

FRIENDS OF BRANDWOOD END CEMETERY



Newsletter Issue No 1

Autumn 2005

WHY WE ARE HERE

Awareness of widespread distress at the deterioration of the terracotta Victorian Grade II listed Mortuary Chapels, resulted in a group of local residents meeting on several



occasions during the months of January to April 2005 to discuss ways and means of restoring the Chapels to their former glory and improving Brandwood End

Cemetery in general. These meetings culminated in a Public Meeting at St. Alban's School, Broad Lane on 27th April, which was very successful and attended by 130 people. A number of people expressed their interest in becoming involved with this project and further consultations were held to discuss the way forward. This resulted in an Inaugural Meeting being held.

MEMBERSHIP

It costs just £5 per annum to become a member of the Friends of Brandwood End Cemetery and at the present time eighty two people have applied for membership; this entitles the member to receive two/three newsletters each year and to vote at the A.G.M and any other public meetings held by the "Friends". An application form will be enclosed with this newsletter, so please encourage your relatives and friends to join. The newsletter will only be sent to paid up members.

INAUGURAL MEETING

This was held on 21st July at St. Bede's Church Doversley Road, Kings Heath and attended by 100 people, including Councillors Neville Summerfield and Ken Hardeman. The meeting was chaired by Councillor Summerfield, a Constitution was adopted and an Executive Committee elected as follows: Chairman: Alistair Morton, Vice-Chairman: Tom Langley, Secretary: Jane Graham, Treasurer: Julian Pritchard plus seven other committee members from the local community: Carola Klein, Barrie Simpson, Moya Smith, Philip Brown, Liz Stuffins, Coral Howard and Anne Courbet who is the originator and

initial driving force behind the "Friends". Four interested bodies will also have a representative on the committee: Friends of Brandwood Pool, The Victorian Society, Birmingham & District Local History Association and Birmingham Open Spaces Forum. Following the elections it was announced that there would be co-ordinators with interests in specific areas who could be contacted with queries/offers of help etc.

Patrick Baird – Historical areas

Percy Jeffrey – Brandwood Pool

Paul Curry – Nature and wildlife of the area

LITTER PICK

It was a fairly damp Sunday morning when we took part in the litter pick that was to make a start to the care we are to give Brandwood End Cemetery. We soon warmed up as we picked and chatted.

We were met by two environmental wardens, April Flower and Amdeep Sanghera, who provided us with bags, gloves and pickers.

A group of us enjoyed a couple of hours in the open air doing a bit to clear some of the rubbish that had accumulated around the borders of the cemetery.

Between us we removed 42 bags of assorted litter and debris and before long we were deep in conversation and litter. In fact, most of us found it very rewarding as it gave us the opportunity to look around the cemetery and see other jobs that needed doing. This was food for thought and we discussed the actions we would have to take. We all had more ideas than when we started and these will be put in order at our coming meetings.

When we first arrived at the cemetery we saw something worth noting and passing on to all of you who have shown an interest, the area around the chapels had been cleared.

This goes to show that if you get involved and show concern people will take it seriously. It was gratifying to note that our concerns were listened to and that someone had authorised the clean up.

It now remains to keep up the good work and we will be drawing up a list of activities that will be undertaken to ensure that we make progress and that everyone's efforts are appreciated. Why not join us on our next litter pick on 20th November 10.00 - 12.00 ?



MEMORIAL SAFETY INSPECTIONS

The Bereavement Services Section of Birmingham City Council are undertaking memorial safety inspections within Brandwood End Cemetery and there may be occasions when memorials are identified as unsafe and it will be impossible to contact the legal owner. Not all grave owners will have informed the Authority of a change of address or ownership. It would be helpful if all "Friends" could encourage any grave owners they know to notify the staff at Brandwood End of change of address or ownership details.

IMPROVEMENTS NOTICED AT BRANDWOOD END CEMETERY SINCE THE FRIENDS BECAME INVOLVED

Amount of litter has reduced considerably.

The grass cutting is more thorough.

The area surrounding the chapels has been cleared and shrubbery removed.

The security fencing has been made more stable and chained together.

Grass has been cut round the chapel island.

The garden at the rear of the lodge has been cleared.

Wooden shuttering on the lodge has been removed and replaced with perspex.

PATRONS

We are very pleased to announce that Professor Carl Chinn, M.B.E. and Dr. Julian Litten, F.S.A. have consented to being Patrons of the "Friends".

Carl Chinn is a Brummie born and bred, being born in Moseley and his parents from Aston and Sparkbrook.

When writing a history of Sparkbrook, for which he obtained his doctorate, he began to realise the importance of the spoken and written memories of working-class people.

His first book "They worked All their Lives : Women of the Urban Poor in England, 1800 – 1839" was published in 1988. Since then he has written and had published over twenty more. Carl, well known locally for his defence of Birmingham and the Brummie accent, for his regular writings on local history in "The Evening Mail", talks on the same subject to associations and societies, and for his weekly radio programme which mixes historical details with live reminiscences and popular music.

He is now Professor of Community History at the University of Birmingham and Director of Birmingham Lives at South Birmingham College.

He and his wife Kay have four children.

For many years **Julian Litten** worked at the Victoria & Albert Museum as a Curator in Public Affairs. An authority on English funeral customs, he organised the obsequies for the Unknown Mariner from the "Mary Rose" for Portsmouth cathedral in 1984 and was instrumental in setting up and invigilating the records of the vaults beneath Christchurch, Spitalfields between 1984 and 1986.

He has also been a Commissioner of the Cathedrals Advisory Commission for England, a member of the board of directors of the Council for British Archaeology and a member of the Royal Archaeological Institute.

In 1987 he was made the first honorary member of the Institute of Funeral Directors in recognition of his research into the history of the trade.

He was also the co-organiser of the Spring 1991 exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum – "The Art of Death" which also saw the publication of his most fascinating book – "The English way of Death. The Common Funeral since 1450".

Julian Litten is also heavily involved with the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

It is hoped to identify the graves of those service personnel who died in World Wars I and II and place a poppy on their graves for Armistice Day. Restoration of the garden originally created in memory of the civilians who died during World War 2 is also under active consideration.

A number of bird boxes have already been erected and there are plans to erect more in the near future. Also on the agenda are projects to help in the conservation of the environment and wildlife which now inhabits the green open space in and around the Brandwood Pool, which lies at the side of the cemetery.

A further litter pick is planned for Sunday 20th November. Time 10.00a.m.

We are still awaiting the results of a survey of the Chapels from Urban Design.

The setting up of a Website for the Friends of Brandwood End Cemetery is in process and by the next newsletter we may be digital.

Please watch the notice board at the entrance to the cemetery for news updates.