

**Friends of Paddington Old Cemetery
Annual General meeting**

30th March 2021 7pm – 8.00pm

Minutes

In Attendance:

Andrew Lowe	Dawn Reidy
Peter Coombes	Carmella Reidy
Richie Walker (part)	David Kay
Lloyd Fothergill	Will Mowatt
Louise Lane	Catherine Brown
Fadel Zayden	Lyn Tattum
Caroline Lynch	Phillipa Hutchinson (part)
Virginia Bonham Carter (QPARA)	Michael Stewart

1. Update and achievements 2020

Andrew Lowe (AL) reported on progress in the last year:

1.1. Chapels

With sustained pressure from FOPOC, Brent had accessed a 25k Historic England grant for emergency repairs to the chapels. In the large scheme and for a listed building this was never going to cover a great deal but it has gone towards repairing the roof and gutters to keep the building dry, and making the stonework safe with re-pointing. There will be further work on the coping and stonework, as well as some pigeon netting protection to follow. The temporary fencing was expected to be removed very soon. Brent had also invested in re-surfacing in the area.

1.2. Biodiversity plan

- FOPOC's all-encompassing proposal to restore tree planting, and vastly improve the biodiversity potential for birds, bees, insects making this a little wildlife haven within an urban environment, has now been adopted by Brent.
- The wildflower meadow will take time to establish but is continuing to improve
- FOPOC volunteers planted 100m of bird friendly hedging around the mound, started on revitalising the woodland area with selective pruning and better management, and planted up the meadow.
- It is hope that larger specimen tree planting to replace the loss over many years, across the cemetery, can go ahead this year in the Autumn, and we have been asked to advise on flowering shrubs and appropriate low maintenance planting on the north side of the burial mound

1.3. Lockdown Volunteering

AL thanked everyone who helped keep the cemetery open during the first lockdown and those who have taken part in regular litterpicks – a number of people had remarked on how clean the cemetery always looks

1.4. Paths and drains

Volunteers working with Community Payback had created the path next to the school Greenspace, and restored the pathway all the way up the western boundary. The drains have been cleared and leaky taps have been replaced

1.5. Communication

We have started issuing regular newsletters (members who would like to subscribe to receive this MailChimp newsletter do please let us know) which included circulating a code of conduct. Brent committed to improving communication about opening and closing times with new signage which is expected soon, and we are discussing FOPOC access to noticeboards with them.

1.6. Working with Brent

We have now developed a good working relationship with Brent and they have supported and invested in a number of initiatives above.

AL pointed out that many of the achievements above and the improvement in joint working with Brent were down to the hard work of Paul Scott as joint Chair of FOPOC for the last two years. It was reported that Paul had decided to step down from leadership of FOPOC however it is very much hoped that he will remain involved. A unanimous vote of thanks was moved for his commitment and hard work over the last two years.

Caroline Lynch (CL) requested further clarification about the funding for the chapels and how it had been used and AL explained that the works were for stonework, wind and weatherproofing (see 1.1 above). Any further development of the chapels would come later and need to be the subject of other funding/grants.

2. Forward look – 2021 – 22

AL provided an overview of plans for the coming year:

2.1 Management – new regime and plan

Brent has taken back management of the Cemetery from Veolia, keeping all staff on. It is hoped that with Brent now more closely involved again a management plan will be put in place. A new lead contact at Brent is making regular visits and liaising with FOPO and new equipment and works have already been progressed.

Members will have noted the new 'Columbarium' – a final resting place for ashes - to the south of the Entrance Gates. AL reported that FOPOC had been consulted, but only on the design where the least intrusive design was favoured. This will continue to generate some income for the Cemetery, and one further Columbarium is planned, location yet to be determined. It has also been made clear than any further access or re-use of the Chapels would likely be a mix of public and more commercial use, again bearing in mind the need to generate income for upkeep. However this is likely to take time to be realised, as power is not yet available at the chapels and a range of options would need to be explored.

Brent have reported that some records may become available, either digitally or at an ex-London archive repository. Members expressed an interest in these and FOPOC will continue to request information and access.

2.1. Biodiversity – Autumn tree planting

A programme of tree planting will be undertaken in the Autumn. These will include specimen trees to replace those lost as reflected in the Biodiversity plan. There will be continued thinning and more active management of the south wooded section in order to encourage a wider variety of species, and FOPOC have also been asked to advice on proposed shrub/flowering plants for the north face of the 'new' active burial mound.

2.2. Composting

A composting area will be built at the south of the cemetery positioned to ensure neither the school Greenspace nor Lonsdale Road are impacted.

2.3. Cars /access

FOPOC has asked Brent to consider access issues to deter cars from the smaller paths and lower speeds. Speed bumps and a lower speed limit may be imposed and discussions will take place about placing restrictions to cars on smaller pathways while also taking account of access issues for people with disabilities who may be visiting graves. Members welcomed this idea as access can be compromised by cars on the paths to the detriment of pedestrians' cars are an issue in the Cemetery.

2.4. Community liaison, conduct and communications

FOPOC had published a code of conduct via its newsletter but more work is needed to ensure that the various distinct Cemetery users can exist in harmony. Members were urged to encourage users to manage their dogs responsibly, particularly in new grave areas, and reminded that dogs should not be allowed onto the 'new' burial mound. This was especially important given that the PSPO would be reviewed later in the year. FOPOC plan to improve information on the notice boards to contain reminders of conduct and Brent have promised clearer notices about opening and closing times.

