

St Swithun's Church, Headbourne Worthy
Scrub clearance around the churchyard
Sunday 16th September 2007



**Worthys
Conservation
Volunteers**

"Water vole Conservation

For the past 3 years this Churchyard has been managed for wildlife, and in particular for water voles. Water voles are Britain's fastest declining mammal, and the habitat where they live is protected.

At Headbourne Worthy the PCC has been working in partnership with Hampshire Wildlife Trust, to protect and encourage water voles, and all the other wildlife living in this beautiful Churchyard.

Management of the Churchyard:

Many of the bank side trees have been pollarded (branches cut at approximately 6' high), to let in light and encourage vegetation to grow, both on the banks and in the water channel. This provides food and shelter for the water voles which make burrows in the banks.

In addition, water vole-friendly hazel faggots (bundles of hazel twigs) have been positioned in the water channels to shore up the banks, speed up the water flow and thereby remove some of the silt.

Each Autumn, the vegetation on the bank sides and wilder areas of the churchyard is cut on rotation. A section will always be left to provide cover for over-wintering wildlife. Two-thirds will be cut back and removed each year, as this encourages a greater number of wild flowers to flourish. In Spring look out for water avens, hemp agrimony, comfrey, cuckoo flower and meadowsweet to name but a few.

Birds and bats:

The mature willow in front of the church porch is unfortunately nearing the end of its life. It has been heavily pollarded to leave a sculptural trunk. This will in time provide an excellent dead wood habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Woodpeckers and other birds, insects such as stag beetles, fungi and climbers such as ivy all colonise standing dead wood. Native honeysuckle will be planted to grow up the trunk, and bird and bat boxes erected on this and other trees, to provide extra nesting and roosting homes for wildlife here."

HIWWT notice on the lychgate

St Swithun's PCC have asked WCV to carry out some of the annual clearance around the churchyard. Specifically, working on the northern side of the churchyard, where there are a number of fallen or damaged branches to be removed and substantial growth of nettles and brambles to cut back. Cut material can be added to existing dead hedges and log piles. There are a few fallen bird and bat boxes to be replaced, and we could take the opportunity to check on the state of other boxes. There is also a lot of nettle growth to the southern side of the churchyard, as well as fallen branches crossing a well-used footpath. This area could be tackled if we have time!

Long sleeves and gloves are recommended, and care will need to be taken when working near the banks of the stream.

Tools needed: Loppers, secateurs, saws, ladder.



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