



Longden Road Cemetery, Shrewsbury Management Brief

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Longden Road Cemeter, Shrewsbury

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CONDITION

GENERAL

Longden Road Cemetery covers about 30 acres in total, consisting of an old section which was consecrated in 1856 and an L-shaped new section which wraps around the old. This management brief concerns the old section only.

PEOPLE & ACCESSIBILITY

This is a really accessible site; paths are generally surfaced and fairly even. There are a few gentle slopes but most of the site is flat. Cars can use all of the surfaced tracks and so can mobility scooters, buggies and wheelchairs. As well as the surfaced paths, STC mow a network of paths through the grass, these paths are a mower-width across. These grass paths are less accessible but are still fairly good and are kept regularly mown. Away from the paths the site is inaccessible, full of trip hazards which are obscured by long grass. The path network does give access to a great deal of the cemetery, but it could be difficult for someone with limited mobility to visit a particular grave or feature however.

BUILT HERITAGE

Victorian cemeteries were designed to be visited by the public; they were seen as Gardens of Remembrance and were landscaped like parks with sweeping paths and vistas. Longden Road Cemetery is no exception, with a network of circular paths, pairs of Irish Yews and a long avenue of lime trees along two sides of the site.

The cemetery contains no listed monuments although the chapel and surrounding buildings are Grade II listed. There are some interesting memorials however, with an ornate Victorian monument prominently placed. The author Mary Webb is buried in the cemetery and her grave is regularly visited.

A book by Peter Francis gives a wealth of information on the history and built heritage of the cemetery; *A Matter of Life and Death: The Secrets of Shrewsbury Cemetery*. This is currently out of print but available second-hand.

NATURE AND LANDSCAPE – see map 1

The Victorian landscaping of the site is highly visible and arguably at its best now, with trees tall and mature, giving a distinctive shape to the landscape. Cemeteries were probably managed as long grass originally, so the return to irregular mowing and long grass is a more appropriate system for a historic site. The site was kept short mown for many years and so species dependent on scrub, long grass and tussocky grass may have been lost from the cemetery. This includes amphibians and reptiles plus some mammals. The grassland flora and fungi reflect the species-rich meadow which would have pre-dated the cemetery. This habitat has not been lost during the years of short grass, but is in danger of degrading under current management.

Following surveying in 2013, 2014 and 2015 the old part of the cemetery was designated a Local Wildlife Site based on the grassland flora and fungi.

GRASSLAND

The cemetery has been split into 4 grassland categories.

A The most species-rich sections in terms of grassland flowers

This area has a sward dominated by flowering plants and fine grass although coarser grasses such as False Oatgrass and Cocksfoot are starting to invade. Colourful in spring and summer it includes oxeye daisy, bird's-foot trefoil, bush vetch, meadow vetchling, lady's bedstraw and a bank of field scabious (area A1). The sward here is of medium length, due to the abundance of shorter flowering plants. There are slopes and a great many monuments here, making management difficult.

B Areas with good populations of waxcaps and other grassland fungi

A survey in 2013 by mycologist Sheila Spence recorded 42 different fungi across the whole cemetery of which 9 were waxcaps. Waxcaps were seen in large numbers in area B when the site was cut more regularly by STC than it is at present. Numbers of fruiting bodies appear to have reduced in recent years although this has not been accurately measured.

Area B1 is relatively easy to cut and can be cut by mower or scythe as the monuments are quite well spaced.

Area B2 is in dappled shade due to the lime avenue and so has a different assemblage of fungi with Funnel fungi particularly common. This area has a good show of spring flowers such as primrose and does not need much management as shade controls grass growth.

Area B3 is under the canopy of the lime avenue and so has a different assemblage of fungi. This is also an area with a good show of spring flowers. This area does not need much management as the shade controls under-storey growth.

