

Clothall Churchyard and its Burial Ground



The Churchyard surrounding the Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin in Clothall covers an area of approximately one acre of land.

This public space is maintained by the church community with the support of money granted annually to the PCC by the Village Meeting and paid by all parishioners through our village precept.

The space is permanently open to the public and is a popular stopping off point for walkers and other visitors.

Regular maintenance of the churchyard is necessary to keep graves accessible to

visitors as well as maintaining the public footpath routes through the churchyard for walkers and those attending services. Reflecting the rural nature of our village setting the PCC tries to maintain the balance of managed space around the more recent graves with wild edges of the churchyard as they meet the neighbouring fields and properties. The churchyard is home to lots of wildflowers and animal and birdlife.

The graveyard contains about 200 marked graves the oldest dating back to the 1770s although there are memorial brasses inside the church as old as 1407. Of course only the well-off would have had grave stones and it is reckoned that most village churchyards hold upwards of 30,000 burials as the land was reused over the centuries. In 2015 a survey of the graves and their inscriptions was carried out by the Hertfordshire Family History Society and the results published in this fascinating pamphlet which can be purchased from the society - the Wardens hold a copy for anyone interested...

The consecrated area of the churchyard surrounds the church and is marked by boundary stones - tricky to spot but roughly in line with the cherry tree at the lower end of the church path.

Governance:

The use of the church building and churchyard is governed by the statutes of the Church of England although it should be noted we receive no financial support from the diocese or church central funding bodies. Like all parish churches we have to make our own way in the world and are completely reliant on the support of parishioners and their donations to continue to look after the church site and of course the church building itself.

The "Friends of Clothall Church" run a charitable fund to support the costs of building maintenance. Again it should be emphasised that the church community receives no support for the upkeep of our 14th Century Grade 2* listed building. We are always grateful to receive donations to our Friends Fund and for the support of the village community for our fundraising activities.

It should be noted that the church burial ground remains "open" only for current parishioners and those with an historic or strong family link to the village.

The Church Wardens and the Parochial Church Council (PCC) are responsible for the church building and its churchyard and are elected to office at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in April or May. The audited accounts and finances of the PCC are presented at this meeting.



Maintenance

The grounds are ably maintained on a regular basis by our paid groundsman who does a wonderful job in keeping the grass under control.

We also hold regular churchyard maintenance parties (see pictures above) where volunteers from the village and church community join in tackling larger jobs as well as spring cleaning of the church interior. These parties are rounded off with a shared picnic and some well-earned tea and cakes. All are welcome and we will continue to try to advertise these convivial occasions via the village noticeboard and social media groups.

How the Precept Money is Spent

The PCC is grateful for the long term support received from the Village Meeting and the village community more widely for the upkeep of our beautiful churchyard.

The precept grant is spent to support the following costs:

- Maintenance costs for the regular mowing of the grass around the grave areas.
- Tree and ground maintenance work.
- Maintenance of the paths and fencing.
- A share of the church insurance costs covering accident cover, property cover and also professional indemnity and public liability insurance.
- A staged share of the cost of our "quinquennial inspection" or five-yearly architect's survey which includes a mandatory inspection of the church grounds and boundary.

For the avoidance of doubt, the precept money is not spent on the church building or on the work of the Rector nor to support church services.

Future Plans

We'd like to develop a wildflower meadow to encourage bees and other insect and wildlife and we also hope to hold a wildflower festival in the church which we think would suit Clothall rather well.

Peter Taylor, Church Warden