

Living Churchyards

You may have noted information about the *Living Churchyard* project in the porch of St Mary's Church, Shipton. Both Milton and Shipton closed churchyards have, with the support of their PCCs, been brought under the umbrella of this churchyard conservation scheme which, sadly, the Local Wildlife Trust can no longer fund.



cutting regime which allows scarcer meadow flowers to blossom and not be overwhelmed by more invasive species.

Bugs and Bats

Churchyards are important sites for

bugs, bats and butterflies and the patchwork of lichens, which thrive on gravestones and old walls.

With the help of Dr. Margaret Ware, a wildflower survey in Shipton's old, closed churchyard in June 2006 produced a count of 80 wild flowers, some of them weeds, but invaluable for wildlife.

We plan to hold a family flora and fauna identification day in June at Milton churchyard, so perhaps Milton can 'up' that record. If you would like to take part in either Shipton or Milton, are interested in wild flowers or could help with grass raking or tidying, contact me as below:

Rich in Species

Areas used by the congregation are kept formally as before but other, less used, areas are managed for a healthy and varied flora and the grass-cutting regime is modified appropriately. Churchyards have often been carved out of meadowland or ancient pastures and are therefore often rich in species. It can be a case of trial and error to find the grass-

Spare Our Grass Verges

Wildflowers are back in fashion, says the latest edition of Vogue magazine: "For too long, Britain's native plants have been the Cinderella's of the horticultural world - dubbed as weeds and relegated to the hedgerows."

Grass verges are also a worry in conservation circles. Very often it is only here that native plants can survive. Even these natural rural habitats are under threat through pollution and grass being cut and left on the verge. These wild flowers not only add colour and richness to the parish scene but also provide shelter and food for birds and small

creatures. As a result of these concerns, the **Wychwood Project** has set up a **Parish Conservation** initiative.

Over the next year, we shall be surveying grass verges in four different parishes, on sites at the edges of villages. If this is encouraging, we shall go on to test different mowing regimes. If you see people in yellow, fluorescent jackets, we are not surveying for a new motorway! So, please, think twice before your vehicle mounts a grass verge, you never know what might be under your wheels.

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