



Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery

FWPC Annual Report 2022-2023

1. The 2022 AGM was held on 26 May in the Camden Centre when, after the formalities, Jeanne Pope showed and spoke to her unique film setting out the many achievements the Friends have made over 15 years to protect Tunbridge Wells heritage and one of its very special green places. This film presentation had been preceded by a documentary-making workshop led by Jeanne on 30 April.
2. Our conservation of the cemetery's habitat has continued with more new plantings including new trees and hedges to provide a screen in response to the felling of neighbours' trees at the bottom of the cemetery. Spring bulbs, including wild daffodil bulbs, were also replenished. Our Gardening Team's Report for 2022 was circulated to all members in March. Woodbury Park Cemetery was entered for the South & South East in Bloom competition, in a newly created category especially for churchyards, and we were delighted to receive a Gold award. Our Green Flag status remains following the successful inspection in 2021.
3. The topic set for the 2022-2023 Jeffery Hale Achievement Awards for primary schools, was based on a "Wishing Tree". Primary schoolchildren were invited to submit entries in the form of triptychs compiled by groups of junior pupils working together to create their own wishing tree display, with each child contributing a leaf with their wish about what more might be done to create a greener and happier world for all. Winning entries will be revealed in Summer 2023.
4. The Friends' Spring Outing on 21 April took place in Edenbridge and Penshurst. We benefited from a guided tour of the medieval Edenbridge parish church and churchyard burial ground and a visit to the Edenbridge local history museum before lunch in a local hostelry, The day finished with a guided tour of Penshurst parish church and its graveyard.
5. A Nature Discovery Walk around WPC was held on 15 June, led by TWBC expert Ian Beavis.
6. Our Summer concert, originally planned for 17 July but postponed owing to the great heat affecting us all in the Summer, was held on 25 September 2022. Given by the Wadhurst Brass Band, the programme was again on the theme of "Queen and Country" during this unique Platinum Jubilee year and, sadly, days after the Queen's passing.
7. We participated again in the Heritage Open Days on 18 September when Emma Vidler led a tour of the cemetery covering the history of the cemetery and some of its inhabitants, while aspects of natural history were also expounded to the visitors. Bespoke walks for other groups also took place in the Autumn and Spring.

8. Memorial repairs resumed in 2022. The Panton memorial, which had caused safety concerns, has been repaired, financed by TWBC. The Jeffery Hale memorial received its triennial wash and brush-up from the specialist team we use from Burslem Stonemasons. Among other things the slightly decaying surface of the 175 year old white marble ledger stone needed expert care to cope with its irresistible attraction for green algae. Some minor repairs to the informal steps leading up to the Hale memorial bench were also effected.
9. The major potential 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. Meetings with TWBC officials continued during 2022 and into 2023 to consider options and the financing of them, including how to address the drainage problems which, if left unresolved, could undermine parts of any new path building and create further surface hazards from run-off on the steep slopes. We hope to have more to report on this later in 2023.
10. 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 2023