

## Friends of Teignmouth Cemetery 2023/2024

Our FOTC volunteers Tuesday work sessions - have continued with mainly maintenance work!

- \*continuous grass mowing of pathways and grassy areas below the driveway plus between the laurel hedge and driveway
- \* grass strimming around planted graves plus various areas near cemetery buildings
- \* keeping driveway tidy -removing fallen branches, twigs and leaves
- \*weeding planted graves and flower beds plus the annual lavender shrub pruning
- \*removing bramble growth from yew trees
- \*pruning back low branches from an oak plus trees along the lime tree avenue
- \*clearance of a few more graves above the driveway near chapel

Our FOTC volunteers Saturday work sessions -are mainly continuous grass mowing and strimming, care of our Commonwealth War Graves, picking up fallen branches and twigs plus heavyduty overgrown grave clearance work.

Following the 2023 FOTC AGM we tried something different ie we had a weekly evening work session in the cemetery for around 12 weeks -although we did extra work clearing ragwort & sow thistles, weeding along the driveway plus weeding the Exeter Rd pavement/cemetery wall boundary our hope to recruit more volunteers was not alas successful -we have not therefore repeated the evening extra work sessions in 2024.

\*Due to Brian's illness we have taken over the care of 49 CWG since early 2024-all graves have been strimmed on and around, gravelled graves weeded and access paths strimmed or mown around 6 times so far this year -we always knew how hard Brian worked to keep our CWG in good order and now we realise what a huge commitment this can be for us. In 2024 we had another visit from Andy Tysoe from

CWGC who introduced us to 2 CWG volunteers. Chris and Duncan who over several work sessions have now scrubbed clean all our CWG headstones-they plan to return in 2025 for more CWG stonework cleaning.

We continue to provide help for relatives with locating family graves ie either people visiting the cemetery or those who message us via our websites or Find a Grave Teignmouth.

TDC continue to pay for our 4 green wheelie bins. In 2023 TDC ie Idverde contactors did not cut any of our grass pathways however so far in 2024 they have cut the main pathways 1.5 times. Idverde contactors also pruned back the laurel hedge in February but they did not return to clear up the prunings -eventually this extra clearance work was done by our FOTC volunteers!

In 2023 the meadow cut contactors strimmed most of the sections twice. Disappointingly in 2024 the meadow cut strimming only began on July 20<sup>th</sup> however work progress was slow and the sections above the laurel hedge and the last area of long grass above the driveway were only recently completed ie by Oct 14<sup>th</sup> - we do not know whether or not there will be a second full meadow cut this year?

When Mark Payne TDC Green Spaces Lead returned after several months off work he arranged for around 20 of our full dumpy bags to be taken away for the green waste to be recycled off site, he also brought us another large bag of grass seed which is very much needed for re seeding our newly cleared graves

The damaged lodge archway remains blocked off by TDC with alas no signs of repair work starting soon. However TDC contactors in 2024 did replace a large missing stone in the driveway wall and painted over the awful graffiti on the Chapel wall.

Before the summer holidays in 2024 70 year 5 & 6 children from Teignmouth Primary School visited the cemetery as part of their local history studies about Teignmouth during WW2. The children brought along 70 beautiful decorated, homemade clay poppies which they placed on our 49 CWG plus a few on graves of those killed as a result of enemy air attacks on our town in WW2. Two of the school children were able to place their poppies on relatives CWG. Staff and children from Hazeldown school also visited some of our CWG this year.

Neil and I have led several cemetery tours again with groups from Teignmouth Walk This Way, Teignmouth U3A Local History Group and Dawlish U3A Strollers.

Earlier in 2024 FOTC took part in the local community groups two week publicity event at the TAAG centre in town.

Neil has also given talks about FOTC and Teignmouth Cemetery to some local groups

During the summer Jacqui arranged our 2<sup>nd</sup> Big Help Out Event in the cemetery - despite lots of posters on the cemetery gates plus publicity on various local facebook sites we didn't manage to recruit more volunteers for our regular work sessions. Nevertheless on the day it was good to have help from Mo the Morrisons Community lady again plus Kate and her husband -also lovely to again have Selena come along to help us.

We have had several new volunteers join our FOTC work sessions since the last AGM -Sue Carter, Bill Gardner plus Marcus, Pandora and Izzie -not all have stayed with us as volunteers!

We are very grateful for help from Justin who continues to take away our full dumpy bags of green waste for recycling off site.

In 2024 Dan Comer a local councillor was able to come along to one of our work sessions when he helped us with grass strimming - also Penny Lloyd another local councillor came along recently and helped us with clearing up tree prunings.

One of the big main areas of work which took 12 months was the heavy duty clearance of section HH by Mal, Geoff and Jacqui with some assistance from Paul and Di. This section was massively overgrown with uneven ground plus lots of rooted brambles and ivy and anthills to remove. The 3 Monterey pines were massively overgrown and covering numerous hidden graves - removing the dead wood from the tree trunks and other areas plus pruning several overhanging branches took a considerable amount of time and effort!

Section II clearance work has very recently been started- again self sown tree saplings plus masses of brambles, ivy, anthills etc will be removed whilst the overgrown and long neglected graves are cleared - after this section is completed there's just section JJ left to clear above the laurel hedge.

NB Our cleared sections are always in need of maintenance work - as well as grass mowing and strimming the bramble and ivy regrowth plus pernicious weeds need to be removed regularly.

In 2023 and 2024 our volunteers have continued to work hard "managing our excessive weeds" by removing masses of rooted sow thistles and ragwort -obviously it's an ongoing annual task we always need to keep up with ...

One of our main cemetery tasks is of course the continual grass mowing throughout the year -the majority of this work has been done twice a week by Wendy who really must have walked miles pushing and pulling the mowers, keeping the main paths neat and tidy as well as cutting lots of narrow paths between rows of graves in the sections -Ian ,John, Rachel and Geoff have also helped with grass

mowing plus Ian with some assistance from Geoff has also kept the sections tidy with regular petrol strimming.

We've also kept John very busy with his time spent repairing the 2 mowers- so good to have his machinery expertise and commitment when dealing with our mower repairs.

Thanks to Jacqui for regularly adding her lovely cemetery photos to our facebook site plus for planting the pretty flowers in the 2 wooden planters at the side of the chapel.

Thanks to Mal for her dedication to the annual pruning back of lavenders on the planted graves and for her determination to clear the dead wood from the 3 section HH trees

Kay we thank you for your continued treasurer role commitment which includes prompt repayment to volunteers for expenditure for petrol and machinery spare parts.

Great to have Paul back helping us again and thanks also to him for his regular FOTC Twitter posts

Also good to have Neil back now working at our Tuesday morning work sessions.

Ian has been very busy adding photos and burial plot info ref all the graves in the sections above the laurel hedge to the Find a Grave Teignmouth website

Neil had added 4 more lots of fascinating cemetery burial research plus plot records for Sections SS and VV and surname A & B burial records to our Teignmouth Cemetery Wordpress site

Special thanks to ALL our FOTC volunteers for their continued hard work and commitment to our very worthwhile project.

