

North East case study for Heritage Counts 2015

Region:	North East
Theme demonstrated by case study:	Community group supporting the conservation and management of a local heritage site (Jesmond Old Cemetery, a Grade II* registered landscape and associated historic features)
Name of project/group:	The Friends of Jesmond Old Cemetery
Lead contact:	Ray Hayes
Location:	Newcastle upon Tyne

Short description of project:

Jesmond Old Cemetery is a Grade II* registered landscape. The cemetery also contains a number of Grade II and Grade II* listed structures and monuments.

The Friends of Jesmond Old Cemetery have played a significant role in supporting the on-going maintenance and enhancement of Jesmond Old Cemetery and its historic features. We have achieved this through direct maintenance activities, fundraising for technical conservation works and by encouraging local support for the site through a public events programme.

Why did you get involved with this project or activity?

I read about the cemetery in a book given to me one Father's Day. I went to have a look around but couldn't get to many parts of the site because they were so overgrown. I contacted the Council and they challenged me (supportively) to do something about it.

I'm a big believer in keeping people's stories and histories alive. I have a nursing background, working alongside older people and a lot of their stories die with them. This is a way to remember that Newcastle wouldn't be the place it is today without a lot of the people in this cemetery.



Ray Hayes © Historic England

How did you resource your project or activity?

Newcastle City Council provided initial support and advice and a number of charitable bodies (including the James Knott and Community Foundations) have provided finance for essential tools and equipment to help clear the overgrowth. Public events and fundraising has brought in additional funds and heritage organisations such as Historic England have supported some of the more technical conservation works.

What would have happened without your project or activity?

The Friends of Jesmond Cemetery have played an important role in maintaining this registered landscape.

Our work to clear litter, saplings, ivy and brambles has helped to conserve the cemetery's historic features, which might otherwise have been damaged by vegetation growth.

The Friends Group has also worked closely with Historic England and the City Council to commission a programme of more technical conservation works, including the restoration of the Grade II listed tomb of Archibald Reed.

Again, without the support of the Friends Group, features like this might otherwise have been vulnerable to loss or decay.



The tomb of Archibald Reed at Jesmond Cemetery (photo: © David Farrington, Historic England)

What difference been made by your project or activity?

The work of the Friends Group means that the cemetery is being maintained and conserved as a valuable heritage asset for both the local community and for future generations.

Graves are being better maintained and families are being given the opportunity to reconnect with ancestors buried there.

Funds are also being raised to cover technical conservation works to restore some of the historic features at this site.

Further information is available from our website: <http://www.jesmondoldcemetery.co.uk>

What have you learnt from this experience?

Enthusiasm and naivety are a powerful combination but you also need patience. When we first started, I thought we would get everything cleared in one day. In practice, things take a lot longer.

What does the future hold for your project or activity?

Work by the Friends Group is on-going. We share information about our project via the Friends website: <http://www.jesmondoldcemetery.co.uk/index.html>

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