

St. Mary's Churchyard Working Party Report APCM 2018

The working party is a jolly team which currently has eight members. Some are regular weekly attendees and others attend on a more occasional basis. We have two newer recruits who cut the average age of members dramatically, but even with them nature does not wait and maintenance of the plant and shrub growth takes some herculean effort on the part of all members of a largely ageing team. We would welcome new volunteers. Knowledge of shrubs and trees is not essential. Should you wish to turn up and try a sampler session in the churchyard, you will be most welcome, and I will always find something for you to do which would be well within your age/strength capability.

I have to inform members that the large Quercus (Oak) behind the War Memorial is not in good health. It has certainly shown signs of being in demise over recent summers. I have taken expert advice and we will be having a PICAS survey to ensure the tree does not present a Health and Safety hazard. Oak trees take many years to die off so it should be around for some time, but we need to ensure limbs are safe and the tree is regularly inspected.

We have lost one tree that I am aware of this winter and that is adjacent to the Hoppit. Although the tree root may marginally be in our ground, the tree has fallen onto the Hoppit. I have made contact with the City of London who will be inspecting the tree before any decision is made about whose responsibility it is to dismantle and remove. Even if it is our responsibility, we will require the City of London's permission to access the tree and remove it.

There is some settlement which requires making up with topsoil where earth was removed and replaced when the mains drainage was installed. Activity by squirrels and deer also necessitates infilling of holes and uneven ground for which they are responsible.

On the bright side, the primroses are beginning to come out and in a few weeks they will, hopefully, be a picture to behold.

Expenditure this year has been minimal, but still more than the Parish Council Grant. The Parish Council funded a long-handled hedge trimmer last summer and this makes trimming of hedges and shrubs a lot easier. We plan to have a hand-held strimmer reconditioned in the next few weeks but apart from that, we hope that we will soon be whizzing around with our mowers and motorised equipment.

Again, on a positive note, one of our members, Gill Stuart, who has been temporarily incapacitated with a broken wrist, has been hard at work updating the churchyard plan of graves, using old records and cross referencing them. This work is already proving to be beneficial in establishing where certain graves are located.

Finally, I would like to thank our happy band of volunteers who constitute our working party. They work very hard every week in pursuit of their particular responsibility. Once the ravages inflicted by winter have been eliminated and grass and flowers are growing, we will once again enjoy a beautiful churchyard. However, all this hard work is interrupted by small celebrations to mark mid-summer, Christmas and a few other occasions, so if you like the sound of it, why don't you come and join us.

John Eaton 01.04.18