C Long grass, still species-rich but fewer grassland fungi

These areas are less species-rich than A and less good for fungi than B but still full of flowers. They contain a good range taller species such as meadow foxtail and oxeye daisy plus a notable show of spring flowers particularly primrose in the shaded areas. The first year that this area was not regularly mown short, produced a fantastic show of flowers which have reduced year-on-year since then due to a lack of appropriate management. Coarse grasses such as false oatgrass are becoming increasingly dominant here.

Area C1 is the sections of C which either have very few monuments (the circle) or else have monuments in lines which can be mown or scythed between. Whilst these areas are not outstandingly species-rich, they will improve with management and this can be achieved due to the ease of cutting.

D Tussocky and species-poor. Good shelter for animals, particularly when over-wintering

Populations of species that need scrub and tussocks will be gradually building up now that the site is managed less intensively. Whilst less attractive than A or B, this area is valuable as a refuge.

TREES, SHRUBS AND WOODLAND

The cemetery contains a mix of mature trees, younger trees, self-seeded saplings and a few shrubs. The mature trees seem to be fairly even-aged and can be assumed to be planted according to the original landscaping plan. There is a good mix of deciduous and evergreen (yews and holly) giving year-round shelter. As the site is designated for species-rich grassland, the increasing level of shade as the trees grow, may become an issue. There are no veteran trees on the site although there is a large piece of standing deadwood – a cedar which needed to have the crown removed about 5 years ago.

E1 Area of young woodland with developing flora

The vegetation beneath the trees in this area is starting to reflect the increasing shade and there is an opportunity to improve this as woodland conditions increase.

E2 Lime avenue

There are actually two lime avenues in the old cemetery. The mature one which follows two sides of the site and also a younger one going around the circle. The one on the circle is incomplete and some other species have been planted into it, but it is becoming an increasingly visible feature as the trees mature.

BOUNDARIES

The old cemetery is bounded on one side by a road, on two sides by the new part of the cemetery and on the fourth side by a footpath and housing. This fourth boundary has a thick hedge against it which will provide considerable shelter and nesting opportunities. The other boundaries all have stone walls of varying height, the ones against the new cemetery contain nooks and crannies, giving habitat to invertebrates.

INTERPRETATION

The site has no interpretation on-site and very little anywhere. There is a map which allows people to locate graves and a paragraph on the history of the site with the SC website.

The Friends have a Facebook page with regular posts by Mark Foxall.

MANAGEMENT OF THE CHURCHYARD

Grassland

The old section of the cemetery was kept short mown by Shrewsbury Town Council (STC) by strimming and mowing regularly throughout the year until 2015. Since then, budget cuts have led to a decrease in management and STC now aim to cut the whole grassland area once a year, starting in September and completing the work by the end of December. They are not able to rake up grass clippings. The flora and fauna present is a reflection of the previous management and the changes that have taken place recently. Populations of some species will be building up whilst others are decreasing as a result of changes. This will be better understood over time.

Trees and woodland

SC are responsible for tree safety and health. STC carry out some small pruning but they are not able to cut back saplings which can grow on graves, out of reach of the mowers and strimmers however. The Friends do this as part of their work parties in order to maintain species-rich grassland.

Friends volunteer group

The Friends organise work parties in conjunction with Caring for God's Acre on a fortnightly and sometime weekly basis. They mow and scythe grass, rake up grass cuttings, cut back self-sown saplings and improve the site for biodiversity by erecting nesting boxes etc.

MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

General Points

Management needs to be multi-faceted and reflect:

- The primary function of the cemetery as a place of burial, remembrance and reflection.
- The species composition of the grassland, as this is the important habitat that led to the designation of Local Wildlife Site.
- The available resources in terms of STC staff and also the Friends volunteer group.
- The importance of the cemetery for local history and the architecture of the monuments.

The grassland of the cemetery is species-rich in many areas, and areas which are not species-rich could be restored through management. It is this habitat that led to the designation of LWS so this should be given priority ecologically.

The most species-rich areas of the cemetery are the hardest to manage with irregularly spaced headstones and sloping ground. Other, easier to manage areas could be improved to make the management more sustainable.

