

# St David's Church

## Churchyard biodiversity enhancement suggestions

February 2014



### Exeter Wild City

Exeter Wild City is a partnership venture between Devon Wildlife Trust and Exeter City Council that is providing opportunities for wildlife to thrive within the city whilst improving opportunities for people to enjoy the natural environment.

### Churchyard resources

The Caring for God's Acre website has a huge amount of information sheets about conservation within burial grounds. The website is

<http://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/index.php/resources-and-publications/action-pack-for-download.html>.

### St David's Church

Below are some suggestions on how to enhance the biodiversity value of St David's churchyard and create a space that provides greater opportunities for people to interact with the churchyard and its wildlife.



St David's church and churchyard

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### Recommendations

- **A** – This area is currently cut once a year. A survey by the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre in 2011 suggests that this used to be the most diverse area of the churchyard. A basic walkover in 2014 has shown that this area is now far less diverse than area B. This may be because grass clippings have been left on site and increased the nutrient levels in the soil. This means that coarse grasses dominate and wildflowers are smothered.  
**Suggestion:** as discussed it may be worth cutting this area more often. It appears easier to cut than other areas in the churchyard as there's a slightly lower concentration of gravestones.
- **B** – The floristic diversity in this area is quite high. If this were left to form a summer meadow it would provide a good deal of interest and colour. Paths could be kept short passing through the area. This would encourage people to explore and make the area feel well used and purposely allowed to mature into a meadow. Fruit trees could be planted (DWT help in November) and small grave patches sown with wildflower seed to create patches of interest and focus for exploration (this would involve stripping the grass from small patches entirely and resowing. This would be more realistic than sowing larger areas. DWT help in April).  
**Suggestion:** The grass should not be cut between early April and late August, but can be cut as regularly as felt necessary outside of the spring/summer months. All clippings should be removed.
- **C** – This area needs little change in management. There are some interesting flowers growing but the proximity to the road and main entrance to the churchyard means that this section needs to be kept neat. There are quite a lot of chives growing!  
**Suggestion:** perhaps certain graves could be allowed to grow during the spring and summer months to retain the diversity. Some graves or patches could also be planted with wildflower seed. Further herbs could be grown to create a herb garden area.
- **D** – This area needs little change in management.
- **E** – This area needs little change in management. Further bulbs could be planted around the boundary or around trees, but as this is a well mown area it may be worth leaving this almost as amenity space.
- **F** – This area sees a lot of fly tipping of garden waste and even rubble. There is an elder covered in ivy which provides brilliant wildlife benefits but adds to the unkempt feel to the area. It would be worth trying to reclaim this area and show that it is used with a purpose.

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**Suggestion:** This area could be transformed by incorporating compost compartments, building a [bug hotel](#), smartening up the edged of the elder/ivy area or planting an area of shrubs/hedging (DWT could provide small whips in November if useful).

### Other ideas:

- [Bird](#) and [bat](#) boxes.
- [Swift boxes in the church tower](#) - this would be a great project. St Michael's with its peregrines and St David's with its swifts! But would need some commitment and someone who's good at carpentry.
- Other insect homes - the simplest being drilling holes in existing wood or bundles of bamboo stuffed into plastic tubing. These can be really creative/arty though, for example - <http://cc-gardendesign.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/DSCN7991.jpg>
- [Hedgehog homes](#), [wood piles](#), [frog homes](#).
- Bare ground for mining bees.
- A bug bench – could be as simple as a normal bench with wood piled up underneath.
- [Bumblebee nest chambers](#).
- Flower borders to provide nectar all year round for bees/pollinators and provide colour for as long as possible – a guide to bee friendly planting can be found on our [website](#).
- An extension of the fruit trees and herb garden could be small vegetable patches within some of the grave boundaries.
- Interpretation.
- Bird feeders (or lots and lots of sunflowers which can then be left hanging from trees in the winter for the birds).

### Future activities:

- Bat/moth/bird surveys or night safari events.
- Orchid/lichen/waxcap/other botanical surveys.
- Nature/heritage trails around the site which can be downloaded or found in the church. Could be developed with University or St David's Primary students.