

SHILLINGSTONE CHURCHYARD MAINTENANCE

NEWSLETTER No. 3

This is the third of our occasional newsletters, giving you the latest information on the churchyard at Holy Rood. We hope you find this helpful.

**Thank you for carrying on maintaining the churchyard through the pandemic.
Please stick to the guidance and only do what you feel comfortable with.**

A flower filled spring!

The crocus and daffodils have been much admired this year, and the violets are starting to make an appearance, along with the deep green leaves of the wild garlic. We have planted foxgloves under the limes and Marcus and Ros have grown a large number of plant plugs to put along the boundary of the wilder area.

Do you find it curious that there are few primroses? Perhaps we can make 2022 the year we add the native yellow primrose to the planting list (no polyanthus though!).



Tools and the tool shed

Mike has been busy getting the machinery serviced over the winter. The AL-Ko Silver mower and AL-Ko mulcher are both now running but he's dumped the Hayter mower. The brush cutter is hopefully maintained and back in the shed.

The grass rake has been broken – does anyone use it or do you bring your own?



The box of old hand tools will be dumped as none appear to be used. They include a saw, 4 sets of shears (2 stamped with SCC?), a small scythe, a screwdriver, a trowel and a spanner. If you want them, please take them by 16th April (but leave the box!). After that, they go.....

When you use the mower please check the wheels are balanced equally – and if there are problems with any of the kit, let Mike know and not leave it for the next volunteer to find. *Thanks!* Incidentally, we disturbed a common shrew from

a bucket in the shed – it was most put out having found a pile of old clothes to sleep in!

The gas pipeline and trench

Having finally secured the permissions to put in the gas pipe link to the church, the trench was dug at the end of March. Wessex Archaeology had a watching brief while the works took place. Apart from a few unknown routes of pipework, the only interesting find was part of a post medieval roof tile— and sadly, rather a lot of late 20th century plastic..... Once the new boiler is operational, the oil tank will be moved and in due course be the final resting place for the compost heap.

Nature notes

Hedgehogs now have a new 'des res' (2 rooms!) home within the churchyard. In a suitably undisturbed place, we hope this will be occupied this year. Three of the open-fronted nest boxes have been moved to more overgrown sites which we hope will prove more attractive to our robins.



BioBlitz week – 5 to 13th June!

As part of the national 'Churches count on Nature' campaign, we are planning a full survey of the wildlife in the churchyard. Also known as 'Bio-bombing' (!), we will try and record all the plants and animals present; I'm hoping to get some experts in to cover the more obscure plant groups as well as bats and insects. You may find sheets of corrugated iron in places (we'll keep them visually as unobtrusive as possible....) – please leave these alone; they are there to record reptiles like slowworms. I need YOUR help in:

- Planning not to cut the grass in the week before and during the BioBlitz week
- Sending me any records of birds, butterflies and mammals you may see at any time.

Things to watch out for:

- The adapted grasscutting regime in the wilder area to give 3 heights (not 2)
- Over the beech hedge, progress on the wildflower meadow at the Church centre and mini-copse
- A self-guided trail leaflet with snippets of historic and wildlife interest in the churchyard
- Thank you tea in the Autumn? If social distancing allows



Wanted

- Any more native foxglove plants to plant into the old compost area?

Thank you to all our volunteers!