

St Leonard's, Yarpole

Four of us joined the online workshop in March, with Harriet Carty of Caring for Gods Acre talking about the week. From this we gleaned lots of really useful information about ivy management and time of strimming and cutting. This has resulted in us splitting our churchyard into 2 parts for management purposes. We also heard about the "Churches Count on Nature" week and thought "*hey we can do something around that*".

So we held an exhibition in the Church about what you might find in churchyards, why churchyards were important and the folklore surrounding them. We included kids activities, packets of wildflower seeds and catalogues that people could take away as well as spotter sheets – sadly very few of the latter were completed by visitors.



One colleague invited some known specialists to help us start to build a species list for submission to the biodiversity database. We were able to identify over 95 different plants but need to work on our bird list and invertebrates.



We developed a guided walk around the burial ground (which is separate to the churchyard) to entice people to have a look. One spin off from this has been an "Adopt a grave" scheme to care for untended graves, 10 have now been adopted and an Ancestry enthusiast is helping us build information about these forgotten people. We also planted 1000 wild daffodil bulbs in there.

The café (open Thursday afternoons) added themed food - offering bird shaped biscuits and muffins with bumble bees. We also invited a local willow weaver to come in and give us a demonstration. Not strictly 'eco' but it did get people into the churchyard and from this we now have a summer programme of events including a choir, basic upholstery skills and poetry readings – fingers crossed for good weather.

Rose Stimson



St Laurence's, Church Stretton



The churchyard at St Laurence's in Church Stretton is always open for people to enjoy. But on Sunday 13th June there was a special opportunity for people to look around and the chance to join in recording and identifying species. To help people appreciate the species and management of the churchyards, lots of helpful signs were placed.

Some simply identified plant species, others explained their uses. Some encouraged reflection while others explained the management of different areas or the wildlife found in particular habitats. There has been loads of positive feedback regarding the signs, both from churchgoers and passers by, with people really enjoying the chance to learn a little more, to make time to reflect on the wonder of God's creation and brush up their plant ID skills.



On the Sunday, some surveying took place together with simple ID sheets available for younger passers by. Surveys in the past 15 years have identified 4 species of mammal, 6 species of birds passing through or resident, 22 species of invertebrates, 128 species of flowering plants and 41 species of lichens and fungi. So it was quite a challenge to find additional species! However, several invertebrates, 4 beetles and 3 bees, were added to the list along with 3 new birds.

A week later there was a Messy Church Outdoors session after school. We had over 20 children and adults participating and we used the ID sheets produced by Churches Count on Nature.



The youngsters were very enthusiastic in seeking out and identifying the 8 flowers on their sheets and adding new ones (with some enthusiastically drawing or painting these). Then we looked for bugs of all kinds and found woodlice, earwig, a millipede, bees (including a nest of Red Tailed bees), beetles and best of all a beautiful Scarlet Tiger moth was seen flying through. The youngsters and their helpers thus managed to add another 6 species to the official Churchyard list.

The information signs will remain in the churchyard until the wildflower areas are cut back late August so please go and enjoy them. As they fade in heavy rain, they will probably then be stored and reappear next spring.