

Mary Tavy Parish Council

We are delighted to report that the very successful Beating of the Bounds was completed on 12th August and that Planning Consent has recently been received for the construction of the DAA night landing site on the Recreation Ground. We are also pleased to report that we have commented to the DNPA regarding the Parish Settlement Profile they published as part of the Local Plan review. The terms of the new Local Plan will of course affect everyday life in all Dartmoor communities. Interestingly, immediately prior to the closing date for such comment only 8 parishes out of over 50 had made such a return to the DNPA!

A very small minority of local people seem surprised that regulations are in place for the proper operation of our parish cemetery. Regulations have been in place for the last 15 years and have remained largely unchanged despite the annual review process. The regulations are not arbitrary and are based on best practice drawn from the regulations of the Diocese of Exeter and neighbouring Burial Authorities, such as Tavistock Town Council, and quite frankly plain common sense. The 15 regulations are simple and straightforward. They provide a balance between the needs of the bereaved and our duty as a Burial Authority to ensure that our cemetery offers a safe, tidy, respectful and dignified environment for all. The parish cemetery is council property and control of it and its operation is totally in the hands of MTPC. Councillors expect that all those who purchase an Exclusive Right of Burial or the Right to erect a headstone with an inscription will comply with the cemetery regulations. The same level of compliance is required of all visitors attending graves in the parish cemetery where the regulations are on display.

While all parishioners have the right to elect to be buried in the parish cemetery, our agreement is dependent on the purchaser accepting the regulations in force at the time and any subsequent amendments made to them. All those who purchase any of the Rights relating to a burial are given a copy of the Charges and Regulations booklet. It has always been the policy of MTPC to view this booklet as, in effect, being the Terms and Conditions governing any sale of Rights. As several weeks elapse between the occurrence of a death and the interment we are reassured to note that bereaved families are able to cope with this legal aspect of a burial. As our Clerk is readily available to give advice and clarification prior to an interment those who still find our rules unacceptable should seek to use an alternative burial ground. They will of course discover that alternative venues have much the same rules as we do.

The parish cemetery is financially supported by Parish Precept funds. Therefore the cost of maintenance is important and is why we have asked those who insist on laying floral tributes along the length of a grave to follow cemetery regulations. These ill-considered actions make it more time-consuming for our contractor to cut and trim the grass. In simple terms, the longer it takes, the more it costs. As MTPC has an enviable record over the last 2 years of reducing the Parish Precept we feel certain that parishioners will wish to support us in keeping a tight grip on our expenditure of their money. Your Council remains unmoved by the actions of individuals who, simply because they cannot have their own way, resort to parading their discontent in local newspapers and social media. Equally we view petitions drawn up and signed by non-residents to have little value as such people do not contribute towards the management costs of our cemetery. We of course encourage all parishioners who feel they have a justifiable complaint to bring it to our attention in Parishioners' Time prior to our monthly Parish Council meeting. It remains our firm belief that good management and insistence on regulatory compliance is the only certain way of ensuring that people will use the cemetery respectfully and with due regard for the sensibilities of other parishioners.

Much to the wry amusement of Councillors, but also tinged with a degree of sadness and despair, our Clerk has informed us that a parishioner who was complaining to her about a Council decision firmly believed that we are paid for the work that we undertake on behalf of the community. The reality is of course quite the opposite. Parish Councillors receive no payment at all for holding public office and seldom even claim expenses incurred in the execution of their duties. The situation is totally different for the next 2 tiers of local government where allowances and expenses are much more the order of the day. Is this perhaps the reason why we still have 3 vacancies on MTPC?

Councillor Peter Jarvis ~ Vice-Chairman, Mary Tavy Parish Council.