**Eighth - Chairman’s Report to the AGM Friends of Darwen Cemetery –**

**Held on Wednesday 25th April 2018 at Darwen Heritage Centre at 7pm.**

**I welcome everyone to our eight FODC AGM.**

**This will be my last as chairman since the snowy day in December 2009 when we began to set up the possibility of a Friends group. Look were we are now – a firmly established Charity Commissioned Group - make up of volunteers. Rosemary Jackson joined us a Secretary in 2010 and drove us in various projects until she departed to Lincolnshire – we owe her a great debt and hopefully be present to take a round of applause. But what a catch – her replacement Peter Van Dyke who certainly keeps me if not everyone on track.**

**The details of the year activities will be outlined by various people from - The War Grave adoption scheme, Grave maintenance, Wildlife survey, working parties group and then the main thrust the Centenary WW1 structure and the sustainable education programme that goes with it.**

**More about that later.**

**My report must and should pay tribute the many volunteers over the year who have put in hundreds of hours of work from maintaining the shrubs, the cutting of hedges, the upkeep of the access to war graves, the restoration of the cemetery as a place of solace for both relatives of those buried and those looking for lost relatives for family research.**

**The annual Remembrance Day services attended by local schools and the community. It’s always very moving when local children place crosses on the graves of the 90 plus WW1 and WW2 graves.**

**This event is always well attended and the FODC volunteers ensure the event is well organised. We thank Tony Foster for his continued support of our education and research work – specially the In From the Cold programme – tracing War dead not recognised by The War Grave Commission. We may have reached our 100th War grave!**

**Our finances have been stretched and we thank the many well-wishers and charities from the Crown Awards, Darwen Town Council and the Lloyd Trust and the many donations we receive.**

**The WW1 Structure as its launch on 1st July at 3pm and we hope as many as possible can attend. Many hours of tireless work has got into this with Steve Davies our President and fellow trustees Jill Marr, Mik Walsh, Paul Dargen, Diane Davies, Diane Walsh. Roy Cox and Peter Van Dyke.**

**We do hope you can support this project and any donations will be welcome.**

**Finally – A big thanks you for everyone – BwD management and staff, local councillors. I hope the legacy of restoration, renovation and revival will continue – as the FODC make their mark on Darwen’s heritage.**