In some areas, waxcap fungi populations are declining and need management for short or medium grass, rather than a 'hay meadow' approach. Whilst this will reduce flowers in spring and summer, it will benefit the fungi.

There are a great many young mature trees which will increase the shade to the grassland and decrease the area of grassland. Whilst this may not be a problem with the current number of trees, further planting or allowing self-seeded trees to reach maturity should be avoided as a general principle.

There are opportunities to create habitat, refuges and nesting sites for birds, small mammals, amphibians and reptiles. This can be done at any time of year, when time permits.

People and accessibility

In this generally accessible site, there is a real lack of seating which restricts many people. There is only one seat, situated near to the chapel, with a nice view out over the cemetery below. Supplying seating around the site would make a great difference to accessibility. Apart from this, there is little that can be done generally to improve physical access. The Friends group can respond to individuals who ask for paths to be cut to specific monuments as has happened previously.

There is a lack of intellectual accessibility; the site is little known or visited and there is no information available on site or at outlets like Shrewsbury information points. There is also little information available on-line to encourage visits.

Built heritage

The grave of Mary Webb is regularly visited and a scattering of other graves are visited across the whole site. As the age of monuments varies across the site, there is no particular area with visited graves apart from war graves and those of babies. Old and newer graves can be side-by-side. There is a section of commonwealth war graves which is kept mown short and has flower beds adjacent to the monuments. In addition, there are scattered war graves throughout the site, and the mown grass paths tend to lead to these. The grass surrounding these graves is kept short mown. There are several graves within the cemetery for the cremated remains of babies who died at birth or shortly after at Shrewsbury hospital. These graves are kept short mown with paths to them and are visited regularly.

In addition to the grave of Mary Webb, there are other monuments of interest either because of the person whose grave it is or because of the architecture of the monument.

Nature and landscape

This is a fantastic site in the heart of Shrewsbury for both biodiversity and also as a designed landscape. It is a real hidden gem. Maintaining both the species diversity and also the path layout and historic tree planting plan should be a priority for Shropshire Council.

Grassland

A This area is full of flowers and can be managed on a hay meadow system of cutting and raking. This is also the hardest section to manage in terms of monuments with a great many monuments in haphazard pattern. Area A can be strimmed or scythed but not mown. There is a risk that this area will become invaded by coarse grasses such as false oatgrass and cocksfoot. To prevent this, the coarse grasses need to be suppressed by either increased cutting with raking or else encouraging yellow rattle (which is semi-parasitic on grass of all species). Both can be tried simultaneously.

B These areas should be managed principally for fungi. Area B1 is in full sunlight and is the main waxcap area, this can be cut earlier than other areas where we are managing for flowering plants. This helps to spread the workload and avoid trying to cut the whole site in the summer which is currently impossible with the resources that we have available via the Friends and STC.

Having a short sward in autumn is a priority for areas with waxcaps and spindles. Previous lack of raking has led to patches of dead, lodged grass which covers the ground. These should reduce over time through decomposition and raking.

Areas B2 and B3 are in dappled shade and have different fungal assemblages. These do not need managing specifically for fungi and can continue to have one cut and rake in the year. If resources are stretched, prioritising raking in these areas would be beneficial.

B1 This section is relatively easy to mow or scythe as the monuments are quite well spaced. Cutting and raking a few times in the growing season should start to suppress the coarse grasses and remove the old, lodged grass which will benefit the fungi. Prioritise this area.

B2 A shady patch which does not need a great deal of management. Ensuring at least one good cut and rake here should keep the vegetation in check.

B3 A shady patch which does not need a great deal of management. Ensuring at least one good cut and rake here should keep the vegetation in check. This area has good spring flowers so could be cut in early summer in order to spread the workload, give variety and create a short enough sward for fungi in the autumn.

C This area is large, and it is unlikely that the Friends can manage to cut and rake all of it at the correct time of year. It does include sections which are much easier to cut than other parts so these can be given priority (C1). The bulk of this area is C2, lower priority.

