

# **Tingewick Parish Council**

## **Churchyard Management Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to set out how the churchyard will be managed in order to fulfil the following mission statement:

- To maintain a peaceful well cared-for place of rest for the dead, their descendants who may wish to visit, and their counterparts who form the present village community of Tingewick
- To provide a habitat for encouraging and protecting wild flowers and creatures
- To create a safe environment in which people of all ages may come to increase their understanding of our natural, cultural and religious heritage
- To conserve gravestones, walls and other artefacts of personal or historical significance
- To make efficient use of the Parish Council's resources

The policy draws on information and understanding of the churchyard gathered during the Tingewick Churchyard Project of 2006/7.

### **Introduction**

The national Living Churchyard Project suggested that a churchyard exists like a small island of time past in the midst of the modern world. It is a place where there is time for reflection in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity – not only a resting place for mortal remains, but a place of ease and interest for the living. In Britain nearly all the lowland hay meadows, which once played host to wild flowers, butterflies and wildlife in plenty, have gone. A churchyard may be the only place now where such life can be found in some abundance.

### **Initial Work**

The slope to the south of the new wall to be raked to remove stones, and, after removal of weeds, to be sown with a suitable grass seed. In future, this area to form part of Area A of the maintenance plan.

The saplings (principally elder and sycamore) growing around the grave-markers to be lopped and the stumps to be treated with Roundup. In future, elder and sycamore seedlings to be removed manually when small, as set out later in the Plan

All ivy growing on the walls of the church, on the wall and on memorials to be cut at ground level, and the vegetation be allowed to die back and fall off naturally.

### **Grass**

The Council's policy is to maintain different kinds of grassland within the churchyard (see attached map) and to allow some areas to remain uncut as long as possible to allow time for wild flowers and grasses to bloom and set seed.

### Close-cut areas (marked A on map)

These are to be mown during the growing season on a regular basis, depending on weather conditions.

Cuttings to be collected or raked off so that they do not smother new growth and disposed of in an appropriate manner. This will give some flowering plants a chance to bloom and seed and will provide some cover for wild-life.

Ledgers (memorial stones laid flat) to be cleared of cuttings after mowing.

### Areas of longer grass (marked B on the map)

These areas contain mainly spring or later-flowering plants, and should be cut to a height of 3 inches at the end of spring and again at the end of the growing season in late October.

### **Paths**

The Council will maintain a path system to allow easy access to the church, and to enable visitors to view gravestones and generally enjoy the beauty of the churchyard and its flora and fauna. Grass paths will be closely mown on a weekly or fortnightly basis, and be kept wide enough and even enough to allow wheelchair access where this is feasible.

Where new paths are created they will be designed to accommodate the needs of wheelchair users.

### **Walls and gravestones**

Mosses and lichens should be left undisturbed. Neither chemicals nor manual scrubbing should be used. Plants should not be removed unless clearly causing structural damage, in which case they should be removed carefully and if possible replanted elsewhere in the churchyard. Iron railings surrounding tombs should not be treated in any way nor painted as they support a number of rare lichens.

### **Trees and Shrubs**

Likely to need no more than occasional winter pruning if necessary. Remove tree seedlings (especially sycamore and elder) by pulling up when small.

Should be removed if they are dislodging gravestones or are too close to walls. A check to be made to see if planning permission or Diocesan faculty needed.

A visual check should be made annually to identify any potentially dangerous branches, which should be assessed, and if necessary removed, by a qualified tree surgeon.

