



Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery

The Gardening Team's Report for 2019, their eleventh year



This was another busy year for the volunteers who once again notched up over 400 hours' work, and subsequently consumed innumerable cups of tea and far too many biscuits.

Our first task was to make a stick fencing around Michael's Meadow to deter people and dogs from crossing this area, thus damaging the spring bulbs. It seemed to do the trick as we had a good display of snowdrops and wild daffodils, although the fritillaries were less successful this year. Perhaps the previous hot summer did not suit them.

At the entrance to Chapel Meadow there was a cherry laurel, which is a very large shrub with far-reaching limbs. As it was isolating Chapel Meadow from the rest of the cemetery, so making it a rarely visited and secret area where we have had rough sleepers, we had a chat with Kasia, our invaluable friend from the Parks Department, who agreed it would be an improvement to remove the laurel. We now have some long term plans for this area, not least of which is to build a tool shed, much to the relief of the gardening team.

Chapel Meadow is the area in which we planted last year a short hedge of alder buckthorn, the food plant of the yellow brimstone butterfly. The young plants are still small and the leaves very sparse, but to our amazement and great joy on the 22nd April this year, a female was spotted laying eggs on these leaves. She repeatedly laid eggs then flew up into the sunshine and the overhanging foliage for about 5 minutes before returning to lay a few more. This she repeated several times. What a rewarding sight!



This year we really feel we are making progress regarding the wild flowers, as from June on there has been a wide and colourful variety of species. In fact, many more than were in that seed selection packet which we sowed in the autumn of 2011. So we must be doing something right!



Oregano



Lavender and Welsh Poppy



Fox and Cubs and Bird's Foot Trefoil

It was a good year for butterflies; a large plant of ragwort were seen hosting many gatekeepers, common blues on birds' foot trefoil, small skippers enjoyed the oregano, speckled woods spiralled away in dappled shade, meadow browns were numerous on the grassy bank, and lastly, many large whites searching for non-existent cabbages, for whom next year we must provide some nasturtiums.



Common Blue



Speckled Wood



Gatekeeper

Mowing did not begin until late August, by which time the grass was very long, giving the Cemetery an abandoned look. However, this was far from the case as in no way had it been abandoned, instead the grass had been left uncut to allow insects to complete their life cycles. Perhaps we should put up a notice explaining this next year.

Then, early September we had the excitement of the emergence of the ivy mining bees from their burrows 30cms below the surface of Cowslip Meadow where the females had laid their eggs in September last year. The males are the first to emerge and the sheer number of them quartering the ground just 2 or 3 inches above the grass in readiness for the females to emerge is quite a sight. The reason the ivy mining bees choose this site is both the suitability of the soil for reexcavating their burrows and the presence nearby of a very large flowering ivy plant on which to feed, and gather pollen and nectar to be stored in their burrows for the young larva to feed upon.



We came across a curious seedling in September; it was growing from an extremely small crack in the stone wall of a tomb. We were indeed puzzled, before realising that it was a Japanese anemone - a perfect rockery-sized specimen of a garden plant normally growing up to three feet tall.

Also in September one of our team was lucky enough to watch pair of jays enjoying, and squabbling over, the colourful berries of the wild arum plant commonly known as "lords and ladies". Sadly there was no camera to hand.



Jay looking for berries



Lords and Ladies

When next you visit the Cemetery you will be surprised to see near the entrance the appearance of four or five tombstones which, for many years have been almost completely hidden by the foliage of two cypress trees. It looks rather bare now but we hope to get some grass growing before long.



An aspect of our cherished wildlife within the habitat we provide is the propensity of some Species to dig. It was a three-year battle to wrest full control of the crag back from the pioneering badgers who moved in.

Although they have now decamped elsewhere, and the holes on the top of the crag have been topped up, we are still coping with an aftermath of loose sand trickling from the widened fissures. Happily the white lilac, planted by St. Barnabas School beside the chapel when they reinterred an arm bone for us a couple of years ago, is thriving.

But in the past couple of months a new excavator has arrived - Reynard we think rather than Brock. A lot of digging has taken place under a couple of graves just along from the Williocombe tomb, with some undermining of the adjoining path. Together with ever helpful Kasia, battle has commenced, in an ecological way of course.

Finally, we are proud to have been awarded not one but two Silver Gilt Certificates this year; one from Tunbridge Wells in Bloom, and the other Kent Wildlife "Wild about Gardens". And we must not forget our prestigious Green Flag Award from English Heritage.

If there is anyone out there who would like to give the working party a hand, not necessarily on a regular basis, we would be so so grateful. You do not have to be a gardener as such, just someone who appreciates our precious space, and would like to help care for it. If so, please leave a contact telephone number with Angela Swain, on 01892 541881.

