

## SPRING WATCH: *What to see in our gardens*



Some creatures have names which just make you smile; one of these, for me, is the cute Hairy-footed Flower Bee (its scientific name being a more serious-sounding, *Anthophora plumipes*).

This lovely little bee (measuring 1.4-1.6cm) can be seen in gardens and parks in Spring and Summer, visiting tubular flowers like red dead-nettle and comfrey. As its name suggests, it has long, orange hairs on its middle legs. They can be spotted in Central and Southern England, alongside Wales, with their chosen habitats being coastal areas, woodlands, towns, gardens and roadside verges. It is encouraging to note that they are classified as 'Common', meaning their numbers are healthy.

The Hairy-Footed Flower Bee emerges from hibernation in early Spring, from late February to March, with the males emerge first and the females appear a couple of weeks later. This species is an important pollinator for early spring flowers, particularly lungworts (*Pulmonaria* species), but also primrose, comfrey and dead-nettles. It feeds on the nectar using its long tongue and will nest in soft mortar in walls, or occasionally in soil.

The female Hairy-Footed Flower Bee is black and furry and resembles a small Bumble Bee. The males, however, are rusty-brown in colour and have long, orange hairs on their middle legs and feet.

### **Did you know?**

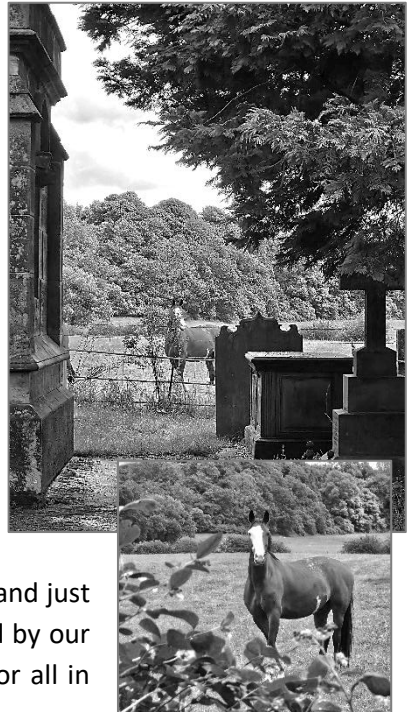
*If you spot a bee around the fireplace, it might well be a hairy-footed flower bee. They have a habit of dropping down chimneys because they like to nest in the cracks between bricks. Just pop it outside and it should soon warm up and fly off!*



Our little bee friends are not alone, of course, in their frenetic activities with the warmer days of Spring; they are joined by a whole host of birds, insects, amphibians and animals. Some, such as the Hares, are synonymous with Spring – and once you have seen the Mad March Hares boxing each other's ears (as they try to impress the female hares), you never forget it. We also have the

return of our migrating birds which we have missed during the dreary and cold Winter months. How lovely it is to hear their merry 'chatter' as they return to their nests and sing to their hearts' content in the Dawn Chorus. Yes, Spring is indeed a wonderful time of year with so much to see and hear.

In our church yard, our green-fingered volunteers have been working over the past few years to make this lovely tranquil setting an attractive habitat for a wide range of native flowers, insects and animals. We are building up our wildflower areas, populating them with native snowdrops, bluebells, aconites, and many other plants besides, to encourage insects to flourish. We also have a Bug Hotel and a good variety of trees and shrubs for insects and birds to shelter in. Benches are being positioned around the churchyard, to encourage visitors to sit and just appreciate this lovely space, surrounded by our beautiful countryside. This is a space for all in



our community; why not come down and sit awhile and enjoy a moment or two in this restorative nature-friendly spot? You never know what you might see ...

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## Church Yard Tidy Up

With Spring fast approaching, after all the rain we have had from the start of this year, the snowdrops, crocus and daffodils are beginning to appear and it's time to make a start on thinking about the church yard and the tidying up after winter. The church yard is looking well-kept, thanks to all the volunteers who helped through last season.



The first meeting of this new season will start on Saturday 21st March from 10 – 12 noon with, of course, time for coffee/tea at 11am when we all take time off to enjoy a hot drink and a chat.

We are a very friendly group and would welcome more helpers. Fortunately, there are jobs to suit everyone and, since a lot of the bushes and trees have been regularly tended over recent years, the jobs have got easier. We do have some gardening tools to share but if you can bring you own that would be very good.

Please let me know if you would like further information.

### Church Yard Tidy Up dates

21 <sup>st</sup> March	18 <sup>th</sup> April
16 <sup>th</sup> May	20 <sup>th</sup> June
18 <sup>th</sup> July	15 <sup>th</sup> August
19 <sup>th</sup> September	17 <sup>th</sup> October

**Christine Clark**

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