

THE LYCHGATE



Opportunities in Adversary by Harriet Carty, Director of Caring for God's Acre

In these extraordinary times, we are all finding new ways of communicating and new ways to seek solace and inspiration. At Caring for God's Acre, we have postponed some activities and events, but we still have many things going on, so please join in with us and keep in contact.

Do you know anybody who would enjoy membership of Caring for God's Acre? We are offering FREE membership for 2020 to those who sign up, so please let them know and help us to spread the word!

We are also sending out Monthly Nature Notes to enjoy or perhaps include in newsletters or parish magazines. Email info@cfga.org.uk to receive yours.

If you are lucky enough to have access to a churchyard or cemetery as part of the view from your windows or for your daily exercise route, then perhaps you can make

a note of any wildlife that you see. As the spring progresses, we have a unique opportunity to see which wildflowers are present, mown short in previous years and now able to flower. Make a list yourself or if in doubt, ask a local botanist or keen gardener to take their exercise

here and advise. You may find that insects have found this new treasure trove of pollen and nectar. Listen for buzzing of contented bees and search for butterflies, crickets and grasshoppers. We would love to hear about what you see, to add your records to our NBN portal (see p4) building the picture of burial grounds across the country and how truly vital they are for biodiversity.

(Continued overleaf)

Help us raise £2020 for our 20th anniversary in 2020

For our 20th anniversary we have launched an appeal to raise £2020 by encouraging supporters to give £20 to support our work in keeping burial grounds beautiful. Please spread the word and if you feel able to donate £20, contact Prue on info@cfga.org.uk who can e-mail or post you a form. Alternatively you can pay directly online head straight to www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/get-involved/20-for-20-in-2020 Thank you very much for your support.

(Continued from front cover)

You may have been enjoying our slideshows of photos sent in by members and supporters. These can be found on our website, our Facebook and our Twitter accounts; take a look and find yourself transported by the beautiful shots that people have sent in. With a different theme each month, you can enjoy Lichens and Snowdrops from January, Carvings and Crocuses from February and Primroses and Preaching Crosses from March. Consider taking a camera with you on walks or searching through your photos to see if you can send us something for the coming months. April will feature Buds and Blossom, May is Birds and Bluebells and we will be adding more monthly themes so please keep checking the website!

Many of you may not be able to visit your local site and may be itching to get on with your usual management tasks. Whilst this can be concerning, as you and your community are used to seeing the site managed in a particular way, you may find fabulous shows of wildflowers when you are next able to visit. When restrictions lift you might like to pause before reverting to your old management system. This could be the year that you decide to make a change; allowing parts of the site to flower each year? Whatever you decide, whether grass is long or short, please try and rake up the cuttings, this really makes all the difference to the wildflowers and fungi growing there.

It is with great sadness that we have to report that Keith Wilson, our treasurer and office volunteer since the charity began 20 years ago, passed away in February.

Keith did a great amount for the charity, including coming into the office every Monday to do the accounts with a spring in his step (even when he was well into his 80s). As anyone involved in finances can imagine, bookkeeping for a charity with multiple projects on the go is no easy task and Keith's favourite saying on the more difficult days was 'Where there's a Wilson there's a way'. And indeed, there always was.



Keeping in our

At the end of April after a journey of over 5000 miles from south of the Sahara, the first swifts arrive and grace our skies with their aerial acrobatics. Swifts spend their life almost entirely on the wing and even feed and sleep in flight. They feed exclusively on insects and only come to land when nesting. During their time incubating eggs (between 19 and 25 days) to keep in shape they perform 'press-ups' using their wings.

Originally cave, tree hole and cliff nesters, swifts have switched their nesting habits to high manmade structures, finding nest sites under tiles, in the eaves, in lofts, towers and spires. Here they construct a simple nest, entering and leaving quietly through narrow openings. They rarely leave droppings.

