

# Working at Loxley Cemetery

## Advice for Volunteers



*Please read this advice before you start working with us. If you have any questions, just ask one of the regular volunteers.*

### **LOOKING AFTER THE CEMETERY**

After the chapel closed in 1993 the cemetery became more and more neglected, so much so that by 2019 almost no graves could be seen, let alone accessed. The Friends were formed to reverse this situation, and we now have weekly work sessions as well as special sessions by groups.

The Friends of Loxley Cemetery have left certain areas of the cemetery undisturbed in order to preserve as much for the wildlife as possible, and we do not carry out any tree work during nesting season. However, our main purpose is to make the graves accessible to visitors, so we do careful work at all times.

### **STARTING WORK**

Ask Jane, our Head of Volunteering, what is needed that session. She will advise which part of the cemetery needs work and provide you with appropriate tools, and gloves if you do not have your own. If you are volunteering with a group, then one of the Friends will advise the group.

Check that you know what to do and make sure you are familiar with the types of vegetation listed below. Also check the information about what to do with the vegetation you clear or cut down. Please remember that care must be taken when clearing vegetation from a monument or gravestone, as you could cause damage to the monument itself and/or to the wildlife habitats created by the vegetation.

Remember that there are no facilities at the cemetery – no toilets, shelter, or water. Come prepared!

### **SAFETY AT THE CEMETERY**

Please take care in the cemetery: many areas are uneven and pot-holed and paths can be slippery. Tree roots, low-growing branches, nettles, brambles and ivy roots are common hazards. Some paths are obstructed by fallen headstones and other masonry.

Some headstones are unstable – these must be avoided. Do not work near any unstable gravestones. If in doubt, check with the head volunteer or your leader.

**The vegetation in the cemetery is mainly:**

**Brambles**



These need cutting back as close to ground level as possible. Use gloves as they have very large sharp thorns. If possible dig up the roots. Small bramble seedlings can be pulled out. They are persistent but if they are repeatedly cut back they will eventually stop growing.

**Grass**



We have several mowers that can be used on the paths and wider areas of the cemetery. However, you will need to use a strimmer between most of the gravestones as they are placed close together. Strimmers can also be used to cut the grass growing on the graves. Take care not to damage the gravestones and kerbs around the graves.

**Sycamore saplings**



These are being gradually cut down during the winter months using power tools. The felled wood is left by the side of the paths.

**Ivy**



This is also persistent. Pull it out if possible or cut it back as close to ground level as possible. Take great care removing the ivy from a gravestone – it could be holding up an unstable stone. Peel it off carefully, taking care not to damage the stone. If in doubt just leave it to wither – cutting the stem close to the ground will help.

**Stinging nettles**



Try to dig these out but the taller ones may need cutting down before digging up. Remember to wear gloves and long sleeves when dealing with tall nettles; some of them reached around 6ft high in 2022.

**Rosebay willowherb**



This is easily pulled out or cut down but it produces masses of seeds and can completely overwhelm other plants. It's best dug up when small – familiarise yourself with what it looks like before it flowers.

**Moss on the gravestones**



Peel moss off the headstones carefully by hand so you don't cause any damage, particularly to the lead lettering which is on some headstones. You can use a non-metal scraper but be gentle. We use a piece of slate roof tile – there's lots of these bits on the ground around the chapel. These are much less likely to cause damage and are sharp enough to do the job.

**Dandelions, buttercups etc.**



Dig these out removing all the root if possible.

## **DEALING WITH THE WASTE**

### **1. Green waste**

We have two areas for green waste to be dumped. Please ask one of the regular volunteers to show you. Green waste is *any plant material* except large twigs, branches, logs etc.

There are builders' bags that can be used to transport the waste. Do not fill them more than half full as they will be too heavy to carry. Before you leave please make sure that the bags are emptied and put back in their piles. We have some smaller bags if required.

### **2. Wood**

Wood from the felled trees is used to make small benches and seats for the cemetery, or taken for wood-burning stoves (people give us donations for this). Sometimes we have the use of a chipper, otherwise the thinner branches are put on the green waste heaps.

### **3. Soil**

Put as little soil as possible in the builders' bags. Shake it off the plants and if there's a lot, spread it over the grave or next to the grave.

### **4. Rock and stones**

Do not put these in the builders' bags. Just leave them at the side of the grave.

### **5. Other waste**

This is anything not listed above – plastic, metal, glass, paper, fabric etc. There is a black bin on the drive down from the chapel. This waste can be put in there, or you can take it home to dispose of in your black bin.

## **FINISHING WORK**

Clear up and make sure all waste is left in the appropriate places.

Return any tools you have used (unless they belong to you!).

*For further information about volunteering, check our website*

<https://e-voice.org.uk/friendsofloxleycemetery/volunteering/>

*Verity Brack, 2025*

*Secretary, Friends of Loxley Cemetery*