



THE FRIENDS OF ST MATTHEW'S CHURCHYARD ANNUAL REPORT 2016

Introduction

We are just coming to the end of our 2-year Heritage Lottery project and, looking back over the last 12 months, we have certainly made good use of the extra money. Many of the highlights are summarised in this report. Informal feedback from the Lottery Fund has indicated that we are seen as a model of good practice, which is very encouraging.

One of the pleasing aspects of the year has been to see an increasing interest by our local community whether as casual walkers, those searching for family graves and support for our annual concert. It is slightly disappointing that we have not been able to involve many young people, but I think that is down largely to curriculum pressures in schools. Nonetheless, a good year with a lot of progress to show for all of the hard work.

I am very grateful for the support from members of the Friends' Committee and our volunteers. In particular I'd like to thank Angela Monaghan for her vision and driving enthusiasm that got the group together and motivated everyone over the past 4 years. Angela is having to take a back seat now because of the demands of her job.

***Ian Philp,
Chair of The FOSMC***

Background

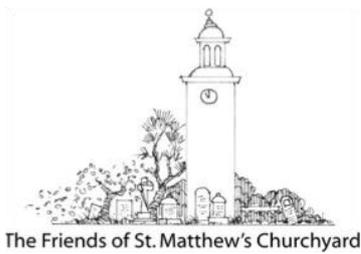
The Friends of St. Matthew's Churchyard, Lightcliffe (FOSMC) was set up in 2012:

- a) For the sympathetic restoration, conservation and maintenance, for the public benefit, of St. Matthew's Churchyard, Lightcliffe; and
- 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; and
 - a place that values and protects the local heritage.

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

The FOSMC is a volunteer-run, community organisation. Membership is open to any individual or group who supports the aims of the group. At the end of 2016 we had 50 members. A voluntary committee is responsible for the running of the FOSMC. The following members were elected or appointed to the Committee at the 2016 AGM:





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- Chair – Ian Philp
- Vice-Chair and Green Team Coordinator – Alan Greenwood
- Secretary and Publicity – Angela Monaghan
- Treasurer – Stuart Crowther
- General Committee Members – John Brooke, Mike Wood, Dorothy Barker, Susan Wood, David Buck
- Ex Officio Member – Revd. Kathryn Buck

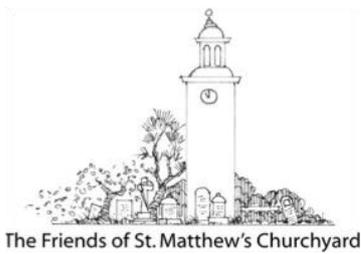


Progress During 2016

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 have made great progress with delivering the management plan this year, completing many projects ahead of schedule. Here's just some of what has been achieved this year:

- New footpaths have been installed to give better access for all.
- Saplings have been removed where they were damaging headstones and overhanging trees have had their crowns raised. A small number of diseased and dangerous trees have been removed.
- 4 grass cutting machines have been bought and the blower house at the church has been improved to allow better storage for the FOSMC and the church.
- Three wooden benches, made for us in a local workshop by people with learning disabilities, have been installed.
- All the WW1 memorials have been professionally restored, along with a few others of particular historical interest.
- 25 headstones that had been laid down have been flipped over so the inscriptions can be read. All known graves have been cleared and memorials photographed and the family information recorded.
- Six QR codes on posts have been installed, offering information and a walking tour for visitors. In addition, we have designed and ordered three interpretation boards, which will be installed in 2017 to help visitors make the most of the churchyard. These will provide information on the history, interesting memorials and the wildlife of the churchyard.
- A new noticeboard has been installed near the Wakefield Road entrance.
- Our website – www.lightcliffechurchyard.org.uk - has been developed substantially over this past year and now allows on-line research into burial records. A number of family history researches have been done and are on the website.
- We have used social media (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) to keep our members and





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others informed of progress and activities.

- One of our committee members, Dorothy Barker, has researched and written up the stories of the families of the soldiers who died in WW1. These have created considerable interest from relatives stretching across the world (see 'burial records' below).
- A number of post-graduate students from Bradford University Archaeological Department used part of the churchyard to practice their surveying skills. We now have the results and hope to use them to find a few missing graves later in the year.

The Tower

During 2016, we had a visit from Matthew Saunders, a Director of Friends of Friendless Churches, who gave us temporary access to the inside of the tower. When the tower was opened, a plaque was found confirming that Ann Walker of Cliffe Hill (1803 – 1854), who was the partner of Ann Lister of Shibden Hall, is buried under the old pulpit along with the Revd. Richard Sutcliffe, who was vicar when the old church was built. We've been able to take photographs of the memorials that are stored there and these will be included in an archive section of the website, together with a collection of photographs of the old church taken in 1960 and 1971.

