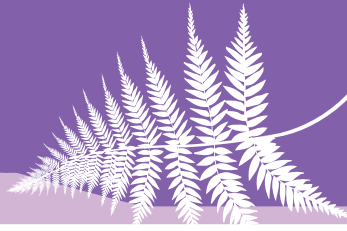




Beautiful Burial Grounds

Members' Magazine



Your Church, Your Swifts

The speaker at our online AGM at 7pm on Tuesday 12th November will be Edward Mayer of Swift Conservation. Edward's talk about this fascinating and endangered bird will be full of practical and easy to follow advice about steps that can be taken to support this spectacularly agile and exciting flyer.

More information about Edward's talk and how to book can be found on the back page of this magazine.

Swift leaving a church tower by Andy Fusek Peters

New Project Manager joins the Team

We are delighted to welcome to the Caring for God's Acre team Dr Josie Wall, our new Project Manager for Our Digital Ancestors England-wide project. The project will be working with surveying company AG Intl Ltd who are mapping CofE churchyards using a digital system and working with volunteers to investigate those memorialised in the churchyards.

Josie Wall has a PhD from the University of Birmingham. Her research focused on the development of 19th century cemetery landscapes and monuments in Britain and France. She's been working in the Heritage sector for over 10 years, including at the Coffin Works Museum in Birmingham and on the Jewellery Quarter Cemeteries Project, and is excited to be back working in burial grounds!

Turn the page to find out more about Josie's journey to Caring for God's Acre.



There's a lot for you to get involved with in our autumn and winter magazine so please read through and see what takes your fancy!

How about adding some dates to your diary. Our AGM on the 12th November is followed by a couple of webinars to inspire you on dark winter days. We are hoping to add more webinars in the New Year so why not sign up to our e-newsletter to receive an email alerting you to these once they are planned. You can sign up at bit.ly/cfga-newsletter

It's great to welcome Dr Josie Wall to our team and to see Our Digital Ancestors project underway. There will be many ways to join in with this project coming soon, and we can't wait to share some of the stories that will be unearthed by volunteers, following the thread

of information from churchyard monuments into local archives, old newspapers and online sources. We hope to shine a light on particular individuals, places and events that are memorialised within our churchyards and cemeteries, finding stories within the stones.

Please keep looking for autumn and winter birds and making a record of them to help us build the data on just how good burial grounds are for biodiversity year-round.

Finally, for those of you who help to care for a churchyard, chapel yard or cemetery, take a look at your yew trees and see if a little timely ivy reduction is needed.



Harriet Carty

Q&A with Dr Josie Wall

Where did your interest in burial grounds start?

When I was a little girl, my uncle used to show me gravestones when we walked his dog Frodo in the local churchyard. We would talk about the history and people's lives, look at what the stones were made from and the lichen growing on them. He wasn't surprised when I decided to do a degree in Archaeology and Geology.

What was your journey to Caring for God's Acre?

When picking my dissertation topic, I really wanted an excuse to visit Paris – so decided to write about Pere Lachaise Cemetery, the first garden cemetery in the world. I didn't know then that I would spend the next 15 years researching cemeteries and write my PhD thesis about them.

Alongside my studies, I started volunteering and working in heritage organisations across Birmingham. Fortuitously, The Coffin Works, the world's only time capsule museum of a coffin fittings manufactory opened in the city in 2014 and I have been involved ever since. My experience there as a volunteer coordinator led me to be chosen as the Activities Programme Manager for the Jewellery Quarter Cemeteries Project, where I also worked alongside Caring for God's Acre on the Celebrating Birmingham's Burial Grounds project, so was delighted when I had the chance to apply for this role.

Country churchyards or urban cemeteries?

An impossible choice because I love both! As a student I got a chance to help survey a remote

kirkyard on the Isle of Harris in the Outer Hebrides overlooking the sea and in its own way that was every bit as beautiful as the Egyptian Avenue in Highgate Cemetery.

