

Report Given at Farmborough Parish Council on the Church Graveyard During 2024

Firstly, the Parochial Church Council would like to thank the Parish Council for supporting the upkeep of the churchyard by awarding the 137 Grant of £800, the increase of £100 being most appreciated.

2024 was an encouraging year for the churchyard at All Saints. It didn't get off to a good start as our regular contractor who mows and strims the grass had been off sick and there were complaints about the untidy state of the upper level.

Subsequently our army of volunteers increased in number and organised by Dr. Chris Lovell rose nobly to the challenge. There have been regular sessions of mowing, strimming and general tidying. Additionally, individual volunteers worked on some "unloved" graves, removing weeds and restoring the surfaces with gravel. Several volunteers popped into mow, trim or attack weeds at other times. Marshall Stevens continued to tend to the lavender beds around the memorial garden and stocked the planters donated in memory of Michael and Monica Horseman. Maurice Willis' family restored and donated his garden bench to the churchyard.

Three miniature fruit trees were planted at the southeast corner; the rather damp summer had been ideal to help them get established. We are grateful to Farmborough Tyres for a new tyre for a donated wheelbarrow.

Churchyards are important habitats for wildlife. We have some resident frogs and slow worms. A couple of badger setts appeared earlier in the year but, perhaps fortunately, they seem to have moved on. The annual butterfly count in June revealed good numbers of some slightly more unusual species, such as the Meadow Brown. For the first time, a pyramidal orchid in flower was identified in the area just below the sloping bank and we hope to maintain this area of the churchyard as a managed wildflower meadow in future years. Another unusual native plant, spotted near the gate, is the ivy broomrape, which parasitises ivy.

The Councils' grant has enabled the purchase of a cordless string trimmer and petrol mower (we had previously used one kindly lent to us). Future expenditure includes some work on the yew trees by the gate and more repointing of walls.

The council's financial support has enabled us to make our churchyard something to be proud of. Very many thanks to all who support our efforts financially or physically, and in many cases both!