

# Plan for St. Peter's Churchyard, Stoke Fleming

Produced by the Friend's of St. Peter's May 2022

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Proposed Plan</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. Entrance to Churchyard</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Wild flower area</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5. Pathways</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6. Mini-Meadows</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7. Fruit trees</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8. Seating</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>9. Wildlife</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>10. Involving the School/Education/Research</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>11. Lichen</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>12. Digitising the Gravestones</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>13. Small things</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>14. Information to the Community</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>15. Workgroup</b>	<b>12</b>

## 1. Introduction

To quote from “Caring for God’s Acre”:

*‘Appealing to many who are interested in local history and the natural world, burial grounds encapsulate the history of communities whilst offering refuge for our native wildlife.*

*For many people burial grounds are the only locally accessible green space. However, their heritage value, and even their continuing presence, cannot be taken for granted. They are under threat from development, closure, under management and mismanagement.’*

<https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/>

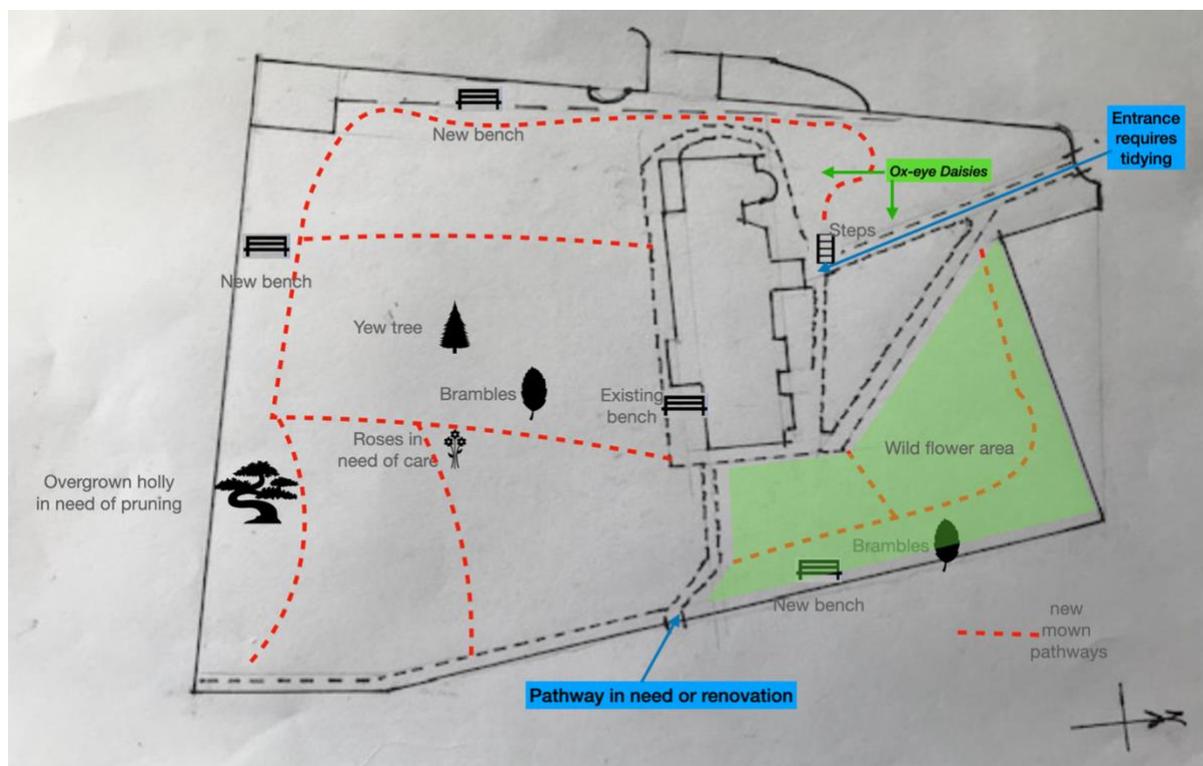
The following paragraphs contain, in outline, a plan of work that the committee of the Friends of St Peter’s suggests may be undertaken in the coming months and years to improve and develop the churchyard so as to make it accessible and of interest to those living in Stoke Fleming and to visitors to our village. This document will be used as a basis for discussions with the PCC and to seek views and suggestions from organisations and individuals in our community.

Churchyards are a unique habitat because they have been uncultivated and enclosed for hundreds of years, and our plan should both conserve what is already there, and also increase the number and variety of native plants and creatures.

This is intended to be a guideline and as work develops, and our knowledge of the churchyard increases, the plan may be adjusted to suit the natural aspects of the churchyard.

