

Mortimer

CHURCHES FOR NATURE PLAN

CHURCHYARD

GOOD PRACTICE IN –

Purpose and Planning

Maintain and ensure land, burial plots, and headstones. We encourage wildlife-friendly management of our burial ground that respects and cares for the natural flora and fauna without compromising Public Liability Risk management Requirements. Insure reasonable design intent to headstones and grave footprint as a safe Place of Use.

Plan annual risk assessment, grass cutting, hedge maintenance, plan in biodiversity elements and land management, add in wildlife sustainability to suit the seasons.

Management Principles and Guidelines.

The Old Chapel built in 1870 was the Methodist Church in Drury Lane. A village school classroom built in 1900 is attached at the rear of the Old Chapel. A new Church was built in 1972 in Westend Road on the site of the existing Church hall for the purpose being centralised in the hub of the village. The Old Chapel then became a private residence. The guiding principle of the Trustees was to ensure our burial ground maintained a natural biodiversity grasslands. Holly hedging and the large Yew tree are within the enclosure of the church yard and allows habitation for wildlife. Our principles and management protect the environment under the aspect of our Church council.

- A place of peace, reflection, and tranquillity
- A place of memories, spiritual mind thinking
- A place of love
- A place to express and seek calmness

A harmony of nature, wildflowers, bees, and butterflies

The chorus of Skylarks, birds vocal songs, wind bent grasses in tune with the relaxing song as the Nightingale sings

Good Neighbour Policy

We verbally inform and write letters of impending funerals to minimise disruption and where possible reduce carbon. Deceased families always comment on how nature has been embraced by our principles. They compliment our green space for their loved ones final journey. We constantly inform people as they walk by of the changes. We are aware that wild areas can confuse however we try to balance the environment that eases the minds of those concerned.

Hedges and Trees

The Churchyard boundary on three sides are holly hedges with tall Ash Trees aligning the border on the west and north elevation. Holly is especially valuable for wildlife in winter when the thick cover of evergreen leaves gives a great place as shelter for small mammals like wood mice and also provides berries as a food source. The holly hedges are cut back on an annual rotation scheme so as to allow a constant food source and shelter.

Ash Trees. We love to grow them as they improve soil, and increase nutrients availability, a good food source.

Grass Areas

We have clear boundaries on grass cutting - long grass policy and short grass policy. We try to balance keeping long grass around the burial ground margins. Short grass cutting around the headstones and access ways. Most grass cuttings are taken away, but we retain part of them for composting. We keep green waste for a home and food source for Slow Worms, birds, hedgehogs.. Grass cuttings are bagged for our village resident's garden compost plus use on allotment land.

GRASSES - THE FUTURE

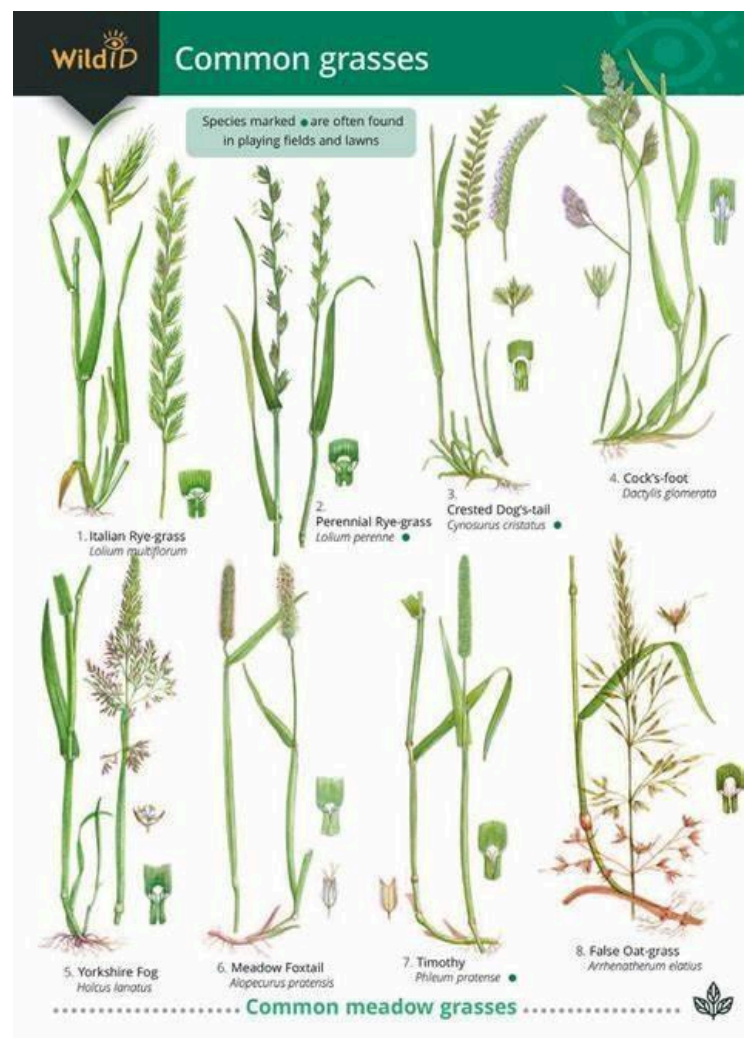
As part of a Global Community Barenbrug UK are developing through research into grass seeds increasingly focused on sustainability and to minimise negative impact on our environment. The thinking is that we should look at drought tolerant grasses. Common meadow grasses find a place in our Churchyard to increase grass areas for species of Bent, Fescue, Broome, rye grass, oat, and meadow grass as a source for Grass Hoppers and Caterpillars. How we nationally can find grasses for the future by adding 'warm season grasses' that sits with maintaining our biodiversity.