What do you think the role is of volunteers in burial grounds?

I think that volunteers are the champions and guardians of burial grounds, because of the strong personal connections they form to the places they look after. They might have loved ones buried there, live or worship in the local community, or just become connected to the space. Volunteers know every tree, plant and creature at home there, they keep the stories of the past alive, and fight to make sure burial grounds are protected into the future.

Everybody needs Friends...

It is a fortunate church, chapel, cemetery or burial ground that has a Friends group. A group of individuals so passionate about a place that they volunteer their free time to care for and promote it.

However enthusiastic your group though, there are times when it can feel like an uphill struggle, particularly during the winter when leaden, grey skies cause spirits and motivation to flag, or when the local community is disengaged or unsupportive.

Here is a short list of suggestions to keep your Friends group active and engaged with tasks that are both meaningful and fun, as well as getting the local community interested. Who knows, some of them may even become inspired to join you.

Springtime

Spring, when trees are coming into leaf or blossom, is a great time to do a tree survey. This may feel like a daunting task, best left to a professional, but a volunteer survey is a very good way of keeping an eye on your trees and spotting potential problems that may need professional care. The volunteer tree survey involves recording size, species, location and condition, and is both manageable and enjoyable. There is lots of advice on our website. Have a look at bit.ly/cfga-tree-survey to see how to do a basic tree survey.



Could you create a bee buffet?
Sowing native Sedum (stonecrop)

seeds directly onto the gravel of unvisited graves is great for many pollinating insects who will enjoy the nectar-rich flowers.

Summer

Summer is often a time when the majority of the hard work is done and if you have a wildflower meadow area it will be in full bloom, buzzing with life. This could be the time to show off your burial ground by holding a small public event. You might be surprised by the enthusiasm you get from your local community, which injects new energy into your activities.



• In June encourage your local community to join in with Churches Count on Nature during our Love Your Burial Ground week. No specialist knowledge is required and there are lots of resources to help you plan an event on our website at bit.ly/cfga-burial-ground-resources

• During July and August any perennial wildflower areas should be cut and the grass raked off. Why not turn this 'Hay Day' into a fun event with a picnic afterwards? If the hay is particularly species-rich then it can be used to create a new meadow by strewing, so you could offer the green hay to people wanting to create their own, local meadows.

• Moth event: is there a local enthusiast or member of a club who would like to set up a moth trap one evening and then share the morning release with local people? Over 2,500 moth species have been recorded in the UK compared with 57 resident butterfly species and 2 regular migrants, so people may be astonished at the numbers found within your churchyard or cemetery.



Autumn

If you have some undisturbed areas, near a boundary wall for example, why not install some reptile mats? These can be offcuts of corrugated bitumen (commonly

used as shed roofing) or corrugated iron. All sorts of creatures use the warm, protected spaces under these mats, so an occasional peer underneath may reveal a vole (or evidence of vole activity), or if you're lucky a snake or slow worm.

Fungi foray: do you have a local expert who would lead a search around your burial ground? There's always something to be found. Grassland fungi such as waxcaps, spindles and clubs are good indicators of ancient grassland.

Thinking ahead, autumn is the best time to plant native wildflower bulbs such as snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis*) and daffodils (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*) ready for a colourful display next spring. If you are trying to establish a new area of meadow, this is also the best time to sow yellow rattle seed, a semi-parasitic plant that weakens grass species and allows wildflowers to flourish.

Winter

Winter, when the vegetation has died down, is a good time to start recording your memorials. Many of our churchyards and burial grounds contain memorials from the 1800s onwards, their inscriptions gradually eroding through centuries of wind and rain. Recording these names and dates while they are still legible will preserve them for future generations to discover. Please check out the 'Recording Memorials' section of our website for help with this at bit.ly/cfga-memorial-recording

Public events can be a good fundraiser, as well raising local awareness and interest. Why not ask participants for a donation, which will also fund any fees or expenses of experts leading events.

