



RUTLISH SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Mr A. Williamson

24 September 2017

Dear John,

Re: Rutlish School 'Memorial Garden'

Rutlish School first opened its doors in 1895 and has been an extraordinary School ever since.

Given the age of the School it is to a very large extent defined by the two World Wars of the 20th Century. During the First World War ninety eight former boys of the School lost their lives and during the Second World War eighty three former boys died. Amongst the dead and the survivors were distinguished soldiers many of whom were decorated including two recipients of the Victoria Cross, John Dimmer & George Cates.

There are two Memorial Boards in the School representing each of the World Wars and Remembrance Services take place annually at the School and your Church, St Mary's, where the lost Rutlish lives occupy centre theme of the Service on Remembrance Sunday in November.

Recently published by Cynthia Clift & Peter Moulin: 'Rutlish in the Great War' is a detailed account of the former boys of Rutlish School who fought and died in the First World War. The School in recent years has visited many times the First World War graves of Belgium & France identifying former Rutlish boys' graves.

The School has on its site a piece of ground just under half of an acre surrounded by a listed wall & an interwoven fence that has for years had little purpose and has been left derelict for many decades. The Full Governing Body and in agreement with the Local Authority, Merton Council, have fully supported an initiative by the School to turn this piece of land into a 'Memorial Garden' for the Rutlish Fallen.

The project oversight is being provided by myself and the ambition is to complete the project by 11 November 2018 the 100 year anniversary of the ending of the First World War. We hope to open the 'Memorial Garden' on the nearest Sunday to the 11th November 2018 with you conducting the opening service.

In terms of Design I recently visited the Aberfan Garden of Remembrance a very moving experience indeed.

Key Phases of the 'Memorial Garden' Project:

- Clean up existing piece of land to produce a clean canvas from which to Design the Garden;
- Secure Perimeter Fencing & a conduct full tree analysis of the Garden;
- Communicate with local Stakeholders to be fully transparent about project plans;
- Engage Rutlish students in the Design of the Garden;
- Execute Design that will involve a Garden that will be easy to maintain;
- The Garden will have pathways to walk around, specific trees planted for commemoration, plants, flowers, etc.;
- Following the First World War, Rutlish School established a 'House' System, eight in all;
- Designs may involve eight separate plots of grass and a ninth plot that will have a Water Feature reflecting the intended peace & tranquillity of the Garden;
- Around the outside of the Garden and on the edges of the pathway will be Remembrance benches;



- The Garden intends to be nature reserve/attraction with bees, butterflies, birds, etc.

In terms of total cost that is not fully known at this time. It maybe that phase 1 (to be finished by November 2018) can be further developed in the coming years and clearly there is the cost of annual maintenance that has to be paid.

We both appreciate the history of the School and that Rutlish School should probably have an appropriate 'Memorial Garden' where lessons can be taught in the summer months in the Garden remembering the past but also ensuring that in the future the horrors of battle are avoided at all costs.

The local community is very much connected with the School as you are very much aware. I was wondering whether it would be possible to display this letter on your web site or on the noticeboard in the church hall please.

Transparency with the local community is paramount on such a project as this. I was wondering whether any of your congregation would like to assist in the project be it from a project expertise perspective, Garden design, assist in the actual development of the Garden, contribution of plants/shrubs, etc., financial contribution to the project or any help at all. I would be grateful of all assistance. If you would like me to discuss this project in person that would be absolutely fine. My email address is: peterapan@aol.com

With Best Wishes

Yours Sincerely

Peter Norrie
Chair, Rutlish Full Governing Body.

