

St John the Baptist, Carhampton churchyard



St John the Baptist Carhampton churchyard is run by a maintenance team of local volunteers, who take part in a monthly maintenance session. They are well established and have been increasing the value of the churchyard for wildlife since 2010, with an impressive wildflower meadow and an array of waxcap species present.

Actions we have taken to conserve and/or increase the value of our churchyard for wildlife

Maintenance

- We have wildlife-friendly areas which we leave to grow wild
- We vary cutting regimes so areas near the church are 'lawn' cut
- There are three wildflower meadow areas which are only cut once a year in rotation, so they get different flowering opportunities
- Other areas are cut bimonthly or twice a year
- Before strimming we do a warning 'swish' to alert slow worms
- We always remove any mown grass, either using a grass box or a rake after strimming

Communicating

- Ongoing write up in the monthly village newsletter to draw attention to what's going on e.g. when primroses are flowering, or the wax caps are out
- Occasional events e.g., wildflower identification talk
- "See weeds think bees" identification sheet
- Churchyard formed part of local garden club's outing!
- Photos of flora and fauna in the churchyard were part of Heritage England event in 2020

Species and habitats found in our churchyard



8 different
species of
waxcaps!

Day-flying moths

Grass cutting
pile



Butterflies - meadow
browns, comma,
speckled woods

Grasshoppers



Lots of beautiful tunnel spider
webs in the long grass



Slow worms



Dead wood



Species rich
grassland

Wildflower meadow - 57
wildflower species
identified in 2007 survey!



Bees

Bats - certainly
Pipistrelles



Bug hotel



How we have raised awareness in our community

- **Monthly article** in the village newsletter including maintenance dates and a positive sentence when possible
- **Events** such as a Bat Watch, in partnership with borrowed bat detectors and wildflower identification talks and quizzes
- **Posters** that highlight what to look out for in the churchyard or to advertise things the churchyard is taking part in e.g., National wildflower survey
- **Explanations** of wildflower friendly churchyards and why the cutting regime is the way it is
- **Parochial Church Council** are on side and supportive
- **Community Wildlife Mapping Project** has been set up on iNaturalist alongside a wildlife identification and iNaturalist training session

Key lessons we have learnt

- **Communication** is important, long term and never-ending
- **Be positive** - people love the idea of their area and community contributing to good things
- **Simple message is better**: explain why a churchyard is different from the surrounding farmland; for example, we highlight that unimproved species-rich grassland is unique, special and disappearing fast and that it can still often be found in churchyards
- **Mowing paths** round areas to make access as easy as possible really works
- **Having a maintenance team** makes all the difference - it is highly enjoyable, spreads the word as well as the workload and enables us to do what we can and not be pressured to do more than is possible
- **January New Year meal** - allows time for the team to review what has gone well, what may need to be improved and what we want to plan for the next year
- **Being respectful and understanding of peoples' feelings is important** - people like flowers but can be concerned about 'messy' areas of long grass near to the church, so maintenance plans and communication about what we are doing, when and why are essential

Get involved or find out more...

This information was provided by Emily Feldberg, St John the Baptist Carhampton's Churchyard Maintenance Team Leader.

If you would like to get involved in Carhampton, or get in touch with Emily to find out more about her experiences at the churchyard, please email teamwilder@somersetwildlife.org.

If you would like to find out more about how to get your churchyard/other church land/burial ground involved in Wilder Churches, please visit our [website](#), where you can find a variety of resources including a series of online training sessions.

Take a look at St John the Baptist, Carhampton churchyard..

