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Background

The Friends of St. Matthew's Churchyard, Lightcliffe (FOSMC) was set up in 2012 with the following aims:

- a) The sympathetic restoration, conservation and maintenance, for the public benefit, of St. Matthew's Churchyard, Lightcliffe.
- b) To ensure the churchyard is cared for in a way which makes it:
 - A place in keeping with the function of burials, with an atmosphere of respect and commemoration for the departed;
 - A pleasant, attractive place for all visitors;
 - A haven for wildlife;
 - A place that values and protects the local heritage.

The churchyard is owned by St. Matthew's Church, Lightcliffe which is located further up Wakefield Road. The tower, all that remains of the Old Church of St. Matthew, built in 1774, was saved by The Friends of Friendless Churches in 1974 when the rest of the church was demolished.

The FOSMC is a volunteer-run, community organisation. Membership is open to any individual or group who supports the aims. At the end of 2014 we had 36 members.

A voluntary committee is responsible for the running and management of the FOSMC. The following members were elected or appointed to the Committee during 2014:

- Chair – Angela Monaghan
- Treasurer – Ian Philp
- Green Team Co-ordinator – Alan Greenwood
- General Committee Members – John Brooke, Mike Wood, Stuart Crowther
- Ex Officio Member – Revd. Kathryn Buck

Photo shows a pupil from Cliffe Hill primary school building a bird box at the churchyard, helped by the Vicar of St. Matthew's, Revd. Kathryn Buck





The Friends of St. Matthew's Churchyard

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Management Plan 2013-18

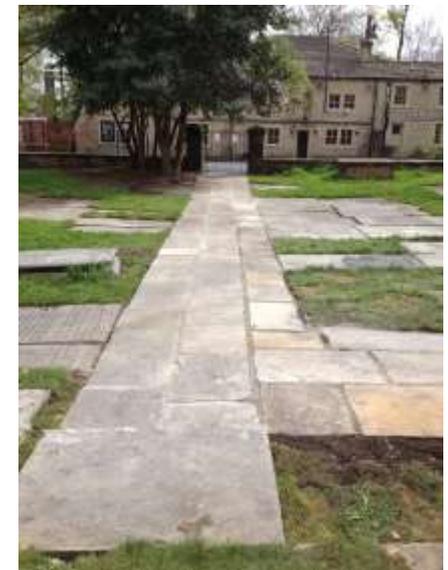
In 2013, we developed a 5-year management plan that set out what we planned to do over the next few years to achieve our aims. We were successful in achieving most of our aims in 2014. Here's some of what we did:

The Green Team

We held monthly work parties from 2.00-4.00pm on the third Sunday of each month from January to November throughout 2014; we miss out December. Unfortunately we had to cancel the work party in June since there were no supervising committee members available.

In March we invited local schoolchildren to come and make some bird boxes and an enthusiastic group came from Cliffe Hill Community School. Everyone had a good and productive time and there are now several bird boxes on trees around the site. Chris Sutcliffe of the Calderdale Countryside Service supervised the event. It would not have been possible to do this, and other events, without his help and our thanks go to him for his support throughout the year.

In the old burial ground [Section 1] we have taken turf off and cleaned up the stones leading past the tower. A team from Community Payback (run by the Probation Service) re-laid and repaired the path and also repainted both gates. It is now possible to walk in through the gate on Wakefield Road and into the rest of the area.



Entrance path after being re-laid and repaired



Plan of the churchyard



The Friends of St. Matthew's Churchyard

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In the new burial area [Section 3] we have done some tidying around some of the more recent graves. However, this year, most of our activity has been concentrated on the middle section [Section 2] with graves from the mid 1850s to the early 20th century. Many monuments have been revealed for the first time in many years.

We have had three sessions with tree surgeons, removing a lot of smaller trees and raising the surrounds of others. This has greatly improved the lines of sight in this area for people walking in the churchyard. Our work parties have added to this by further cutting back, particularly of holly.

We have improved the paths that cross the section. We have raised their level, thus improving drainage and reducing mud with a combination of turf, removed from gravestones in the oldest part of the churchyard, and wood chippings. The purchase of a strimmer has meant we have widened and tidied the paths as well as further reducing vegetation overrunning the grave monuments. Apart from one small bonfire, we have collected all the tree trimmings in habitat piles; these have been amalgamated in work parties to further improve the openness of the site at the same as improving the site for wildlife.



