

# Welcome to the first of our Eco newsletters.

Following our church Eco Sunday on May 29<sup>th</sup>, we hope you have been inspired to take a closer look at the wildlife in your garden. It was fitting that the following Saturday Elaine, Peter and John carried out a survey of our church grounds. We did this in connection with a project by the name of God's Acre which is geared to recording the wildlife in church grounds, especially very old cemeteries which over the years have become important habitats for a wide variety of species.

Our survey included the cultivated garden, the grassy area, part of which had purposely been left unmown, and the tarmacked and the paved area bordering the car park. Although our grounds contain only a miniscule variety of the world's total species, the sheer diversity of the organisms in it is overwhelming and could form the basis of a lifetime's research. Such is the challenge that we face in understanding our wonderful world wildlife. The result of our survey is shown on the attached list.

In the short time we had for our survey, we concentrated on recording our plants and had no time to search for the elusive insects, however, God's Acre suggest that we continue our observations throughout the year and this should allow us to compile a fuller picture of our garden residents. We did however encounter two residents which were not of the plant variety.

The cultivated plants offer a colourful display and are a tribute to Elaine and her helpers who regularly maintain the garden. Of course, many have the beneficial role attracting bees and butterflies. On this occasion, Peter and John want to concentrate on the wild plants in our grounds, the majority of which have established themselves without the help of us humans, but there are a few which have been purposely set. It would be good to write about the unique properties of each and every plant but, considering our limited space, we have selected just a few.



The tarmacked  
forecourt  
around our  
main church  
door is covered  
by extensive



patches of moss. The one to the left of the door goes by the common name of SOFT TUFTED BEARD MOSS. Unsightly? Well if we get down to ground level and take a beetle's eye view we see a veritable forest, and a most attractive forest! (1a,b) Amazingly, on taking a close look at a bit of this forest, a remarkable creature slowly ambled into view – a WATER BEAR, a creature that so closely resembles the bears we are familiar with. This one had eight legs, claws, eyes, skin and muscles. (2) There are over 900 species of WATER BEAR worldwide found in hot springs, the top of the Himalayas, under five metres of solid ice and in ocean sediments. Don't be afraid next time you go to church, they pose no danger to humans. Our specimen was a quarter of a millimetre long!



Whilst on the subject of mosses, we invite you to turn your attention to the pavement side of the church wall in front of the forecourt. In dry conditions, we see patches of



something that looks as if it is dead. (3a) On coming into contact with water we see an immediate transformation into the lovely verdant



CAPILLARY THREAD MOSS. (3b)



On the forecourt area (near the old entrance to the hall) we see **BLADDER CAMPION**. (4a) Note the balloon shaped swelling



beneath the white flower – hence its name. (4b) Often we see frothy patches on this plant – cuckoo spit, beneath



which we find the **RED & BLACK FROGHOPPER**. (5)

of nectar to moths, bees and butterflies. Of special interest is the

Our **RED VALERIAN** (6a,b) offers a good source



**HUMMINGBIRD HAWK MOTH** (7) which yearly flies to this country from the continent. The

moth can occasionally be seen hovering over a flower and extracting nectar by means of its long proboscis. We have two plants in our grounds that the moth selects to lay its eggs on and which the larvae subsequently eat – buddleia and **CLEAVERS** (8a). As we're sure



you know, cleavers takes the opportunity to cling for support to anything it comes into



contact with by means of its well positioned stiff hairs. Its fruits are also equipped with hooked hairs (8b) which enable it to stick to clothing and animal fur.

RAGWORT (9a). An attractive plant of the daisy family. It provides nectar for many species of bees, flies and moths and fourteen species of butterflies. It is the food plant



of the cinnabar moth larva. (9b) It is poisonous to cattle, indeed the toxins are absorbed by the caterpillars and moths (9c) making them unpalatable to would be predators.





TREE MALLOW (10a) Mainly a coastal tree-like biennial with large flowers (10b) which attract bees. (10c)

EVENING PRIMROSE (11a) Our plant with the largest flowers. An interesting plant. Its



flowers last just one day and it is wonderful to see its new flowers unfurl and expand in late evening. (11b). It has a very pleasant scent which

becomes stronger at night-time when it attracts moths. Bees take over in daylight hours and are seen trailing



pollen grains which are strung together with very fine threads.



The gaps between our paving slabs (12a) are occupied by



various plants which are commonly found on pavements. Here we found WELSH



POPPY (12b), PETTY SPURGE (12c), GREATER PLANTAIN (12d), YARROW (12e,f,g) FOX AND CUBS (12h) and PROCUMBENT PEARLWORT (12i,j) which from a distance could be taken for a moss. It bears very small flowers.

We both invite you to keep a keen watch on your own garden, we're sure there are many surprises awaiting you.



*John & Peter*