

Draft

Report from the Chair

The Friends of Church Island have had a couple of longstanding concerns over recent years and I'm pleased to report some progress, if modest, with regard to both of them. Firstly, you will be aware that the Church commissioned a survey of the graves on the island some years ago in order to identify any safety problems. The firm that did the survey listed 79 graves that required attention because the headstones were not securely fixed or a monument was at risk of collapse. The cost of making these graves safe was going to be about £8,000. Half of the money for doing this would come from grants, it was hoped, and the Friends undertook to find the rest. It was hoped that the firm that undertook the survey would also carry out the work, but this did not happen. Despite repeated requests no detailed schedule of work was received. In recent months, however, the firm in question has now formally withdrawn, admitting that it is no longer in a position to do the work. Other monumental masons are now being contacted and we hope that next year's annual report will confirm that work has begun.

The other big concern over the years has been grass cutting and controlling the plant life on the island. As I reported last year, the rabbits on the island have had a beneficial effect both financially, since they're doing a lot of the work of the grass-cutting contractors, and aesthetically, since the control of the grass has allowed for more flowers to come through and we enjoyed a magnificent display of daffodils, primroses and bluebells this spring. I can also report that Nigel Brown, the former director of the Treborth Botanical Garden, has now become our consultant for environmental matters on Church Island. In the autumn he helped us draw up a plan for action. Our priorities are to remove invasive species of plant (notably the cotoneaster on the top of the hill around the cenotaph and on the foreshore beyond the wood behind the church), remove some trees such as sycamores or those that are not in good condition and prune others in order to provide more space for other trees and plants and/or to improve sightlines such as the views from the cenotaph to the church. In addition to that we aim to continue clearing brambles, ivy and so on from the paths and walls, and from around the graves. This year we've had visits from two volunteer groups. The AONB group came twice to clear the cotoneaster from the shore, and the Coastal Path group (the "Silver Slashers") came to work on the top path just below the cenotaph. Snowdonia Tree Services undertook to work on the trees and the cotoneaster on the cenotaph hill. Approval for the work on the trees had to be applied for from the County Council because there is Tree Preservation Order on the island. This was granted but too late for this winter. The work will take place in November. The cotoneaster has been removed however, and all the waste from that and the work of the voluntary groups has been chipped and spread. The remains of the cotoneaster and other invasive plants have been sprayed in order to prevent regrowth. At the February meeting of the Committee it was agreed that up to £2000 should be spent on this work this winter. In the end the work so far has cost £1,285.

As in 2016, two festivals took place on the island this year. Gŵyl Tysilio / Tysilio Festival was the big one – now bigger and better than ever before thanks to new programming and better publicity. In particular, the lunchtime events were better attended this year, and a new feature was a guided walk by Nigel Brown around the island. This was so successful that the walk is being repeated during the changing seasons of the year. Our thanks go to Lis Perkins, the festival director for all her work, as well as all the performers who give of their time and talent, and also to Nigel Brown for his walks and his help. The 2017 Festival will take place this year from July 11th-16th – a week earlier than last year. More information will follow. We will require volunteers to welcome visitors through the week. The other festival was Island Whispers, organised by Femke van Gent. Like last year it featured outdoor activities for young and old, culminating in a wonderful recital in the church.

To finish, a summary of other highlights: We were present at the Menai Seafood Festival, but gave Ffair Borth a miss. In September we were invited to have a stand at the Civic Society Garden Party at Plas Cadant. In May we gave a talk to the WI in Menai Bridge to publicise our work. The WI are generous members of the Friends. We were pleased that the Zorbing Centre planning application, which we objected to, was finally turned down. In addition to the monthly summer Sunday services in St Tysilio's, there has also been a new weekday service, once a month throughout the year: a Pilgrim Service for Healing and Wholeness. The Church is about to repair the shed behind the church. There has been no further progress on a new Friends' website.

My thanks go to all the Friends who have given money to us this year; everybody who has provided practical help on the island; Lis Perkins for Gŵyl Tysilio; Nigel Brown for his guidance; and our officers: David Brydon, John Hughes and Malcolm Rogers.

Gareth Hughes, Chair
24.05.2017