

Churchyards and Cemeteries: Where nature recovery starts





*'I like that ancient Saxon phrase,
which calls the burial ground God's Acre' Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

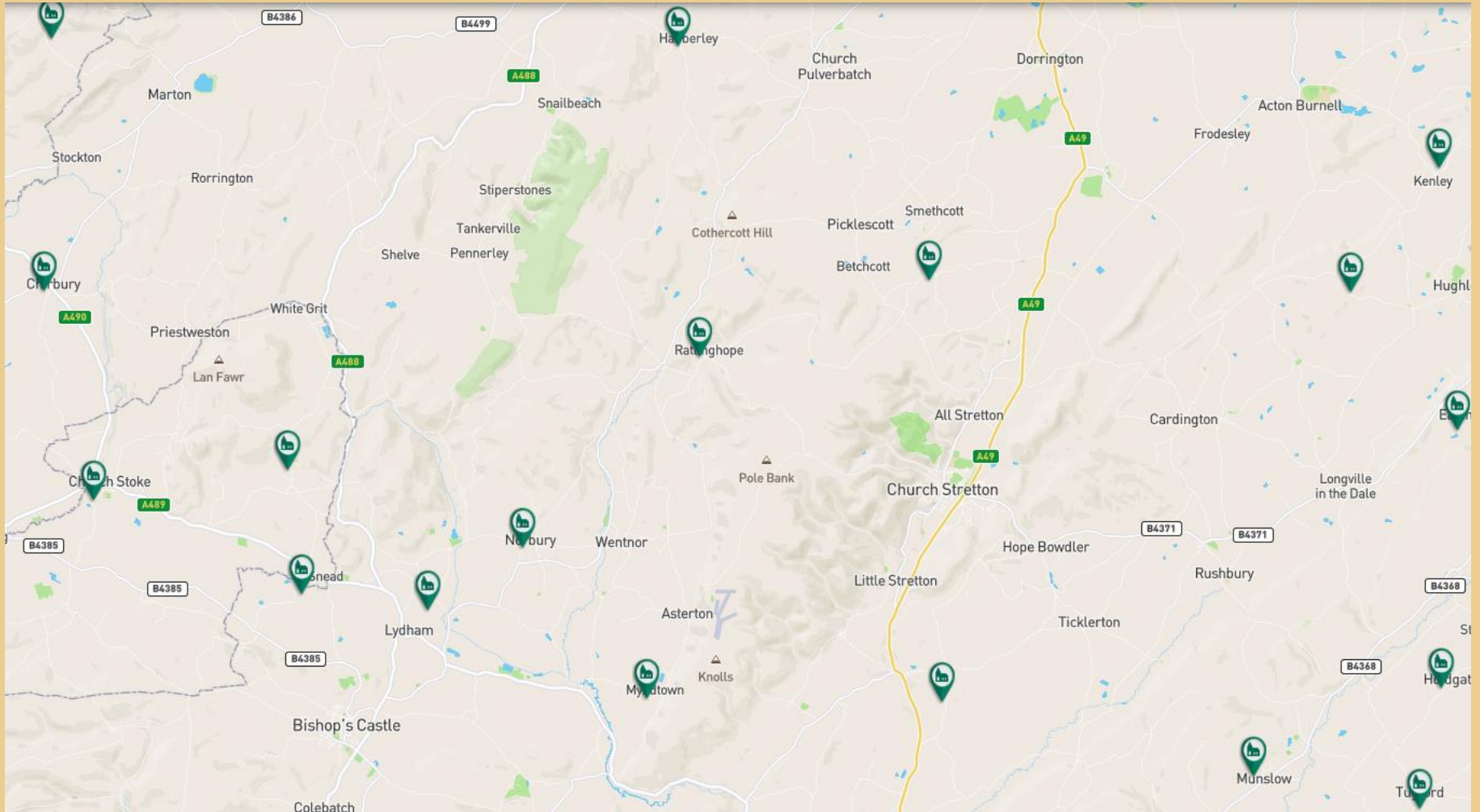
Ancient Yews at least 800 years, no known upper limit

