

The Parish of Rushall

St Michael's, Walsall, Diocese of Lichfield, Leigh Road, Walsall, West Midlands WS4 2DS.

Telephone: 01922 624677

Website: <https://www.rushallparish.org/> Email: colinsuch01@gmail.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/rushallparish/>

Vicar: Rev. Colin Such



Our Green Journey

Application for the Eco Church Gold Award

“For God so loved the world....”

Our aim is to be good stewards of God’s creation.

Background History

The present Parish Church of Rushall is the third church in the history of Rushall and is a grade II listed Victorian Church. The first church was built by the Lords of the Manor of Rushall close to Rushall Hall. Together with Walsall Parish Church it was appropriated in the year 1220 to the newly founded Premonstratensian Abbey at Halesowen, 12 miles away in Worcestershire. The exact site of the first church of Rushall is not known but was probably nearer to the Hall itself. Neither do we know the exact date of its foundation, although it was already in existence by 1220.

The second church was built by John Harpur and his wife Eleanor and consecrated by William Heyworth, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, on 19th January 1440. This building stood on the site of the present and larger church. The tower remained standing after the first half of the present church was built. From these two earlier churches very little remains. There is the base of an old preaching cross in the churchyard on the south side. The Baptismal Font with its dogtooth ornament dates from around 1200. There are also two 18th century memorial tablets in the south transept and a bench seat now in the chancel, carved on the front 'RA 1661 CF', possibly made from timbers from the repairs carried out after the Civil War.

The present (third) church was begun in 1854. Built of limestone it is in Early English Style and was completed in 1868. This church is 'cruciform' and there are several features worth noting. The murals over the chancel arch and along the east walls of the transepts are by E. Reginald Frampton, a painter of the late pre-Raphaelite school, and completed in 1905. The murals are a constant reminder of humanity’s effect on the environment, and on the one side the Garden of Eden and the results of humanity’s sinfulness with the ground barren and stony and angels above holding the instruments of the passion. The other side shows the Garden of the Heavenly Paradise with flowers and butterflies and angels holding the crowns of the righteous. The four Archangels within the mural show Gabriel bringing the message of hope, Michael fighting for God’s people and weighing our actions in the scales, Raphael bringing healing and Uriel who brings knowledge and wisdom. These are recognised as being unique and in 2015 were conserved as part of a major project to restore the east end of the Church. To prevent condensation the temperature in the Church is kept at a minimum of 10° C throughout the year. So, bearing these factors in mind our buildings are carefully managed to keep our carbon footprint low.

The environment, our part within it and duty to preserve it are therefore before us in every act of worship in which we partake. A Church Hall was added in 1972 and this was improved and enlarged in 2003. The Church is grade II listed as mentioned, and forms with Rushall Hall and Farm the “Old Rushall” Conservation area in the Borough of Walsall. This means that any additions or alterations have to be compliant with that status. The church itself lies within the Old Rushall Conservation area and is one of the few remaining examples in the local area of a church, hall (manor) and farm grouped together. It is an example therefore not just of the heritage of nature in the area but also of our history.

The church and churchyard sit on the edge of Old Rushall Conservation Area and is adjacent to Rushall Farm and Rushall Hall (the presence of which dates to Saxon times although the current building is mainly 17th century with fortifications dating from the civil war).

Situated at the end of a quiet residential road, the church neighbours Rushall Lime Pits (closed in 1723) and is now a site of several fields, a lake and some woodland leading to Rushall Canal. The area is rich in wildlife with bats, owls, kingfishers, kestrels, buzzards, herons, and many other wild birds often seen whilst dragonflies, crickets and frogs are abundant. Foxes and deer are often seen in the fields and the area is popular with ramblers and dog walkers. The churchyard links this area to the residential area which in turn leads into Walsall Arboretum and the town centre which is only 1 mile away.

For many centuries the churchyard was quite small but from Victorian times it has been extended on various occasions. On the south side (adjoining the drive to the hall and farm) a small piece of land was added to the churchyard at the end of the First World War and accommodates the War Memorial and graves dating from the period. The area immediately around the church is the oldest part whilst on the North side of the church the graveyard was extended on at least three occasions and comprises several distinct areas one part having a woodland feel and the far end full of kerbed graves, many of which are no longer kept by families.

