

Thinking about volunteering with the Friends of St Peter's Berkhamsted – Rectory Lane Cemetery Project?

What do volunteers do?

Volunteers are absolutely vital to the success of the project, the future of the Cemetery and the delivery of our mission:

'To change perceptions of cemeteries as "*dead spaces*", transforming ours into a vibrant and diverse contemporary garden of commemoration, a pivotal heritage asset and an environmental haven by making connections, promoting health and wellbeing and welcoming all.'

All the volunteer roles are contributing to the achievement of this mission – but they need different skillsets, interests and time available.

If you are outgoing and have good communication skills and enjoy engaging with people you could help the Project **change perceptions of cemeteries as "*dead spaces*"**. With the right training, materials and guidance to enable you to feel confident, you could:

- Lead individual tours of the cemetery – perhaps on a particular aspect (military graves / authors buried here) or in a period role (the Countess of Bridgewater / our WWI matron!)
- Be a guide as part of a larger event such as the annual Heritage Open Days
- Give talks and presentations offsite – to groups, schools or businesses.



If you prefer a less front-of-house role and like working outdoors, you could contribute to **transforming** the Cemetery, improving its physical space and how welcoming it is to visitors – helping the project to achieve the highest standards of presentation as a garden of commemoration. You could:

- Adopt a grave to keep it neat and potentially plant it up as a miniature garden
- Participate in regular work parties tackling that month's tasks
- Turn it into a richer environmental haven, by composting, undertaking regular species monitoring and habitat management.



Some volunteer tasks are short-term or date-specific, others are ongoing and regular. Some can be done by individuals, others by a group or a family working together – like grave adoption. Some need more training than others, some can stretch you while others are simply relaxing! A list of some of the roles follows this section – so do check them out and see what you think would most suit you. We are also open to suggestions of new ‘micro-projects’ if you have proposals for discrete pieces of volunteer activity based on your skills, interests or connections.

We ask that you are willing and enthusiastic to meet project expectations and we commit to being clear about the roles and providing appropriate preparation or training, support and initial ‘going alongside’ until you’re ready. You can even try a taster session before you commit.

There is no Project office, so volunteering either takes place at the Cemetery itself, or at another venue (for a talk, market stall etc) or from your home. We have a lovely volunteer base on site while you’re working at the Cemetery itself and the Project will reimburse you for local travel costs, so you’re not out of pocket.

Overleaf is an organisational model showing how all the roles – both voluntary and paid – fit together. It should help you to see where you would fit in!

Rectory Lane Cemetery: Organisational Model															FoSP																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																						
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Volunteer roles – short outlines

These are brief descriptions to give you a sense of the variety to choose from and what they might require in terms of your aptitude and time. Some roles involve working with other volunteers, others you can fulfil on your own; some are in the cemetery itself or other public places; some need more time and regular commitment. More details will be made available once we have agreed which role is best for you. And this does not cover everything the project needs to be successful – there is enormous scope to harness your skills!

Work party

Work parties are task-focussed sessions, usually held on the first Sunday afternoon of the month, but ad hoc ones are also organised when necessary to keep the Cemetery a welcoming and well-kempt place, for example just before an event. Tasks include mowing or strimming, raking leaves or mown grass, weeding, clearing paths, turning the compost, picking up litter and fallen twigs, planting or tidying up the Garden of Remembrance and Rectory Lane entrance or the Volunteers' Retreat, or undertaking mini-projects such as planting up areas, maintaining buildings and structures, building compost bins.

This role could suit you if you:

- Enjoy working out of doors
- Are well enough to be physically active
- Can commit two hours on the first Sunday of each month, most months or could be available for ad hoc sessions.

We will:

- Provide the necessary tools, but you can bring your own
- Explain the tasks to be done and Health and Safety considerations
- Provide refreshments!

Ecology and wildlife surveys and habitat management

When established in 1842 the cemetery was on the outskirts of Berkhamsted – now it is three acres of green space right in the middle of town, accessed off the High Street. It is a wildlife haven, with mature trees and wild areas, as well as zones neatly mown for memorialisation and activities. Our aim is to manage it for maximum bio-diversity, guided by organisations such as Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

This role could suit you if you:

- Are interested in wildlife generally, or perhaps have particular knowledge of butterflies, bees, insects, birds, bats, small mammals, flora
- Enjoy working practically out of doors
- Might be experienced in conducting wildlife surveys, building habitats and managing grassland to encouraging wildlife
- Are happy to work alone or lead others
- Might be experienced in leading public information sessions

We will:

- Share our wildlife (trees, lichens, plants, butterflies & bees) survey data with you
- Involve you in our ongoing management programme
- Support you in creating small group wildlife sessions (bio-blitzes, bug hunts, moth and bat events, as appropriate)

Grave adoption

Rendering previously neglected graves beautiful again, particularly in the Garden of Remembrance area, is part of making it a vibrant green space. Adopting a grave means looking after it – weeding and planting out as a miniature garden – and then maintaining it throughout the year.