Veteran Yews 500 to 1200 years

Notable Yews 300 to 700 years



Ancient Yew Group website



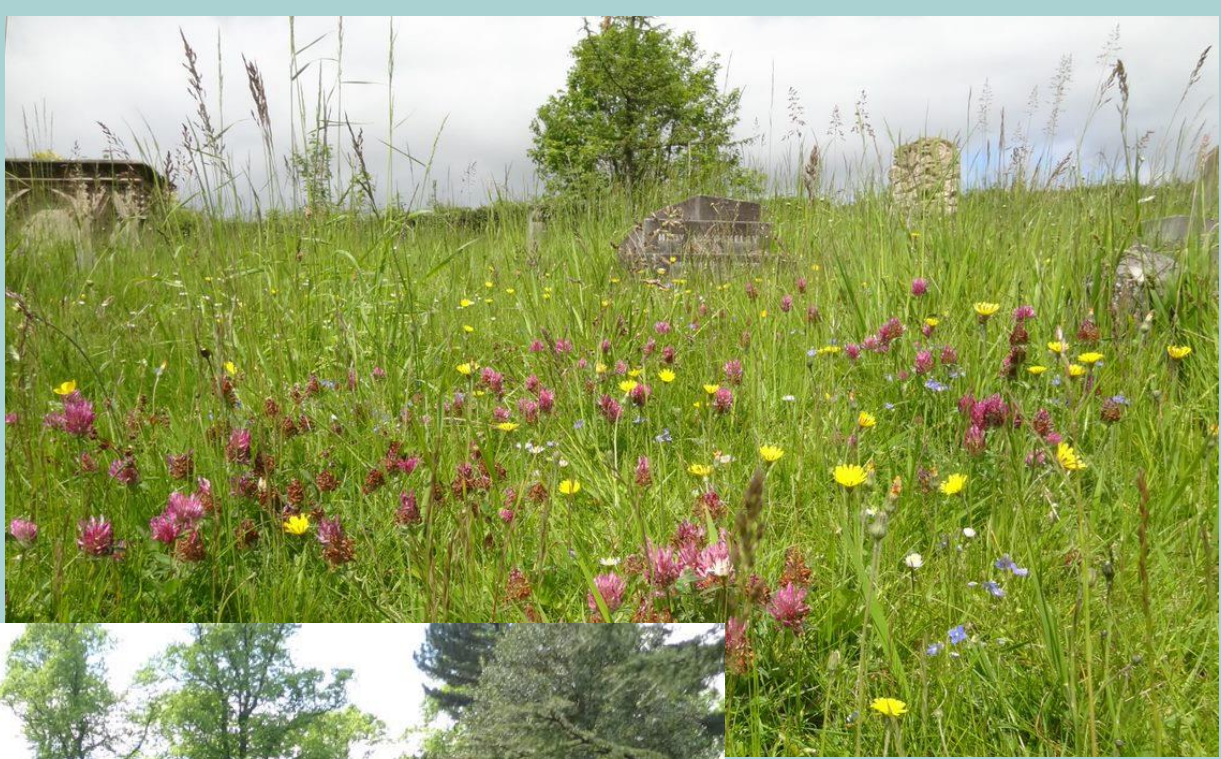


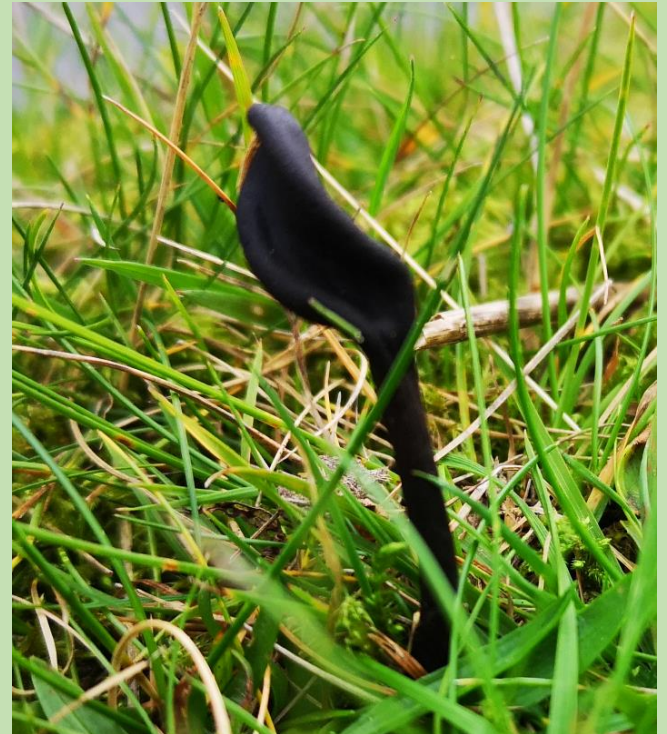
Redwing and Hawfinch



Ancient Meadow











Protected land and species

In England **4,921**
burial grounds
within 1km of a
SSSI and **9,462**
within 2km

