

The year also saw the introduction of guided walks through the Cemetery on Sunday mornings and 10 have now been completed; these have been enlightening and enjoyed by over 70 people thus far; it is fair to say that each walk has been different, responding to the particular interests of the attendees. **Barry Sowerby**, our long serving Historian, and **David Jones**, our even longer serving Secretary, have been regular guides and thanks go to them for all the time they have devoted.

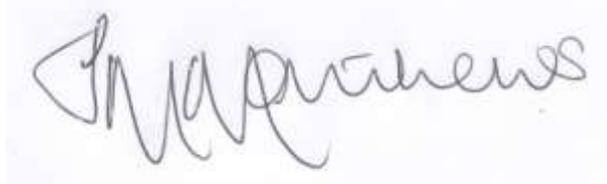
Our fund raising efforts have borne fruit and heartfelt thanks go to **Stella Watling** for her substantial efforts in raising over £10,000 – thus achieving our commitment to the **Heritage Lottery Fund** in return for £1.6m of its funding. As well as Loose Change boxes and yard sales at Stella's house we also benefited from concerts by the **Phoenix Choir** and the **Slipshod Singers** - and regular Quiz Nights at the **Cowes Ale House** and here at the **Kingston Arms**.

In the year four quarterly newsletters have been published and they always attract emails of appreciation from Friends the world over; we have **Jo Mckinnie** to thank for these most newsworthy of items.

As Chairman I have been indebted to the substantial efforts of all the Trustees and volunteers and my thanks go to them for the support they have given to 'making a difference' - a difference that I think we can justly claim to have achieved in the Cemetery. I'd also like to thank our host and hostess at the Kingston Arms, Adrian and Jackie, for always making us welcome for our regular meetings.

The Constitution, which was amended at the 2016 Annual General Meeting, determines that a Chairman's term of office cannot extend beyond three years if there is another willing nominee. So, this will be my last Chairman's Report as I hand over the reins; **Peter Almond** has indicated his willingness to be Chairman and his nomination will be put to the 2017 Annual General Meeting.

Finally, and as I commented in last year's report, the success of the **Northwood Cemetery Heritage Project** has been possible only with the tireless efforts of our Project Manager **Linda Ovník**, ably supported by **Janis Mundell**. Our sincere thanks go to Linda for her expertise, her skills, her dedication, her professionalism - and for all the midnight oil she has consumed on our behalf.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jon Matthews', written in a cursive style.

Jon Matthews

Chairman

11<sup>th</sup> September 2017