Our vicar, the Rev Colin Such (appointed 2004), and the Wardens, Bob Barnard and Jan Firth are enthusiastic environmentalists. In 2020 we were very pleased to achieve Silver Eco Church status. We have an eco-working party, consisting of PCC members, the congregation, and people in the community. We hold regular formal meetings and with a set agenda and report back to the PCC. More recently we have been exploring the possibility of putting solar panels on the hall roof. The roof in question is south facing and not visible from the street or the front of the church. This is something we need to be mindful of being in a conservation area and will need full approval before taking it further.



WORSHIP & TEACHING



The Agricultural Year

There are traditional dates spread throughout the year that we use for worshipping God's earth:

Plough Sunday/Monday – The first Monday after Epiphany, traditionally the day farm labourers returned to the fields after the Christmas feast.

Rogationtide – The sixth Sunday of Easter (the Sunday before Ascension Day) when the readings reflect nature and creation.

Lammas Day – 1st August. The celebration of the wheat harvest with the blessing of bread made from the first wheat of the harvest and then used in the mass.

Harvest – a celebration of harvest anytime in September or October.

There is also Fairtrade Fortnight in September.

Our Plan (2024)

A timetable of themes throughout the year:

January 7th Epiphany and Plough Sunday: Invite people to bring gardening tools (a trowel, spade etc) to church for them to be blessed at the end of the service ready for when the gardening season starts.

May 5th Rogation Sunday: Invite people to bring their packets of seeds to church for them to be blessed ready for the planting season. The theme of Rogation be kept for the seeker service that day. Perhaps have a plant stall in hall afterwards for the sale or swop of seedlings etc.

August 1st Lammas Day (as it is a Thursday in 2024 a loaf baked by a church member be blessed in the 9.30 service). Congregation members invited to bake bread 2 weeks later for use in refreshments following the cluster service around 15th August or move the cluster service to around Lammas Day and keep it as a celebration of creation. Possible bread making competition within the congregation? Only a few would probably be willing to take part so it would need to be simple and fun with bread and jam or chutney for everyone afterwards using the breads made.

September – Fairtrade fortnight – a sermon based on fairtrade issues on one of the Sundays.

October 6th Harvest festival. A harvest lunch/supper at some point either on the Sunday or in the week around harvest. Decorate the church using sustainable methods (no oasis foam, garden flowers/foilage etc.)

The Community

The allotments in Borneo Street, Cartbridge Lane and Winterley Lane be visited with the offer of a series of 5-minute-long services taking place throughout the year at key points in their gardening year as follows:

Week beginning 7th January: Blessing of gardening equipment as they start their planning for the year.

Week beginning 6th May: Blessing of seeds/seedlings and a prayer for the growing season.

Anytime between late August and October Prayer of harvest thanksgiving.

Each service no more than 5 minutes, a very short word of explanation, a prayer, and a blessing, simple and short but it would bring prayers for creation into the community.

Intercessions

Our service intercessions have a section praying for God's earth every week in our main 10.30 am eucharist service, but feature in other services too. This can be seen on our streamed/recorded services on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/rushallparish/>

Hymns and Songs

St Michael's has a vibrant choir and each week we endeavour to have at least one hymn containing some verses celebrating God's earth. We also sing anthems at choral evensong appertaining to the creation and the beauty of the earth. This can also be found on Facebook in our recorded services.

Newsletter

Our Parish newsletter has ongoing monthly features on the environment. This month (Oct 23) we have articles on gardening, God's earth, animal welfare, and a poem about litter written by a parishioner: <file:///C:/Users/in7060/Downloads/Magazine.pdf>

Children/Sunday School

Our Sunday School are relatively small numbers of mainly under ten's. We do make sure that they learn about God's creation and the importance of the natural world. Recently they were collecting Autumn leaves for a display and learning about the seasons ([See Hall Noticeboard](#)). The Sunday School children have planted sunflowers and watched them grow. The teaching follows the liturgical calendar. We have encouraged a nature watch in the Churchyard, using the God's Acre checklist.

BUILDINGS

In the Church.

In completing the Diocesan Energy Footprint Calculator we came out in the top 10% of Parishes with a low carbon footprint. This, we think, was mainly due to the rigorous management of our heating systems by parish officers coupled with high usage when the heating is on. Our electricity to the church and church hall is provided from renewable resources.