In England and
Wales **2,927**
species that are on
the Red Data List
have been found in
burial grounds





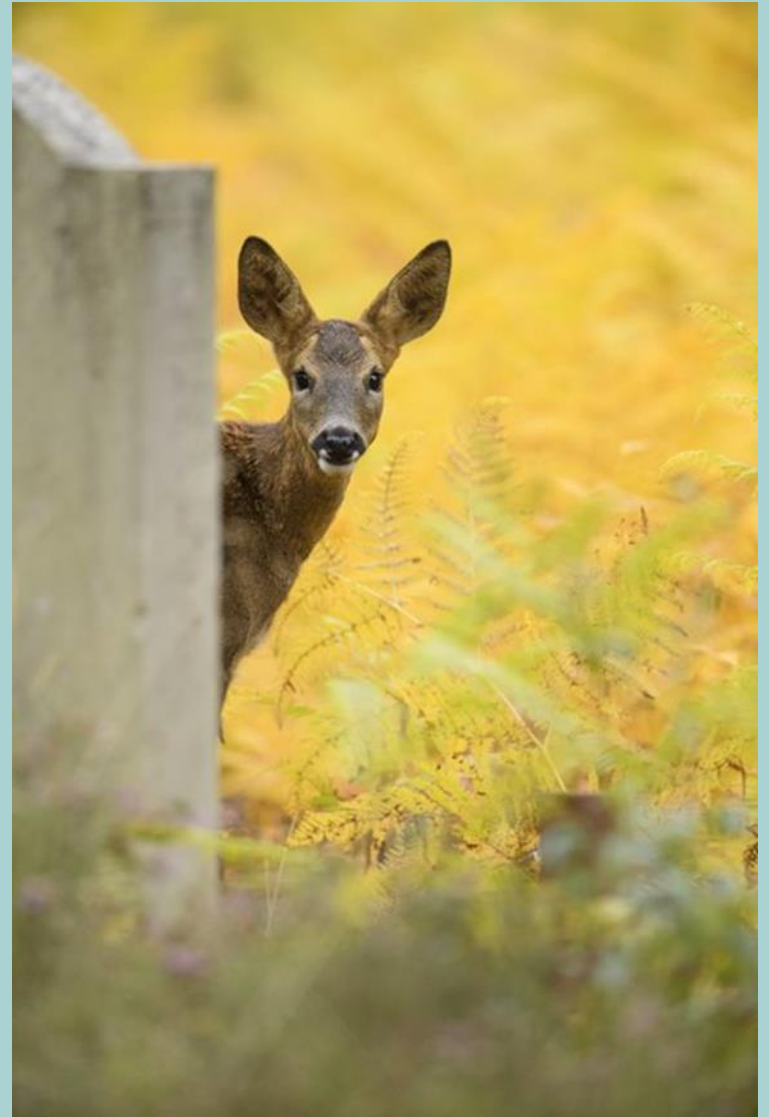


Start your recovery where nature is still present, make small changes



Welcoming More Wildlife

- Create a meadow
- Look after your veteran trees
- Give wildlife a home
- Be a little untidy
- Plant for pollinators