Wild Flower Areas.

Our surplus graveyard spoil is now a wildflower meadow garden. Natural wildflower meadows are one of the rarest of places for habitats that support hundreds of species of invertebrates, good pollinators such as bees and small haven for wildlife,

diversity and the environment through carbon capture, wildflowers support a range of invertebrates including

butterflies. Maintaining our wildflower area is to take 'HAY CUTS' after the flowering period. Hay cuts refers to flowers and grasses being cut at the base. We leave the cuttings to dry and drop seeds and our intention for future wildflower area is using grave



surrounds because families have ignored maintenance of their deceased plots over the years

WATER AND WILDLIFE

Provision of rainwater retention by supply and fix 200 litre water butt by agreement of the Old Chapel owners (water butt is made from recycled plastic). We tapped into their rainwater downpipe allowing water source to wildflower areas and our Churchyard pond. Ponds are the most biodiverse and ecologically important freshwater habitats and part of our eco system rainwater collection and intention at our Churchyard philosophy. The ground slope in the Churchyard causes surface water to run off ditch formation so retention is not possible.

Our new pond has aquatic plants, Miniature Pennywort, Variegated Slender Sweet Flag, Pennyroyal and Dutch Potato / Arrowhead. We have helped hedgehog swimming by provision of a wood access ramp. We await hopefully for –

- Water snails
- Larvae (Caddisfly, Dragonfly and Damselfly)
- Water beetles
- Common frogs
- Smooth newts
- Pond-skaters

And various bird species

Community

We embrace local people to use our Churchyard as a place of green space, reflection, and calmness, enjoying the environments' surrounding. We encourage our community spirit by outreaching to passers-by in Drury Lane, which is much used by cyclists, runners, dog walkers, local walkers, and Mums with little ones in pushchairs.

Joining the Berks, Bucks and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust BBOWT has bought understanding, knowledge and learning outcomes for restoring nature. Our Church mission is to attend the Discovery Nature Reserve to learn and practice from their Wildlife Trust events for the future

Our Land Management plan involves a schedule throughout the year

2024 Plan

Winter period- hedge reduction on a rotation programme cut back this year
West elevation 2024 north followed by east 2025 this allows continuous
Biodiversity, food and shelter for wildlife

SPRING

Long and short grass policy is hand drawn on a church yard map including
Mowing schedules.

The maps show wildlife habitats with surveys outlining use and numbers

We hold Eco church meetings that reflect future tree planting, use
Of church land IE raised beds for wildlife, fences used as a backdrop
for feeders . land used for beetle habitats inground.

Places for bird species survey

Monitor wildflower gardens for reseeding

Use of containers for biodiversity/wildlife/wildflowers if churches have limited

Natural space. IE inner cities or towns

SUMMER

Agree not to mow areas, use arisings for recycling as a form of mulching

Into the vegetable plots

Use of water retention containers these water butts take very little space to feed birds.