We constantly measure our energy use with a view to reducing usage and our bills. Our target is to use as little energy as possible and the actions below demonstrate that:

- Light bulbs have been changed to LED's.
- Lights are not put on until the service starts and are put off immediately it finishes.
- Heating is timed and regulated by the Vicar.
- The gas boiler is new and is 'A' rated and is serviced regularly.
- Daily prayer has been moved to Zoom to save on heating and car journeys.
- QR codes are used in notices and posters.

In the Church Hall.

Our Church Hall is a modern building (20 years old) and is well insulated. However, we also do the following:

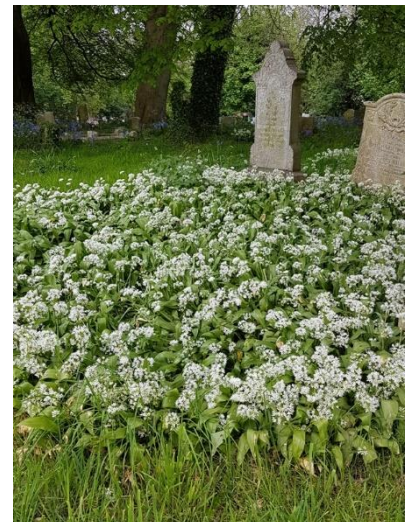
- Recycled paper towels used in the toilets.
- Sustainable toilet paper.
- Heating is carefully regulated by the Churchwardens.
- LED lighting is used throughout.
- The gas boiler is 'A' rated and serviced regularly.
- Taps in the Ladies and Gents toilets have been fitted with valves to ensure they go off after use.
- Lights in the Ladies and Gents toilets automatically go off after use.
- Dual flush buttons fitted to toilets.

- Manage the building in conjunction with its users to ensure our carbon footprint to kept to a minimum.
- As part of our journey, we are now exploring the possibility of solar panels on the roof of the Church Hall which is south facing. This should enable us to meet our electrical needs in the hall from totally natural resources. Our Diocesan Architect is a qualified Conservation Architect, and we rely on his advice when carrying all major works to BREEAM benchmark standards.
- Our church hall is a community asset and is used throughout the week by several different community groups. It is also available to hire for parties. Notices are evident to remind people of the importance of turning off lights etc to maintain our eco standards.

The upkeep of the Vicarage is the responsibility of the Diocese of Lichfield. All LED lightbulbs have been fitted, is double glazed, loft insulated, and has a new efficient boiler.

The P.C.C. are keen to ensure that despite the nature of Church buildings everything possible is being done to minimise our carbon footprint.

LAND & OUR PLAN FOR NATURE



In this part of the report we present how we seek to maintain the churchyard in such a way as to provide a habitat for wildlife consistent with the Lime Pits and the conservation area whilst also providing a safe place for contemplation by the community and a respectful resting place for the departed. This plan was adopted by the PCC in July 2023, and is reviewed annually by the Eco Committee and reported upon to the PCC. This section forms our 'plan for nature' of our gold eco church submission.

Rushall churchyard is a "Closed" churchyard, having been designated as such in the 1980's when the churchyard was reported as full with no room available for new burials save for a few spaces in existing family graves where space was reserved for family members. In designing our plan for nature we have used the resources produced by A Rocha UK and Caring for God's Acre:

[https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/resources/land/to inform some of our decisions.](https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/resources/land/to%20inform%20some%20of%20our%20decisions)

Management Plan (also see Appendix A)

Maintenance of the churchyard is shared between the Parochial Church Council and Walsall Council. We maintain an excellent partnership with the local Council.

Grass cutting

The council cut the churchyard grass three times a year, the first occasion being once the spring flowers have finished and have had sufficient time to build up energy reserves to see them through to next spring. A couple of lawn areas are mowed more regularly by the council and volunteers and the churchyard clearing party seeks to do some work each month in the churchyard.

It is impossible for us to cut the whole of the churchyard regularly (even if we wished to) given the small number of volunteers available and so we seek to maintain a grid of pathways throughout the churchyard so that access can be gained to groups of graves leaving it for families to maintain their own graves.

The area on the South side of the church is problematic given several kerbed graves which are not maintained by family members and unmarked graves many of which are not level. This area is in full sun throughout the day and is difficult to maintain. Our aim is to improve this area by targeting some graves and planting insect attracting plants such as foxgloves, roses, and native wildflowers in the hope that we can gradually extend our efforts.