Often people do not know where swifts are nesting which leads many nest sites being destroyed or accidentally blocked – a contributing factor to the rapid decline of this wonderful bird. Swifts, like other wild birds are protected by law and it is illegal to kill or harm them, damage their nests or take their eggs.

Most of the 20,000 churches across England and Wales provide a great opportunity to help swifts by having nest boxes installed in their belfries. Where this has been done it has proved to be very successful and we are on a mission to inspire people to install nest boxes in many more.

On our website you will find a blog post by Dick Newell from Action for Swifts which explains in detail (with diagrams) how to fit nest boxes along with some frequently asked questions including:

Q: Will Swift boxes allow bats or other wildlife to enter the church?

A: As the nest boxes are sealed on the inside, no wildlife can get into the church.

Q: Do Swift droppings foul the church?

A: Unlike Swallows and House Martins, Swifts do not

produce large amounts of 'white-wash'. Swifts are clean birds, the adults consume the chicks' droppings, and very little is seen outside.

Q: Are Swifts affected by bellringing?

A: Swifts have been observed on video being momentarily startled when bells start to ring, they then soon settle down. Often, they do not react at all.

Although not essential, playing attraction calls (a recording of swifts) will increase the chances of success and reduce the time taken to attract the first occupants. As the belfry is so high it is rarely noticed by people.

In February our CfGA Conservation Team installed six nest boxes under the tower louvers of St Cuthbert's church in Clungunford, Shropshire. The wooden boxes were made by our dedicated long-time volunteer, Fred Porton. We have found that with older churches the sill of the belfry window is so wide and flat that a simple rectangular box can be placed onto the sill, with a brick on top to prevent the wind from moving it. A hole is then cut in the wire covering the louver – just larger than the opening in the box. Younger Victorian churches lack these wide, stone sills so more difficult and complicated joinery is needed!

We will be looking to the skies from April onwards to see if the swifts are using the boxes.

If you have swifts in your church or visiting your churchyard we would love to know about it.

Please contact liam@cfga.org.uk

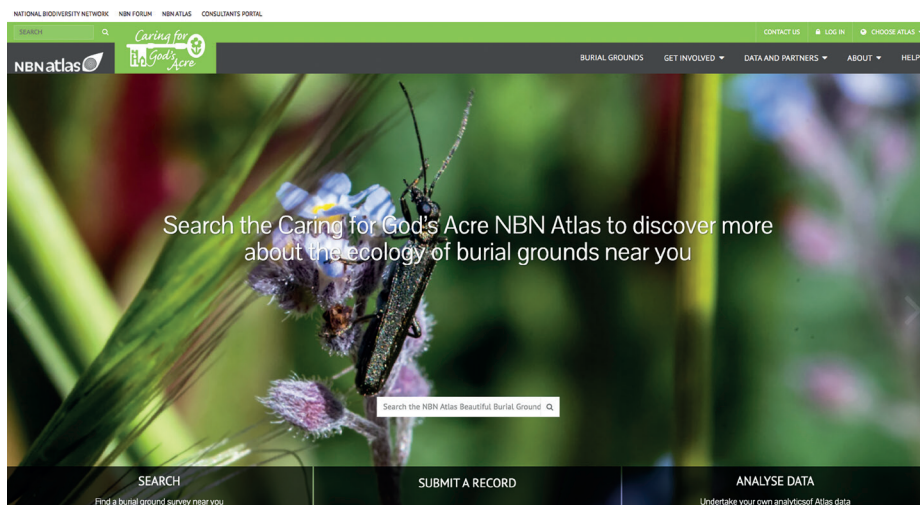
Swifts Skies

Get in touch with us for any advice on fitting nest boxes or head to **Action for Swifts** or **Swift Conservation** who can direct you to your local Swift Group.

actionforswifts.blogspot.com
www.swift-conservation.org



Burial Grounds Portal Launch



Burial grounds tend to be poorly understood in terms of their biodiversity when compared to other public green spaces. Many people feel that they need permission to search for and record wildlife within burial grounds and as a result, they are unaware of the interest of these sites.