Finally, we are here to support the valuable work undertaken by Friends groups across the country, so if you have questions, or would like further advice, please get in touch using enquiries@cfga.org.uk

Ivy and Churchyard Yew Trees

By Russell Ball, ISA Certified Arborist



Yew tree © Russell Ball

Churchyards have been termed a Noah's Ark for old, veteran and ancient yews. A valuable refuge that over the years have provided a sanctuary for this historic and culturally significant tree. But there could be a threat to their long-term survival: ivy.

The biodiversity value that ivy in trees provides to all sorts of wildlife is undisputed, from a nectar supply for bees and hoverflies to fruits and nesting habitats for a range of birds.

However, ivy in the crowns of old, veteran and ancient churchyard yews can present significant problems for their long-term survival. Like all trees, yews need a full crown (inner, middle and outer) with a full complement of needles to photosynthesise and support the tree's energy needs. When ivy begins to spread upwards and outwards within the crowns it swamps these needles, impeding or preventing this vital photosynthesis. The net result is a yew under stress that increases as the ivy increasingly swamps the crown. Given that these valuable yews do not reach great heights they can easily become ivy-clad. Another problem is ivy on long, extending branches. This can add considerable weight, leading to limb failure, notably in wet, windy weather.

So all is not good with ivy in churchyard yews. And it needs to be managed if these valuable trees are not to be seriously affected.

The solution is to sever the trunk ivy, taking out a 3-4cm stem section so

the severed stems cannot re-graft. This should be carried out around the trunk base. But if there is concern over low nesting birds, it could be undertaken 1-1.5m off the ground, retaining live full-leaf trunk ivy.

Importantly, handsaws should be used to prevent the underlying yew bark from being damaged. If the ivy stems are thick then a wide carpentry chisel using a rubber/wooden mallet could be used – again, see bark consideration above. For safety, protective gloves and glasses should be worn.

Within 12 months the ivy will begin to shed its leaves with only the bare stems remaining – providing valuable habitat until they decay over time. Importantly, as such, it is not necessary to strip-out ivy within the yew crown. If the loss of ivy nesting habitat is of concern then bird and bat boxes could be installed.

Unfortunately, this is not a 'one-time operation' as the ivy roots, which are intermingled with the yew roots, will regrow up the trunk year on year. Thus, trunk ivy removal will be required on a repeat basis, although it will be easier to sever the young fleshy stems.

So whilst in general ivy is beneficial, it can present real problems for old,



Yew tree © Russell Ball



Yew tree © Russell Ball

veteran and ancient churchyard yews. Please look out for this in your churchyard and keep ivy managed to ensure the long-term survival of these valuable, historic

and culturally significant yew trees.

Russell Ball

*Graduate Botanist,
Chartered Biologist and an
ISA Certified Arborist*



Winter birds in burial grounds

By Peter Carty, former National Trust Countryside Manager

Early October sees the end of one migration, the southward departure to warmer climates of our summer visitors and the start of another, the arrival of our winter visitors escaping the colder areas further north. Swifts, which will nest in churches, are the first to leave in early August followed by Swallows and House Martins as well as warblers and flycatchers.

There are not enough flying insects for these species in the winter. However, in recent decades some migrants are remaining in Britain as climate change brings milder winters with less snow and freezing conditions. Two of these, the Blackcap and Chiffchaff, both of which are types of warblers, are often seen in winter. They are technically not true long-distance migrants like the Swallow, which is pre-programmed to migrate south of the Sahara. Instead, these two species move away from cold weather and may only fly as far as the Mediterranean basin in response to cold weather. Blackcaps will eat berries as well as insects, but Chiffchaffs need small insects to survive the winter. They take a risk remaining and prolonged deep cold will take a

toll. Advantages of not migrating include finding the best breeding territories in spring by being there early and avoiding crossing the Sahara.

