

Project & Amenities Committee 29th March 2022 Report of Cemetery Gardener/Dog Warden

Cemetery

Working in the cemetery in Springtime is always such a pleasure. The colours of the daffodils, primula and hyacinths give our visitors a real lift after the long winter months. The front border of the Garden of Remembrance is awash with colour from plants that have all at some time been rescued from the rubbish bins.

With the popularity and ease of now being able to trace relatives via the internet I meet many visitors keen to trace the whereabouts of headstones. I've spent time writing down every name in a book making it easier for me should I meet someone to be able to point them in the right direction. This is only useful of course if there's a headstone to see. I was recently approached by a lady on a trip from Folkestone tracing her great grandfather's brother. There was no headstone but with Jane's help we managed to find his resting place and we received a very grateful email from the lady for our perseverance. During conversations with this lady, I learnt that he was quite an active politician at the time whose daughter married a member of the visiting West Indies cricket team. Of Chinese origin this gentleman was linked to a bowling term 'a chinaman', (beyond me I'm afraid).

Due to the very wet conditions a lot of old graves have been sinking, much more than I've noticed over previous winters. I've used the spoils from the grave digs to top them up with the assistance of the grave diggers who are grateful not to have to take the soil and clay away.

Initially this has caused a couple of complaints from visiting relatives despite me making it look as neat and tidy as possible, but it's a very necessary part of our winter maintenance programme and ongoing.

In the Garden of Remembrance, I will be reseeding, with grass seed, the area under the Leylandii again within a couple of weeks, always an area of complaint, but I just keep persevering to make it look as good as nature allows

The weather recently was perfect for the first weed spraying, the warmth has most of the weeds just coming into bud before flowering and so I was able to commence with the annual spraying programme before the bees appear. I managed to get the whole cemetery done at once and certainly felt my age once I'd finished! We use a non glyosphate solution so as to preserve nature as much as possible, this is a more costly and time-consuming operation but more eco-friendly.

I'll continue next week spraying the playgrounds and carpark areas.

Over the years the Badgers have caused me a few nightmares but we do seem to have been spared any actual damage to graves bizarrely, until recently. They are picking on one particular grave for some reason and decimate it most nights. It's right in amongst other graves and no other grave is affected, goodness only knows why!

We lost just one tree during the storms, it was quite a young tree and fortunately away from anywhere that could affect headstones etc.

As I wander around the cemetery with my wheelbarrow seeing the young Squirrels scampering around and the beautiful pale gold Fox stopping to take in the spring sunshine, amidst all the pain around the world I never underestimate how lucky I am to have such a wonderful workplace.

Tina Cooper

Dog Warden

The Memorial Playing fields have been a nightmare this last few months with dog fouling. I've caught two owners not complying who both used the same excuse of 'just used the last bag' but they can't possibly be responsible for the rest of the mess.

Now the contractors are grass cutting it does usually historically seem to get better, plus more people are around which encourages owners to appear more responsible.

The Little Lane fouling problem seems to have gone away. I'd like to think the threat of being observed on CCTV was a deterrent but I'm more inclined to believe it's due to one of my prime suspects now not living in the village. Whatever the reason things are much better.

I'm experiencing more calls regarding nuisance dogs than ever. I'm finding it's mainly due to 'lockdown' dogs now being left alone for long periods and they're suffering from separation anxiety and barking all day. It's not really part of my job to do these visits but sometimes if someone is at the end of their tether with the noise the least, I can do is go and visit and hear their complaint. If there is a genuine welfare issue then I can refer it to the relevant agency or give advice if possible. I've often found a visit can get neighbours talking to each other instead of just picking the telephone up to complain. One such situation resulted in the complainant who was home all day now enjoying walking the very dog he was complaining about! If only all disputes could be handled this way.

Tina Cooper.