# The Cemetery Under Lockdown

Lockdown began 23rd March 2020. Fortunately we had completed the first phase of planting along the lower line of the Catacomb building. Thanks to the generosity of our friends Morag and Robin we planted the following: Ferns, both deciduous and evergreen; Hellebore hybrids in colours ranging from pale yellowish white through to dark dusky red; Epimedium yellow flowering species; Arum maculatum (Lords and Ladies Lily), and Convallaria majalis (Lily of the Valley). Some pieces of Polygonatum spp (Solomon’s Seal) may have crept in there too. The plants went in while it was still pretty wet so I hope they got off to a good start. The Ferns will give structure to the planting and the shade loving Epimediums and Convallaria will spread and give delicate colour and scent. The winter and early spring flowering Hellebores provide nectar for early bees and will sow their seeds and multiply.

As to the rest of our plans for the lower Catacomb area. Here is the situation. Progress with the Council’s Forestry Dept which was going great guns in early February was brought to an abrupt halt in March. The email correspondence I had with Ian Morrison (10th 11th and 13th Feb) resulted in offers of two 2 m high pear trees (Pyrus communis) to plant at the corners by the stairs. These trees would come from the Forestry’s own nursery plot and thereby meet the Council’s bio security requirements. Ian Morrison has also offered us some domestic apple trees from his own collection. After agreement from Ellen I accepted all this with our grateful thanks, Lets hope we can get planting again come autumn/winter 2020.

In the meantime and generally in the lower Catacomb area we should look after the Ferns etc and prepare as much of the rest of the ground for similar plantings by keeping on top of the brambles and nettles. I see that many valuable wild flowers are coming up well in the area including one called Good King Henry/Fat Hen/Pernnial Goosefoot. Botanical name Blitum bonus-henricus. This is a tall nettly-looking plant but it does not sting. It has small white flowers and big green leaves which you can cook like Spinach (it is a spinach relative). In terms of bio diversity Good King Henry is host plant to several moth species.

The Sarcococca hedge planted behind the Screen Wall seems to be suffering a bit from the dry weather. We need to keep it weed free and try to stop the grass and dock encroaching from all around.

Similarly the mound to the left of the Screen Wall has remained very dry. Morag and Robin gave us Vincas (Periwinkle) and these are now in along with two Deutzia bushes which might flower this year. The Viburnum opulus is going great guns and it now has a winter jasmine (courtesy of Iain ) alongside.

The area behind the second bench is once more rampant but the wild flowers including foxgloves planted during the winter should struggle through if we keep the brambles from taking over. The Bird Cherry Tree had blossom so we should get fruit. The Rowans including the little new one we put in last year are doing fine as are the Hawthorns and the three wild roses at the grave for ‘Shirley’. Maybe we should get some more wild roses (Rosa canina) when Covid permits.

I look forward to getting back to some active work and seeing you all again.

If anyone would like to add anything to this please do let me know. It is intended eventually for the website.

P:S: Bio Diversity should be a key aim for us. I have found charts on Butterflies, Moths and Creepy Crawlies recently and will do some research on the food source plants they like.