As winter progresses, we start to see the arrivals from further north. Large flocks of Redwings migrate from the forests of Scandinavia, northern Europe and Siberia travelling to Britain, Ireland and much of southern Europe down to Morocco. They fly at night and one can hear the quiet 'seeih' on a clear night as huge numbers pass overhead, as many as 8 million making the journey. They and their larger cousin the Fieldfare often feed on berries and earthworms in churchyards. You may spot them on yews along with other thrushes. Fieldfares are often located by their

cackling and 'chacking' calls.

Other thrushes are present in winter: Blackbird, Song Thrush and Mistle Thrush. The latter two are brown with a spotted breast but can be separated on size: a Mistle Thrush is larger than a Blackbird; a Song Thrush smaller. Mistle Thrush shows white underwings in flight and Song Thrush is orange. The former has dry rattle for a call and the latter a loud 'tic'.

Another bird that migrates to our shores is the Hawfinch, that arrives from central Europe to escape the winter, sometimes in large numbers. When this happens it is known as a 'Hawfinch year' and birds are seen in gardens as well as churchyards and cemeteries. They are shy and hard to spot so listen for the loud robin-like 'tic' call, then try to spot the bird! The Hawfinch has a huge bill capable of opening a cherry stone, whilst its bright colours will help you with the identification once you have spotted it.

Another rarer visitor from northern Europe is the Waxwing. They love berry-bearing trees and shrubs, often seen on cotoneaster or berberis. They have a chattering call and are brightly coloured. Their old name of 'Bohemian Chatterer' is apt and they, like the other winter visitors, are delightful to see.

As well as winter migrants you can also see our resident birds in churchyards. If you look hard at any time of year, including winter, you will find Goldcrest foraging in a yew tree and making a high-pitched call. Look again and you may find the very beautiful Firecrest, which has spread north over recent decades. There are now about 500 breeding pairs in Britain, mainly in the south but with birds now starting to be seen further north. Look for black and white sides to the top of head and brighter colours in order to separate it from a Goldcrest.

Another bird with a similarly high pitched call is the Treecreeper. They can also be seen in burial grounds, scuttling up tree trunks and picking out small invertebrates from beneath the bark with their curved bills. Treecreepers are also resident in the UK so can be seen all year round.

In winter one familiar bird is notable for its singing. This is the Robin and its winter song is even more melancholic sounding than its summer song. Robins defend a winter territory, protecting vital food reserves to sustain them through hard times, so the song has an important purpose. Robins are actually short-lived birds with the average life span of a Robin only 9 months, as many young perish in the winter. We often think that we have a tame Robin which returns year after year and gets to know us. This is unlikely. As well as being short-lived, many Robins that we see in winter are actually migrants who have escaped the northern winter. It is likely your winter churchyard Robin is a

Russian bird, which will leave in spring and be replaced by another.

Other birds don't sing a full song in winter but do use calls. These are often simple notes and may be contact calls used to keep the individuals of a roving flock in touch with each other, and helping to let the flock know when an individual has located a source of food. A delight in winter is to come across a flock of Long-tailed Tits as they move from tree to tree in small flocks of about 10 birds, seeking food within the foliage. They use a low trill as a contact note, keeping the flock together.

Birds often have a different alarm or warning call to alert others of a predator such as a cat or Sparrowhawk. The best known of these is the Blackbird whose alarm call has an instant effect on birds nearby. Sometimes the small birds will use what is known as a mobbing call when they locate a roosting Tawny Owl. They will start up a loud chorus of alarms drawing attention to the owl, which is a predator of small birds, and keeping others on alert.

Tawny Owls often use churchyards and in October can be especially noisy when parent birds are driving their young birds away from the territory where they have been

raised. This helps to disperse birds, avoids interbreeding and also conserves food resources for the established adult pair. The young need to find their own territories with sufficient food for the winter, far enough away from other adult birds with established territories.

