

THE EDINBURGH GRAVEYARD PROJECT: REBUILDING MONUMENTS

Alan McKinney

As noted in previous reports, the Old Edinburgh Club has financially supported the Graveyard Project,¹ and the efforts of the Community Payback Programme – run by the City of Edinburgh Council – are now being concentrated on the historically important Grange Cemetery.² The Council's supervisory staff, having been trained to the appropriate standard, instruct and direct those on the above Programme with the outcome at 15 November 2020 being that 227 headstones have been rebuilt at the Grange Cemetery and 19 foundations prepared.

The work entails safely laying aside the monument, lifting any base stone and then digging out the brick foundations, with concrete then being poured into the void and left to set. After it is 'cured' that concrete and the base of the monument or base stone is then drilled, with stainless steel pins being inserted in these holes as the monument is returned to its vertical position (see the report in BOEC volume 9 for photographs of such work). It should be borne in mind that this is carried out by a largely unskilled workforce carrying out unpaid work court orders, enhancing their skill set, employability and sense of achievement and ultimately reducing their risk of re-offending.

Clearly there have been some staffing issues but the City of Edinburgh Council continues to support the Project although it is recognised that addressing the current Covid-19 limitations (primarily, proximity and social distancing) has impacted upon the numbers of monuments that have been re-erected. The concrete foundations, being somewhat more straightforward, are prepared for the time that rebuilding of the monuments can be undertaken.

It should be noted that the Supervisor has noticed that the cemetery continues to be a popular place for quiet reflection and relaxation, more so than ever before. The aesthetic appeal of standing, well maintained headstones is encouraging the public to visit.

FINANCE: The most recent deposit of funds (the earlier deposits being exhausted in the Grange and other graveyards) is that from the Grange Association, with the current, positive balance with the material supplier standing at £1,683.49 at 15 November 2020.

ACHIEVEMENTS: Although some 227 headstones have now been rebuilt at the Grange Cemetery, everyone is reminded that under the current scheme it is not possible, due to their height, to tackle the larger monuments (see 'Development' below).

These figures are in addition to the 200-plus monuments that have been rebuilt in Liberton Cemetery.

On my most recent visit I had the opportunity to speak to those undertaking the work and the following comments were willingly volunteered:

*'There's no family here to look after the graves';
'Was good to be involved';
'Was good to show some respect to the dead';
'a positive sense of achievement'*

DEVELOPMENT: Unfortunately, the training of the City of Council Staff has been focused on the more conventional headstones up to approximately five feet in height, and this means that some of the larger monuments in the Grange Cemetery laid over on the grounds of safety cannot be tackled under this Community Payback Scheme.



Figs 1 and 2. 'Before' and 'after' views of work carried out at Liberton Cemetery during the first phase of the Project (2008, 2011).
Photos Alan McKinney

However, in an effort to further enhance the appearance of the Cemetery, consideration is being given to the possibility of securing a 'not for profit' contribution from commercial monument builders and, with activists from the Grange Association, we

have identified a number of monuments that could be rebuilt. Currently, as I await estimates for such work, the Association has kindly indicated its willingness to make a further contribution.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Alan McKinney and Andrew McMillan, 'The Edinburgh Graveyard Project: A Social Solution and Methodology for Rebuilding Gravestones', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, New Series, 9 (2012), pp. 137–42.
- 2 Alan McKinney, 'The Edinburgh Graveyard Project', *BOEC*, N.S., 13 (2017), pp. 135–6.