Until now there has been no national database of these wildlife records. Anyone interested in burial grounds has had to contact individuals or groups who have been recording in order to find the information they wanted; and in many cases, the information cannot be found, even by a dedicated searcher!

Thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the hard work of the team at the National Biodiversity Network Atlas (NBN Atlas), in co-operation with Church Heritage Cymru and Church Heritage Record, we are delighted to launch our new system which allows everyone to discover what wildlife has been found at different burial grounds across England and Wales really easily.

The NBN Atlas is an online system drawing together records of wildlife UK-wide. Plants, mammals, birds, invertebrates, lichens and fungi are all recorded.

Over the past few years, we have been designing and creating our burial ground portal with the NBN Atlas team. The Burial Ground Portal sits within the much larger

NBN Atlas, focussing solely on records known to be from within burial grounds. In other words, the portal enables you to search for a particular burial ground in England and Wales and view all the available records of wildlife found there.

Why is this important?

1. Accessibility

We have provided a handy way for the public, church wardens, other site managers, naturalists and researchers, to discover exactly what wildlife has been recorded in burial grounds. This is now available at the click of a computer mouse.

2. Coverage

We rely on recording to identify places of high ecological value and to understand how places change. Burial grounds are badly under-recorded at the moment and what knowledge there is has not been previously shared. Sometimes a handful of individuals know that a site is special, but this knowledge can be easily lost over time.

3. Protection and Management

Organisations and individuals

looking after burial grounds need to know as much as possible about their sites so that they can manage them well and protect them from detrimental changes.

4. Targeted recording

We have made it possible for wildlife recorders to find burial grounds in their areas, learn whether there is anything currently known about an individual site, and plan where to go to enjoy looking for wildlife and making records.

5. Open-access

All of the records and information on the portal is completely open to anyone who has access to a computer, a phenomenal resource for individuals and groups approaching the subject for a variety of reasons.

6. Attitudes

We have found that those who enjoy identifying and recording wildlife rarely think to look in burial grounds and if they do, are not sure if they would be welcome. The Beautiful Burial Ground project, this NBN Atlas portal and the activities we are running, are helping to change this, which may in turn encourage more people to get involved with their conservation and management.

7. Built Heritage

Whilst the portal is primarily dedicated to ecology, we will be letting people know what has been recorded concerning the built heritage such as the memorials and social history investigation.

8. Designation

Many burial grounds have such a rich array of species that they become designated as Local Wildlife Sites. Making records is the first step to discovering which sites should be designated.

Who benefits?

We hope that many people will find the portal interesting and will start to use it regularly. It will be of great interest to:

- Communities learning about their locality
- Wildlife enthusiasts
- Built heritage and social history enthusiasts
- Local authorities managing municipal cemeteries and closed churchyards
- The Church of England and Church in Wales
- Churchwardens and Parochial Church Councils

Coverage

So far, we have added half of the English dioceses and all the Welsh dioceses to the portal. We are hoping to add the remaining English dioceses as soon as we receive the information needed from the Church of England.

Of the 10,389 sites we have listed so far, only 2,318 of those have records at the moment. Please see if you can add some records to the portal, we want to know about all species seen, from magpies and molehills to rare lichens.

We are working with a wide range of partners to increase the wildlife records on the portal, more information is going up every week. Please keep checking sites that you are interested in to see if something exciting has been added.

Help us to fill in the gaps!

The following Dioceses are currently available on the portal:

- Bangor • Birmingham
- Bristol • Carlisle
- Exeter • Guildford
- Leeds • Lincoln
- Liverpool • Llandaff
- London • Manchester
- Monmouth • Norwich