## 2. Proposed Plan

The following shows our overall approach to the churchyard bio-diversity plan:



This plan was drawn up after consultation with David Curry and after carefully assessing the area. David is an advisor on matters relating to the environment and biodiversity to the Exeter Diocese and leader of the Devon Living Churchyards project. What is not shown on the plan are aspects such as woodpiles, fruit trees, bird and bat boxes, bug and hedgehog houses and a 'Mason Bee Hotel'. We hope that Stoke Fleming School will get involved in such activities.

### 3. Entrance to Churchyard

The churchyard entrance is the church's 'shop window'. It is where wedding photos are taken and gives the first impression of the church. It needs to be welcoming and 'tidy'. In addition to giving the approach to St Peter's a smarter appearance, we hope that making this a priority will calm the fears of those that may worry that the churchyard is going to be turned into a biodiversity wilderness!

This is how the approach currently looks:



This area needs to be tidied and carefully mown with bulbs planted along its length. This should make an immediate positive impression on regular worshippers and those who come to the church for weddings, funerals etc.

Care needs to be taken because ox-eye daisies grow in this vicinity (see plan).

**Priority: High**

### 4. Wild flower area

The area to the east of the entrance, shaded green on the plan, is an ideal area to allow the grass and flowers to grow in a wilder, unmanicured way. Mowing would be limited to twice a year in spring and autumn. This area should be divided off with discrete notices explaining why it is being managed in this way – to encourage natural flowers and plants and help pollination. Laminated explanation and information sheets may also be made available.

Pathways would be mown around graves so that they may be accessed and to demonstrate that this area of the churchyard is not neglected or 'abandoned'. This is a simple thing to do and will have a quick result.

Another potential area for wild flowers is in the south and eastern area alongside Old Road where there are natural wild flowers already and ox-eye daisies.

Other areas of the churchyard would be more closely tended.

**Priority: High**

## 5. Pathways

The existing pathways access only a small part of the churchyard. In the plan some additional paths are indicated to enable visitors to walk round the whole churchyard. These need only be mown strips that encourage people to explore more widely and can have an immediate, positive impact.

Other than the main path from the main gate to the church door, the paths are not in a good condition. Consideration should be given to improving them. This would be a fairly major project.

### ***Priority: High***

The pathway that leads from just inside the main church gate to the east end of the church and on towards New Road, known as the 'Coffin Walk', is in disrepair and in need of renovation. The surface is poor and the path is not wide enough for wheelchairs nor even enough for those who may have walking difficulties. This would be a fairly major and a longer term project and quite a costly one.



### ***Priority: Medium***

## 6. Mini-Meadows

Quite a lot of the bordered graves that are untidy and overgrown.



These are natural areas to transform into 'mini-flower-meadows'. This can be achieved by scraping away the weedy/grassy surface and sowing native wild flower seed. Although we haven't counted all of the potential graves, there are probably in excess of 200! It will therefore require a significant amount of work and, at 1m x 2m or more per plot will total 400-500 m<sup>2</sup>. At 2g per m<sup>2</sup> this require approximately 800g of seed. 1kg from a recommended supplier ([www.pictorialmeadows.co.uk/](http://www.pictorialmeadows.co.uk/)) costs £825.

It is recommended that the seed is sown in autumn, so we have the rest of this year to organise the clearing of the grave surfaces.

Some graves have already naturally developed as mini-meadows.



This part of the project does need to be initiated soon to meet autumn sowing but will be later in terms of impact.

For that reason it is given a high priority:

**Priority: High**

## 7. Fruit trees

One of the suggestions by David Curry is to plant a few native fruit trees in the churchyard – specific to this part of Devon. We would need to identify the most suitable location.

**Priority: Medium**

## 8. Seating

There is only one bench in the churchyard. We suggest a number of benches around the pathways to enable visitors to rest, enjoy the space and contemplate. We favour a variety of interesting seating options rather than the standard park bench style.

As schools and other community groups get involved in the churchyard we can envisage a particular area for storytelling (e.g folklore and local history, poetry etc). A special bench for that purpose could be installed. The following are examples:



There is obviously a cost to providing new seating – especially for something ‘special’ like the above. We include this in our plan but accept that it will take time.

**Priority: Medium**

## 9. Wildlife

The churchyard is a haven for wildlife and this can be enhanced and encouraged. A few examples are:

- Pollinating insects including bees
- insects
- Bats
- Numerous bird species
- Hedgehogs
- Owls
- Voles and mice

Providing habitats such as log-piles, bat and bird boxes, hedgehog houses and so on can enhance this area and be fairly easy to do.

