



TREE TO BE FELLED IN CHITHURST GRAVEYARD

Free logs!!

16th December

(3pm +)



Collect from:

Trotton common meadow
Southdowns Manor car park

The parish council announces that it has been reluctantly forced to arrange to have an ash tree in Chithurst graveyard felled because it has ash die-back disease and would otherwise become a danger to pedestrians / church-goers and to the (newish) church roof. Local residents will therefore have the opportunity to collect the wood for logs.

As the graveyard was closed to burials in 1950, it became legally the responsibility of the parish council to maintain the graveyard - which normally means little more than keeping the grass and hedges under control – for which we pay about £250 a year. However, last year, foresters who were dealing with a lot of diseased trees in the nearby Chithurst Monastery land reported that the large ash tree adjacent to the church (and overhanging its roof) was looking unhealthy.

A series of visits by tree specialists confirmed that the tree has contracted ash die-back disease. This usually begins by affecting the extremities of the tree but then tends to lead to invasion of the trunk and main limbs by various fungal and other parasites, so that large branches or the whole tree can fall with little warning. It can be hard, without regular (and expensive) expert testing, to establish when it is reaching this stage. When it does, though, it becomes too dangerous for tree surgeons to climb the tree and lop or fell it, so it has to be left to fall (dangerous in this position) or taken down by crane – which would have trouble reaching the church via narrow lanes and the bridge!

The parish council therefore decided, early this year, that the only safe course was to have the tree felled before it became dangerous – the only realistic alternative would have been to close the graveyard (and therefore the church) until the tree fell down! However, a neighbour asked for a delay to commission, at their own cost, a registered consultant of the Arboricultural Association to inspect the tree. This was agreed and the consultant confirmed that the tree is suffering from ash die-back disease. He found no existing signs that the tree was already suffering from honey fungus or other secondary infections, and noted that: *“...it is possible that the tree will hold its own for some time.”* but he admitted: *“...it is very probable that in the long-term the tree will need to be removed...”*.

Faced with Tree Council advice that: *“... affected trees can become unstable and dangerous very quickly. The rot is usually associated with other secondary pathogens such as honey fungus and can occur without any obvious dieback symptoms in the canopy. This makes identifying ‘dangerous’ ash trees considerably harder.”* the parish council decided it could not risk any further delay. The rector and churchwardens agreed but advised that permission would be required from the diocese. They too were in favour until the neighbour appealed, at which point the diocese referred the case to the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Chichester – at our expense! The court agreed that the tree should come down but the fees amounted to £830 – on top of the £1,600 it will cost us to have the tree felled! Fortunately, a friend of the church raised £1,500 towards this so we, the residents, will not have to pay the cost.

... and, as some compensation for what it will cost us, the contractors have agreed to let the residents keep the wood – and ash is said to be the very best wood for burning in domestic fires. As they don't want their work obstructed, though, they don't want people collecting it from the church area and have agreed to drop piles of logs in two places for us all to collect **from 3pm onwards on 16th December:**

- For residents living East of Trotton bridge: meadow at top of track off A272 opposite Chithurst Lane
- Other residents: the old tennis courts – East end of car park at Southdowns Manor

FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED