



## Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery

### FWPC Annual Report 2019-2020

1. This has been another year of achievement by the Friends, although it has ended with the early stages of the Covid-19 crisis disrupting our plans and arrangements made at the beginning of 2020 for action during the rest of 2020.
2. Our conservation of the cemetery's habitat has continued with more new plantings which has been rewarded by an increase in the number of butterflies in the cemetery. We are immensely fortunate in having such a dedicated group of gardening volunteers, who have put in over 400 hours of painstaking work in the cemetery over the year, recognised in particular by the awards won this year: Silver Gilt Awards from South and South East in Bloom and from Kent Wildlife "Wild about Gardens". We also retained the Green Flag status. Besides their report on what they have observed throughout the year they have compiled colourful charts for visitors to the cemetery showing interesting plants and butterflies to look out for month by month. Plans for a tool shed have been agreed but implementation has been deferred during the Covid-19 crisis. A new updated nature board is in place below the chapel, replacing its vandalised predecessor.
3. In May we welcomed Michael Boden from the Jeffery Hale Foundation in Quebec City who came to pay his respects at the tomb of Jeffery Hale and presented the Friends with another generous cheque towards our work.
4. The topic set for the 2019 Jeffery Hale Awards for primary schools, "Trees of Life" continues our emphasis on conservation and the natural habitat. Awards for some outstanding entries by The Wells Free School and Pembury Primary were presented in July at their school assemblies and to the 14<sup>th</sup> Royal Tunbridge Wells Calverley Wolf Cubs at a ceremony in Dunloran Park.
5. For 2020, the topic is "Hidden Treasures" and while schools have started their work for the award, their completion is being deferred during the present closure of the schools.
6. Our stock of publications is being reviewed and updated and a new history booklet, "Dr John Hennen, Physician to the Poor" was published in May 2019 at the time of our AGM when a talk on his life and work was given.
7. Our Summer concert held on 30 June 2019 was given by the Women in Harmony Choir on the theme of "Peace and Harmony".
8. The Friends' Summer Outing was a local one in 2019, taking in the Old and New churches of Pembury and the medieval parish church of St Denys, Rotherfield and its attached graveyard. A special delight was viewing the 1500 years old yew tree and the Lindsay-Hogg memorials in the family grave enclosure at Rotherfield. The old church at Pembury allowed us to see two slab memorials to the Amherst ancestors of Jeffery Hale, and who were Lords of the Manor of Bayhall

9. We participated again in the Heritage Open Days in September when both history and natural history were expounded to the visitors we guided round the cemetery.
10. The Autumn lecture saw Fiona Woodfield inform us about the history and uses of the Woodbury Park Chapel and its connections with St John's church and parishioners.
11. The year saw completion, or near completion, of some memorial repairs, in particular the complete renovation of the Dr John Hennen and Mary Dillman Hennen tomb and partial renovation of the related tomb to the Engelheart family. These are generously being paid for by the Engelheart family. Other completed memorial repairs were of Miss Amy Kennett, a Lodging Housekeeper who died at 41 York Road in 1875 aged 56 (this repair re-erecting the gravestone on a new base); and repair of the collapsed grave to an unknown person to preserve the vault to ensure health and safety and also to allow "Millionaires Row" to retain its high quality appearance.
12. The Friends continue to watch issues around the cemetery boundaries, liaising with TWBC as necessary.
13. The major financial project continues to be repair of the paths which have worn away in many places and debar disabled access to most of the site. A trial section was laid close to the Hale tomb to assess visual impact and clarify costings for a high quality specification with drainage down into the wet meadow. However progress on this as with the toolshed has had to be put on hold with all that has happened associated with the Covid-19 epidemic.
14. We commend this report to all our members whose continued support is crucial to the wellbeing of this heritage site. We also express our warm thanks to the TWBC Parks Department for all the help and advice they so willingly provide.

April 2020