

Visit to Lustleigh Churchyard with Kelvin Boot – 16.5.25

Thanks very much for coming along to this event. We hope you enjoyed it and got some good ideas.

I took a few notes from Kelvin's talk and thought I'd just share these with everyone:

- You need to know what is there before you start! Do surveys/a bioblitz of the churchyard, including insects, plants, birds.
Note: We have lots of Wildlife Wardens who are great surveyors – if you ever need help at your churchyard, please do get in touch and we can probably find a few people to help you. Always do a shout-out in your community though – it's amazing what expertise comes out of the woodwork!
- Churchyards are “oases in time and space.”
- Relationships with the PCC can sometimes not be smooth – some people feel that churchyards should be managed to look like a bowling green. Historically, they were managed by popping a few sheep in!
- Patience and communication with the PCC are key – work out what you want to achieve and convey this to them. It needs to still look cared for and managed and not left to become a wilderness! That might be their overriding concern.
- If you are struggling to get the PCC on board, Kelvin has done talks at individual churches to help show what is possible in a churchyard. Often, this can help the PCC see something visually and then get on board. *Get in touch if this is something that might help in your parish.*
- Use Google Maps to get a satellite photo of the churchyard. Mark up all the key areas, trees, and landmarks that have particular interest. The map will change over time, but it is a good place to start. Mark any areas that are of particular interest for either species, i.e. “butterfly corner,” or important graves such as war graves.
- Use footpaths to guide people around the graveyard—either away from hazards or to lead them to specific wildlife spots, interesting, or regularly visited graves, etc.
- Write a 5-year plan of what you are hoping to achieve – under promise and over perform!
- If the churchyard is managed by TDC (closed churchyard), you can liaise with them about when it is cut. *The Wildlife Warden Group has direct contact with the TDC Greenspaces team, so please do get in touch with me and I can connect you.*
- If using photographs for ID later, remember many species require a very specific set of images to be taken in order for a correct ID to be made, i.e. bees need body, side, and front-on face shots to enable ID.
- [Caring for God's Acre](#) – national charity with lots of online resources.
- The more people who get involved and the more invested the community is in the site, the better.
- Control what is going into the churchyard re: plants – no plastic ones!

- Every wild plant will have a story behind it. Yew trees have a long history with churches – sometimes they are planted, sometimes the church has been built around them.
- Think about a sensory garden – bench, biblical herbs, etc.

General advice for grounds:

- Cut after spring bloom and once seeds have dropped.
- Remove all arisings (cut material) – wildflowers like low-fertility soil.
- Cut again after the summer bloom and once seeds have dropped.
- Remove all arisings.
Top tip: Strim in one direction to aid raking off arisings – get help with this via community engagement
- Management should encourage the natural seed bank already present within the church grounds.
- Lots of churches like short grass at the front to allow photos to be taken at weddings, etc.
- When mowing paths, allow for a pushchair's width or so two people can walk side by side. Then have a half-width either side of a slightly higher cut to allow for some graduation. This helps it look "managed" but will also help lots of species that need differing lengths of grasses for their lifecycles.
- Oxeye daisies are pretty and good for insects, but if left will go bonkers! They need managing so they don't take over and swamp all other plants.
- Place bird boxes up – but not too many that would create competition.
- Install bat boxes, bee bricks, log piles in sunny and shady areas, and rock piles.
- Often, churches are set above the road, and edges need to be carefully managed so people do not fall off – you could mow a path around the edge to make it obvious.
- Look at planting extra trees in existing hedges – choose berry- and fruit-bearing ones.
- When planting, choose native species first – by planting native, you will be supporting the whole lifecycle by providing larval foodplants. This is key!
- Secondary planting choices would be wildlife-friendly species, especially biblical plants.
- Ensure you are sourcing plants that haven't been sprayed with insecticides – they may say "pollinator friendly," but they certainly won't be if they have been sprayed!
Note: We have a Wildlife Warden in Stokeinteignhead who grows native wildlife flowers – contact me if you want to be connected. Also, visit our website for [links](#) to seed suppliers.
- One churchyard has a "cuttings bed" of flowers used for church decorating.
- Use signage saying, "These grounds are being managed for people and wildlife."

Kelvin has offered to come to churches for a few hours to see what is there, help create a plan and write a report with ideas – please do get in touch if you would like to take advantage of this in your own parish, or let your PCC know we have this connection and help available.

For more information about the ACT Wildlife Warden scheme visit [our website](#) or join our [Facebook page](#).

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ACT supports Teignbridge District Council, town and parish councils, community groups and residents to make the district carbon neutral, sustainable, resilient and healthy.