



FRIENDS OF WOODBURY  
PARK CEMETERY

# FRIENDS OF WOODBURY PARK CEMETERY



## The Gardening Team's Report for 2017, our ninth year

The year began with our discussing plans for Chapel Meadow which is a dark and overgrown area at the foot of the rock on which the former mortuary chapel stands. It is a most unwelcoming corner favoured by sleeping vagrants.

First we must remove some sizeable cherry laurel trees, for which we have permission, then we have a long term plan to plant a hedge of alder buckthorn, a plant not widely found but extremely important for the Brimstone butterfly which lays its eggs upon it, thus it becomes the food plant of the larvae.

The next plan is to build a bug hotel and accompanying log pile making it a community project. We must also construct the dead hedge we planned last year. A dead hedge is a useful way of stacking fallen wood and at the same time making shelter for small creatures. Lastly, in this little meadow there is a large outcrop of Tunbridge Wells sandstone covered in bramble which grows down from the top. We plan to reduce the length of this bramble by half so exposing an area of rock to the sun and creating a warm, sunny place for insects and reptiles.



Plans laid, the first job was to construct a twiggy boundary around Michael's Spring Meadow in an attempt to keep the dogs from chasing over the delicate flowers which give so much pleasure to so many people. Similarly we put twig defences around an area of primroses, cyclamen, dog violets and lily of the valley which is to be found towards the lowest corner of the cemetery.

In March we planted out 60 primroses, and 60 cowslips supplied by TWBC plus 600 snowdrops in the green, and approximately 50 winter aconite seedlings given to us by a kind Friend. We were very saddened to notice that the winter aconites on a tomb near the gate which have steadily flourished over the years, have this week disappeared, just as they were coming into flower. We trust they are being looked after kindly.

On March 15th we spotted the first butterflies, a Red Admiral and a Brimstone. A mouse too was seen peeping out of the log pile in Chapel Meadow. A rewarding sight.

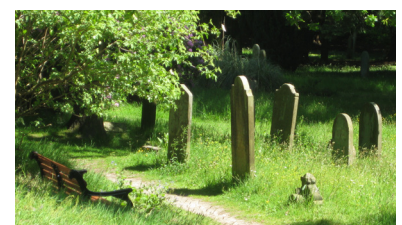
This year we have had a good display of fritillaries in Michael's Meadow where they seem to be happily established, as do the Wood Anemones under the two hedges. We must plant lots more!

English bluebells beside the wet meadow are increasing well since the sycamore tree which cast so much shadow came down in the gale at the end of 2015. Cowslips on the Wildflower Bank are quite spectacular; they enjoy the site and have seeded well.

On Saturday 22nd of March six adults and nine children had a great time building a handsome seven storey bug hotel. On the same day Gillian Anderson and Mike Taylor labelled all the most important trees prior to the publication of their Tree Walk booklet.



At the beginning of May a fine new seat arrived and was placed facing the Wet Meadow in which Ragged Robin, Flag Iris, Buttercups and Marsh Marigolds were producing their best show yet. On Millionaires' Row the thyme tomb (Powell) and the lavender tomb (Cattley) were very colourful and much photographed and with increasing numbers of foxgloves there was an abundance of flowers for the bees to enjoy.



On Saturday May 9th we held our Annual Plant Sale on St. John's Church green. This is the culmination of several months' work by the gardening team and other volunteers. This year we raised just under £1000 from the combined sales of plants and garden bric a brac. We also hired out tables to people wishing to promote their activities, be it photography, honey production, wild life painting and even the care of bats.



Due to overhanging vegetation the Grosvenor Hedge cannot be extended as far south as we would like in order to hide the unsightly car park beyond, so we invested in some rolls of brushwood screening and some good stakes and finally managed to get it in place. The result was not perfect but certainly an improvement. However not for long as someone took a fancy to the stakes and our efforts came to nought. At the same time they decided to help themselves to the stakes supporting the newly built dead hedge in Chapel Meadow. They were simply snapped off.

One Saturday in July we spent the afternoon in Chapel Meadow clearing away a load of saturated bedding, scores of beer cans and even sodden old library books. A really unpleasant task.

In August we noticed that we had a sudden eruption of plantain plants on Wildflower Bank. These are not attractive plants and do not appear to be of great value to wildlife so we began to dig them out. But why had they suddenly appeared in such numbers? A naturalist friend explained that because we had sown Yellow Rattle seed to weaken the coarse grass and thus reduce the competition facing the wild flowers, we had also reduced the competition facing the plantains. Yellow Rattle is widely recommended where wildflowers are to be encouraged - so be warned!

In September local naturalist, Dr Ian Beavis, visited. He noticed and pointed out to us 100s of bees flying low over Wildflower Bank and disappearing into patches of bare earth, patches conveniently left by us when we dug out all those plantains! They were Ivy Bees and on the wall behind was a huge overhanging growth of ivy covered in flowers for the bees to harvest the pollen. Interestingly ivy bees only arrived in southern England in 2001.

On the 15th September a group of seven volunteers from Kent High Weald arrived to insert a strip of plastic along the side of one of the curving paths bordering the wet meadow. All the paths in WPC quickly lose their definition particularly when they become wet and muddy and people step to one side and often onto graves, but it is extremely important that we maintain the original lines as WPC was granted listed status by English Heritage on account of its unique design and elegantly curving paths. We are most grateful to Kent High Weald for their help.



In October we planted 1000 wild daffodil bulbs in Spring Bulb Meadow, also 200 fritillary bulbs.

On Thursday 26th October we all went to Canterbury to collect our award from Kent Wildlife - a gold one, to add to our silver gilt award from Britain in Bloom.



So the 2017 came to a close during which we had notched up a total of 549 hours of work, this being one of the details which we record in our log book. Much of that time however was spent working on mundane tasks which are ever present; digging out brambles and docks, weeding, pruning, strimming, raking and mulching, etcetera. Nevertheless it is always interesting and challenging, and we enjoy the tea and biscuits afterwards!



If you know of anyone who would like to join the working party please contact Angela Swain on 01892 541881.