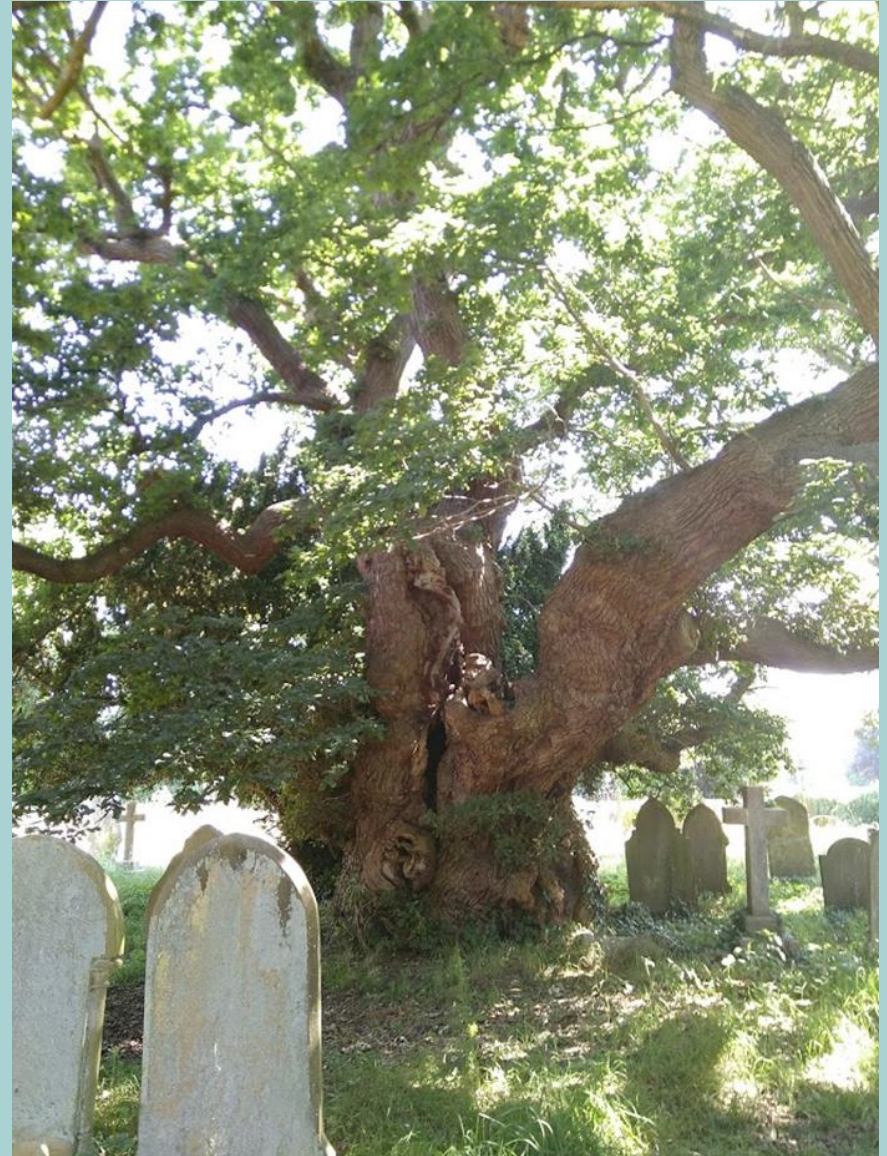
Create a meadow

- In a sunny area currently short mown
- Start small
- Leave uncut for 3 to 4 months – no longer



Look after your veteran trees

- Clear saplings
- Don't store anything under the canopy
- Clear ivy from yews



Give wildlife a home and be untidy

- Bird and bat boxes
- Bug hotels, hedgehog homes
- Compost heaps
- Deadwood and stone piles
- Rough corners



Plant for pollinators

- Use wildflowers and herbs for decorative planting such as Viper's Bugloss
- Early and late season flowers for bumblebees
- Simple flower shapes for insects to enter



Welcoming People Too!

- Make a plan
- Short grass in key areas
- Let people know
- Run an event
- Record what you see





This sheet gives guidelines on how to care for grassy areas and explains the different ways of managing grassland.

A churchyard or burial site may be the most ancient enclosed piece of land in a parish, perhaps even older than the church building, having its roots in pre-Christian times.

Apart from grave digging, the grassland will have been relatively undisturbed, re-seeding naturally for hundreds if not thousands of years. It will also have been both mown for hay and grazed by animals during its time as a burial ground.

A benefit of this continuity of management over a very long time is a diversity of beautiful grasses and flowers and associated animals, some which may now be uncommon or rare in Britain.

Old, relatively undisturbed grassland is now rare in the UK. Part of the most important part of

Deciding how to manage important decisions to be careful thought and plans

The management of your on what would suit the site are prepared to mow it. A heights will help wildlife

The variety of grass height - short like a lawn.

- medium and cut regular time.
- long and flowering and is
- long and tussocky and is

year.

SHORT GRASS

- Looks neat and cared for allows people to visit the whole site easily.

- Makes it easier to read memorials.

- Helps ground feeding birds such as thrushes and wags

- May contain wild flowers close to the ground (field thyme or self heal for example).
- Can have rare grassland fungi which are able to push through the short grass.
- Needs regular mowing requiring mowers, fuel and people prepared to do the work i.e. considerable resources.

Managing short grass
Mow regularly and always remove grass cuttings.



This sheet lists the tools for cutting long grass and gives suggestions of how to manage the cuttings by composting them on site, taking them off site or making hay.

