The Old Burial ground, Church Road, Horsforth

In 2006 the Parish Church Council (St Margaret’s Church) asked the committee of ‘Horsforth in Bloom’ whether they could find someone to take over the maintenance of the Burial Ground. The parishioners it was said, were elderly and there was no one to undertake the work. One of the Horsforth in Bloom volunteer’s, Freda Copley set about to assess the site and consequently a wild life garden was proposed and accepted by HIB and the Parish Church Council.

The general proposal was made to Richard Gill, then in charge of Parks and Countryside, now the officer for the local ‘In Bloom’ projects (the brainchild of the English Tourist Board). Richard advised on the officials to be contacted and offered a grant of £500 if permissions were given. Phil Stephenson (cemeteries and crematoria) was contacted and he gave consent.

In 2009, Peter Mallott joined Horsforth in Bloom and was asked by Freda if he would be prepared to take on the responsibility of upkeep of the Burial ground, as well as the plot of land directly underneath the Jubilee clock on Church Road at it’s junction with Hall Lane.

Whilst Freda had done a magnificent job in the upkeep of the grounds she felt a younger person would be in a better position to take on the role.

One of the problems Freda encountered was that the local contractor, employed by Leeds City Council simply ‘cut and dropped’ the grass, leaving her, and others many hours in clearing up the cut debris.

Peter Mallott, who was able to use his own petrol mower to make a much neater cut and at the same time was able to recover the cut grass to use on the compost area within the grounds.

Although Freda ‘bowed out’ from the more physical aspects within the ground, she has a wealth of specialist knowledge of wildflowers and is always generous with her advice.

She occasionally still ‘tinkers’ with the upkeep of the graves and can often be seen sat beside a one brandishing a small kitchen knife which she uses as her weeding implement!

Whilst there is much work still to do to enhance the appearance of the grounds, the living legacy of Freda’s work, coupled with the enthusiasm of Peter Mallott means that the Old Burial Ground has become a positive, visionary, wildflower & wildlife area for all the people of Horsforth to enjoy. (OBG Dec14)