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# Autumn 2011

**Welcome...** to the latest newsletter of the FRIENDS OF HYDE PARK CEMETERY. Here you'll find information on the progress that we've made over the past few months and on events involving the Friends, along with news items that, we hope, will interest you. Do, please, let us know if you'd like information on any other topics.

You can keep up-to-date with all FoHPC activities by visiting our website at:

www.fohpc.org.uk

# 'Grave Finder' Service

The Friends of Hyde Park Cemetery have recently launched a 'Grave Finder' Service. With this service, anyone who is trying to find the burial details and grave location of someone who is buried in Hyde Park Cemetery can request this information from the Friends, in return for a modest fee. For people who are unable to visit the cemetery, the 'Grave Finder' Service gives the option of our supplying photographs of the grave in question, in addition to comprehensive details from the burial and grave registers.

For more information either visit our website or contact Richard Bell (see overleaf).

# Music Hall Star in the Cemetery

About 3 months ago we were contacted by a couple who were trying to find the burial place of an ancestor who had died in Doncaster in 1923. It soon became clear that this lady was one of the biggest stars of the Music Hall from the late 19th century. Harriet Vernon (real name Harriet Whitehouse) was the leading 'principal boy' of the 1880s and 1890s, with many appearances at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane and all around the country. She also toured abroad extensively, including several visits to the United States, as well as Johannesburg and Berlin. Although in poor health and aged 64, Harriet came out of retirement in 1923 to tour with the 'Old Time Artistes.' On arrival at Doncaster for a week of shows at the Grand Theatre, Harriet's health deteriorated quickly and, on 11 July, she died at Doncaster Royal Infirmary. Surprisingly, this huge star of her day lies in an unmarked grave!

The couple who first drew our attention to Harriet Vernon came from London to visit her grave and, since then, three other descendants of Harriet have been in contact with us and, consequently, with each other. We really feel as though we have helped to reunite a family through our work.

# **Forthcoming Events**

WORKING MORNINGS on the 2nd Saturday of every month (10th December, 14th January, 11th February, etc.) - These sessions give the opportunity for FoHPC members and visitors to help with improving the cemetery. We've made a real difference in the year-and-a-half since we started, so please come along and help. Meet at the Carr Lane entrance at 9:30am. Toilet and washing facilities are available at Adrian Welch Glass & Glazing, across the road.

# HERITAGE FESTIVAL from Monday 6th

to Friday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2012 - The Heritage Festival will be led by DMBC's Local Studies Library, with the support of the Doncaster & District Heritage Association. The Festival will include talks, visits and guided walks, so watch for further details. The Friends will be leading a guided walk around the cemetery as part of the Festival.

# LOCAL HISTORY FAIR on Saturday 11th

**February 2012 (10am to 4pm)** - This Fair will be held at Doncaster Museum & Art Gallery and will feature a wide range of heritage organisations from the area, covering almost every subject of local history. The Friends will be there with their display, spreading the word about the cemetery!

### **DOG-WASTE BINS INSTALLED**

The Friends have been in discussion with DMBC for some time about having bins installed for dogwalkers to clean up after their pets. We're pleased to be able to report that three such bins were fixed in place in October, one near to each exit. Thanks go to DMBC Bereavement Services for their help in this matter. Our next objective is to re-locate some of the existing litter bins, to put them in places where they will be more convenient to use.

#### **GHOSTLY STORY AT HALLOWEEN**

Local children were treated to an after-dark exploration of Hyde Park Cemetery on Halloween, thanks to the efforts of the Central Neighbourhood Support Team. The children, accompanied by parents or guardians, were told a little about the history of the cemetery and about some of the people buried there. Then, they were treated to a ghost story before prizes were awarded for the best costume and the best Halloween pumpkin lantern!

The Friends were consulted in advance and were represented at the event, to make sure that the activities respected the nature of the site and were carried out in a sensitive manner.



### **GUIDED WALK SUCCESSES**

FoHPC completed their 2011 series of guided walks around the cemetery with two events to coincide with Heritage Open Days, in September. Both the 'Notable Doncastrians' walk and a repeat of the 'War Graves' walk proved very popular, each attracting over twenty visitors. Two of the attendees on the first of these walks were actually direct descendants of two of the 'Notable Doncastrians' whose graves were featured. We hope to introduce new walks during 2012 and at present we are working on one with a railway theme.

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## **FAMILY HISTORY FAIR**

The Friends of Hyde Park Cemetery joined many other local heritage organisations exhibiting at a Family History Fair in Doncaster a few weeks ago. We took this opportunity to launch our 'Grave Finder' Service, which attracted a lot of interest. Doncaster & District Family History Society made an excellent job of organising the Fair, which attracted more than double the number of people attending their previous Fair.

#### PICTURE POSTCARD FROM 1906

One stall at the Family History Fair (see above) was stocked with thousands of picture postcards. FoHPC committee member Margaret was rewarded for her time spent searching through the many boxes by finding a postcard displaying a photograph taken inside Hyde Park Cemetery and dating from 1906. The postcard was sent by a Lydia Taylor to Miss Ethel Backhouse of Dewsbury.

If you have any old photographs of the cemetery we would love to see them. Please contact Richard Bell (see contact details opposite).

### **WINTER HOME FOR BUGS!**

Children from Hexthorpe Primary School are putting the finishing touches to a winter home for insects, which will be placed in the wildlife area of Section C. The home is a grid of 'pigeon holes', filled with a variety of materials that will provide cosy quarters for a wide range of insects throughout the winter.

### ANOTHER THEATRICAL PERFORMER

As well as Harriet Vernon, Music Hall star of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Friends have discovered that there is another theatrical performer in the cemetery. John Leicester Windust's headstone reveals that he was a member of the Children's Opera Company and died at the age of 16. Why this young man, from Kentish Town, London, came to be buried in Doncaster has yet to be established, but perhaps he was due to perform at the old Opera House in the Market Place. If you can help us to solve this mystery please get in touch.

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### **MEMORIAL RESTORATION**

To help us put together a successful funding application, FoHPC Chair Richard Bell has attended a training session with Heritage Lottery Fund. There's much to be done to get the project going, but we are determined to start repairing and restoring memorials and monuments in the cemetery.

# GETTING INVOLVED

If you've been inspired by reading about what's happening with Hyde Park Cemetery, we'd be delighted if you could help the Friends. Whether it's researching walks, helping in the cemetery itself, or anything else, we'd welcome your help.

# Check out www.fohpc.org.uk

#### Do we have your email address?

To keep our administration costs down, we would like to send out newsletters by email to as many of our members as possible. If you received this newsletter by post but would be happy for us to use email in future, please send your email address to:

#### richardbell.fohpc@btinternet.com

If you used to receive your newsletter by email, but this one arrived by post, perhaps you've changed your email address and forgotten to let us know.

If you wish to continue to receive newsletters by post, but we haven't got your address quite right, please tell us.

For any matter related to the Friends of Hyde Park Cemetery, you can contact Richard Bell by the following methods:

Telephone: 07777-688438

Email: richardbell.fohpc@btinternet.com