If you are finding it difficult to learn bird calls and song then try a free smartphone app to help you get started. You can download the Merlin app, which is produced by Cornell University and is excellent. iNaturalist can help you identify calls if you can record a snatch of song and using either iNaturalist or Birdtrack will produce a biological record, helping us to build our understanding of bird populations and movements. If you do find a Firecrest, a Waxwing or a Hawfinch please report it to either your county bird recorder or use an app to make a record.

So, to end, keep an eye on your churchyard, chapel yard or cemetery and do use the iNaturalist app for your records. It now has a Caring for God's Acre project on it, bit.ly/cfga-inaturalist helping us to better understand how important these sites are for birds throughout the year.



Hawfinch by Andy Fusek Peters

Yellow Rattle

a grassland manager's little helper

Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) is a true hero in the quest to restore and create wildflower meadows, whether in a burial ground or your own garden. This semi-parasitic annual attaches itself to neighbouring grasses through its root system, reducing the vigour of the grass. Where Yellow Rattle is present, you will notice that the grass is shorter and less dense (it can reduce hay yields by up to 50% which is why some farmers want rid of it). This reduction in grass density allows more sunlight to reach the ground and reduces competition for wildflowers.

How to Grow Yellow Rattle

Establishing Yellow Rattle can be a bit tricky, but we have found the following tips can help:

1. Obtaining Seed

- Yellow Rattle seeds are short-lived, so they must be sown as fresh as possible, ideally harvested in the most recent summer.
- If you know of a local area with Yellow Rattle, consider asking for permission to collect some seeds. They can be gathered by picking the stems on a dry day and shaking them into a paper bag. We have found sweeping with a butterfly net also very effective. We typically collect seeds between June and August.
- Alternatively, you can purchase seeds from a reputable supplier such as Habitat Aid.

2. Sowing Seed

- Sow the seeds between harvest time and the end of December. They need cold temperatures to trigger germination, so earlier in autumn or winter is best.
- To prepare the area, cut the grass as short as possible and remove the clippings. Ideally, rake or harrow the soil surface to expose some bare soil (can be up to 50%) before sowing the seeds.

- Scatter the seeds by hand at a rate of 0.5g to 1g per square meter. After sowing, tread the seeds in, but do not cover them with soil. We usually sow in patches to monitor their establishment.

3. Ongoing Management

- Seedlings will start to appear from late February to April. They need sunlight when very small so a spring cut can help if the surrounding grass is long and would smother the seedlings. If you are doing a spring cut, set your mower blade high so as not to mow them out. The plants typically grow from around 10 cm up to a maximum of 50 cm.
- Unlike most meadow plants Yellow Rattle is an annual, which means that plant does not overwinter and it grows from seed each year. Do the main cut once it has shed its seeds, which will usually be between early July and August.
- It's important to cut or graze your meadow area at least once

more between late summer and March. This ensures that the Yellow Rattle has space to thrive in spring without being crowded out by grass. These additional cuts also benefit the other wildflowers, preventing them from being outcompeted by grass.

We hope these tips help you to establish this handy species!

Our New Wildflower Seed Mix • inspired by historic country churchyards

If you are wanting to add seeds to your own garden wildflower area, we have been working with Habitat Aid to establish a lovely

British Wildflower Seed Mix, inspired by our historic country churchyards. The mix contains 21 species of wildflowers and 9 grasses. Ideally sow this autumn as the mix contains Yellow Rattle.

Each pack contains 50g of seeds, costs £16.30 and will cover around 12m² of area. Remember to get 20% off with your member's discount.

To order visit our shop

bit.ly/cfga-wildflower-seeds



A huge thank you to all who took part in Love Your Burial Ground week in June of this year

Many people did so, some through Churches Count on Nature 24, others as part of National Cemeteries Week (all of which take place over the same period).