St Michael, Cefnlllys
Parish: Brecon Diocese: Swansea and Brecon

908 records (908 in total)

| Group | Species | Species : Common Name | Records |
|-------------------------|---------|--|---------|
| All Species | 401 | 1. <i>Abax parallelepipedus</i> | 7 |
| Animals | 282 | 2. <i>Abdera biflexuosa</i> | 3 |
| Amphibians | 0 | 3. <i>Acleria laterana</i> : Dark-triangle Button | 1 |
| Arthropods | 254 | 4. <i>Acleria vanegana</i> : Garden Rose Tortix | 3 |
| Crustaceans | 5 | 5. <i>Adalia decempunctata</i> : 10-spot Ladybird | 3 |
| Insects | 243 | 6. <i>Aegopinella nitidula</i> : Smooth Glass Snail | 1 |
| Myriapods | 2 | 7. <i>Aeshna juncea</i> : Common Hawker | 2 |
| Spiders And Allies | 4 | 8. <i>Agathidium nigripenne</i> | 4 |
| Birds | 1 | 9. <i>Aglais io</i> : Peacock | 1 |
| Fishes | 0 | 10. <i>Aglais urticae</i> : Small Tortoiseshell | 1 |
| Mammals | 7 | 11. <i>Agonum fuliginosum</i> | 4 |
| Molluscs | 20 | 12. <i>Agonum micans</i> | 4 |
| Reptiles | 0 | 13. <i>Agonum moestum</i> | 1 |
| Worms | 0 | 14. <i>Agonum muelleri</i> | 5 |
| Bacteria | 0 | 15. <i>Agriotes saccinatus</i> | 2 |
| Chromista | 0 | 16. <i>Agriotes pallidulus</i> | 3 |
| Fungi | 8 | 17. <i>Alosterna tabacicolor</i> | 2 |
| Plants | 111 | 18. <i>Amara familiaris</i> | 4 |
| Algae | 0 | 19. <i>Amblystegium serpens</i> var. <i>serpens</i> | 2 |
| Biophytes | 110 | 20. <i>Anania hortulata</i> : Small Magpie | 1 |
| Clubmosses And Fimosses | 0 | 21. <i>Anaspis fasciata</i> | 1 |
| Ferns And Allies | 0 | 22. <i>Anaspis frontalis</i> | 2 |
| Flowering Plants | 1 | 23. <i>Anaspis maculata</i> | 1 |
| Gymnosperms And Ginkgo | 0 | 24. <i>Anaspis regimbartii</i> | 1 |
| Horsetails | 0 | 25. <i>Anchomenus dorsalis</i> | 3 |
| Protozoa | 0 | 26. <i>Anisosticta novemdecimpunctata</i> : Water Ladybird | 4 |
| | | 27. <i>Anoncodon viticulosus</i> : Rambling Tail-moss | 1 |
| | | 28. <i>Anthracinus cardamines</i> : Orange-tin | 1 |

Burial Ground pages show the boundary on a map and all the species that have been found there.

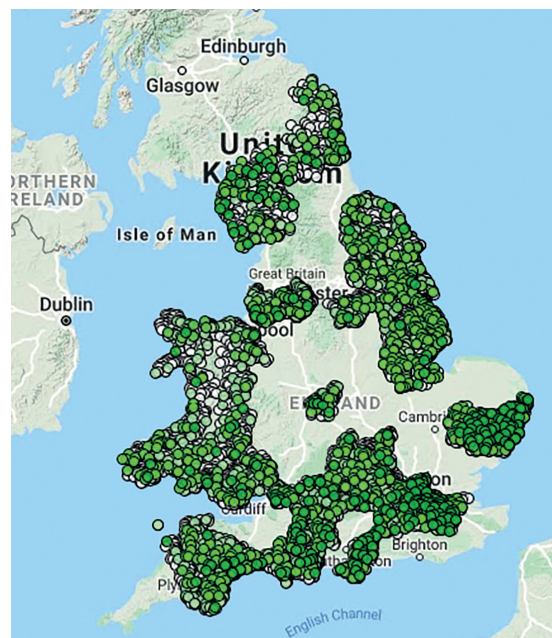
- Newcastle • Oxford
- Portsmouth • Rochester
- Salisbury • Sheffield
- Southwark • St David
- St Edmundsbury
- Swansea & Brecon • York

Moving Forward

You can find the portal by searching for **'burial grounds portal nbn'** on the internet. Alternatively, you can visit the website directly – www.burialgrounds.nbnatlas.org.