Matthew has authorised the replacement of the architrave around the door and will be looking at replacing the door itself.



Wildlife and Conservation – the Green Team Report

The churchyard has never been treated with pesticides or herbicides, unlike most of the surrounding fields. This makes it very special, and one of the reasons it is a haven for wildlife. We are pleased to report that the predominant theme of 2016 has been consolidation of our previous efforts.

In early May, Mark Dempsey from Calderdale Council Parks department delivered some wildflower and grass seed as part of a wider Calderdale scheme. We planted these in various parts of the churchyard with mixed results, although we did have some more flowers for everyone to look at for a couple of months.

In late May we had our Bat Evening with Chris Sutcliffe of Calderdale Council Countryside and Forestry department. There was a good turnout, on an unseasonably cold evening, by folk from adjacent areas as well as locals. This is becoming a regular annual fixture, which is due to be repeated in 2017.

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As part of the aim of making the churchyard a place to reflect and learn, one of the three interpretation boards to be installed will cover the theme of 'Wildlife & Conservation'.



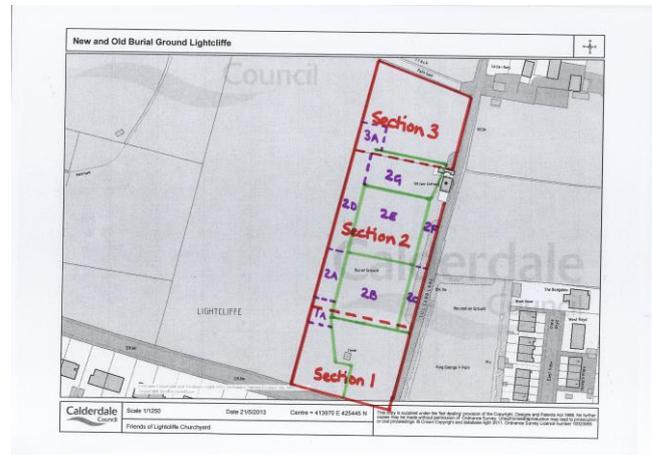
The roped-off areas, which were allowed to stay wild to encourage insects, butterflies and moths, have been reduced to two. We have observed how effective they are, both for their wildlife purpose and also in maintaining a clear demarcation from the areas where cutting takes place. We will continue to control, by physical measures, any dominant and unruly plants to maintain as much biodiversity as possible in the churchyard.

With the help of community volunteers, we have removed some habitat piles from the middle section to more discreet areas in the new part of the churchyard, which are unused for any other purpose.

The last significant overgrown area has been cut down and kept under control. This is Section 2G on our map, at the northern end of the middle section of the Churchyard adjacent to Till Carr Cottage. On a foul day last winter four Amey employees, whose services had been made available to us, cheerfully cleared the area in question.

We continue to have our monthly work parties from 2-4pm on the third Sunday of each month, with the exception of December. There is usually a good turnout, apparently undaunted by the weather, and our volunteers undertake willingly whatever task is thrown at them.

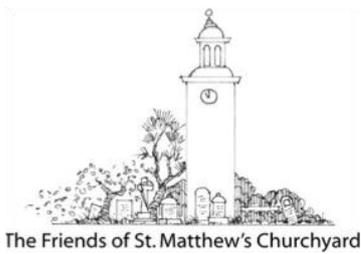
Once again we are grateful for all external help in achieving our aims and we would like to thank everyone who has contributed to improving the environment within the churchyard.



Burial Records

All the burial records are now available to search on our website and all visible memorials have been photographed.

The background stories of all the WW1 soldiers commemorated in the Churchyard have been researched and written up and placed on the website. These PDF files are in the section "About the Churchyard" where, on scrolling down, they can be found in a list of "People of Interest". Posters were created for those soldiers who fell in the Battle of the Somme and these were displayed on the noticeboards. Three Crimean war soldiers have also been researched. One, Joseph Naylor, survived returning to Lightcliffe to become a



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local "celebrity" whose eventually passing away was described in detail on his memorial headstone, a rather splendid one complete with sword.

His story initiated contact from a relative who provided more details. Similarly, FOSMC has been contacted by several people – from as far afield as Australia and Canada as well as the UK - who have found the biographies of 'our' soldiers when searching online. Any additional information and, in some cases, photographs that these contacts have forwarded will be added to updated biographies in the future. Posters may also be created for those WW1 soldiers who fell in 2017.

Whilst researching the soldiers the background stories of other family members were discovered. When these family stories proved to be particularly interesting then they were also recorded and uploaded to the website. One such piece of research explained why a Lightcliffe born mill worker, Fred Booth, who ended up in the USA was commemorated on a headstone in the Churchyard.