To the north of the church in the centre of the churchyard is an area which is shaded by trees, this area contains wild garlic and bluebells in the spring and cow parsley in the run up to summer, it also contains several War Commission graves. There are very few graves that are attended here and so we seek to maintain this as a wildlife area.

Removing cuttings

Grass cuttings are raked up and removed to the compost heap whenever possible. This is essential in areas that have not been cut for a while. By removing the cuttings, it will prevent the vegetation underneath from being smothered and killed and also prevent the build-up of soil nutrients which would encourage the spread of weeds (e.g. nettles, docks and thistles) and coarse grasses at the expense of the fine grasses and wildflowers.

Trees

The council undertake the routine maintenance of trees such as pruning together with any major work as may be required.

The churchyard supports various wild birds and bats fly through it from the Lime Pits. Care is taken to ensure no disturbance is caused by any works undertaken.

Dead wood - valuable to many invertebrates. Minor fallen branches and prunings are deposited next to the compost heap.

The planting of new trees will only be considered when old trees are felled, or they are approaching the end of their life and new ones are required to replace them. Trees will often propagate themselves naturally by seedlings or suckers which will produce healthier saplings however they should be removed quickly from areas where they are not wanted (i.e., from grassland, monuments and around mature trees).

Hedges

Hedges are not cut during the bird-nesting season. They are cut during the months of October to February inclusive.

Berries provide a valuable food source for birds and are left where possible.

Gravestones and walls

Gravestones and walls are important sites for lichens and mosses. Several species are protected by law. Damage to stonework by lichens is minimal and they are not removed. They grow very slowly, and many are long-lived. Bramble and ivy are removed if they overshadow gravestones with lichen as they will cause the lichens to wither and die through lack of light.

Ivy

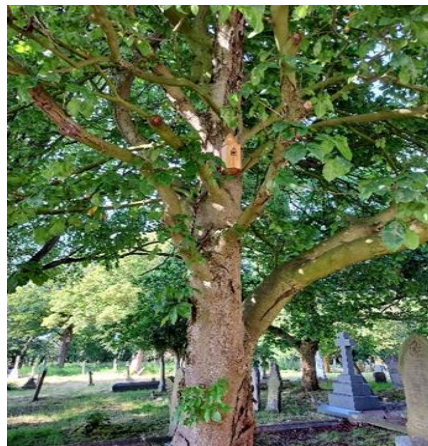
Ivy growing up trees can become a hazard to the tree due to its weight and the creation of a sail effect or by smothering the leaves preventing sunlight reaching them. In these cases, the stem of the ivy will be cut through at a suitable point and the plant left to die *in situ*. Ivy provides a valuable source of nectar late in the season as well as berries and nest sites. It will be left to grow where it is not damaging structures.

Herbicides and fertilisers

Herbicides are not used in the churchyard. Fertilisers are not used in the churchyard.

Bird boxes/Hedgehog box

Bird boxes have been installed throughout the churchyard. We have had blue tits nesting in the boxes at the back of Church. We have bird feeders outside the kitchen hall, and motifs on the windows to stop birds flying into them. There is also a hedgehog box in the churchyard.