If you are new to recording please have a go, it is surprisingly easy and this may be start of a lifelong hobby. Visit our website and find the link for 'Share Records' at the bottom-right of the page. We have a video to help guide you through the few simple steps to get started. Alternatively send us a list of your sightings and we can put them onto the system for you.

We believe the creation of the Burial Ground Portal is a significant achievement, one we are proud to launch in 2020. This launch is an important step in realising our goal of encouraging people to investigate, care for and enjoy the interesting wildlife and heritage to be found within burial grounds.



The map of areas available on the portal so far.



There are 2 moths in this picture! Buff-tip & Poplar Hawk-moth.

Churchyard boundaries

Written by Judith Leigh, CfGA Trustee and member of Diocesan Advisory Committees.

The boundary of a churchyard is very significant as it separates off a consecrated space, which is also commonly (though not always) used for burials and is also a place where people historically might claim sanctuary. Most often this boundary is defined by a wall. For a modest medieval country church in a stone-rich area it is very likely to be of local stone rubble, sometimes roughly coursed with maybe a regional style coping. More costly churches built of dressed stone or ashlar may have walls in equivalent style. In regions where flint or brick were the traditional building materials, churchyard walls will probably match the building and as machine made brick began to be more widely used for Victorian churches, churchyard walls followed suit. A disjunction of materials may well indicate some rebuilding. The construction medium for all traditional walls will be lime mortar.

Churchyards were traditionally cleared from time to time if needed to make room for more burials, with grave markers removed, and any disarticulated bones reburied, and soil sometimes imported to provide greater depths. Over time this often results in the ground level inside the churchyard being substantially higher than that outside, reflecting many generations of burial. This means that the churchyard wall acts as a retaining wall for the higher ground inside, and this is one reason why walls occasionally collapse outwards due to the pressure of soil, exacerbated by poor drainage. Rebuilding will need to take this into account, providing more strength and better drainage, but at the same time it is important to re-use the original materials in the original style. All repairs and re-pointing (under faculty and maybe also under archaeological

supervision) should be in lime mortar as cement will inevitably crack and weaken the joints. During repair early sculpted stone fragments from earlier buildings or monuments may come to light, having been incorporated into the wall at periods of rebuilding. These are of clear importance and should be recorded and reported to the diocesan archaeologist.

The shape of a churchyard may say something about its origins. In Wales circular churchyards usually indicate an early Christian, i.e. pre-Norman, foundation. The churchyard boundaries may well have been extended, and early maps from county archives can identify this, as also can differences in the wall structure or style. The area enclosed by the wall may have included other buildings related to the church, such as a priest's house, the foundations of

which may survive below ground. Country churchyards may well have been grazed by sheep, so the wall needed to be stock proof, also to exclude cattle. Entrance through the churchyard wall may be through a roofed lych-gate, which had an important symbolic and liturgical role, particularly in funeral rites. At the entrance there may be a lych-stone on which a coffin could be rested. It is extremely difficult to judge the age of most churchyard walls, but many may be as old as or even older than the church they enclose.

Boundary wall surrounding the ovoid churchyard at St Stephen's Church, Llanstephan, Powys.

For more information about this beautiful churchyard, head to the Local to You part of our website.



A-Z of Burial Ground Conservation

F is for fungi

Where would we be without fungi? The more we learn about them, the more vital they seem to be for life on earth. There are nearly 150,000 species of fungi, classified in a kingdom of their own, separate from plants or animals.