Most people chose to organise some nature spotting and we saw 325 different events taking place across England and Wales. For those of you who haven't yet got involved please have a look at the photo gallery and map on our website bit.ly/cfga-ccon-gallery-2024 showing the range of events across the country which may inspire you to pop it into your diary for next June.

Whilst Love Your Burial Ground week has been running for many years (previously named Cherishing Churchyards week), Churches Count on Nature is a relatively recent initiative, now in its fourth year and continuing to be very popular. We have between 4,000 and 12,500 people getting involved and, judging from those who send us feedback, they love it, with over 90% saying so in every year!

For those of you who are churchyard or cemetery volunteers and managers, why not consider running heritage or wildlife themed public events as a way of attracting new volunteers. Most events drew in a high proportion of people who had not been involved before, about half of whom said they'd be interested in helping care for the site. Whilst not every offer of help made in sunny June transforms into action in November, it is still encouraging!



We ask people to try and use the iNaturalist app on a smartphone or tablet if you are at all used to using digital devices like these. This app encourages you to take a photo of anything you see, or to record a sound such as bird song. It will then make suggestions to help you identify it. Most importantly, the photo really helps the army of volunteer naturalists who check all records to ensure that they are correct and can be 'verified' as such. If you haven't tried this app then do give it a go and log onto the Beautiful Burial Ground project within it. We have a couple of short films on our website. See bit.ly/cfgafilms to help you get started. Try it first on something you can already identify, a churchyard holly tree or a molehill perhaps, so that you can get used to using it.

Once familiar you can branch out. How about recording a robin singing in winter? Once you've got going you may find that you enjoy recording this way and can start counting nature in your local churchyard or cemetery all year round, not just during Love Your Burial Ground week.

Feedback from Churches Count on Nature 2024: *'We are now planning a follow on event for the Autumn with a challenge to identify the flowers and fruits of species found in the churchyard.'*

Feedback from Churches Count on Nature 2024: *'We are now planning a follow on event for the Autumn with a challenge to identify the flowers and fruits of species found in the churchyard.'*

Feedback from Churches Count on Nature 2024: *'We are now planning a follow on event for the Autumn with a challenge to identify the flowers and fruits of species found in the churchyard.'*

Feedback from Churches Count on Nature 2024: *'We are now planning a follow on event for the Autumn with a challenge to identify the flowers and fruits of species found in the churchyard.'*

New Chair of Trustees

We are delighted to introduce Catherine MacCarthy who stepped into the role of Chair of Trustees following the retirement of Oliver Goode as Chair in December 2023.

Catherine's background is in conservation, having trained as a Paper Conservator at Camberwell School of Art. Following part-time work as a Conservator at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, she joined the National Trust in 1981 as a Conservator in Preventive Conservation and then as a Conservation Manager.

For her last 10 years at the National Trust she was the Head of the Conservation consultancy in the Midlands Region, and Caring for God's Acre were lucky to recruit her as a Trustee on her retirement in 2017.





A-Z of Burial Ground Conservation

M is for Memorials

Some of the oldest and most impressive monuments, from the pyramids at Giza to the passage grave at Newgrange in Ireland, are memorials for the dead. The humblest headstone in a country churchyard is part of a human impulse to immortalise those we have loved and lost which can be seen throughout time, all over the world.

A wander through any burial ground is a stroll through the past of that community, like stepping between the pages of an open-air history book. Each stone tells the story of an individual or family and can provide remarkable insight into their lives. Through the symbolism and epitaphs chosen for each of these stones we can learn not just names and dates, but trace professions, learn of local disasters, chart changes in life expectancy and infant mortality, or people's characters and interests. No wonder they are so valued a resource for local and family history researchers.

Not every grave is marked with a memorial though, with archaeologists estimating that the average parish churchyard contains around 10,000 burials and urban cemeteries up to 1 million! When did we start using gravestones as memorials and why doesn't every burial have one?

