



2018 Chairman's Report

At the AGM last September I was elected as the third Chairman, following **Lora Peacey Wilcox** and **Jon Matthews**. **Roger Williams** was elected Vice-Chairman and, in this role, he has been invaluable.

During the year the Trustees were very busy attending meetings with the architects, the building contractors, project managers, the **Isle of Wight Council** (IWC) and other professionals. Complications in the ground conditions under the chapels resulted in the work being extended by three months but they were re-opened in October 2017 within budget. The two days of celebration were very well attended.

As well as the restoration of the two chapels, work continued in the Cemetery with the installation of a new toilet block, new benches, new litter bins, new information boards, the roads and paths were resurfaced - and many of the headstones were repaired and cleaned. Information materials were also produced as visitor guides, thanks to a team led by **Barry Sowerby** (our hard working Historian).

The conservation volunteers, led by **John Pullen**, continue to work tirelessly on Wednesday and Saturday mornings. A key member of this team, **Marian Lamsley-Jones**, has also successfully undertaken the mammoth task of collecting, organising and archiving over ten years of FoNC documentation. **Jon Matthews** has focussed on the role of recruiting new members and he has increased the membership this year from 250 to over 320, including 63 Life members.

The East Chapel has now been used for half a dozen funeral services since its re-opening last October.

The West Chapel, now known as the **Heritage Resource Centre** (HRC), has been used for 9 hours a week by the **Isle of Wight Family History Society**. In addition FoNC volunteers have opened it for a further 6 hours a week. This facility is available for hire by the community and many visitors have commented on the beauty of the chapels – and, indeed, the Cemetery overall.

The restoration project won the coveted 2018 Conservation Award from the **Isle of Wight Society** and the **Royal Institute of British Architects** (RIBA). The Cemetery was also the winner of a **Green Flag Award** as an open space for the community. This international award is a sign to the public that the space boasts the highest possible environmental standards, is beautifully maintained and has excellent visitor facilities.

On 1st April 2018, the Friends of Northwood Cemetery (FoNC) celebrated its **10th birthday** and celebrated with an 'Open Day'.

Our fund-raising efforts were once again led by **Stella Watling** and I would like to thank her on your behalf. In addition to her various initiatives, including an auction, presence at car boot sales and concerts, over the last 3 years the **Cowes Ale House**, through its regular fortnightly quiz nights, has raised more than £5,000. We must continue to raise funds to make our contribution to the 2017-2027 **Management and Maintenance Plan** (MMP). This sets out the joint responsibilities of the IWC and FoNC within the Cemetery and is a major part of our commitment to the **Heritage Lottery Fund** in return for its £1.6m grant.

Another factor in delivering the MMP is the availability of volunteers; in short, we need more! This is not only for conservation work in the Cemetery but also for a wide range of other activities including: (i) 'desk-bound' research; (ii) being on duty so we can keep the HRC open; and (iii) help with fund-raising activities. With now over 320 "Friends" it should be possible to recruit more volunteers from this pool – or, indeed, the wider community.

Finally I would like to thank all the Trustees for their support in my first year as Chairman.

Peter Almond