Golden Rule: Remove all grass cuttings: compost them, make hay or take them off site.

CUTTING LONG AND TUSOCKY GRASS

Using the right equipment saves time and effort. Long grass can be cut with:

1. A scythe mower or sickle bar mower

These machines are motorised and have a bar at the front with an arrangement of reciprocating blades that move from side to side like a row of scissors. The cutting bars are available in varying lengths.

These mowers are suitable for cutting long grass in large open areas that have no headstones or kerbstones. The tall grass is cut at the base and falls in a swathe ready for haymaking or raking up.

The downside is that the cutting blades can damage historic stonework and in turn the stonework can break the cutting blades.

2. Wheeled grass trimmer

These can be as versatile as a strimmer but easier to use.

They come in various sizes with engines of different powers. Consider carefully what size is best for the area and type of grassland you will be cutting.

Hand-held trimmers are basically the same but held by the operator. Damage to trees, shrubs and stonework is particularly easy to do with a hand-held trimmer.

3. Hand scythes

Scything today is undergoing a renaissance. The lightweight Austrian scythe is increasingly being used by local authorities and stately home and burial ground managers.

Unlike trimmers, scythes produce no noise, vibration or fumes and are sociable tools to use. They cause minimal harm to wildlife and the grass is laid neatly in a windrow which is easy to turn to make hay, or rake up for the compost heap.

For more information on training and the use of the

scythe contact the **Scythe Association** or Caring for God's Acre. A short film on how to adjust, use and sharpen the scythe and use a hand hay baler can be viewed on the Caring for God's Acre website.

DEALING WITH GRASS CUTTINGS

All grass cuttings need to be collected and removed from grassland. This is the case for short or long grass. Removal improves the sward for conservation and also gradually reduces the nutrients in the soil, leading to slower grass growth and more flowers.

Short grass

This can be cut with any sort of mower and cuttings should be collected as you go along. These can then be removed from the site or tipped into a compost heap.



Medium grass

This can be cut with a reasonably robust mower and cuttings should be collected as you go along. These can be removed from the site or tipped into a compost heap.

Long grass

This can be cut with a scythe, reciprocating bar mower or strimmer. After cutting, the grass can be raked up and composted or allowed to dry and used for hay.

Tussocky grass

This can be cut with a scythe, strimmer or shears. After cutting, the grass and coarse plants will be raked but are unlikely to be useful as hay as they are of poor nutritional value. They can be composted however.



This churchyard is a haven for people & wildlife



- KEY**
- (A) Medium grass
 - (B) Long grass
 - (C) Scrub
 - (D) Nettles
 - Tree
 - Native hedge
 - Laurel & Cypress hedge
 - Commonwealth way graves

Churchyards are often home to a huge variety of species, from the lichens that grow on the old stonework to the ancient trees and wonderful wildflower meadows.

Burial grounds support many different invertebrates and this in turn attracts species such as bats, swifts, slow worms, hedgehogs and dormice.

This churchyard extension is owned and maintained by the Vicar and PCC of the parish church of All Souls Crockenhill. The site is carefully managed for people and nature, and we are

currently in the process of adopting a new management programme.

If you would like to help or have any questions about it, please contact the church by email: allsoulsrockenhill@gmail.com

This management plan was written by Caring for God's Acre, the conservation charity for burial grounds of all types.

To find out more about the work of Caring for God's Acre please visit: www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk

