

2022 AGM REPORT FOR MEMBERS

Despite the many challenges and restrictions we have all had to face over the past 12 months I feel justified in describing 2021 as a year of successful FBEC 'firsts'.

Spring – Our first ever FBEC AGM held on Zoom was followed at the end of the month by FBEC representatives joining the Gallipoli Association at its first Brandwood Cemetery 25th April ANZAC Day Remembrance ceremony. The Chapels finally lost the old black window boards and temporary 'builders-yard' barriers and now, for the first time these important listed buildings have reinforced Perspex revealing the terracotta tracery and permanent green fine mesh fencing - the improved visual aspect is striking. In May, in what we hope will be the first of an occasional FBEC Website series, Executive Committee member Lisa Fair produced a delightful short film showcasing Brandwood Cemetery in a winter setting. **Enjoy some Winter scenes in Brandwood End with this short film.** In addition, thanks to their dedicated work, Lisa and Secretary Jane Edwards have also now completed the much needed updated digitalised version of FBEC's poppy cross graves project records which will also, for the first time, enable the addition of colour photographs.

Summer - FBEC volunteers took part in inaugural recording sessions of Brandwood's memorials as part of charity Caring for God's acre 2019-2022 Celebrating Birmingham's Burial Grounds project. They are now transferring the resulting information sheets onto the first digitized map. When BCC financial constraints left the Lodge access flower beds still empty in July, Jane and Steve Edwards and grandson Oscar stepped in and planted them with geraniums sourced from Coffon Nurseries. Throughout the year volunteers have weeded, mowed and tidied the Civilian Garden with two replacement miniature rose trees donated and planted. Our two FBEC Benches have just returned following a complete refurbishment and over the past 10 months our loyal and growing band of litter pickers have so far filled an impressive 52 bags.

Autumn - In the week leading up to our 19th September Birmingham Heritage Festival Open Day, for the first time, we included a series of day events culminating in the very successful Lodge based event which gave us the opportunity to launch FBEC's first self-guided downloadable Heritage walk **FBEC. HERITAGE WALK 2021**. The occasion attracted Councillor John Cotton, making his first visit to Brandwood End as Cabinet Member with Bereavements portfolio. He and Assistant Director Paul Lankester have since returned to make a full morning tour of the cemetery. The first FBEC 'Learn to Identify Fungi' walk, held on October 13th and organised by Georgina Sharp, (Community Co-ordinator for Caring for God's acre and Lukas Large, Curator of the Natural Science Collection at Birmingham Museums Trust) was voted a tremendous success, one that we would be keen to repeat.

Remembrance - By the end of October our volunteer teams had once again placed over 350 poppy crosses on our Brandwood war graves, and we were particularly pleased at the beginning of November to learn that for the first time the Commonwealth War Graves Commission are to take over the maintenance of the CWGC 8-grave Section 33 lawn area. The initial phase of that work has already been completed. After a Covid enforced gap Captain Katharine Reeves and thirteen 202 Field Hospital reservists paid us their welcome pre-Remembrance visit spending over 5 hours uncovering pre-identified war graves and clearing mountains of self-set holly and ground ivy. After having to be cancelled in 2020 the 14th November FBEC Remembrance Sunday event was particularly well supported and included Scouts, Clubs and Beavers of 148th St. Dunstan's and, for the first time, Steve McCabe MP Selly Oak was able to join us and lay his personal wreath. I end my report with a tribute to the late Mrs. Anne Courbet, our instrumental FBEC Founder and subsequent Life Member, whose well attended funeral on 14th December paid testament to the high regard in which she was held – we endeavour to continue and maintain the legacy she has left us.

Mrs. Julia Griffin – Chairman FBEC – 11 March 2022