Fungi include yeasts, rusts, mildews, moulds and of course mushrooms. Before the development of the microscope in the 18th century, fungi were a puzzle, appearing overnight and sometimes taken to be the work of dark powers. Actually, the visible part of the fungus is the fruit, filled with tiny spores; the rest is below ground and consists of hair-like filaments called hyphae which develop into a mesh, growing through the material from which they take their food. This mesh is called the mycelium. Churchyards and cemeteries can be brilliant places to search for grassland fungi such as waxcaps, spindles and corals. Grassland fungi are good indicators of a meadow which has not been disturbed, ploughed or sprayed, in other words unimproved grassland which is now so rare

in the U.K. The fungus mycelium wraps around the roots of plants, with species developing together over the years, decades and centuries. Mainly decomposers and recyclers they break down dead vegetation, returning its nutrients to the soil and are a vital part of life. Sites rich in fungi, and waxcaps in particular, are now rare in the UK and burial grounds form a crucial network of these sites across the country. Other distinctive fungi of grasslands include fairy clubs, earth tongues and fairy rings. Grassland fungi need fairly short grass in the autumn to allow the mushrooms to fruit and scatter spores. Scythe or mow your grassland in the summer, ready for the autumn show of these brightly coloured treats, making sure to rake off and remove the cut grass.



Project highlights

The Beautiful Burial Ground project includes opportunities to discover the social history of burial grounds as well as the fabulous wildlife, and we have a project focussing on just this which will be starting in Birmingham this year, as soon as we are able.

Celebrating Birmingham's Burial Grounds will involve digital mapping of four cemeteries and one closed churchyard; Key Hill and Warstone cemeteries in the Jewellery Quarter, plus two larger cemeteries – Brandwood End and Handsworth. The closed churchyard is St Barnabas, in Erdington which those familiar to the area will probably know from the fantastic café in the church building!

Once the mapping is complete, we will be encouraging local people to learn how to record inscriptions and make a simple assessment of the monument condition, loading all this information onto the digital system. This record will be owned and stored by Birmingham City Council and can be used by the public as well as site managers and historians. We will be running events and activities in all five of these sites, including investigations within the Birmingham archive for information on the burial grounds or those buried within them. Thanks to **Historic England** for funding this

project, we are excited to start as soon as it is safe to do so.

Another project also due to start this year will be based in Wales. **Welsh Burial Grounds for Wildlife** will use the information gleaned from our NBN portal (see pages 4 and 5) to help and support those managing Welsh burial grounds, particularly sites which are rich in wildlife. We will be able to target support and advice, depending on the species which have been identified, so a site which has a veteran yew and a rich array of lichens might need different management planning from one with little current wildlife interest but potential to create habitat and improve things. Our thanks to our President, HRH Prince Charles for funding this project via the **Prince of Wales's Charitable Fund**.

Meanwhile in Shropshire we have been using churchyards and cemeteries as a template and also a seed source for improving the wider countryside. We are partners within two Shropshire-based projects,

to help manage species-rich churchyards and then spread that biodiversity out further. **Restoring Shropshire's Verges Project** (RSVP) is funded by the **National Lottery Heritage Fund** and has been managing flowery verges for both plants and pollinators, using the hay cut from local churchyards as 'green hay' to be strewn straight after cutting, as a way of spreading the seeds. We have also been enhancing a meadow owned by the South Shropshire Housing Association in the same way. Working in partnership with the National Trust as part of their **Stepping Stones** project, we will be managing churchyards, laying hedges, putting up nest boxes, making mini-films and working on more verges, again using our precious churchyards as inspiration. We are grateful to players of **People's Postcode Lottery** for their support.

With all three of these projects we are currently busy with the planning and desk-based research so that we can hit the ground running once restrictions are lifted.



Historic England



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GML Ltd.
The Millichope Foundation
Ecclesiastical Movement
for Good Award

Thank you to all of our members, with your support we can:

- Employ our core staff, Harriet, Andrea and Prue
- Run our helpline – answering your calls and queries via phone or e-mail
- Maintain our resources and information including the website
- Produce this newsletter and maintain the charity
- Let people know about burial ground conservation through general publicity and social media
- Develop new projects and initiatives to support groups managing burial grounds across the country
- Support our wonderful Volunteer Team

Please get in touch:

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