



St James' Heritage & Environment Group

Celebrate Our Churchyard on May 19th

Thursday 19th May is the date of our first Annual General Meeting. A short business meeting starting at 3pm will be followed by a celebration event to which everyone is invited. The theme of this event is -

Making our outdoor spaces more beautiful!

Join us in enjoying the churchyard and admiring the improvements that have been made during the past year or so – including the restoration of Richard Grainger's grave.

Plant a hanging basket or pot with bedding plants to take home – plants, equipment and help provided. Or help with planting around the churchyard entrance.

Join us for the whole afternoon or drop in at **any time between 3 – 7pm**. As well as the planting activities, there will be refreshments, displays, opportunities to meet other people and find out more about what's happening at St James'.

Free of charge to members of the Heritage & Environment Group (membership costs £2)

St James' Heritage & Environment Group – the first year

It is just over a year since the Group was formally established as an independent group committed to improving the graveyard and building of St James' Church and running activities for the local community to explore and enjoy these precious local assets. During this time a lot has been achieved.

- The graveyard looks much tidier and more attractive now as a result of the hard work of our Graveyard Group. As well as clearing and maintaining it, there have also been improvements such as planting spring bulbs and a new boundary hedge.
- An important first step towards realising our ambitious plans to restore some of the most historic graves has been taken with the completion of restoration work on Richard Grainger's grave in time for the City's commemoration of the 150th anniversary of his death.
- The Group has run a number of successful events which have brought people of all ages into St James' and enabled them to find out more about the fascinating history of this area and its community. The next year will see even more happening.
- The Group has supported the plans to develop St James' as a Centre for Culture & Heritage. A major step recently was getting a big repair grant from English Heritage

Join us in making things happen at the heart of our community.

St James' Heritage and Environment Group

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News from the Graveyard

We aim to make St James' churchyard an attractive green space for people to explore and enjoy. This is partly about making sure that it is kept tidy and clear. The Graveyard Group meets weekly to chop, prune, pick up litter, and also to do new planting. The Group is also collecting information about who is buried at St James' – did you know we have a world-class boxer buried there? We have a data-base of the 600 or so graves and also copies of the burial records for the 15,000+ people buried there since it first opened in 1833. We receive regular enquiries from people trying to trace where family or friends are buried and have been able to provide information from our records. We are also in the process of setting up a website with information on about St James'.

If you would like to help, or just want to look around the graveyard or ask a question, visit us on a Tuesday afternoon between 2.00 - 3.30pm or ring on 0191 2528675. You can get a soup and cake lunch beforehand at *Lunchbreak* in the church hall between 12-2pm.

Getting children involved

We are keen that children should learn more about the history of this area and value its heritage and environment through taking part in activities in the churchyard. We have been successful recently in getting funding from the *Make Your Mark* programme to run three projects –

- A sculpture project with children from Bridgwater School where they worked with a sculptor to explore the churchyard and design metal sculptures to be sited there
- A drama and film project with children from St John's School which will use the churchyard as the stage for enacting stories from the history of this area
- A printed children's trail is being designed to encourage children to explore the graveyard. Children from Bridgewater School have helped to develop this.

Local People: Local Heroes

This area has a fascinating and varied history. It used to be at the forefront of global industrial development. We want to celebrate the skills, inventions and achievements that contributed to this. *Local People, Local Heroes* is our new programme of events and activities –

- The *Big Buddle Event* took place in March, when over 60 people took part in a day of tours and talks about the mining engineer John Buddle who owned collieries in this area and is buried at St James'. Linked with this, we have produced a booklet about Buddle's life and achievements – available free of charge from the Group.
- *Men's Lives* is a project to record the experiences and memories of local older men, especially about working in the traditional industries which no longer exist here. Please get in touch if you have a story to tell about your own life or know someone who would be willing to talk to us.
- We are designing a trail starting from St James' illustrating some of the buildings and sites connected with the famous developer Richard Grainger and his associates – to coincide with the 150th anniversary of his death.

Bat and Nature Walk

Tuesday 26th April 5 – 8pm

Family event organised jointly with Hodgkin Park Users Group

Join us and see what happens in the graveyard at dusk - Refreshments and buffet

Do you have an email address?

If you have an email address, please can you let us know it so that we can communicate with you this way in future. This will save postage so that we can spend more on improving the graveyard and running activities.