Between the widespread acceptance of Christianity in Britain and the Industrial Revolution, most people would be interred in their local parish churchyard. Inside the church itself were memorials for

the local gentry (and the clergy), with the belief that graves closest to the altar were closest to God, and thus the most sought after. The memorials inside churches ranged from elaborate side chapels built with their own altars to house a chest tomb with elaborately carved statues to simple engraved slabs in the floor and everything in between, including brasses and memorial windows. Over time churches became crowded with memorials from different eras, representing the most important, wealthy families. Space beneath the floor for more coffins became just as limited.

These kinds of memorials were beyond the reach of ordinary parishioners – they couldn't afford the high fees for burial inside the church, or commission a stonemason to create a memorial. They would be buried in the churchyard, their names added to the Parish register and be remembered as part of the collective dead on All Souls Day. The location of the grave would be known by their family and friends for as long as they were in living memory and so a permanent marker wasn't needed. Memorials

outside in the churchyard were not practical anyway, as the same piece of land served the community for many centuries, by a slow process of grave re-use.

The graves on the South and East sides of the church were most popular, offering a view of dawn on Judgement Day, with the North side associated with the burial of undesirables, like strangers to the community. Gradually, over the course of a generation or so, all the space would be used and then the process would start again. Any bones uncovered might be transferred to an ossuary or charnel pit, or simply reburied deeper than the level of the new grave. This reuse is why, over time, the soil level around churches grew higher than that surrounding them, often nearing the top of the walls.

From the 18th century onwards, this process was disrupted. Where space inside churches was scarce, wealthy families started to build a family vault or bricked grave, replicating their traditions inside the church and marked with similar memorials, inspired by chest tombs, wall plaques and ledger stones. This trend encouraged



other members of the community to mark graves too. Many early gravestones are small and made from local stone. Sometimes the carvings are quite rudimentary, showing that local workers were turning their hand to gravestones. Marking graves made reuse more difficult, but this was not an immediate issue in small, often shrinking, rural parishes.

Urban areas, however, faced a problem as population increased rapidly. Growing towns and cities of the Industrial Revolution drew in many working families, leading to overcrowded and unsanitary conditions for the living and the dead. Instead of reusing a grave in a parish churchyard once every 40 or 50 years, they attempted reuse them after only 3–5 years, with predictable results – churchyards that offended the eyes, noses, morals and health of the congregation. Buying land to extend urban churchyards was difficult, usually resulting in small detached extensions some distance from the church, where they were built at all. In Paris, to end the problem, they closed all the churchyards and crypts in the city and opened new burial grounds outside the city limits, most famous of which is Père Lachaise cemetery.

This new 'garden cemetery' model with a park landscape and beautiful memorials was widely copied across Europe and America. In Britain this started in 1830s, with private cemeteries owned by Joint Stock Companies. They

made profits for their shareholders by selling graves and the right to erect a monument to the growing middle classes, desperate to escape the overcrowded churchyards. The professional funeral industry was also growing, with new memorial masons next to the cemeteries with catalogues of designs to choose from, to be customised with different symbols and inscriptions.

The Burial Acts in the mid-19th century empowered local authorities to set up burial boards and build municipal cemeteries, so the role of the Church of England in providing burial was reduced in urban areas. Soon even those living in rural parishes could order a gravestone from a catalogue or a local stonemason imitating fashionable styles. More regional types of memorial such as the hogback stones seen in northern England and Scotland waned in popularity. The arrival of the railways made it easier to import other types of stone, such as granite from Cornwall and Aberdeen or Canara marble from Italy. Such stones were shaped at the quarry and only inscribed with the epitaph by the local mason.

The range of gravestone styles and colours seen in churchyards increased. Most memorials were still made from local stone, such as slate in Wales, but scattered here and there would be a pink granite obelisk or a marble cross. By the 20th century, importing materials from further afield became affordable and today popular

polished 'granites' come from South Africa, India and China. The reducing cost of memorials made them accessible to more people too, until it became unusual for any grave to be left unmarked, which is in stark contrast to pre-industrial eras.

