



# FOST news

Friends of St Thomas' Church Northlew

## Art & photography exhibition



and teas in the Church Room and a bumper raffle. We are pleased to include special displays from our school and toddler group, art therapy at the Hospice and creative groups from Made-Well in Hatherleigh and the Wellbeing Cafe in Okehampton. Creativity is clearly important for health and wellbeing - and you're never too young (or old) to have a go.

### Thank you

Roger Atkinson has retired from the PCC as Treasurer and as a long standing FOST Trustee. We would like to thank him for his invaluable advice and dedication over the years. And he's still doing his bit for the church as 'Head Gardener'!

### Green audit

In line with the CofE's commitment to achieving net zero by 2030, an energy audit of the church, Church Room and churchyard is nearly complete. The report offers ideas for reducing our carbon footprint at the same time as improving facilities for community use. The report will be discussed at both FOST and PCC meetings in the near future.

Don't forget to visit FOST's art and photography exhibition over the weekend of 17 and 18 May from 11 to 5 in aid of church repairs and the North Devon Hospice. There's a wide variety of exhibits from local artists and photographers - and visitors will be able to buy originals and cards, enjoy coffee, light lunches

## Supporting FOST

FOST news is an occasional newsletter with information about our church building and fund raising events. If you would prefer an electronic copy, just let us have your email address.

You can support the Friends' work by taking part in fund raising events but if you would like to get more actively involved and/or become a member, please contact Jackie Ellis [jackie.ann.ellis@btinternet.com](mailto:jackie.ann.ellis@btinternet.com) 01837 658750 .

Secure donations can be made using our QR code - and you can Gift Aid your contribution at the same time.



FOST is a Registered Charity No 1070123

## FOST facts

The day before the Patronal Festival used to be called 'bun baking day' - when local women made large round buns with spice and currants and served them on sycamore leaves.

## Coming up

**Sundays 4/11\*/18 May**  
09:30 Morning Prayer  
\*Communion

**Monday/Tuesday 12/13 May 3-5pm**  
Closing dates to deliver Art & Photography Exhibits to the church

**Saturday/Sunday 17/18 May**  
Art & Photography Exhibition  
11:00 - 17:00 Church & Church Room

**Sunday 25 May**  
18:00 Rogation Sunday Hillside Farm

**Sunday 1 June**  
Service and BBQ  
17:30 Ashbury Church

**Sunday 8 June**  
09:30 Communion

**Sunday 15 June**  
No service in Northlew  
11:00 Rev J Cook Priesting Service  
Hatherleigh Church

**Friday 20 June**  
19:00 Safari Supper - Ashbank House,  
Old Wheelwrights then Church Room

**Sunday 22 June**  
09:30 Animal/pet service

**Saturday 28 June**  
Patronal Festival Service followed by  
village fete at Church Gate Farm

**Issue 9: May/June 2025**

## Spotlight on...

Our *churchyard* is a special place of remembrance that offers evidence of the passage of time, the chance to reflect on personal loss and a permanent record of history.

Wander around and you'll find a host of familiar surnames from long established village families, graves of past Rectors and murder victims and memorials for prominent Yeomen and WWI casualties.

Our collection of specimen trees includes sycamore, yews, beeches and pollarded limes, planted in the late 19th Century when the church was renovated. The older part of the churchyard lies within Northlew Conservation Area so not surprisingly the largest trees are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. Specialist tree surgeons are hired for any major work.

There is a special area for the burial of ashes and memorial benches are particularly valued as they provide quiet places for reflection, to sit and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere and views across the Devon countryside.

*One of the oldest marked graves belongs to William Watkins, son of John Watkins, who 'departed this life the 4<sup>TH</sup> day of November 1695'*

## The mowers

The successful upkeep of the churchyard depends on the dedication of a team of volunteers led by 'Head Gardener' Roger Atkinson. They undertake a variety of tasks - including mowing, strimming and hedging - all at minimal cost.

Specific areas of the churchyard are allocated to each member of the team. To encourage biodiversity, a recent decision has been to re-wild two areas either side of the path near the gate to the public footpath. And because the team is keen on composting, their advice is to use only biodegradable materials to decorate graves.

The team is provided with well maintained equipment including a mower and strimmer. But there's always a need for more helping hands - so if you're looking for regular exercise in a pleasant environment, why not volunteer?



## In early summer look out for...



The young leaves of *cow parsley* are edible, but as it has so many poisonous relatives, it's best left alone! Another name, 'Mother die', was used to frighten children into thinking that if they picked cow parsley, their mother would die. This was intended to deter children from picking deadly hemlock.



*Speedwell* is also known as Angel's Eyes, God's Eyes and Eve's Tears because of its bright blue flowers. The Latin name *Veronica* is after St Veronica who offered a cloth (her veil) to Jesus to wipe his face as he carried his cross to Calvary. The image of Jesus' face was said to be imprinted on the cloth and is a treasured relic in the Vatican.

*Fox-and-cubs hawkweed* is a perennial in the aster family. It has many other names including Tawny Hawkweed, Devil's Paintbrush, and Grim-the-coller (the black hairs are reminiscent of a miner covered in colliery grime). They have long been used in folk medicine to treat a variety of diseases, including respiratory infections, digestive problems and skin conditions.



If you'd like to know more about the churchyard, copies of the booklet *The old churchyard* are still available.

### Sources

- Roger Atkinson & Lena Williams
- *Caring for God's Acre*  
[www.caringforgodsacre.org](http://www.caringforgodsacre.org)
- *Plantlife* [www.plantlife.org.uk](http://www.plantlife.org.uk)

## FOST finds

Can you find two crimson Thomas a Becket rose bushes - one inside the churchyard, one outside?