Use terracotta trays to fill with stone or gravel apply water almost level with the stone

For insects/bees and other wildlife this stops wildlife from drowning

Ponds created using small pond liners but fenced an area of 4ft square

If space is an issue.

Place a porous pot fill with water and fit lid adjacent to wildflower gardens this

Will give moisture to the flowers

Grow pollinators early spring in small space thus good for butterfly garden

In the summer again all plot of a map

AUTUMN

Good housekeeping on land management from summer's activities

Wildlife habitats need further attention- assessment of numbers

Vegetable Plots - did we attain full potential of crops

How can we measure climate change in biodiversity- only by creating

More full land use!!.

WINTER

Check habitats that wildlife has access -. reclean bird and bee/insect

Boxes,

2024 programme to fit swift boxes as focus on declining species

Hedge management

Best feeding process during winter period

Plan for 2025 Space for Nature.

Appendix 1.

Wildlife Survey 2023

Wildflowers

Naturalised Poppy
Bluebell
Bramble
Buttercup
Common Nettle
Daisy
Dandelion
Dead-nettle White
Dock broad leaved
Groundsel
Lords and Ladies
Lungwort
Nettle - stinging
Parsley -cow
Plantain – greater
Oxeye daisy
Poppy

Birds

Blackbird
Blue Tit
Great Tit
Green Finch
Jackdaw
Jenny Wren
Magpie
Pied Wagtail
Robin
Skylark
Starling
Wood Pigeon