Catherine Brown suggested that FOPOC should be more pro-active on Twitter warning dog owners to obey the rules in light of on-going possibility of PSPO rules tightening. She also offered to remind the dog walking group, and post on Nextdoor. Members agreed that we should all be reminding existing dog walkers of the need to keep dogs under control, and, vitally, to clear up after them. However at this stage, and given the intensive use of the Cemetery over lockdown it was not thought to be helpful to post on Nextdoor or wider social media as the space could become overused and it might be best to wait to see what post-Lockdown traffic looks like before promoting too widely. The Cemetery Facebook page was also mentioned and could be better used to update members.

Members were encouraged to sign up for the email newsletter and to encourage wider supporters to do the same. There is also a What's App group to solicit volunteers eg for the regular Litter Picks - attendees to let Committee members know if they would like to be added to the volunteering Whats App group.

2.5. Heritage trail

A Heritage Trail is planned in honour of Kevin Barratt who had done extensive research on the history and 'inhabitants' of the Cemetery before he sadly passed away earlier this year. This will be a key piece of work for the Heritage sub-group and might include discreet QR codes giving access to more information. AL also pointed out that it could help gain additional protection and recognition for the site and its monuments and that FOPOC may explore whether any monuments could possibly be locally listed which would help protect against removal and re-use.

2.6. Accounts and CiC status

It was reported that FOPOC's accounts, as a Community Interest Company, would be reported on in the summer and become publicly available. The only income is a modest amount of membership fees and the costs relate to website and newsletter distribution, at present. The accounts were all in order and being prepared for the report. FOPOC had received some helpful advice from Fadel Zayden (FZ) indicating that charitable status might be more appropriate for an organisation of this type. The options would be looked into in the coming year in order to make a recommendation if any change is needed.

3. Constitution and Committee

Peter Coombes took up the chairing of this section

3.1. Agreeing our constitution

A draft constitution had been circulated ahead. Caroline Lynch (CL), Dawn Reidy (DR) and Will Mowatt (WM) raised the issue of grave-owners/ people with family connections or burials in the Cemetery not being represented on the proposed Committee. DR suggested that the position of Vice Chair should be re-introduced and wished to put herself forward. CL wished to put herself forward for the Treasurer position, mentioning her experience of finance and accounting in other previous roles.

AL and Louise Lane (LL) responded, explaining that while there was no intention to exclude grave owners or people with family connections to the Cemetery, the role of Vice Chair did not have a clear remit. It was suggested that grave owners might be well-placed to take on the Community Relations, role, given that it would entail liaison with all Cemetery users including, importantly, those with family or burial connections. DR and CL were keen however, for there to be representation on the lead Committee, and this would not be the case in a Community Relations role. FZ pointed out too, that it was good practice for roles to have a clear remit, and that were there to be a vice Chair added to the Committee it would become an even number of Members, which was not good practice, and unhelpful when voting was involved. However the meeting generally agreed that Grave Owners should have senior representation – though Committee roles should also have a clear remit in themselves, rather than being framed around individuals. Lyn also mentioned that additional members might help improve the diversity of the proposed Committee. After some discussion the following approach was voted on and agreed:

- 3.1.1. There would be an amendment to the draft constitution, requiring the Committee to include at least one individual with family/burial connections to the Cemetery.
- 3.1.2. For this year, that position would be taken on by Dawn Reidy in a Community Relations role.
- 3.1.3. It was proposed and agreed that Andrew Lowe should be Chair and Louise Lane should be Secretary.
- 3.1.4. Lloyd Fothergill (LF) and Caroline Lynch were both nominated for, and discussed approaches to the work of Treasurer. LF provided assurances on the sharing of information on the accounts and had agreed that Peter Coombes (PC) would shadow this work. There would be shared access to membership management tools. For now it made sense for LF to remain Treasurer given his status with the existing Community Interest Company, and the need for that to report. CL said she had relevant experience and an interest in these issues but given these reassurances and the current CiC status she would therefore support LF as Treasurer. This was voted and agreed.
- 3.1.5. CL and DR expressed concerns about the increasingly digital nature of communications from and about FOPOC. This can be exclusive if you do not have access to on line technology and it was hoped that paper communications and noticeboards could be used. It was agreed that a reliance on technology was inevitable during a pandemic, and was increasingly the norm. But that face to face meetings would resume at some point, and that every effort would be made to keep less digitally savvy members informed.
- 3.1.6. The links between the Committee and sub-Committees/groups was discussed. In order to ensure an odd number on the FOPOC Committee it was agreed that Heritage should become a Committee post making five Committee positions. PC stood for that post and was voted in.

- 3.1.7. Biodiversity would remain a sub-group, and Richie Walker (RW) offered to lead on that which the meeting gratefully agreed.
- 3.1.8. Expertise and volunteers are still sought to work on disability access, IT/Website management and comms. Members to encourage friends with that expertise to get involved.
- 3.1.9. Volunteers were also sought for the Early 8.30 am opening of Cemetery on Saturdays and Sundays. Please let Committee members know if you would be prepared to be on a rota for unlocking, otherwise opening will revert to the standard 0900 opening by Brent/Veolia

4. Any other business

There was no other business. The meeting closed at 20.30.