

Laudato Si' Meeting, August 13, 2018: St Mary's (Sabden) Project

Present: Peter and Susan White; Margaret Parsons; Margaret Waling; Pauline Wiggin; Mary and Anthony Brown; Andrew, Susan and Antony Brown; Ann Cooke; Dominic Aunger; Damien Buggy

Apologies: Mark Wiggin; Bernard and Theresa Mercer; Joan Leeming; Grace Fellows; Susan Fellows; Arnold Marsden; Peter Foley

Susan outlined the huge amount of work that she and Peter have done over the years and with very little support. To summarise:

- AstroTurf removed apart from a little around the grotto. This necessitated shovelling 40 tons of topsoil and 10 tons of bark
- laid paths
- laid and planted four beds of wildflowers
- killed weeds removed moss, and planted more wildflowers
- built a stone circle at the front of the church and planted and arranged pots
- put in a rockery from scratch
- tried to keep the weeds down and hedges trimmed
- purchased rockery plants for the Sacramental programme to plant as part of their preparation. Supervised the planting of these and encouraged the children to come back and water them.

The bed in front of the church is going to be renewed as soon as possible with a raised bed with sleepers that Peter has bought. It is impossible at the moment to encourage growth due to poor soil depth because of hardcore laid underneath. This is the first priority before two weddings in September.

As well as volunteers to help with everything there needs to be regular maintenance. A lot of people doing a little can achieve more than a few people doing a lot.

We need also to consider the issue of health and safety and public liability

Peter and Susan proposed a plan for maintaining and enhancing grounds around St Mary's

1. Pathways need clearing, to bring them back to black weed inhibitor.
2. Some sort of stone or chipping needs to then be laid to reinstate paths as shown.
3. Area at top of car park needs scraping off mechanically and making solid to extend parking to this area.
4. All fruit trees want cutting down, as now are rotten and at end of life. These can be chipped.
5. The stone circle needs to be cleaned and weeded around pots planted and arranged (bearing in mind there are 2 weddings in the near future and the front of church should look good for this)
6. A raised bed is planned for the planted area outside church, with perennial bee and butterfly attracting plants.
7. The rockery needs to be weeded and some planting there also. NB the front area of the church does not want to be wildflower but something a bit tidier looking.
8. Then we can think about building up and restocking the 4 beds already laid out in the back (see arial picture)
9. The Grotto area needs the AstroTurf removing to make it safe, also some safe access to the Statue itself.
10. The Stations of the Cross need to be painted and areas around them cleared
11. All the hedges want laying to encourage growth and keep the property secure.

This should be enough projects for the foreseeable future but the completion of this and timescale will depend on the number of volunteers. Then we will be able to come up with new projects to create a lovely environment for all. The above is really an ongoing programme, and we need to continue just to keep the site tidy and looking ok, at the same time as starting new projects.

The Live Simply Award Plan should build on the work above and Antony Brown raised some environmental elements:

- vegetable beds could begin to encourage the concept of self sufficiency and would help with community-building.
- large volumes of water can be collected from the roofs, particularly the hall roof. Large water butts can be obtained cheaply and filled from the gutters. The water can then be used for watering the gardens and beds, thus reducing reliance on mains water and raising awareness of the need for water conservation particularly in times of drought.
- we should install a number of BoB boxes; arrange a demo of assembling them from kits.
- small raised ponds could be covered with grids for safety

We spent some time walking round the grounds highlighting the issues and noting what needed to be done before reconvening for agreement on action.

We agreed that item 6 on Peter and Susan's plan was a priority.

Margaret Parsons suggested we approach Sabden Horticultural Society for their advice /input/support as we have quite a number of parishioners who are active members of the society.

Action:

- A team of helpers to tackle Item 6 of Susan and Peter's plan starting on September 8
- Margaret Parsons to approach Sabden Horticultural Society