WINTER (December - February)	SPRING (March - May)	SUMMER (June - August)	AUTUMN (September - November)
<p>Hedges: Trim hedge in February against the road and adjacent to visited graves.</p> <p>Cut back laurel and cypress hedge and then keep trimmed. Plant hedging whips into the hedge to fill gaps.</p> <p>Trees: Fell trees that are to be removed in autumn or winter, when birds are not nesting. Protect the young oak tree against rabbits and grass cutting blades.</p> <p>Monuments: Check for safety and remove any encroaching ivy to allow people to read the monuments and lichens to develop.</p> <p>Area C: Cut back occasionally to retain the scrub and stop it encroaching further.</p> <p>All Areas: Remove any self-set seedlings and saplings apart from within the hedges.</p>	<p>Golden Rule: Rake up all grass cuttings and remove to compost, whether the grass is short or long. This allows wildflowers and fine grasses to flourish.</p> <p>Area A: Maintain regularly mown grass but don't set the mower blade too low (this allows smaller wildflowers such as daisies and speedwell to flourish). Put cuttings into the compost heap.</p> <p>Area B: Cut in March or April and remove all cuttings off site to compost.</p> <p>Area D: Dig up nettles and pull out roots, sow a 'flowering lawn' seed mix.</p> <p>All Areas: Plant sedums into the gravel of unvisited graves to suppress weeds and attract pollinating insects.</p>	<p>Golden Rule: See notes in Spring.</p> <p>Area A: Maintain regularly mown grass but don't set the mower blade too low; this allows smaller wildflowers such as daisies and speedwell to flourish. Put cuttings into the compost heap.</p> <p>Area B: Cut and rake in late July or early August and remove all cuttings off site to compost. Sow yellow rattle seed into meadow area.</p> <p>Why not run an event for Churches Count on Nature during Love Your Burial Ground Week? It's the second week in June (including 3 weekends). To find out more please take a look at the Caring for God's Acre website.</p>	<p>Golden Rule: See notes in Spring.</p> <p>Area A: Maintain regularly mown grass but don't set the mower blade too low; this allows smaller wildflowers such as daisies and speedwell to flourish. Put cuttings into the compost heap.</p> <p>Area B: If possible, do a further cut and rake in October. Sow yellow rattle seed into meadow area.</p> <p>Area D: Dig up nettles, pulling out the roots, sow a 'flowering lawn' seed mix. Plant spring bulbs once the flowering lawn has established.</p> <p>All Areas: Rake fallen leaves off grass areas and either compost or create habitat piles. Plant sedums into the gravel of unvisited graves to suppress weeds and attract pollinating insects.</p>

All Souls, Churchyard Extension, Crockenhill: Churchyard Management Plan www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk

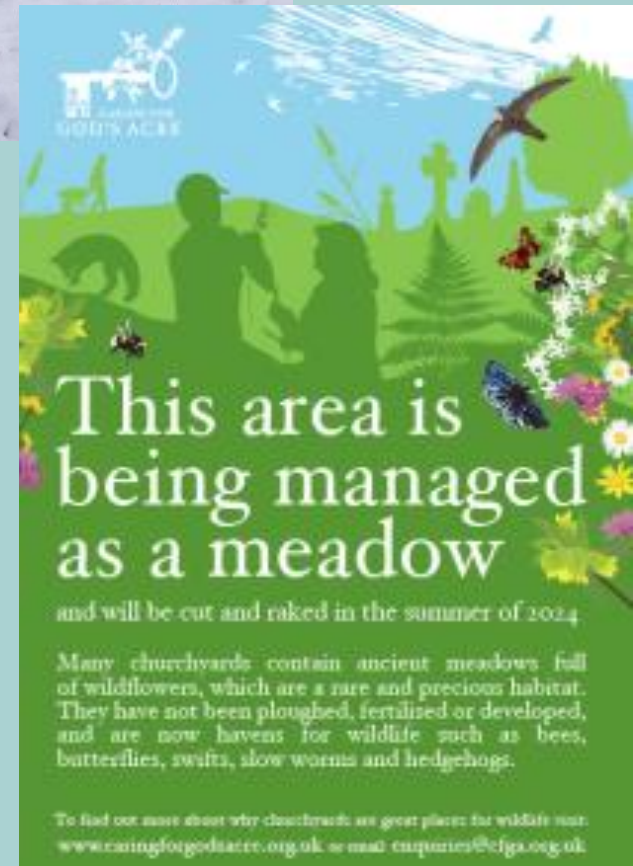
Short grass in key areas

- By the church and entrances
- A strip against path edges
- Regularly visited graves
- War graves and memorials
- Meandering paths through meadow area



Let people know

- Signs and posters on site
- Notice boards and parish newsletters
- Local radio and press



Run an event



Record what you see: Churches Count on Nature 7th to 15th June



Beautiful Burial Ground feedback, over 1,000 responses



Did you enjoy today's session?

90% YES

Have you done this sort of thing before?

74% NO

Following the session, how likely are you to volunteer in this or another burial ground?

59% YES

Do you value burial grounds more as a result of today's session?

80% YES

To summarise:

Burial grounds are hotspots of biodiversity including rarities

They are arks for our 'common' species too

Small changes to management make big differences

They are great places for engaging people with nature, for volunteering and citizen science

They are storing carbon in trees and grassland soils

Caring for God's Acre can help

PLEASE JOIN IN & JOIN CARING FOR GOD'S ACRE!



Thank you

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