Garden Plants

Daffodil
Dogwood
Holly
Photinia

Hedges

Holly
Blackthorn
Laurel

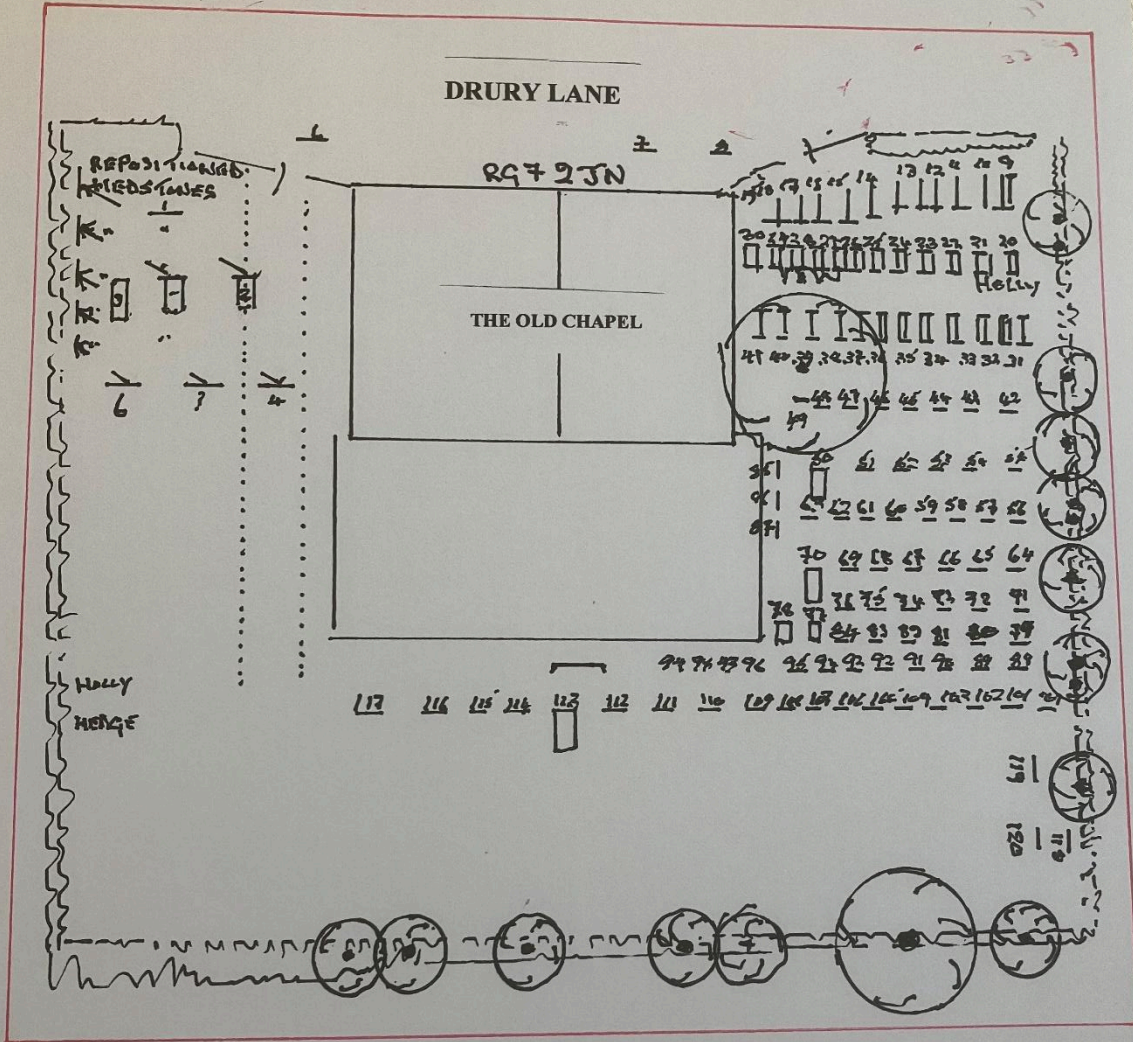
Trees

Ash
Holly
Silver Birch
Yew

Mammals

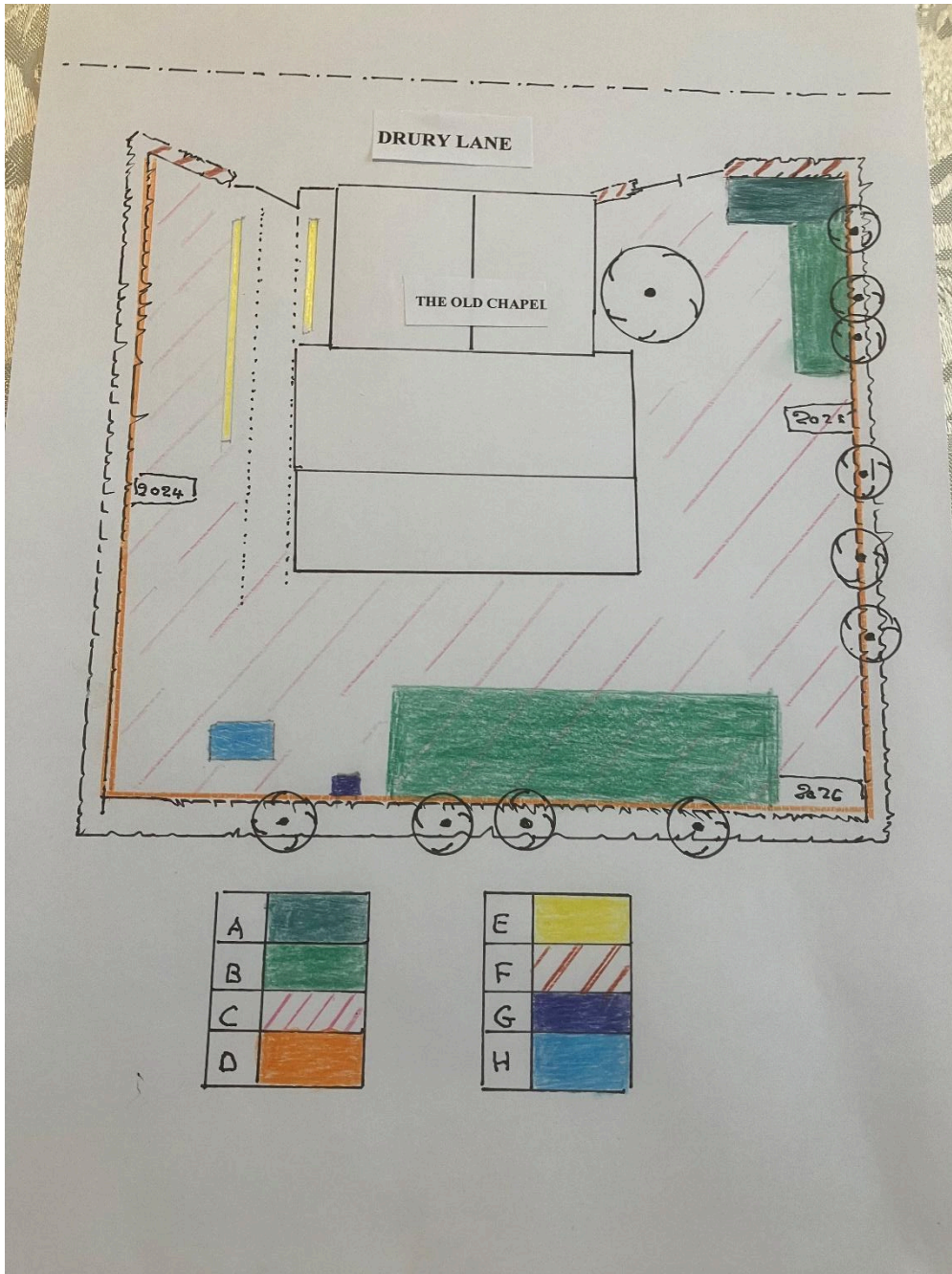
Pipistrelle Bat
Grey Squirrel

CHURCH YARD SURVEY



Appendix 2

CHURCHYARD MANAGEMENT PLAN / SURVEYS



1. The area marked 'A' is retained as our Long Grass Policy restoring biodiversity re – growth of different grasses and plants to upsurge in wildflowers – tree wood stacked for Wood beetles, rare beetles, fungi, and wildlife.
2. Area marked 'B' Future Long Grass. This will prevent scrub invasion and maintain the grass species shelter and food for small mammals and invertebrates.
3. Majority of area marked 'C' is taken as Short Grass Policy planned mowing, removal of cuttings is essential. It is the most difficult element of wildflower management thus having a biodiversity plan. The balance in providing our duty of care to the families requiring access the place of the deceased. Our aims are taken to phase in future Long Grass Policy for other variants of wildlife species.
4. Our hedge rows marked 'D' by having a planned hedge trimming rotation scheme which allows 'Leave alone' ensures winter / summer food source and nesting – rotation programme 2024 east elevation means vast amounts of carbon dioxide is locked up in their roots, leaves, and in the soil. We believe the CPRE Policy embraces the hedge row investment of low-risk management and cast a way to tackle climate change.
5. Area marked 'E' for colour contrast and welcome ambiance we planted daffodils either side of the Churchyard Footpath. These are good for pollinators and their yellow hue gives brightness in the Spring days. They need warm sunshine then a cool Autumn to germinate, a warmer Autumn will affect germination times.