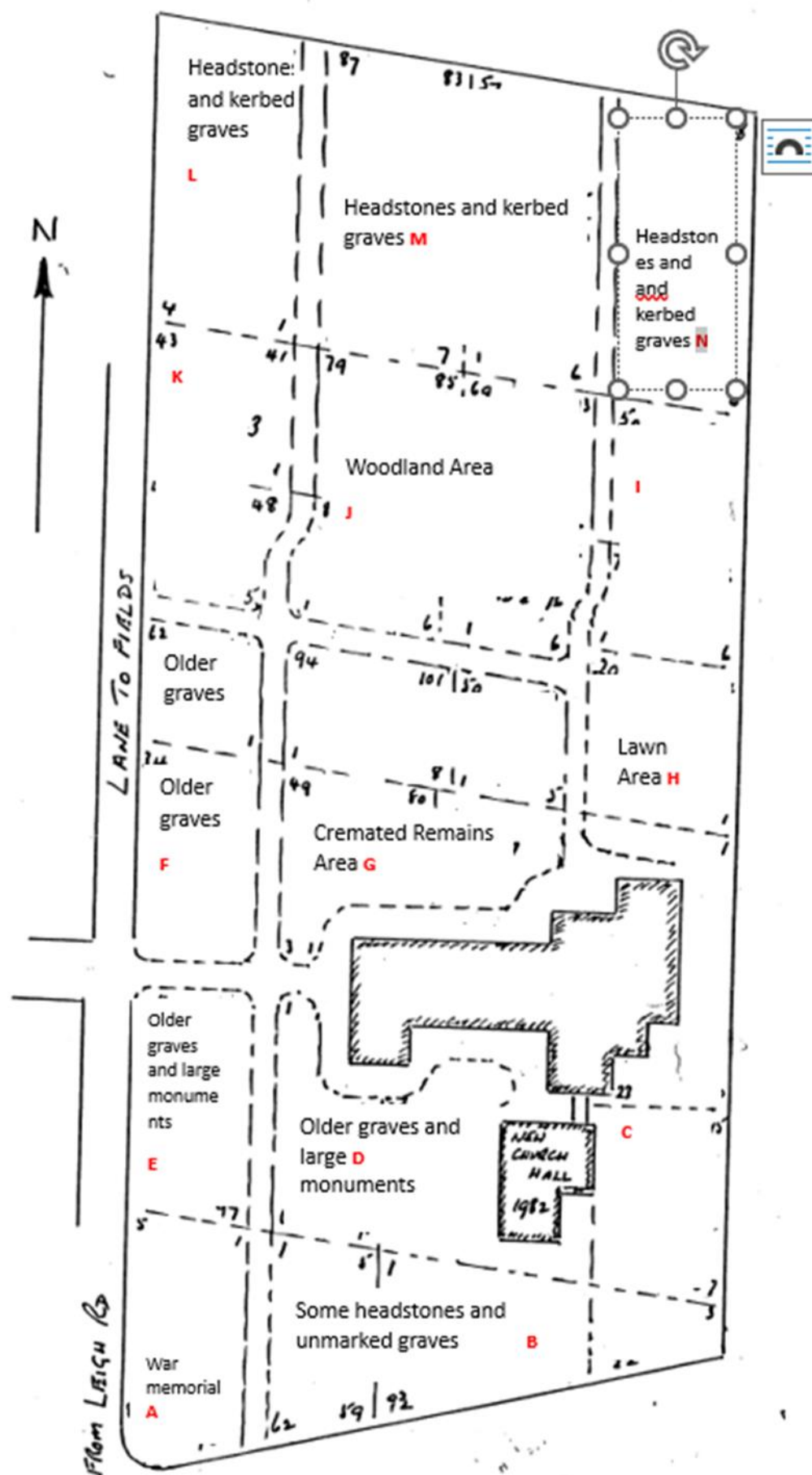


Prayer Area for Reflection

We have a beautiful area for prayer or reflection, which is situated in a quiet part of the churchyard with benches and beautiful shrubbery for quiet contemplation. The area is open to the public, and it is well used.

We have a compost heap and a water butt. We will use the compost in our planters outside the Church, and for growing potted flowers in Church. Foliage from the Churchyard is used for flower arranging displays.

A plan of the churchyard is included as follows:



Maintenance Schedule: Areas

Area A is mown regularly, and the borders maintained as it is here that the war memorial is situated together with the noticeboard. It borders the houses on Leigh Road.

Area B has many unmarked graves and is only lightly cut when necessary for safety reasons.

Area C is very uneven but has several graves that are regularly visited, some strimming is necessary because of this.

Area D is mainly taken up with large Victorian graves and not much work is required here through the summer.

Area E has large monuments along the path and Victorian graves in the remainder. It is here that some of the heritage daffodils have been planted.

Area F is a lawn area where cremated remains are interred and is mowed regularly. The remainder of the area contains headstones are cut when necessary.

Area H is another lawn area where unmarked common graves are situated. It is here that a bonfire is lit on the rare occasions when one is needed.

Area I is filled with kerbed graves and, together with adjoining area I and areas M and L, is the most visited part of the churchyard for those tending graves. These areas need the most strimming to allow access by visitors to graves.

Area J is our woodland area. has some fine graves and includes some mature trees and has a woodland feel. Wild garlic and blue bells are abundant here as is cow parsley later in the spring.