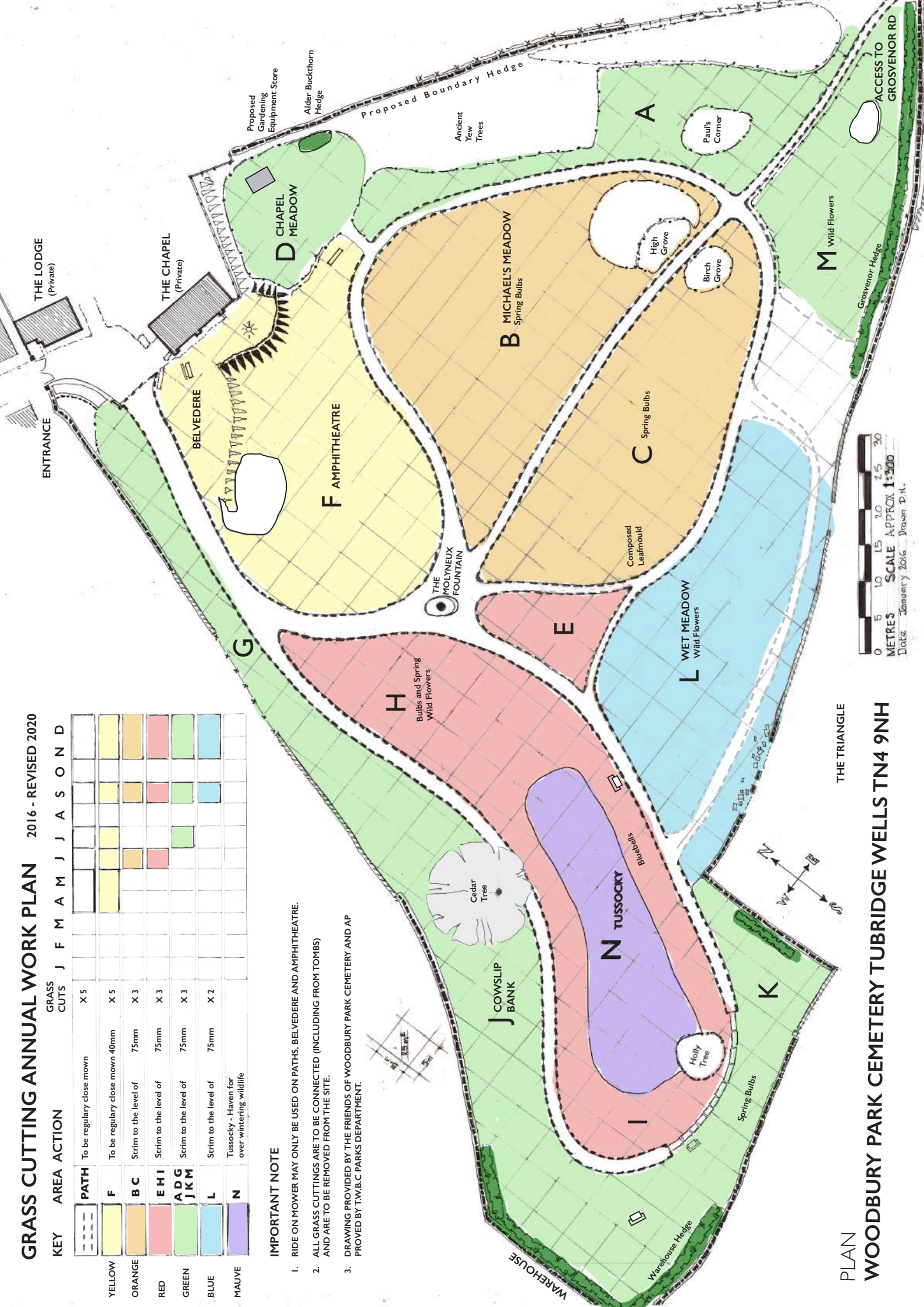
The plan overleaf shows the layout of the cemetery and the location of various areas mentioned in the above text.

GRASS CUTTING ANNUAL WORK PLAN 2016 - REVISED 2020

KEY	AREA	ACTION	GRASS CUTS	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
---	PATH	To be regularly close mown	X 5												
YELLOW	F	To be regularly close mown 40mm	X 5												
ORANGE	B C	Strim to the level of 75mm	X 3												
RED	E H I	Strim to the level of 75mm	X 3												
GREEN	A D G J K M	Strim to the level of 75mm	X 3												
BLUE	L	Strim to the level of 75mm	X 2												
MAUVE	N	Tussocky - Haven for over-wintering wildlife													

IMPORTANT NOTE

1. RIDE ON MOWER MAY ONLY BE USED ON PATHS, BELVEDERE AND AMPHITHEATRE.
2. ALL GRASS CUTTINGS ARE TO BE CONNECTED (INCLUDING FROM TOMBS) AND ARE TO BE REMOVED FROM THE SITE.
3. DRAWING PROVIDED BY THE FRIENDS OF WOODBURY PARK CEMETERY AND APPROVED BY TWB.C PARKS DEPARTMENT.



PLAN
 WOODBURY PARK CEMETERY TUBRIDGE WELLS TN4 9NH
 THE TRIANGLE
 Data January 2016 Drawn P.H.
 SCALE APPROX 1:500
 METRES 0 5 10 15 20 25 30