

## **CHURCHYARD MANAGEMENT GROUP 2017-18 (April 2018)**

CMG is a group of volunteers and reps from the PC and PCC, who aim to maintain the churchyard as a beautiful community space, whilst minimising the cost to the ratepayers of Coddendam. Key activities include grass cutting, weeding and the maintenance of some of the physical infrastructure of the churchyard.

The group also works closely with the Gardemau Church Charity in funding equipment and so on and liaises with contractors over the routine cutting of the verges around the churchyard and the major annual grass cut in late summer.

A few highlights of the last 12 months:

Sadly, after setting up, leading and supporting the group for many years, David and Brenda Hudson stood down from the CMG last summer. We'd all express our immense gratitude to them for all they've done over the years.

The new grass/path cutting regime is now established and seems to be achieving its aim of a good balance between neatness, accessibility and biodiversity, if the current show of wildflowers is anything to go by. Many will be aware that the churchyard is a County Wildlife Site and has one of the best displays of wildflowers in Suffolk. Great thanks to John Peacock and Neil Bailey, who do the vast majority of this work.

With funding from the Gardemau, the Group has purchased a wheeled brushcutter and a new mower for use in the churchyard and elsewhere.

A new noticeboard has been put up by the main gate.

Risk assessments have been carried out on the churchyard to ensure (eg) that gravestones and tombs are safe and stable.

The churchyard shed has been repaired and the roof replaced after storm damage (thanks to those not members of CMG who assisted in this).

Apart from the loss of David and Brenda, these are all positives. Unfortunately, there is one major negative: the ongoing abuse of the churchyard by a SMALL MINORITY of dog owners, who persistently allow their pets to foul the area. It's very unpleasant, when you're cutting the grass, to suddenly have dog poo flying everywhere. Not only unpleasant, but unhygienic, inconsiderate and ILLEGAL. Polite notices and dog bins (which are used by the vast majority of dog walkers) have not made any difference to these people. Remember also that local families have loved ones buried in the churchyard and should not have to put up with this. The time for gentle persuasion is over and, if any of those responsible are identified, their details WILL be passed to the local police with a request for prosecution.

However, to end on a positive: it's been overwhelmingly a good year for the CMG and the churchyard is looking lovely – so good that, on 13 June, the Aldeburgh Festival is organising a walk for up to 100 people which will include a visit to the churchyard and lunch at the village hall. Nice that the hard work is appreciated!

If anyone might be interested in joining the CMG, please contact me or any member of the group.

David McDonnell

April 2018