D Tussocky grassland which will be largely unmanaged and the lowest priority for STC staff with their annual cutting regime. This area will become a refuge for small mammals, amphibians and reptiles and also invertebrates, allowing populations to build back up over time. Ideal management would be for STC to cut this area every other year, cutting half in one year and half in the other. This would maintain a refuge, whilst preventing the area from going to scrub and woodland.

If resources increased greatly at the cemetery then area D could be managed back towards species-rich grassland, but in the present situation this is not likely, and priority should be given to the rest of the site.

Tasks to do:

- A** Cut and rake twice in the growing season.
Sow yellow rattle seed onto bare ground.
- A1** Cut later in the year than the rest of A to allow the field scabious to flower. Monitor this bank to ensure that coarse grasses are not starting to invade due to the late cutting date.
- B1** Cut and rake three times per year, in order to improve the sward for fungi.
- B2** Cut and rake once in order to prevent tussocky grassland and scrub developing and to improve the sward for fungi.
- B3** Cut and rake once in order to prevent tussocky grassland and scrub developing and to improve sward for fungi.
- C1** This area is the easiest part of the site to manage and so can be given priority to restore it to species-rich long grass. Cut and rake twice in the growing season. Sow yellow rattle seed onto bare ground.
- C2** Cut and rake twice in the growing season if possible. Lower priority so may only receive the STC autumn cut, followed by raking up by Friends.
- D** Cut every other year, half in one year and the other half in the next.

Trees, shrubs and the woodland

There is little management needed for the trees, shrubs and woodland area. The site has few shrubs and these give good cover for nesting and over-wintering so are of value ecologically.

E Area of young woodland

This woodland lacks an interesting ground flora, probably because it is new and has fairly recently closed canopy. There is an opportunity to enhance the ground flora by planting some native spring flowers such as wood anemone, stitchwort and bluebell.

Tasks to do:

- E** Plant spring flowers – wood anemone, stitchwort, bluebell, red campion. Source seed or bulbs from an approved supplier to ensure local provenance.

Boundaries

These are managed by STC who cut the hedge annually.

Helping wildlife

As there are no veteran trees and only one significant piece of standing deadwood, so the site lacks natural holes, nooks and crannies or flaking bark for bats to hide beneath. This will reduce the nesting and roosting opportunities for birds and bats as well as invertebrates. The Friends have already installed a number of bird boxes. Bat boxes on the limes in the avenue would seem a welcome addition although it would be worth seeking advice from a specialist before positioning bat boxes.

The populations of small mammals, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates should be generally increasing with the change of management in the last 4 years. This can be enhanced by providing features such as **deadwood piles, piles of stones and bug hotels.**

STC could provide logs for a deadwood pile if they were doing tree work in the cemetery and might have some available at their depot. Deadwood piles should be in shaded areas, within the woodland and will develop an invertebrate population as the wood rots, providing food and shelter for frogs, toads, newts and hedgehog.

Piles of stone create a series of holes and gaps for invertebrates and amphibians and reptiles. There are stones within the soil pile in the woodland area which could be used to make a pile against the wall between the old and new cemetery.

Bug hotels need to be in sunny locations, so anywhere within the grassland areas, where they will not be too visible or near to visited graves would be suitable. Bug hotels look more artificial than deadwood and stone piles so this may not be suitable across much of the site, but a few more in area A, where we made one a couple of years ago would be fine.

The cemetery is a great place for swallows, with several pairs nesting in the chapel cloisters. Swifts, swallows and martins can all be seen hunting over the cemetery in the summer. The chapel does not have any holes or missing tiles allowing birds to nest within it and the louvres have wire over them to prevent birds such as jackdaw and pigeon getting into the tower. The tower is unsafe for access and so there is no current opportunity to place swift boxes behind the louvres.

The site was mown short for many years and species are likely to have been lost from the cemetery. Now that management is more wildlife-friendly there may be opportunities to reintroduce some species often found in burial grounds such as slowworm or hedgehog. This would need to be planned in conjunction with Dan Wrench of Shropshire Council and would make an interesting and motivating project for the volunteers.