Area K has a small amount of lawn and crocus and snowdrops are abundant in the spring together with more of the heritage daffodils.

SEE APPENDIX A FOR OUR OPERATIONAL PLAN.

Community and Global Engagement

An important part of our role as a Christian community in the parish of Rushall is to reach out to our wider local communities and beyond, including global engagement.

Local Community Engagement.

We currently have two notice boards in our church dedicated to environmental awareness (Eco Matters), where we have posted copies of the magazines God's Acre and A Rocha 'Root and Branch', and various other environmental literature of interest to the congregation and community. In the recent past, we held an exhibition in our hall on 'Saving the Planet'.

Over the years the Church has had numerous speakers in the sermon slot to bring matters to the attention of the main congregation (60-70 strong on most Sundays). The last 2 were from USPG and before that Christian Aid. We have had an environmentalist talk with church groups which resulted in the planting of 2000 daffodils in our churchyard. Our immediate church neighbour is a

farm and, as we have bats in the area, the farmer has met with the Bat Conservation Trust and consequently engaged with a church group to feedback information on caring for the bats and the owls.

On carrying out an inventory of our congregation's environmental interests, we were delighted to discover that a huge proportion of our church community support a variety of conservation groups, such as, The Woodland Trust, Greenpeace, WWF, RSPB, Friends of the Earth, National Trust, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and many others ([See Church Notice Board](#)). In doing this many of them are supporting campaigns concerning national environmental issues.



As with the rest of the UK the area is blighted by fly-tipping and litter. On a weekly basis a litter pick is carried out by church members, both within the church grounds and the wider area. This good practice is linked to the Walsall Volunteer Programme and information is posted on Walsall Community Litter Watch Facebook page. By adding this link to Rushall Church Facebook page the congregation can see the amount of work being carried out by volunteers across Walsall. It also allows them to participate in the scheme. Every bag of litter off our streets improves the environment, has a positive impact on mental health with neighbourhoods looking clean and prevents the threat of harm to birds and other animals. We have a good relationship with our local councils Clean and Green Team and Andrew Stokes who heads it. We are regularly in touch with the team to discuss issues relating to the upkeep of our churchyard and the wildlife, plants and trees within it.

In 2003 the new Community Hall was opened and over the years has been used by a multitude of community groups. The rates charged for use are the lowest in the area and although usage has declined since the pandemic it is still used daily by such groups. There are 2 notice boards in the Hall which almost continuously draw attention to our eco activities. The Hall has also been used for numerous community meetings over the years when there have been issues which the community wished those in power to acknowledge. We have held meetings in our church hall with local leaders and the community to discuss environmental issues. The most recent one being on plans to build on an area of greenbelt land in our community. The preservation of Green Belt land is a priority. So the church was able to host a meeting attended by local councillors, environmentalists and local residents to highlight the potential destruction of the wildlife should plans be approved to build on Green Belt land. Many of its residents also went on to attend meetings at the Council House to campaign for the preservation of Green Belt land. Members of the church and community can follow the campaign at www.greenbelt-arbo.co.uk. Our current Churchwardens are active supporters of a local group set up to preserve the local Green belt which abuts onto our Churchyard. Wendy Moreton MP is also an ardent supporter of the green belt and members of our church are affiliated to her Fb page.

Our clergy, Rev. Colin Such and curate Rev. Peter Carmody Heaton are both in contact with a local school where Colin is a part of the governing body. Colin and Peter have led assemblies and Peter has recently led a Harvest assembly which is an opportunity to engage the pupils in environmental

issues. Peter is also involved with a local YMCA nursery and as our Pioneer Curate is making many links with the local community.

Our church fairs throughout the year are always green in nature, focusing on recycling of unwanted household goods, books, clothes and the selling of plants, produce or baked goods produced by the congregation. We had over a 100 people in the community attend a recent fair.

Photographs of our many recycling fairs, with plants, baked produce, and produce from recycled materials. This includes recycled wood, wool, paper, cards etc.