This role could suit you if you:

- Enjoy working out of doors either on your own or with others
- Have basic gardening skills and a few tools, or these can be provided
- Are looking to volunteer two or three hours a month.

We:

- Will identify a grave for you to adopt and
- Agree a planting scheme for local conditions and wildlife
- Will reimburse planting expenses.

Genealogy research

Discovering the life stories behind the 1,200 memorials is part of transforming the cemetery *'from a dead space to a living place'*, and sharing these stories brings our town's history to life.

This role could suit you if you:

- Are interested in genealogy or the history of Hertfordshire
- Are familiar with resources such as *Find My Past* and *Ancestry.com*
- Have access to these online sites, either via your own computer or library membership
- Would like to learn how to conduct research
- Want to work from home
- Are looking to fit your volunteering around other commitments – how much time you give depends on how many plots you decide to take on – the detective work is quite compulsive!

We:

- Will identify a memorial or plot for you to research
- Can guide you through the process 1:1 or arrange for group training at the library
- Will assist if you get stuck
- Will publish your research on our website.

Events assistance

The Rectory Lane Cemetery Project organises community events such as Heritage Open Days and Chiltern Walking Festival tours, wildlife and history tours to promote the Cemetery **'as a pivotal heritage asset'**. The Cemetery hosts the annual *BerkoFest Book Festival* programme for children and a variety of adult and children's theatre performances as part of **'welcoming all'** to the space.

These events are only possible through the hard work of our volunteers. Roles include:

- Pre-event: **marketing** (distributing flyers or posters, promoting on social media, local radio)
- Pre-event: **preparation** (erecting gazebos and putting out chairs, setting up displays, signage and decorations)
- At the event: **hosting** (ticket desk, welcoming and information, refreshments, tours and guiding)
- Post-event: **clearing down** and returning the Cemetery to its peace.

So different skills needed for different roles – but being part of a public event is always fun and satisfying and might suit you.

Tour guiding

Every role in society is reflected in the stories of those buried in the Cemetery – we have authors, photographers, publicans, boat builders, wheelwrights, surgeons, soldiers, straw plaiters, tax inspectors, journalists, campaigners, mothers, market gardeners, telegraph operators, agricultural labourers ...

We have memorials formed of different stones from around the country, carved into different shapes, decorated with different symbols and restored with heritage skills; epitaphs inspired by poetry, hymns, prayers and concepts about death ...

Everyone loves to discover stories and learn new facts. Guided tours offering different insights are a popular activity with our visitors and we are always looking to develop new tours and new guides.

This role could suit you if you:

- Have experience of guiding or leading tours
- Are interested in social history or another aspect of the cemetery
- Are comfortable leading and talking to small groups
- Enjoy taking on a historical persona and dressing up

We will:

- Create the tour with you /rehearse you in the tour if already existing
- Provide costume and props if appropriate
- Help you to develop your skills
- Accompany you on your tours

Schools outreach

Part of our mission is to inspire the younger generation to appreciate the heritage that shaped modern Berkhamsted. Learning about the lives and livelihoods of those buried in the cemetery can be a memorable way to engage with social history and local geography. We want to encourage schools to view the Cemetery as a vital resource on their doorstep to bring their students to again and again.

Volunteers are needed to work with the Community Engagement Officer (who is DBS checked) to:

- Represent the project to school leaders and teachers
- Identify areas for collaboration eg social history, geology, art, literature, conservation
- Develop tools and materials together with the CEO.

This role could suit you if you are:

- A retired/former teacher or part-time teacher or teaching assistant
- Interested in sharing knowledge and working with young people
- Connected locally and/or knowledgeable about the school curricula

We will:

- Arrange for your DBS check
- Involve you in developing and enhancing our schools programme.

Photography, videography and other arts projects

With its accessible open green space, quietness and the rich history of its inhabitants, the Cemetery has a lot to inspire artists, photographers, creative writers, storytellers and filmmakers. We have hosted theatre, drawing, writing and photography groups and the Cemetery has featured in stories and short films.

Volunteers are needed to promote the space to artists of all persuasions and to host art-related group visits.

This role could suit you if you:

- Are an artist, photographer, filmmaker, actor/director, creative writer or storyteller yourself and/or connected to an art group
- Are interested in exploring new opportunities to inspire creative activities.

Fundraising

The Lottery Funding has been carefully spent, transforming the Cemetery into how it looks today, but for it to be sustained and looked after, further funding needs to be found: through legacies and trusts, appeals for business sponsorship, applications for awards. If you have experience in this area we would love you to work with us.

Health and fitness

As an easily accessible green space in the centre of town, the Cemetery is ideal for certain group health and fitness activities, such as walking, pilates, tai chi, yoga. It offers a degree of seclusion, unlike a public field or common. The project has a vital role in '**promoting health and wellbeing**'. There are no permanent structures on site so these activities are weather-dependent, but gazebos can be erected to provide some cover for group activities. The Performance Area can accommodate small groups.

