

St Nicholas Churchyard becoming an eco-friendly churchyard

Below is the text I have sent to the Winsley Weaver for their May edition to inform the community of this new initiative! Could we have similar experiments in our other three churchyards? Ann, Rector

Dear friends

We hope that despite the restrictions, you were able to enjoy Easter. We certainly missed seeing you and gathering together for our celebrations and Easter Egg hunts in church. However, thank you to all the families who joined in and made Easter gardens; we hope you enjoyed the surprise Easter egg left safely on your doorstep. Sadly, it is likely that our church will remain physically closed for at least some of the month of May but should it be possible to open, we will put news of services on our website, and post them outside the church

Whilst the building may remain closed in order to keep people safe, the Christian faith has always been more about people and relationships than about a building, so we assure you we are open, just using different methods of communication!

We are streaming Sunday services on YouTube, keeping in touch with each other by phone, Skype, Zoom and WhatsApp, keeping each other updated with articles, prayers and resources on our website and sharing news stories in our weekly online NewsLink. If you have a story to tell, information to share or a photo to inspire others, do please let me know so I can include it. If you just want to have a chat, our contact details are below. We look forward to hearing from you.

St Nicholas Churchyard

Our churchyard of course remains open and whilst maintaining social distancing, do please come and use it as a peaceful, prayerful place to be, or to wander around on your daily walk.

Whilst visiting you can observe our new wildlife area!

In November 2019 the Church Council decided to set aside for one year a section of the churchyard, for the grass to be left uncut during the growing season of March through to July. The purpose of this is to see what plants which are cut repeatedly as part of the summer mowing regime, occur within the churchyard, with a view to having a wildflower meadow area annually.

An area was agreed at the west end of the churchyard and during spring and early summer, David Green, a local ecologist/botanist will monitor and record all flowering plant species seen throughout the churchyard over the entire 2020 growing season. Special emphasis will be given to recording all the flowering plants that occur within the newly taped off wildflower area. In the two visits already made this year, over 120 flowering plants have been found!

The purposes of this exercise are threefold:

- 1) for us to understand the diversity of the largest greenfield open space in the centre of Winsley.
- 2) to maximise this space for future use for urban wildlife, and as a resource for the community
- 3) to allow the church committee to manage it in a more eco-friendly way.

As part of this exercise we are looking to see what else occurs within the churchyard. So, during Dave's periodic visits, (he walks from Bradford-on-Avon), he has set out some reptile mats, these attract reptiles who warm themselves underneath on sunny days, and allows when carefully lifting them, to observe what's there. So far we have proven that we have both male and female Slow Worms on the site.

Once all the grasses and flowers have finished flowering, in approximately the third week of July, all will be cut back, and the churchyard will resume its normal close cut look.

We would appreciate anyone visiting the site not to disturb these mats and not to enter the taped off wildflower area.

It is hoped if we are unlocked by June, that Dave will have an opportunity to present an open day for people to come and see and ask questions.

We welcome your support and ideas for this project.

Revd Ann Keating, Rector