

Historic cemetery gate needs repair

By JULIE HUSS

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EAST DERRY — Its iron designs offer a gateway to history and those who enter take a step into the past.

The main gate welcoming visitors to Forest Hill Cemetery in East Derry needs a bit of a face-lift these days and, along with the main burial ground, is part of a community-wide restoration and cleanup effort.

For several weeks, friends of the Forest Hill Cemetery have entered the historic 35-acre graveyard manned with rakes, trimmers, and garden gloves to clean up fallen brush and limbs and ensure the integrity of this sacred spot in town.

At a cemetery organizational meeting a few weeks back, residents spoke out about how much the cemetery meant to them and what it would take to make it look its best. The main cemetery gate, standing at the entrance since 1885, was one point of concern, according to town historian Richard Holmes.

"The gate is hanging off the hinge," Holmes said, "and it's been bent by many, many snow plows."

The gate, along with the cemetery took the brunt of a long, frosty winter, with much snowfall, and an added December ice storm in the mix, causing



JULIE HUSS/Staff photo

The historic wrought-iron gate at the Forest Hill Cemetery hangs as a welcome to all who step into the historic cemetery in East Derry.

damage, many dropped limbs and branches, and much physical distress.

Holmes said at one point, part of the gate was missing, refurbished, and re-straightened, and now it needs to be cleaned regularly with a wire brush to keep it up to par.

Forest Hill Cemetery has headstones dating back to 1729. Derry's first settler, Reverend James MacGregor, is buried not far from the iron gates. And the main entrance is the gateway to so much history, Holmes said and it's a shame to not have the historic burial grounds looking their best when people enter to

find loved ones or during funeral ceremonies.

"It should look its best," Holmes said.

Holmes said the town's earliest settlers planned the cemetery back in the early 1700s and put their loved ones here and it's important to keep Forest Hill in top shape.

"It really needs to be dressed up so it's a credit to the town," Holmes said. "Everybody can do something."

Anyone interested in getting involved in keeping Forest Hill in good shape can e-mail to forest_hill_cemetery07@yahoo.com.