**Friends of Darwen Cemetery**

**AGM Working Party Report**

**1st May 2019**

This report summarises the work carried out by the volunteers during 2018 and the plans for 2019.

2018 was another very successful year with 69 volunteering sessions, averaging 11 volunteers per session and contributing over 2000 volunteer hours. Using the national lottery rates for skilled and unskilled volunteer contributions this equates to over £14,000 worth of “free” labour.

My thanks as always go to the dedicated band of volunteers who turn out in all weathers and undertake every task set to them without complaint, well mostly without complaint.

The tasks undertaken during 2018 were the usual assortment including.

* general maintenance, for example clearing and improving path edges,
* there was lots of everyone’s favourite tree chopping,
* and general gardening.

2018 was a very special year for the FODC with the building and unveiling of the memorial wall. Many working parties and hundreds of volunteer hours were spent preparing the former site of the workman’s cabin. So as not to repeat the words of the other speakers, I have limited my thanks to the work done on the site preparation and the working leading up to the unveiling.

The Thursday group did the majority of the heavy manual labour, which included cutting down many large Rhododendron trees and removing the stumps. Untold hours were spent by Mick and Peter working out how and where the wall would fit in to the space. Yards of path edges were restored by our resident path edging expert, Anne. Both sets of working party volunteers kept Prickly corner and other flower beds in the vicinity weed free and tidy. Thanks to Brent for the additional work carried out in the vicinity of the structure, erecting headstones and repairs to the tarmac road. 15 Volunteers turned out on the Saturday before the unveiling to ensure the area was looking its best.

Special thanks to Peter for the superb organisation before and on the day, and to all the volunteers who took an active role in making things run smoothly.

Details of the work carried out in 2018 is shown in the full report.

The volunteers have 2 special projects to note for 2019 both involving digging and heavy lifting, not to mention Micks expertise with stone.

1. A small dry stone retaining wall is being erected in the nature garden to extend the flower beds around the centre circle. This work is already underway.
2. And a set of stones steps in the steep bank on section G leading to the military section will be restored to their former glory, we hope.

A schedule of work planned for 2019 can be found in appendix 1 of the full report.

**2018 SUMMARY**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Total | 2020 hours |
| Costed at National Heritage Lottery rates | £14,400 equivalent |

**2018 DETAILS**

The fortnightly Saturday sessions have concentrated on 6 main areas of work in 2018.

Cutting back and shaping Rhododendrons

Clearing and restoring path edges

General gardening

Ground levelling

The Grave Maintenance Scheme

Preparation work for the WW1 memorial wall construction and unveiling

In 2017 work commenced on the Rhododendron hedge on Section H to reduce the height. This work was completed in 2018. The waste material was removed to our holding site on section 5 where it was burned.

Path edges have been cleaned and restored, drain uncovered and grates cleared.

General weeding and tidying has been carried out throughout the year on the various flowerbeds and formal gardens.

Some ground levelling has taken place to assist the grass cutting service to ensure that as much grass can be cut in as short a time as possible.

4 Sessions were taken up with the Grave Maintenance Scheme. The scheme had on average 24 graves requiring regular maintenance. With volunteer numbers at the current level it is thought that a maximum of 30 graves can be maintained bringing in much needed revenue. (currently at 27)

The Thursday group has continued to attend on a weekly basis contributing the bulk of the volunteer hours. Their dedication to the task cannot be too highly praised and my thanks go to them all.

Spare ground is at a premium, with very few areas free from graves, however an area of section 5 continues to be used to accommodate the waste until it can be burned or “recycled” into firewood, by and for the hard working volunteers. The relocation of this waste from around the site would not be possible without the support of a local farmer. My particular thanks go to Diane Mares and family for their time and equipment without which we could not have achieved so much or kept the cemetery as tidy.

Our thanks go to Brent Stephenson and the Good Friends Group for their continued support with grass cutting and the re-erection of headstones.

