**Friends of Darwen Cemetery**

**AGM Working Party Report**

**28th April 2021**

This report summarises the work carried out by the volunteers during 2020 and the plans for 2021

2020 working parties were disrupted due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Both the Saturday and Thursday groups were suspended during the first national lockdown in March and April.

However, 60 volunteering sessions, averaging 9 volunteers per session, and contributing 1599 volunteer hours did take place. Using the national lottery rates for skilled and unskilled volunteer contributions this equates to over £11,400 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.

**2020 SUMMARY**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Total | 1598:55 hours |
| Costed at National Heritage Lottery rates | £11,400 equivalent |

**2020 DETAILS**

The fortnightly Saturday sessions have concentrated on 5 main areas of work.

 Cutting back and shaping Rhododendrons

 Clearing and restoring path edges

General gardening

 Clearing brambles

The Grave Maintenance Scheme

In 2020 remedial work commenced on the Rhododendron hedge on Section H, previously trimmed back in 2017/18. The waste material was removed to our holding site on section 5 where it has been burned.

Path edges in the old cemetery side and the circular path at the northern side of the new cemetery side have been cleaned and restored, drain uncovered and grates cleared.

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

4 Sessions were taken up with the Grave Maintenance Scheme. Volunteers worked on their own or in family bubbles to ensure the programme of maintenance did not slip, despite lockdown restrictions. The scheme had on average 28 graves requiring regular maintenance.

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

The FODC volunteers continue of clear away all waste vegetation generated and dispose of it on site. The 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.

Our thanks go to the Good Friends Group for their support with grass cutting throughout 2020.

**2021 PLAN**

During 2021 we planned to hold 25 formal public working parties, commencing on the 9th of January

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 9th January 2021 - cancelled | 23rd January 2021 - cancelled | 6th February 2021 - cancelled | 20th February 2021 - cancelled | 6th March 2021 |
| 20th March 2021 | 3rd April 2021 | 17th April 2021 | 1st May 2021 | 15th May 2021 |
| 29th May 2021 | 12th June 2021 | 26th June 2021 | 10th July 2021 | 24th July 2021 |
| 7th August 2021 | 21st August 2021 | 7th September 2021 | 18th September 2021 | 2nd October 2021 |
| 16th October 2021 | 30th October 2021 | 13th November 2021 | 27h November 2021 | 141h December 2021 |

As in previous years the formal working parties will continue to be complemented by weekly informal Thursday morning working parties, which were planned to commence on the 21st January 2021.

At the time of writing this report 13 working parties have been cancelled due to Coronavirus lockdowns restrictions, with sessions recommencing in March 2021.

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

A schedule of activity planned for 2021 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. |
| 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 | Early Summer and November | Clear the path to the first war grave. Trim Laurel trees as required to keep the Holly and Elder trees clear. |
| Section G | Spring/Summer/November | Keep undergrowth beneath large conifers on north west corner.Trim and weed prickly corner |
| Section H | Late autumn | Clear brambles on southwest corner.Monitor Rhododendron Hedge for unwanted regrowth |
| Section J | SpringPlus continuous as required. | Cut Rhododendron bushes back from the pathMonitor and clear the silt trapMonitor and clear the path around the walled garden |
| General  |  | Monitor and clear path edges and gutters on roads previously cleared. 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 and throughout the year as required. | Keep clean and tidy.Ensure hedges are kept back from overhanging the road. |
| Military Section | Continuous as required. | Maintain privet hedge |
| Heather Bed |  | Remove large woody heather and replace with new plants. Weed and tidy as required. |
| Lark Street |  | Monitor and clear path edges as required. |
| Section 1 |  | Continue removal of Lime suckers |
| Section 2 |  | 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 | 6th March12th June18th September11th December | Weed and Tidy |
| Special project - RC Chapel Site  | As time permits | Cut out recumbent branches on self-seeded willows and clear accumulated waste material |