

St James's Church - Hampton Hill

Churchyard Management Plan (Draft)

Vision

“Managing and maintaining the churchyard as a haven for people and biodiversity”.

Description

The churchyard covers an area of some 1.6 acres, including the church buildings. The majority of the churchyard lies to the east and southeast of the church, and there are also graves in the narrow border on the northern side and in the new northwest garden. It is divided into a number of sections as shown on the accompanying map (see below). There are 4 access points – from Park Road (2), St James's Road, and St James's Avenue - and a network of tarred footpaths cross the churchyard. It is widely used as cut through by pedestrians and dog-walkers between the roads. There is no designated 'right-of-way', and access is "at the indulgence of the incumbent". There is a war memorial and a garden of remembrance (block H), and in the northern corner of the churchyard (Block A) a recently laid formal garden has been set out.

The churchyard contains 1,000 graves many of which have damaged monuments, and 4,000 bodies as several of the family graves contain more than one interment. [Note: this count was made in 2019, although a more recent and possibly more accurate count was made by Roland Bustock prior to the pandemic; this record is in a published red book located in the church office]. There are 12 Canadian War Graves in a formal row and 14 scattered War Graves. In addition, 4 graves within Private Memorials have also been identified. (The CWGC does not own or maintain private memorials but does monitor their condition to ensure the individual's name is legible).

The churchyard contains a number of significant trees. Of the five English oak found here, the dominant one, to the immediate south of the War Memorial is estimated at 312 years old. The main Copper Beech, in the north-east section, has a girth of 3.8 metres and is estimated at 223 years old. Of the other mature native trees there are two further Beech, four English oak, a substantial triple-trunked Common lime, Ash, Field maple, Yew, Holly, Hazel, Scots pine, Hawthorn and Elder. The mature non-natives are Walnut, Sycamore, Austrian pine, Norway maple, Ginkgo biloba, Sweet gum / *Liquidambar styraciflua*, Swedish birch, purple Cherry plum and Atlas cedar.

Suggested Developments

This is based on a 3 – 5 year timescale to realise the vision for the churchyard management.

1. As part of the vision to make the churchyard more 'people friendly', it is planned to introduce more seating, in addition to the existing benches alongside the church west porch, in the formal garden and in the garden of remembrance. These should be of two-seater design (to deter vagrants and rough-sleepers), and would need to be securely fixed. Based on consultations in 2018 (when 6 possible locations were identified) one or more suitable benches could be favourably located as shown below on Map 2. Funding for these would be by donation or sponsorship, to be decided and agreed with the PCC.
2. Install an illustrated information board for children and families showing different key aspects of the churchyard bio-diversity and wildlife (temporary illustrations were popular during the Churches Count on Nature week in 2021). For reference, such boards have successfully been installed in nearby Bushy Park in the Woodland Gardens. Again, sponsorship could be one way of financing such boards.

3. Install an information board on the church hall wall in the inner courtyard showing the positions of the War Graves with any pertinent information for visitors. (There is a CWGC plaque on the railings by the main entrance to the south porch).
4. There is a need to develop and approve a 'Churchyard Code'. Such a code needs to be 'visitor friendly' whilst at the same time deterring any forms of anti-social behaviour. It should be pointed out that the churchyard is managed for the quiet enjoyment of users and the protection of its biodiversity, and visitors should follow the Churchyard Code when entering the churchyard.

This Code would include the following instructions for access to the churchyard:

- ≡ Access is allowed but there is no designated 'right of way'
- ≡ Behave with understanding to maintain tranquillity for other users
- ≡ Keep to paths
- ≡ No littering
- ≡ No cycling or games permitted
- ≡ Dogs must be kept on a lead, and no dog fouling
- ≡ Avoid damage to plants and fungi

This 'Churchyard Code' would be put on the 4 entrances (St. James's Avenue gate, the Lych gate, the Park Road gates, and the entry past the Vestry door).

5. Plan a phased repair of damaged monuments in the 'old churchyard' (on the map, areas A, B, D, F, northern parts of E and G). This would require an initial survey and then tidying up repair work (Continental Landscapes have offered to provide some volunteers to assist in this; they should be included in any publicity shots/reportage of the restoration projects).
6. The more long-term need for 'restoring' monuments will require a Faculty and decision on financing arrangements. To further this work, consider introducing an 'Adopt a grave' initiative amongst the Congregation and also the wider community for unattended graves in the older part of the churchyard.
7. The Grade II listed War Memorial has, over the past years, become increasingly dark stained, possibly with a mould, and needs to be cleaned and treated in accordance with the 'Listed Monuments' requirements and guidelines.
8. Steps should be taken to seek 'Designated Wildlife Area' status for the churchyard.
9. There is a need to update the tree and major shrubs/plants inventory (this was last done in 2013) in the interests of an up-to-date biodiversity checklist. Liaise with the Council to see what records they have kept.
10. There has been agreement to reinstate the Canadian Sugar Maple in the Canadian War Graves area. This will need Council cooperation to heavily pollard the overgrown bay tree to the south west of the area to allow more light for the maintenance of the closely mown grass there.

11. Given the encouragement from the Church of England to plant fruit trees in graveyards, follow up and seek required approvals (the Archdeacon) to plant the two fruit trees that were offered, possibly on the east side of area G. Also, reserve a 'Queen's Jubilee Tree' from the Woodland Trust.
12. Examine options for furthering churchyard wildlife diversity. This may include: nesting sites and boxes (for birds, bats etc.), maintaining a wild growth border around the churchyard for wildlife passage, and increase butterfly and moth friendly breeding plants.