Tasks to do:

- **Monitor bird boxes and increase the number if most of them are being used. Include boxes for a range of species such as tits, robin, starling and sparrows.**
- **Construct and install an owl box, taking advice from the Shropshire Ornithological Society and see if anybody would be interested in running a bird ringing project in the cemetery.**
- **Organise a bat survey by an expert and seek advice on design of bat boxes and where to place them – construct and place bat boxes.**
- **Create a deadwood pile in the woodland area. Ask STC for suitable logs.**
- **Create a stone pile against the wall.**
- **Discuss reintroduction of slowworm and hedgehog with SC ecology staff.**

Accessibility

Increase the number of benches within the old part of the cemetery. There are a great many benches in the new part adjacent to the railway line. See if any of these could be relocated and discuss with SC and STC staff to arrange this.

Task to do:

- **Discuss relocation of a few benches and identify suitable locations with SC and STC staff.**

Interpretation

The cemetery lacks interpretation both on and off site.

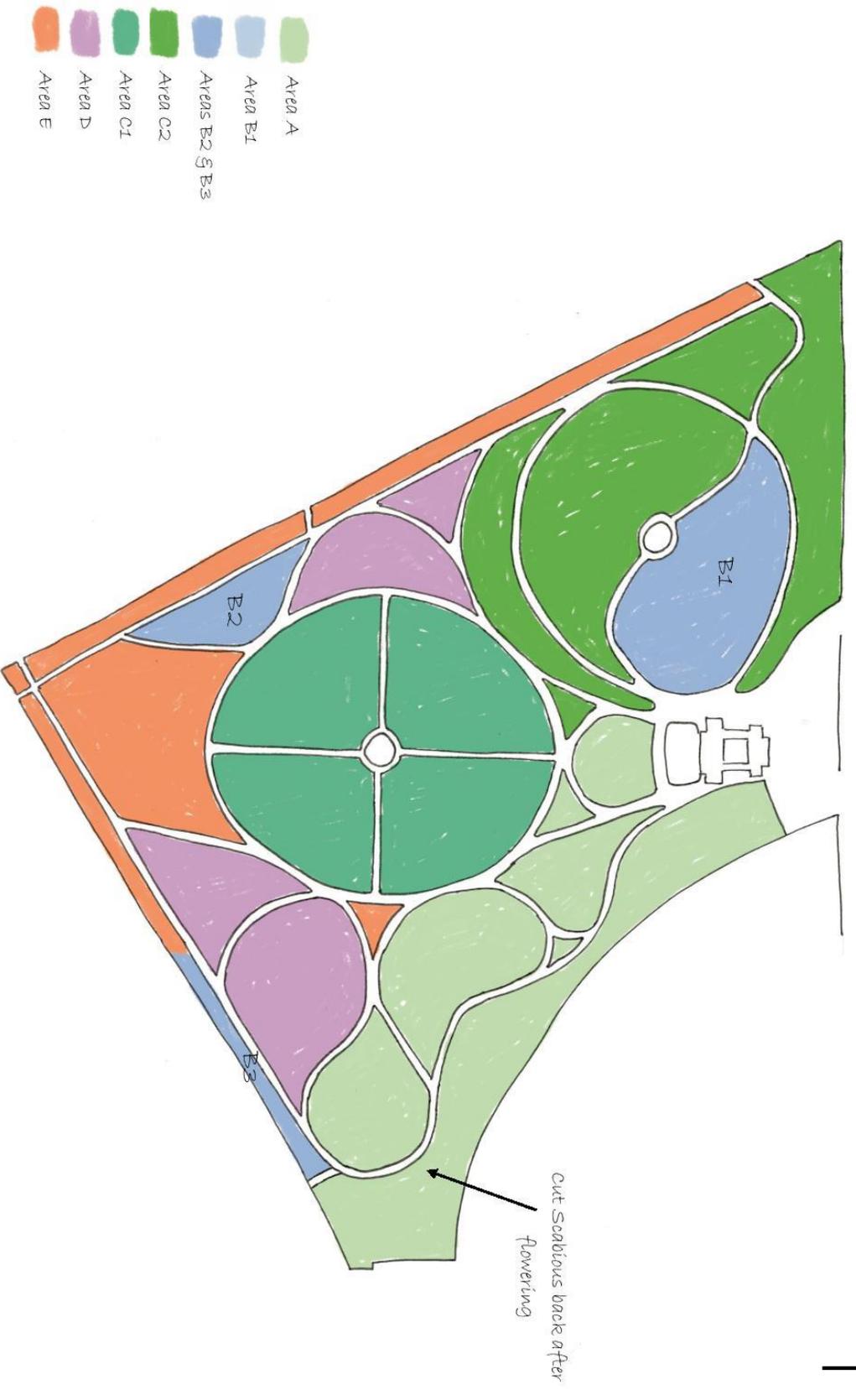
Task to do:

- **Identify a funding source to pay for interpretation both on and off site.**

Three Year Work Plan

Activity	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Grassland A, cut 2x per year and plant Yellow Rattle			
Grassland A1, cut later in the year and monitor for coarse grasses			
Grassland B1, cut and rake 3x per year			
Grassland B2, cut and rake 1x per year			
Grassland B3, cut and rake 1x per year			
Grassland C1, cut and rake 1x per year, sow Yellow Rattle			
Grassland C2, cut and rake 1x per year, sow Yellow Rattle			
Grassland D, cut and rake 1x every other year, half each year			
Woodland E, plant spring flowers			
Helping Wildlife, monitor existing birdboxes, install more boxes for other species of bird			
Helping Wildlife, install 2x owl boxes			
Helping Wildlife, organise a bat survey and seek advice on boxes			
Helping Wildlife, construct and erect bat boxes			
Helping Wildlife, create deadwood piles			
Helping Wildlife, create stone piles			
Helping Wildlife, discuss reintroduction of slowworm and hedgehog			
Increase Accessibility, relocate benches			
Interpretation, seek funding for interpretation			

Longden Road Cemetery - Map 2



USEFUL INFORMATION PROVIDED BY CARING FOR GOD'S ACRE

Churchyard and Burial Ground Action Pack

A Managing Churchyards and Burial Grounds

- A 1** The five steps to churchyard and burial ground care
- A 2** Caring for grassland
- A 3** Cutting long grass and dealing with grass cuttings
- A 4 Inspecting and caring for trees
- A 5 Yews and other veteran trees
- A 6** Practical management of trees and shrubs
- A 7 Caring for hedgerows
- A 8** Creating a wildflower meadow and helping wildlife
- A 9 Pesky plants and animals
- A 10 Caring for stonework, metalwork and woodwork
- A 11 Caring for stone walls

B Havens for Wildlife

- B 1** Slow worms and other reptiles and amphibians
- B 2** Hedgehogs and other mammals
- B 3** Bats in the belfry
- B 4** Swifts and other birds
- B 5** Bumblebees and other bees, wasps and ants
- B 6** Butterflies, moths and other insects
- B 7 Learn about lichens
- B 8** Wonderful waxcaps and other fungi
- B 9 Mosses, liverworts and ferns
- B 10** Surveying for plants and animals
- B 11 Burial sites across Britain

C Burial Grounds Through Time

- C 1 Archaeology and historic built features
- C 2 History, folklore and traditions
- C 3 Social history of burial grounds

D Involving People

- D 1** Involving volunteers
- D 2** Health and safety
- D 3** Recreation and learning – things to do
- D 4** Telling the story – interpretation
- D 5** Applying for grants
- D 6 Sustainability

Risk Assessment Template – Action Pack sheet D2 explains how to do a risk assessment and the blank form allows you to fill in as many as you need

Education Pack

If you are involving the local primary or pre-school please encourage them to take a look at our Education Pack which is linked to the national curriculum. It is available on our website (under Resources Information) and also the Times Educational Supplement website. Many of the education pack activities are suitable for family events, Messy Church and uniform club badges.