**2019 PLAN**

During 2019 we will be holding 25 formal public working parties on the following dates:-

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 12th January 2019 | 26th January 2019 | 9th February 2019 | 23rd February 2019 | 9th March 2019 |
| 23rd March 2019 | 6th April 2019 | 20th April 2019 | 4th May 2019 | 18th May 2019 |
| 1st June 2019 | 15th June 2019 | 29th June 2019 | 13th July 2019 | 27th July 2019 |
| 11th August 2019 | 24th August 2019 | 7th September 2019 | 21st September 2019 | 5th October 2019 |
| 19th October 2019 | 2nd November 2019 | 16th November 2019 | 30th November 2019 | 14th December 2019 |

As in previous years the formal working parties will continue to be complemented by weekly informal Thursday morning working parties, which commenced on the 24thth January 2019.

All working parties will run from 10.00am till 1.00 pm unless, by exception, extended hours are required for specific tasks.

In addition to the regular Friends working parties we may host volunteer sessions for outside groups from industry, schools and other community and charitable groups. The aim of these sessions is to provide a complete experience with an identifiable end result. The assistance of volunteers who are able to provide hours during the working week will be required to facilitate these events.

A schedule of activity planned for 2019 is shown at appendix 1

Jill Marr

Trustee – Working party coordinator

Appendix 1

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Approximate timing** | **Activity** |
| Section A | Spring, Summer Autumn | Reduce the size of the rambling Rose. Activity is weather dependent. Extreme caution required due to uneven ground conditions.  Invasive tree in Duxbury vault to be cut back. Extreme caution required due to uneven ground conditions. |
| Section B | Summer and autumn | Ensure brambles and nettles are controlled so that regular mowing can be carried out |
| Section C | Summer | Remove small birch saplings and check unwanted regrowth on Rhododendrons |
| Section D1 | Autumn/winter | Rake off fallen leaves |
| Section E | Spring/Summer | Clear Bridewort. Activity is weather dependent. |
| Section F | February  Early Summer and November | Cut back the laurels to approximately 6 feet to allow regrowth from the base and free the established trees at the rear of the site  Clear the path to the first war grave |
| Section G | Spring/Summer/November | Clear undergrowth beneath large conifers on north west corner.  Reinstate the steps on the slope leading to the military section. This is a one-off project. Specialist footwear will be required by all participants.  Trim and weed prickly corner |
| Section H | Late autumn | Clear brambles on southwest corner.  Monitor Rhododendron Hedge for unwanted regrowth |
| Section J |  | Cut Rhododendron bushes back from the path  Monitor and clear the silt trap  Monitor and clear the path around the walled garden |
| Section K | As required | Ensure the ground is levelled following any remedial work on headstones. |
| RC Chapel Site |  | Cut out recumbent branches on self-seeded willows  Cut back the Rhododendron hedge behind the priest grave to approximately 6 feet |
| General |  | Monitor and clear path edges and gutters on roads previously cleared. Section B/E boundary, Long Tom, Old Cem ring road, Lark Street.  Keep drains running.  Maintain privet hedge – Southern boundary all |
| Memorial and Nature Gardens | Continuous as required | Hedge trimming, weeding and tidying |
| Memorial Wall and Cross of Sacrifice areas | Early November  Plus continuous as required. | Keep clean and tidy.  Ensure hedges are kept back from overhanging the road. |
| Military Section | Spring | Level and turf over the flower bed  Maintain privet hedge |
| Heather Bed |  | Remove large woody heather and replace with new plants.  Weed and tidy as required. |
| Lark Street |  | Reduce the height of the Rhododendron bush behind the map  Monitor and clear path edges as required.  Maintain privet hedge |
| Section 1 |  | Remove Rhododendron bush (next to the holly tree) from corner with lark Street  Continue removal of Lime suckers |
| Section 2 |  | Trim hedge against the corner of the boundary wall  Clear Bridewort. Activity is weather dependent.  Reshape Rhododendron and Holly bushes |
| Section 4 |  | Cut down and treat invasive shrubs/trees |
| Section 5 |  | Ensure waste material is stored and destroyed/removed as required |
| Grave maintenance | 23rd March  15th June  21st September  14th December | Weed and Tidy |
| Special project | Spring | A small dry stone retaining wall erected in the nature garden to extend the flower beds around the centre circle |
| Special project | Summer | A set of stones steps in the steep bank on section G leading to the military section will be restored to their former glory |