

NEWS UPDATE TO ALL VOLUNTEERS

From Neil Howell, Chair FOTC Committee

Following the emergency we had to deal with a couple of weeks ago Jean and I had a very socially distanced meeting on Wednesday with the grounds manager, Mark Payne, from Teignbridge. It was a bitterly cold day in the cemetery.

Overall it was a very positive meeting and he said several times how pleased he was with everything we'd done and how much better the cemetery was looking - a very welcome compliment for all the hard work over the last four years. He explained that, for him, having a single organisation like FOTC to deal with has made a huge difference. We also thanked him for the additional support that he had been able to give, despite his budget restrictions.

We obviously discussed the emergency we had had with the wobbly headstones. He confirmed, once again, that headstones should not be moved under any circumstances and that any work around them should be done in such a way as not to disturb headstones and make them potentially dangerous. We confirmed back to him that that had been our clear understanding from day one, which is what is in our policy, plan and risk assessment and that our members were aware of that. He asked us to continue to let him know about any headstones we regard as potentially unsafe and was at pains to point out that public safety comes first.

He has had to lay several headstones down flat and we asked if they could be flipped where necessary to show the inscriptions on the headstones. He confirmed that he would get a couple of his guys to do that as and when convenient. His view on the other headstone which had been flattened (after he had made the other headstones safe) was that someone had pushed it over and had broken it at the base as a result.

We had a long discussion about insurance and Mark confirmed Teignbridge's position in relation to all spaces owned by Teignbridge which is that all groups assisting work in those spaces must be covered under either Teignbridge's or their own group's insurance. He was aware that there were individuals working in those spaces (e.g. at Homeyards, Shaldon) as part of "lockdown exercise" and that they would be doing so at their own risk unless covered under their group's insurance. We confirmed that our insurance does not cover such activity during lockdown and that we had put up a notice as he had requested.

We took the opportunity to ask Mark about the buildings, although he isn't responsible for them. He wasn't aware that we had submitted a revised business plan which had been accepted and that Matheu Gladman of Teignbridge Estates had agreed to begin lease negotiations. He did say, however, that Matheu was off work for personal reasons and that someone else had taken over monitoring his workload. He said he'd talk to him & ask him to tell us what's happening. Our expectation at this stage is that nothing much will happen until after COVID is over.

This last year of COVID has obviously been a very difficult one with disruption to work in the cemetery. Once the current lockdown is over we'd like to be able to get back to normal activity as quickly as possible and it would be good to start

planning for that now with a fresh impetus. So we'd like to hold a Zoom meeting of volunteers in the next couple of weeks to catch up with one another and talk about the way forward. The proposed date is Thursday 25th February at 2pm, so please book that in your calendar. We'll send out a reminder closer to the time with the Zoom details.

Take care, everyone.

Neil