Churchyard maintenance

1. Continue and develop the on-going working relationship with Continental Landscapes re: churchyard maintenance. The aim is to include designated long grass area and, where appropriate, medium cut areas to encourage wild flowers.
2. Maintain a wildlife long grass area, designated in the eastern portion of Block D. This will require being loosely cordoned-off (with stakes and rope), and signposted.
3. Participation in the 'Churches Count on Nature' (in June 2021 over 90 species were identified and listed), and the 'Beautiful Burial Ground Project' as part of 'Caring for God's Acre'.
4. Increase community involvement with the volunteer churchyard care group (the Gardening Club) and consider running training sessions; involve the group in the forward management plan; and, hold a yearly volunteers' celebration event, possibly with an invited guest speaker from 'Caring for God's Acre' or the Council's conservation team.

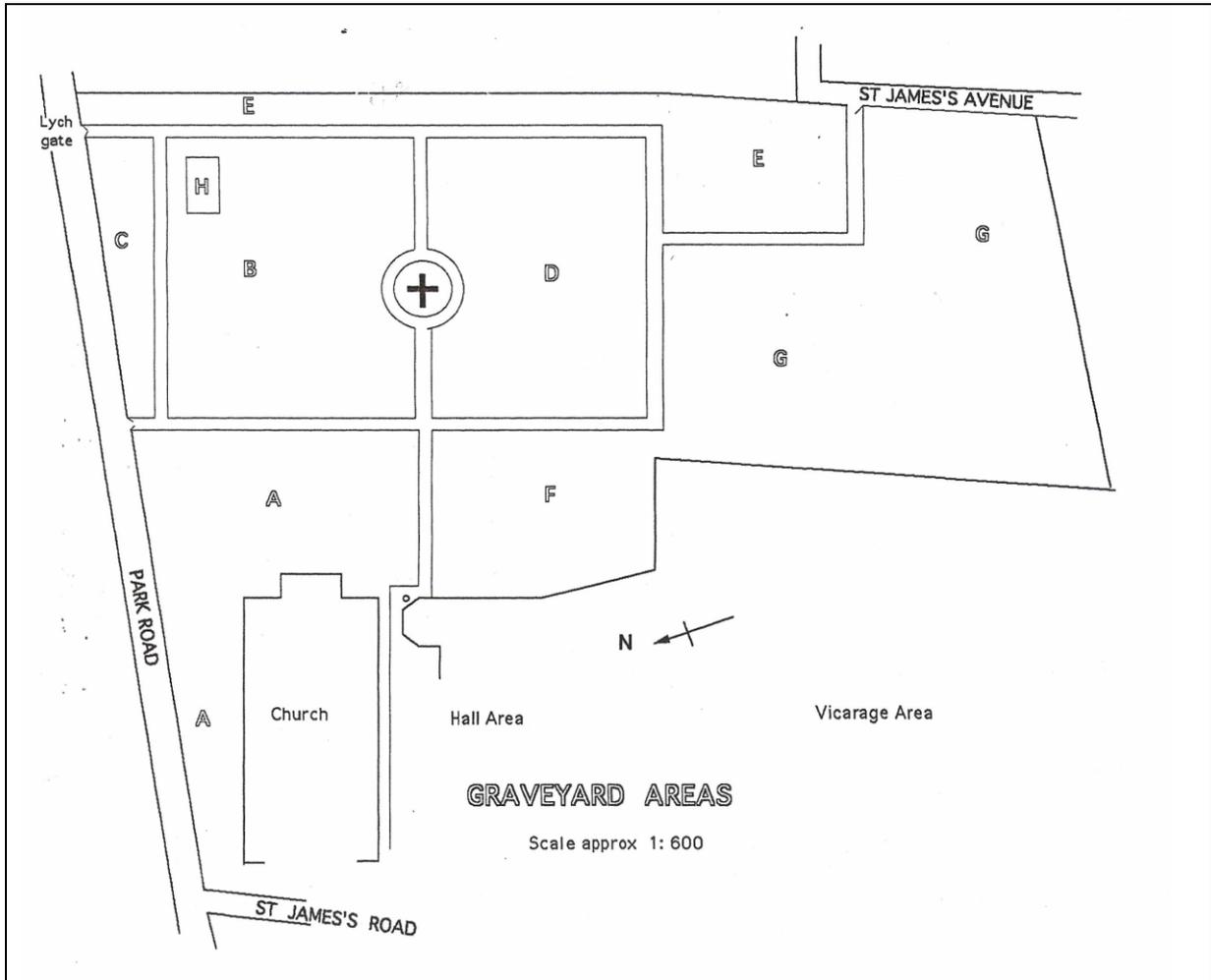
Tasks & Responsibilities

The following tasks have been Identified which will require volunteer personnel.

- i. Liaison with Continental Landscapes and the various Council Officers regarding the day- to-day and on-going churchyard maintenance, tree inspections and tree trimming where needed, and any immediate needs which may arise (e.g. the control of processionary moth caterpillars in the Turkey oak in the church hall yard).
- ii. A person(s) to be responsible for the interment of ashes in the Memorial Garden.
- iii. A person(s) to be responsible for the installation of Memorial Roses and plaques. As well as the rose planting and plaque and stake assembly, and installation, this includes family liaison (including requesting a voluntary donation for the on-going rose care).
- iv. A person(s) to oversee the condition of the Memorial Garden, litter pick on a weekly basis, mow and rake the interment lawn – particularly before ashes burial, tend, feed, deadhead and prune the roses and flowering plants there, weeding, clipping and tidying.
- v. A person(s) to maintain the watering of vulnerable trees and plants during dry weather throughout the churchyard. Also, keeping the new north-west garden and the new west shrubbery tended, weeded and watered.
- vi. A person(s) to assist with the various surveys planned as part of the churchyard development plans above.

[Draft LGS July 2021]

Map 1: St James's Churchyard



Map 2: St James's Churchyard – Locations for Benches