Compost container made from old pallets

We have built a compost container to maintain a tidy feel to the area. We have also built a 'bug hotel', complete with basement for visiting hedgehogs, in a discreet area without known graves.

We have spent some time with work parties tidying around graves, and are currently experimenting with spreading wood chippings to suppress weeds. We await the prospect of long dormant wild flower seeds germinating in the new lighter and open conditions. We are conscious of the amount of growth that has occurred, despite our efforts during the summer months. Of particular concern is Rose Bay Willowherb (RBW). RBW is a valuable food source for many insects and hence encourages small mammals and bird life. We feel it is not appropriate to attempt to remove it completely. During the summer it was striking that we had many species of bees and butterflies present on the site. Nevertheless, it needs to be controlled, particularly where it



Green team volunteers at work



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affects access to gravestones. We have established a trial area to test different methods of control. The FOSMC are incorporating further plans to manage this in the forthcoming year in keeping with our overall aim of balancing access to the graves with maintaining a wild-life friendly habitat.

The work parties have attracted a variable number of helpers but there is loyal core who attend regularly; our thanks go to everyone who has helped. It has made a real difference to realizing our vision of what the churchyard can be.

We are also grateful to Calderdale Council, especially the Cemeteries and the Cleaner, Greener teams, for their support throughout the year. This has included carrying out urgent repair work to the wall along Till Carr Lane, returning the stones to the top of the gateposts, cutting the grass in section 1, removing rubbish after work parties and righting some of the fallen headstones.

Events

In addition to our monthly work parties, we ran, or contributed to, a number of events to raise awareness of our work, bring people into the churchyard and raise funds. These included:

- An Evening in the Graveyard - led by Chris Sutcliffe from the Calderdale Countryside Service
- Open Churchyard – an activity and information day run as part of Cherishing Churchyards Week
- Outdoor service - to commemorate those who died in WW1
- ‘God’s Acre in Lightcliffe’ – a talk to the Lightcliffe & District Local History Society
- ‘Some Enchanted Evening’ – a fundraising concert produced by John Brooke

We will continue to run a similar programme of events in 2015.



Poster for Some Enchanted Evening



Alan Greenwood in our information tent for Open Churchyard, June 2014



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Burial Records

Insert Ian's piece here

Communications

Members were kept informed of progress and events through two printed newsletters and a number of email updates throughout the year. We have also used posters, articles in the local media, various websites and Facebook (www.facebook.com/lightcliffchurchyard) and Twitter (@FOSMChurchyard) to keep both members and the wider community aware of what we are doing.

Fundraising

It cost just over £1,600 to carry out our work in 2014. We raised this from a number of sources including:

- a grant of £1,000 from Calderdale Council
- donations from groups and individuals
- proceeds from our concert

Our sincere thanks go to everyone who has contributed



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Looking Ahead

- The 5-year management plan sets out a number of objectives for the churchyard, with the aim being to balance the needs of the families and ancestors of those buried there, the local community, wildlife and local heritage.
- Working parties will continue to take place on the third Sunday of every month.
- There will be a programme of events run during 2015, including a bat watch, Open Churchyard and another fundraising concert in the autumn.

Thanks

We would like to extend warm thanks to all the following for their help during 2014:

- All our volunteers and Committee members for their generous support and hard work.
- St. Matthew's Church and PCC.
- Calderdale Council – especially Chris Sutcliffe, Philip Singh and the Countryside Volunteers, Pam Smithies, Dave Clay, and Philip Schofield for all their advice, support and practical help.
- All the singers and musicians who took part in 'Some Enchanted Evening'.
- Carol Crowther for her research and work on the burial records.
- Chris Green for looking after the north section.
- The Sun Inn for providing refreshments during working parties.
- All the other individuals and organisations who have offered their support, help and expertise.



The musicians and singers from 'Some Enchanted Evening'

Further Information

You can contact us by:

- Telephone: 07941 286821
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- Twitter - @FOSMChurchyard