



# FOST news

Friends of St Thomas' Church Northlew

## A buzz in the air...

As part of St Thomas' commitment to Eco Church, FOST is organising a Bee Fun Weekend in the church on 16/17 May and celebrating World Bee Day.

There will be lots of information on the importance of bees and pollinators in the environment, an open Art & Photography

exhibition, a Poetry competition, displays and fun activities and workshops for children (and adults). Further displays, refreshments and a raffle will be in the Church Room.

It's not too late to enter the bee poetry competition or exhibit some of your art and photography to help raise funds for church repairs to the tower and guttering. If you'd like entry details, please contact Val Welsh [valofgreen@gmail.com](mailto:valofgreen@gmail.com).

The Eco theme of the weekend will continue with our annual Rogation Service at Hillside Farm on the Sunday evening, blessing the crops and farm animals - none of which would thrive without the help of pollinators.

It should be an interesting weekend, so save the dates!



Friends of St Thomas' Church Northlew

**Bee Fun Weekend** 

Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 May, 10 - 4  
Northlew Parish Church and Church Room

Activities for adults and children!  
Art & Photography exhibition (themed)  
Poetry competition  
Talks, demonstrations and displays  
Build a bee hotel  
Plant a meadow in a pot  
Discover nature in the churchyard  
Refreshments, sales table & raffle

All proceeds will be used for urgent church repairs  
For more information contact [valofgreen@gmail.com](mailto:valofgreen@gmail.com)  
[www.fostnorthlew.org](http://www.fostnorthlew.org)



## 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 our Secretary - email [secretary@fostnorthlew.org](mailto:secretary@fostnorthlew.org) or visit our website [www.fostnorthlew.org](http://www.fostnorthlew.org) for more information.

Secure donations can also be made using our QR code - and you can Gift Aid your contribution as well.



FOST is a Registered Charity  
No 1070123

## FOST facts

The restoration of our rood screen and loft by Herbert Read of Exeter marks its centenary throughout this decade. Work started in the early 1920s, and was managed in stages until the last bay was completed in 1929.

## Coming up

Sunday services at St Thomas' are usually held at 09:30. Communion is on the second Sunday of the month.

**16/17 May: Bee Fun Weekend**  
10:00-16:00 Church & Church Room

**17 May: Rogation Service**  
18:30 Hillside Farm

**Sunday 7 June: BBQ and Service**  
17:30 Ashbury Church

**Sunday 14 June**  
09:30 Pet service

**Saturday 20 June: Safari Supper**  
19:00 Ashbank House, The Old Wheelwrights then the Church Room

## FOST finds

The late Pat Durston (a founder Trustee of FOST) kept a handwritten diary of events when she was Churchwarden. Some of the entries give us a glimpse of her take on church life.

*July 5th & 6th 1986: Church Festival held in Victory Hall (wet). Rev Sam Philpotts, St Peters, Plym, was to preach but was too late due to traffic. Fr G ad libbed and was very good. Profit £539.00*

*October 8th 1990: Harvest Supper was laid for 94 & then stretched to 100! Some disquiet at no jacket spuds.*

*June 22nd 1998: PCC meeting. Short as England playing Romania in World Cup (lost 2-1)*

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## Spotlight on...

Burial grounds hold so much of interest and value that it's hard to know where to start. They are the place within a community for burial and remembrance, but also local history waiting to be explored and a true haven for wildlife. They are valued for the atmosphere of peace and tranquillity, where you can hear birdsong and slow down for a minute.

What leads to this atmosphere of timelessness and the range of plants, animals and fungi to be found here? There are clues in the history of burial grounds and by managing with history in mind, you can keep a burial ground welcoming and teeming with wildlife while improving access to our built heritage for people to explore and enjoy.

Start by imagining our churchyard through the centuries... What did it look like and which features were there? For several centuries, churchyards contained few built structures, perhaps a churchyard cross but no grave markers. These became fashionable in the 18th Century with many dating from Georgian or Victorian times. Before this, the churchyard was a meadow, cut for hay and used for activities such as archery practice (and occasionally other less salubrious pastimes).

Management would not have changed much with the advent of stone monuments. This was still a meadow after all, managed with scythes or by grazing; so our older monuments would have stood within longer grass full of wildflowers - a familiar sight to those living at that time.

Source: *The Benefact Trust*



### *What can we do locally?*

FOST has an important role in caring for the churchyard as well as the church building. And both FOST and the PCC are committed to protecting the environment as God's creation.

A recent visit by Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT) confirmed that the old churchyard in Northlew still has remnants of wildflower meadow and, with the right management regime, has great potential to increase its biodiversity. The land has never been ploughed, fertilised or treated with herbicides.

DWT will be sending us a detailed report, but in the meantime - with the help of visitors to the Bee Fun Weekend - we are hoping to identify as many plant species in the old

churchyard as possible and compile a database so we can monitor changes over time.

As an initial experiment we are leaving an area in the north west corner of the old churchyard unmown for around twelve weeks over the spring and summer to let the plants flower and attract more pollinators and wildlife. At the same time we will maintain good access for visitors and put up some explanatory signs.

If you are interested in taking part in more organised ecology activities - such as bat detection, moth trapping, pulling Himalayan balsam and installing bird and hedgehog boxes, please let us know.

And if you're keen to join the mowing team, do contact Roger Atkinson or a member of his team. They would be very pleased to hear from you.



### *Extending the burial ground*

Plans are underway to extend the lower graveyard.

Not surprisingly, this involves navigating strict planning, environmental, and legal regulations including planning permission for change of use, conducting hydrogeological surveys to protect water sources and ensuring proper site access for funerals and visitors.

Finally, and most importantly, the new burial ground will be consecrated by the Bishop.

*For more information about St Thomas' burial ground you can download The old churchyard at [www.fostnorthlew.org](http://www.fostnorthlew.org)*