Volunteers are needed to promote the Cemetery as a venue for appropriate health and fitness sessions.

This role could suit you if you:

- Lead fitness sessions yourself
- Attend fitness sessions as part of a group
- Want to explore holding certain seasonal sessions outdoors.

How do I get involved in the Project?

As an individual: we want to make sure your volunteering experience will be satisfying, starting at the beginning, with a short chat with the Community Engagement Officer, responsible for the volunteering programme, to understand your interest, skills and availability. She will also explain the next steps:

- We ask you to complete a short application form so that we can learn something about your interests and the skills you can bring. This is available at the end of this document and also on our website <https://www.rectorylanecemetery.org.uk/sustain/volunteer/>
- We will invite you to a discussion (F-F/telephone/Zoom) about the project and a potential volunteer role – some roles, for example working with vulnerable groups, may require references and a DBS check
- You will have a tour around the Cemetery by the Community Engagement Officer /another Project volunteer as a general introduction and with a focus on the role under consideration
- If we both agree to go ahead we will confirm your role, go through the Volunteer Guide and both sign the Volunteer Agreement
- We will introduce you to that activity's Lead Volunteer and arrange an induction with relevant training and materials
- If appropriate, a taster session/ opportunity to try the role out with support will be set up

As a member of another volunteer group: you might already belong to a volunteer organisation, who could be happy to contribute time to the project. In this case, the process would involve a conversation between that volunteer organisation's representative and the Community Engagement Officer to agree the task and timings. An example is the Chiltern Society, a charity dedicated to conserving, celebrating and caring for the *Chilterns*. A local sub-group of the Chiltern Society have spent time building both a compost bin and a bug hotel at the Cemetery – and they said they really enjoyed building for once, rather than clearing!

What are the benefits of volunteering with the Project?

We know there are many worthy causes that would welcome your time and skills. What are the benefits of volunteering with us?

The work is:

- Rewarding – supporting a successful community project
- Tangible – the local community is overwhelmingly positive about the project
- Flexible – to suit your availability
- Varied – so many different tasks to harness your skills or encourage new ones
- Friendly – our ethos is to be very welcoming and inclusive
- On your doorstep!

What ongoing support would I have?

Our Community Engagement Officer, Kate Campbell, is responsible for the volunteering programme. Her job would be to ensure that you feel supported and enabled to fulfil your volunteering role, by providing you with the training/briefing that you need to feel confident. She would arrange regular 1:1 check-in/supervision sessions to ensure both you and the Project were happy with your volunteering experience.

The volunteers who started the Project back in 2014 are still involved and passionate about the Project. They are always very happy to share their knowledge and experience.

If you are volunteering with us while looking for work, we can vouch for the contributions you have made to the project.

Where can I find out more about the history of the Cemetery and what the Project has achieved before I commit?

Our new website www.rectorylanecemetery.org.uk has lots of information on the history of the Cemetery and the Project so is a great place to start.

Volunteer application form

Completing this form will help us to understand your interests, skills and time available, so that we can identify the most satisfying role for you.

Personal details

First name:

Surname:

Preferred title: Mr Mrs Ms Miss Other

Tel no:

Email:

Address:

How did you hear about volunteering for the Rectory Lane Cemetery Project?

Why would you like to volunteer with the Project?

Role matching information

Are you particularly interested in any of the roles listed on the website?

When could you volunteer?

Regular sessions – what day/time?

Frequency?

One-off sessions – week day/ weekend?

Do you have experience of volunteering?

Anything you'd like to share about your work, hobbies or interests?

What skills do you think you can bring to the project? Tick those which apply:

- Creative arts ☐
- Event organisation ☐
- Fitness instruction ☐
- Fundraising ☐
- Gardening and horticulture ☐
- Genealogy research ☐
- Grassland management ☐
- Heritage interpretation ☐
- Historical research ☐
- IT ☐
- Leadership and governance ☐
- Managing people ☐
- Marketing ☐
- Media and journalism ☐
- Project management ☐
- Public speaking ☐
- Storytelling ☐
- Teaching ☐
- Tour leading ☐
- Training and facilitation ☐
- Websites and social media ☐
- Wildlife surveying ☐
- Other skills we've not listed here? Please specify below:

Health and safety

Are you fit to volunteer? Yes/No

Do you have any health issues we need to be aware of when considering appropriate roles for you?

Yes/No

If yes, please let us know below

Next of kin details (for contact in an emergency)

First name: _____ Surname: _____
Preferred title: Mr Mrs Ms Miss Other
Tel no: _____
Email: _____
Relationship to you: _____

Signature

Date

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with the Project.
The information you have shared in this form will be handled in accordance with GDPR.

Please email to community@stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk
Or post to Kate Campbell, 31 Cedar Road, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire HP4 2LB

We will be in touch very shortly.