

St Peter & St Paul Church Great Missenden

March 2023-March 2024



Introduction

St Peter & St Paul Church is located to the east of Great Missenden. Surrounded by a Council owned cemetery to the northwest, open fields to the east and south, with the main A413 running along its south western edge, the church occupies an elevated position. The now disused cemetery has become a woodland site, and a the church warden along with a group of volunteers help to look after it. In 2019, the warden contacted the Rough Around the Edges Project Officer for possible help to improve the grounds and woodland. However, all project plans were delayed due to the global pandemic, and the project was only properly picked up again in March 2023.

The aim was to improve the condition of the woodland cemetery by removing dead, diseased and dangerous trees, as well as clearing paths, tidying some overgrown graves and encouraging more light into areas of the woodland. The group also wanted to have more skills and resources for working with their family groups.

Summary of actions

In 2022 we commissioned a local consultant to survey the woodland and advise on management. This was funded through some Additional Projects funds. It then took some time for the Church to agree the works and arrange a contractor to carry them out. In March 2023, a contractor was agreed, and St Peter & St. Paul Church signed up to a Rough Around the Edges project. We part funded the following tree works to make the woodland safe, removing a number of diseased ash trees.

During the time before we started the project, the church established a relationship with gardeners from Missenden Walled Garden and later with Chiltern Way Academy for regular youth groups to carry out simple conservation work. The woodland works in early 2023 made access easier for that group, and for visitors to the cemetery.

Church volunteers also attended a number of training sessions delivered by the Project Officer and by other community groups, strengthening local links between groups.

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The church have an active family group who carry out activities with families and children, including building an insect hotel, seed sowing and building nestboxes. They also do some care and maintenance around the church.

Budget

We committed £2600 to the project. We spent:

- £2000 on woodland management works
- £135 on nestboxes
- £265 on tools and equipment for families to carry conservation activities
- £200 on training

Outputs

- Woodland surveyed and given management plan
- Woodland safety felling carried out
- Engagement with volunteers from other community groups (Prestwood Nature, Greening Chinnor, Chinnor Churches Go Wild!)
- Training for 4 volunteers
- 1 volunteer first aid trained
- Multiple activity sessions with children at church
- Regular work parties from Chiltern Way Academy
- Raptor box installed and engagement with Bucks Owl and Raptor Group

Impact on people and wildlife

As well as removing dangerous trees, the woodland works have thinned out the trees, creating space for other trees to grow and creating light on the woodland floor that allows the ground flora to develop.

Being able to access the woodland, carry out simple conservation tasks and sow wildflower seed has helped the various volunteers to learn more about wildlife. The church volunteers have talked about the links to the bible and nature, and visitors enjoy walking through the woodland.



Bench with view across fields and deadwood after management works.

Credit: K. Horgan

Challenges

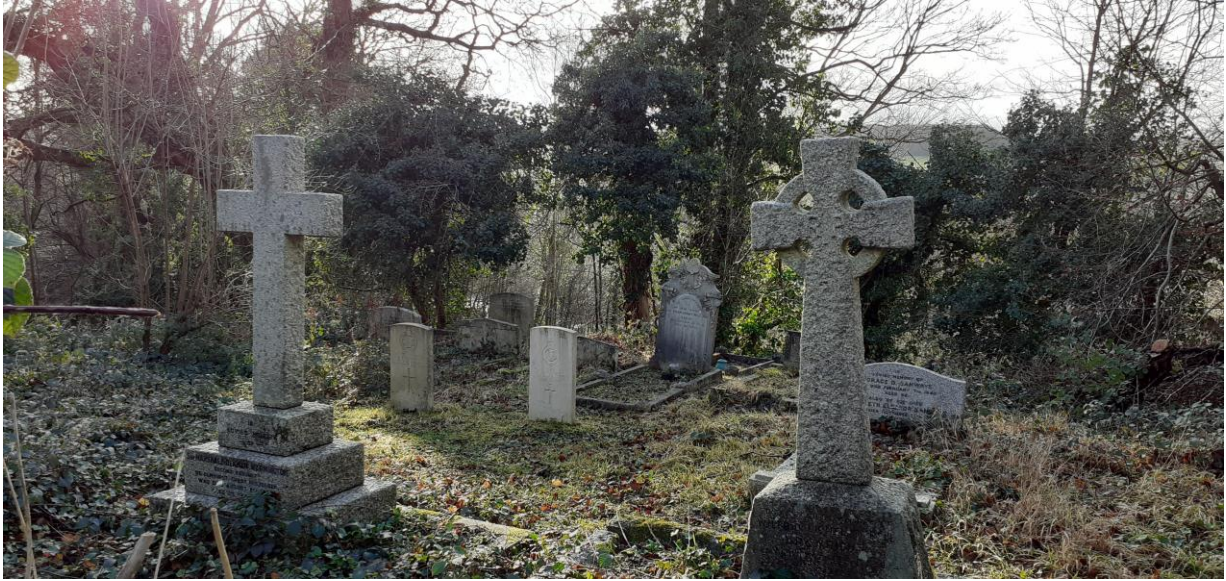
The global pandemic was a significant factor in running this project as this came at the same time as a change in vicar. Both of these made decision making very difficult for the warden – the lead volunteer – so we had to wait until both situations had stabilised. Recruiting volunteers to help with the project took some time, and we also need the initial woodland work to be carried out.

Future plans

The church volunteers now have regular family days where, amongst other activities, they carry out wildlife themed activities in the churchyard. They will continue to work with Chiltern Way Academy, and are likely to

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have some further woodland work carried out as needed. In addition, they will continue to engage with other local groups doing similar work.



War graves in sunlight after removal of diseased ash trees. Credit: K. Horgan