6. Area marked 'F' different hedgerows, Laurel and Blackthorn give contrasting formation of colour – white flowers of the Blackthorn to the polished leaf of the Laurel. Early flowering of Blackthorn provides a valuable source of nectar and pollen for bees. Its foliage is a food plant for Caterpillars and Moths and a nature hedge makes a fashionable stock hedge.
7. Our Composter marked 'G' is a food source for insects and nutrients for Wildflowers. We also use the compost to top up sunken graves.
8. The Churchyard pond marked 'H'. Our small pond provides a perfect habitat for Frogs, Toads, and Dragonflies, Pond edges are planted with aquatic plants which provides food for Wildlife and helps to oxygenate the pond. We will carry out in our first year during the winter when the amphibians are away from the pond.



Overview

It is important to remember that a Churchyard managed for wildlife does not thrive on neglect. A Churchyard managed with sympathy and understanding can look well cared for and be attractive to people as well as wildlife. Management of wildlife can have other benefits including the need for less labour, reducing in particular the burden of very frequent grass cutting.

Birds and Bats use the Ash Trees as corridors for their natural habitat. Our Churchyard position is on a high point surrounded by farmland and woodland areas. The adjacent Spinney serves as a nesting place for the migrating Cuckoo.

We have a long-planned Churchyard nature plan for the future which we hope will follow in a seamless success plan.

References and Useful Resources

BBO Wildlife Trust

<https://www.bbowt.org.uk>

A Rocha

<https://ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk>

Tree Aid

<https://treeaid.org>

Barenbrug UK

<https://www.barenbrug.co.uk>

Field Studies Council

<https://www.field-studies-council.org>

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