Events

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

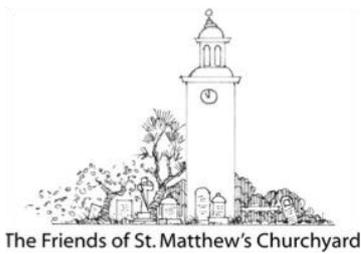
- **Batwatch** with Chris Sutcliffe from the Calderdale Countryside team;
- **Open Churchyard** – an activity and information day run as part of Cherishing Churchyards Week;
- **'Make Believe'** – a fundraising concert celebrating the musicals of Jerome Kern and George Gershwin; and
- a number of talks - to the local historical society, Ovenden Park men's group and Calderdale Heritage Walks.



Plans for 2017

In 2017 we aim to:

- continue to keep the churchyard tidy and free of litter, the pathways and graves accessible, the trees pruned (particularly the holly trees), and keep grass to a height of 4" whilst encouraging other plants;
- improve the footpaths further;
- plan a wildflower programme;
- organise follow-up surveys of mammals, birds, flora, lichens & fungi to note changes since the major work was started;
- establish the churchyard as an educational resource for young people;
- recruit more volunteers as Friends and for working parties;
- increase the archive material on the website to include photographs of the exterior & interior of the church, and the plaques inside the tower;



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- liaise with the Friends of Friendless Churches to get an oak door in place on the tower;
- hold a "re-dedication" event to mark the restoration of memorials and the end of the Heritage Lottery Fund project;
- Keep the website and social media up-to-date and respond to enquiries;
- continue to run events, talks and our annual fundraising concert.

Finance Report

In summary, our income for the year was £8,783, which, with a carry forward figure, totalled £14,352. The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) provided £5,880 of this, a Ward Forum grant from Calderdale Council was £500 and the Friends' concert grossed £2,058. Additional income of £200 came from the St. Matthew's Church and a further £145 from a number of individual donations.

Expenditure has totalled £9,649 so far but we have commitments already made to additional HLF projects. The large items of expenditure are indicated in the review of the 2016 progress. The balance at the end of the year showed a surplus of £4,694.

The detailed accounts will be presented at the AGM and these are in the process of being audited. Full accounts are available on request.

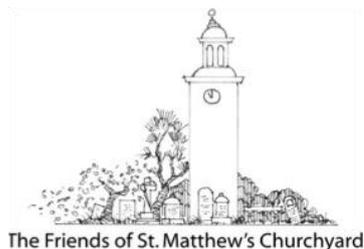
Thanks

We would like to extend warm thanks to all the following for their help during 2015:

- All our volunteers and Committee members for their generous support and hard work.
- St. Matthew's Church and PCC.
- Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Calderdale Council – especially Chris Sutcliffe, Dave Clay and the cemeteries team, and Philip Schofield and the Safer Cleaner Greenerf team or all their advice, support and practical help.
- Musical Director Rob Paxman, soloists Aidan & Juliet and all the singers and musicians who took part in our sell-out concert, 'Make Believe'.
- Chris Green for looking after the north section of the churchyard.
- Amey for their volunteer team.
- All the other individuals and organisations who have made donations and offered their support, help and expertise.

We would also like to remember and give thanks for Councillor Graham Hall, whose untimely death was announced as this report was being written. Graham had been an enthusiastic supporter of The Friends of St. Matthew's Churchyard from its inception and will be much missed.





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EVENTS IN 2017

Volunteer work parties take place in the churchyard from 2.00-4.00pm on the 3rd Sunday of every month, except December. All welcome.

Date and Time	Event	Location
Sunday 19 February 2.00-4.00pm	Work Party	Churchyard
Sunday 19 March 2.00-4.00pm	Work Party	Churchyard
Sunday 16 April 2.00-4.00pm	Work Party	Churchyard
Sunday 21 May 2.00-4.00pm	Work Party	Churchyard
May – tbc 9.00pm	Batwatch led by Calderdale Countryside Officer, Chris Sutcliffe	Churchyard
Saturday 3-Sunday 11 June	Cherishing Churchyards Week: organised by 'Caring for God's Acre'	
Sunday 18 June 2.00-4.00pm	Work Party	Churchyard
Sunday 9 July 2.00pm	Lightcliffe Gala	Lightcliffe Cricket Club
Sunday 16 July 2.00-4.00pm	Work Party	Churchyard
Sunday 20 August 2.00-4.00pm	Work Party	Churchyard
Sunday 17 September 2.00-4.00pm	Work Party	Churchyard
Sunday 15 October 2.00-4.00pm	Work Party	Churchyard
October – Sat date TBC	Autumn Concert	St. Matthew's Church
Sunday 19 November 2.00-4.00pm	Work Party	Churchyard

FURTHER INFORMATION

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