**Priority: High-Medium**

## 10. Involving the School/Education/Research

Involving the school in building a bug hotel, having a hedgehog house and/or a mason bee hotel (mason bees are solitary bees that do not sting and are excellent pollinators) are the kind of projects we have in mind here, along with such things as bird and bat boxes. There is also an educational element to this with local history being explored via the people buried in the Churchyard – e.g. George Parker Bidder and the rev Elias Newcomen great grandfather of the famous inventor.

Contacting the school should be an early priority – the new joint Heads are Georgia Taylor and Andrea Hall.

**Priority: High**

## 11. Lichen

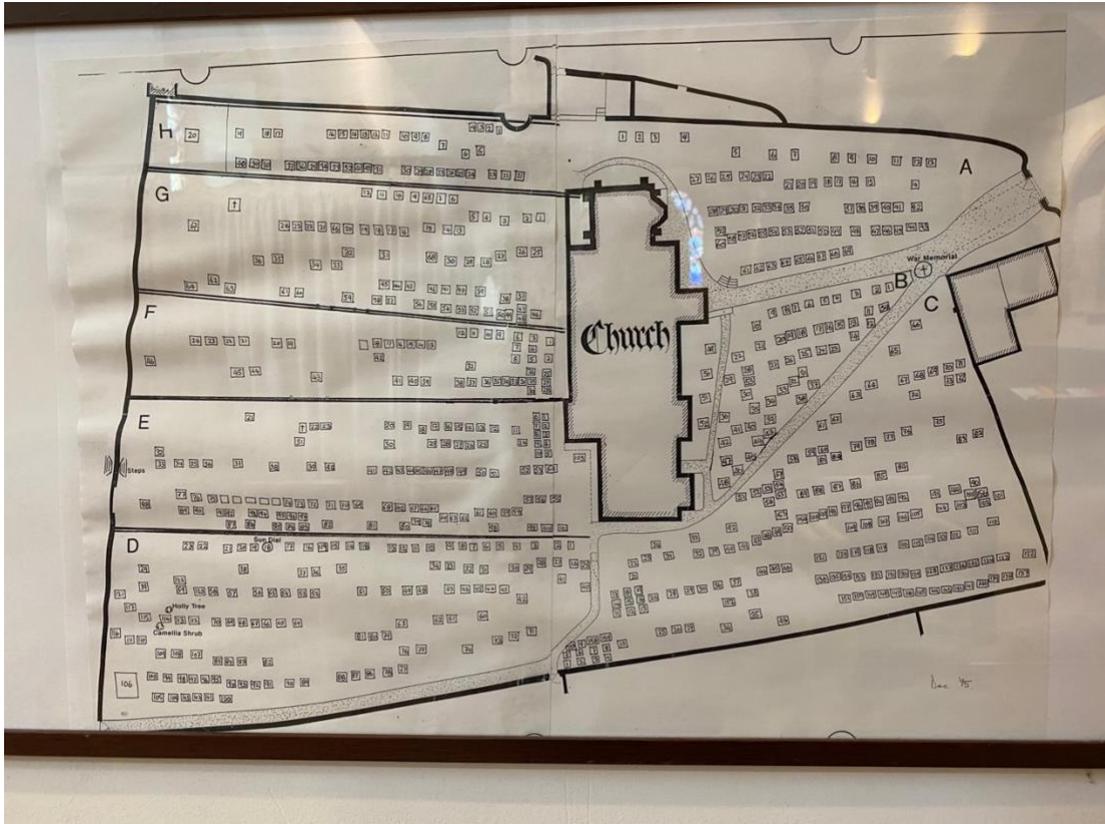
There is an amazing variety of lichens on display in the churchyard which should be surveyed and recorded, another educational opportunity.



**Priority: Medium-Low**

## 12. Digitising the Gravestones

There is a plan of the graves hanging in the Church, though not up to date:



Nick Teage produced a spreadsheet of the graves that John Dietze is updating. Making these available on-line on the Internet – probably on the Church website – would add local and historical interest.

This is an example of its application:



**Priority: Medium**

### 13. Small things

We have a tap at the Churchyard but this could easily be improved for watering graves:



**Priority: High**

There are very many examples of plastic flowers in the Churchyard. These should be discouraged as far as possible:



**Priority: Medium-Low**

## 14. Information to the Community

Informing the community as to our objectives and actions is very important. Leaflets can be available at the Church but also information on Social Media such as the Community Facebook pages and also Sustainable Stoke Fleming as well as in the Parish Magazine.

**Priority: High**

## 15. Workgroup

This is a big, long term project and a small group of volunteers will be required. Gathering volunteers, especially gardeners, is a priority. This can be via Sustainable Stoke Fleming which has a ready 'converted' membership and also through the Community Facebook pages and Parish Magazine.

**Priority: High**