Notes of a meeting of the members of the Churchyard Committee
Monday 9th March 2026
at 2.30pm
at the Fire Station Meeting Room

Grass Cutting

- The closed area of the churchyard is strimmed rather than cut: the intention, which has been in place since before transfer of maintenance responsibilities to the Town Council, is that it should be a wild flower meadow. There should be at least an annual strim; and, ideally, the area should be strimmed twice, first in the early spring and then at the start of August, after the wild flowers have set seed.
- The Churchwarden worked with Caring for God's Acre (CFGA) last year to establish Yellow Rattle in the closed area of the churchyard, to weaken the growth of vigorous grass species and thereby improve biodiversity.
- Strimming used to be done by a local contractor but in recent years has been done by the same maintenance company as looks after the Town Cemetery. The Town Council has paid for this work. The work is believed to have been done as part of a formal extension to the existing contract with the maintenance company.
- The strimmed grass needs to be removed and this is believed to be part of the contract with the maintenance company. However, the Churchwarden believes that the cuttings were not removed last year.
- Soft paths through the grass in the closed area of the churchyard, and neatening of the edges by mowing around the laid paths in the closed area, is undertaken as part of the mowing of the open area of the churchyard. The Parochial Church Council pays for this work, with the Town Council contributing 3/7ths of the cost in recognition of the work done in the closed area.
- Given that maintenance of the closed area now falls to the Town Council, it was noted that any work in that area by voluntary groups, such as CFGA, should be notified in advance to members of the new Churchyard Committee. It may be appropriate for a councillor or council officer to be present.

Contractual Arrangements

- It was noted that the Committee needs sight of the contract with the maintenance company to understand whether (a) removal of strimmed grass is part of the contracted work and (b) whether the extension to the contract for strimming is permanent or was done on an *ad hoc* basis.

Other Work

- The Churchwarden explained that permission from the Diocese to undertake work in the churchyard is handled through a triage system. Some simple work can be done without prior authority and simply needs to be reported; intermediate level work only needs permission from the Archdeaconry and this is usually turned round quickly (although there is currently a vacancy which may be impacting timescales); and major work requires permission from the Diocese.

- It was noted that the holly hedge between the Old Vicarage and the closed area of the churchyard has been cut by the residents of the Old Vicarage in previous years but it is not clear whether this work may fall to the Committee at some point in the future.

Immediate Priorities

The following immediate priorities were noted for the coming season:

- Vegetation needs to be cleared from the handrail on the slope up to the western entrance to the closed area of the churchyard. This belongs to the adjacent property and the owner should be asked to action the matter.
- Although, according to the recent survey, the boundary walls are at no immediate risk of structural collapse, the vegetation growing on and through them needs to be controlled. This is largely ivy, although there are also patches of valerian and brambles. It was noted that killing the ivy could, in itself, cause structural problems and that it would be better to close-trim it. The valerian needs to be removed if possible; and the brambles need to be controlled.
- While the Lychgate is not in immediate danger, there are some small tasks that need to be attended to (replacement of slipped tiles; securing of the handrail) and the rotting of some timbers needs to be assessed. It was suggested that it might be appropriate for a formal survey of the Lychgate to be commissioned properly to assess the situation and work required.
- It was noted that the manhole cover under the bench by the western entrance to the closed area of the churchyard is loose. While this is not a high priority concern, this needs to be addressed soon as it could present a risk.
- The survey of monuments completed in 2025 had largely focused on restorative interventions. It was noted that, while such interventions may be admirable, the immediate responsibility of the Committee would be to ensure that any Health & Safety concerns were addressed. It was agreed that some members would meet at 11am on 8th April to conduct an informal survey of monuments in the closed area of the churchyard the results of which could be presented at the first formal meeting of the Committee.

First Formal Meeting of the Committee

- Members indicated that they would all be available to attend a first formal meeting of the Committee at 2.30pm on Monday 11th May 2026 at the Fire Station Meeting Room.