We have a walking group called Strollers, set up by a couple of church members, which meets once a week in The Arboretum, our beautiful local park which, as the name suggests, is full of beautiful ancient trees, plants and many species of birds. The group provides gentle exercise (a walk around the lake) but more importantly fellowship over a cup of coffee after their walk. Over the years other members of the wider community, not affiliated with our church, have also tagged along and become part of the group. See the link below for details of the Strollers.
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064855593939>

We have a good relationship with the churches in our local cluster, and our clergy and wardens discuss with them the steps we are taking to achieve Gold Church Eco status. Our wardens have also visited another church, St Peter's Maney, which has Gold Church Eco status to discuss and exchange ideas. We also include environmental related items in our monthly online parish magazine. We have downloaded the WWF My Footprints app to keep a check on our church's carbon footprint, also individual members have obtained the app for their own use. We have quite a few events throughout the year where church members come together and share food, e.g.

Harvest supper, Lent lunch, other social events. These bring and share events always include some food that has been produced by church members. This is organic, animal friendly and always contains a good variety of foods for vegans and vegetarians. Often Fairtrade items will be donated for our bring and share events. We never throw food away. Anything left over from an event is given to anyone who can use it. We have recycling facilities in our kitchen.

Global Engagement.

For a few years now we have been supporting the Anglican Mission Charity USPG and in particular its projects in Malawi. The communities of Malawi are frequently in our prayers as are other global communities that are affected by climate change and environmental degradation. We have, in the recent past, had a speaker from USPG to talk to our congregation about its work in Malawi and help us to become aware of the social, health and environmental issues of that country. Malawi relies on a subsistence rainfall agriculture which limits its growth potential and eventually leads to food insecurity. Our understanding of the work USPG are doing to help communities with farming initiatives along with its work supporting girls education, helped us to make the decision to support Malawi financially.

Rushall Church has in recent times taken its responsibilities to the local community and the wider world seriously. Its support the Glebe Centre (YMCA services for the homeless) and as mentioned the USPG project in Malawi are clear evidence of this. Charities are mentioned weekly in the notices and parishioners give support where they can. Our toilets are twinned with Malawi and the certificates are displayed in the hall toilets. We pray for our projects weekly as an ongoing feature in the intercessions.



We have supported Embrace the Middle East for several years. We will be having a speaker to talk to us from this organisation early in the New Year. Embrace support, enable and partner with Christians in the Middle East as they work to transform lives and restore the dignity of the most excluded and marginalised in their communities. They are also helping with land reclamation across the Middle East.

We are registered with the Fairtrade Foundation as a Fairtrade church. We always use Fairtrade tea and coffee. We also access other Fairtrade products at different times of the year, such as Fairtrade Advent calendars for those who wish to purchase them. ([See Certificate on church noticeboard](#)).

We continue to work together with our church members and the wider community to reduce the effect that we have on the environment so that we can be the best stewards of God's wonderful creation that we can be.

Lifestyle

Our eco lifestyle at St Michael's permeates all activities.

We have reduced our paper usage considerably over the last 6 years and are virtually paperless. We use QR codes for information on services and. For those members of the congregation without a computer we have less than half a dozen church magazines printed. All notices, and weekly service information is sent electronically as are the PCC agendas and reports.

We encourage our parishioners to walk to church and thus reducing our carbon footprint. We have a care share scheme where many car users give lifts to others. We are fortunate to have a good local bus provision and encourage users. We don't have a bicycle rack as such but there is an iron railing at the top of the church drive allowing people to chain their bikes to, or they can leave them in the hall passageway if the weather is inclement.

We have encouraged the individual members of the congregation to use the WWF carbon footprint calculator and have completed the Lichfield Diocesan carbon footprint calculator. This was a mandatory requirement, and we were very pleased to be in the top 10% of churches.

We held an exhibition in the church hall before lockdown on 'Saving the Planet' which generated a lot of interest with various displays. It was here we instigated initiatives such as encouraging people to think about what they buy in respect to plastic packaging, and the use of plastic bags. This included informing people about eco-friendly items such as guppy bags, reusable coffee cups, eco products such as washing up liquid.

We recycle cards making our own birthday/Christmas/ greeting cards. These are for sale as a permanent feature in the hall. We also make our own gift tags from recycled cards. All products are sold at our Spring and Christmas fayres. We have held successful recycling fayres and encourage people to donate preloved items to our Spring and Christmas fayres which are very successful. The recycled clothes stall is very popular. Before the pandemic we were organising the collection of crisp packets and taking them to the local recycling point. One of our congregation members encourages people to save their stamps for recycling, we also have a battery collection scheme.