The symbolism of memorials became more varied over time. Early gravestones were very plain or decorated with 'memento mori' (remember you must die) symbols like skull and crossbones or winged hourglasses. These were first replaced in the 18th century by more romantic symbols, like winged cherub heads or weeping willows, broken columns and urns, inspired by Roman and Ancient Greek art. The 19th century had Egyptian, Gothic and Celtic revivals, all making their mark on gravestones. The Victorian language of the flowers was a popular source of motifs, like roses for love or ivy for loyalty. Sentimental designs like clasped hands accompanied by the words 'we shall meet again' were common. If you want to learn about symbolism in your local burial ground, Caring for God's Acre have a handy symbolism guide available on our website at bit.ly/cfga-signs-symbols

Over the coming years, thanks to Our Digital Ancestors project, we'll know more about memorials in English churchyards than ever before, with approximately 10–12 million of them mapped and photographed, for us to explore their stories further.

Our autumn/winter webinar series starts here:

Tuesday 5th November 12 – 1pm

'The Stories Behind the Stones: What memorials can teach us about our ancestors' by Dr Josie Wall, Project Manager for Our Digital Ancestors

Our burial grounds are open air history books and a brilliant starting point for more research. Each monument tells the story of a life or family in the community. During the webinar Josie will talk about the development of churchyard and cemetery monuments, who gets memorialised, how and when, and will discuss many ways they can help us research the past. Marking the beginning of Our Digital Ancestors project, which will teach communities how to use new digital maps of CofE churchyards across England, this webinar will be a fascinating introduction to the social history of gravestones in all burial grounds.

We hope you can join us for our online AGM
Tuesday 12th November 7pm

The official business will be followed by 'Your Church - Your Swifts' by Edward Mayer of Swift Conservation

The Swift, a spectacularly agile and exciting flyer, a once common migrant insectivore now on the Red List of disappearing birds, took to nesting in churches when the UK lost its ancient forests. In some cases, they have been nesting in the same church for hundreds of years, maybe even more. But intolerance, re-roofing, renovations, modifications and insulation threaten their survival as never before.

Yet it is easy to save their nest places. Join us for this evening talk after the business of the AGM to find out more.

Edward Mayer has been in love with Swifts since the age of six, they were the first birds that he really noticed.

His career has been spent in property and project management. He spent 12 years managing the Tate Gallery's properties throughout the UK.

To find out more and sign up for our webinars visit bit.ly/cfga-webinars

Thank you to all of our members, with your support we can:

- Employ our core staff, Harriet, Prue, Andrea, Liam, Mick, Anna, Alex, Kirsty and Tony
- Run our helpline – answering your calls and queries via phone or e-mail
- Develop new projects and initiatives to support groups managing burial grounds across the country
- Maintain our resources and information including the website
- Produce this magazine and maintain the charity
- Promote and support conservation activities in burial grounds
- Support our wonderful Conservation Volunteers

Editors: Prue Dakin, Andrea Gilpin

Design: www.markansell-graphicdesign.co.uk

Please get in touch:

01588 673041 enquiries@cfga.org.uk

Caring for God's Acre, 11 Drovers House, Craven Arms, Shropshire SY7 9BZ

Charity No: 1155536

Update on a marathon success!

A big Thank You is due to everyone who supported Alex in his London marathon run in April. We wanted to share that the total raised was a very impressive £2,375, which was a huge increase on the projected £1,500. We are very proud of Alex and in awe that he plans to do it all over again in 2025!



Thank you to our current funders:

Atlantic Geomatics Intl

Church of England

Church in Wales

GML Ltd

The John Ellerman Foundation

National Lottery Heritage Fund

The Millichope Foundation

The Leonard Laity Stoaie

Charitable Trust