In our monthly magazine we cover a wide variety of eco topics. Our church funds are ethically invested through the National Church.

As already mentioned, we have several 'bring and share' social events throughout the year where people bring their own grown produce. At the Summer event people shared their own lettuce, tomatoes, and home cooked food. There are always vegan and vegetarian choices at our events. At our harvest supper we had homemade soup and bread. There are many other ways we encourage our congregation and the public to grow their produce tomato plants, herbs and flower seeds as an example, at our fayres. Our green/plant stall is a permanent feature. We have several members of the congregation that make their own jam and kindly share it with other. We sell the local farm honey in Church.

It has been a rewarding journey to witness the commitment and interest of the congregation and how they have adapted to new ways of thinking and behaving. We feel our shared commitment to God's creation has assisted in carrying out the Church's fifth mark of mission, as well as adopting a lifestyle at one with the planet, and all living plants and creatures within it. We would like to thank our Eco Working Group members for their time and dedication in the pursuit of the Gold Eco Award:

Rev. Colin Such

Bob Barnard (Warden)

Dr. Jan Firth (Warden)

Denise Kemp

Zahlia Lister

Wendy Manton

Karen Dainty

Boris Worrall

Appendix A

St Michael the Archangel, Rushall, Walsall Churchyard Working Group Management Plan 2023-26 Plan for Nature

The Churchyard has been closed since around the year 2000. Responsibility for its upkeep and maintenance therefore lies with Local Authority however the PCC has always accepted that it and the Church has a role in keeping it tidy and ensuring that it is place where the community can find peace and tranquillity. The PCC are now seeking a Gold Eco Award for its eco-friendly policies and wishes to keep the Churchyard as a place where wildlife in all its forms can thrive. The plan is a live ongoing endeavour, and activities should be followed depending on the seasons.

In pursuit of the above policies the PCC will endeavour to ensure the following plan is followed:

WINTER SEASON (December, January, February)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General tidying, including weeding• Clearing leaves from paths and gullies.• Picking up fallen timber.• Cutting back any self-set trees not dealt with in the Autumn season.
SPRING SEASON (March, April, May)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General tidying, including weeding• Planting of wild flowers around Church boundary wall to encourage insects.• Blackberry bushes to be left and not cut back until Oct/Nov• Cutting grass in cremated remains area and around the Courtyard and Cenotaph.• Planting of annuals on borders of the path leading to Church and around front signage.• Cutting of hedgerows should be done no later than the start of March (before nest building)• Planters in courtyard to reviewed and tidied. One will be refilled for the herb garden, and other small vegetables (tomato plants).
SUMMER SEASON (June, July, August)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cutting grass in the areas above.• Minimum or light pruning of Ivy on walls and trees being careful not to disturb nesting birds.• Hedgerow cutting should not take place during the nesting season.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing growth from the base of trees to help with security and light issues (August) • General tidying and weeding especially in the borders leading to the Church.
AUTUMN SEASON (September, October, November)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to cut grass as required. • Clean paths of weeds and • Remove self-set trees, Ivy and growth from the base of trees as before. • Cutting back of blackberry bushes (Oct/Nov) • Clear leaves from paths and gullies. • General tidying especially in and around the main paths.
<p>Whilst the PCC expects that most of this work will be done by the monthly working party it encourages anyone to come along at anytime to help with this important work.</p>
ESTABLISHMENT WORK
<p>In 2020 we established a live compost heap and a water butt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review habitat for birds, insects, and the hedgehog box to ascertain whether we can make further improvements. • Review our border plants to establish more bird and insect friendly species such as yellow rattle. • Continue with the annual count for nature as advocated by God's acre.
MAJOR WORK
<p>This is the responsibility of the Local Authority and includes cutting the whole churchyard (Currently done 3 times a year), cutting hedges (Once a year in August) and trimming trees as required.</p> <p>The wardens will take responsibility for liaising with the Council for continuity on matters concerning the Churchyard.</p> <p>Liaise with the council on the new perimeter railings and establish a new hedge.</p>
CONCLUSION
<p>The PCC should seek to hold regular meetings through its Churchwardens with the Local Authority to ensure this asset for the community is kept in good order. These meetings should be held at least annually.</p>

