

Case study: Christ Church Dore

Name of project or group

Christ Church Dore churchyard. Case study by Rowan Shergold, June 2022

What actions for nature did your group want to take and why?

We wanted to encourage a return of naturally occurring wildlife in our churchyard, making the most out of it as a green space. The aspect of rewilding was at the top of our lists – allowing the churchyard to grow as it wanted to without the influence of strict gardening routines, introduction of non-native plants or use of pesticides or similar. Furthermore, I wanted to encourage community use of the churchyard, presenting it as more than just a space for graves, but as a welcoming outdoor space. I believe that a place like a churchyard should be used to celebrate life in all its forms, and working towards a rewilded, living space at the centre of Dore would epitomise that.



Photo credit: Rowan Shergold

What resources or support did you use?

Rewilding Britain and the National Trust website provided excellent reading on conservation as a whole, and A Rocha (specifically their Eco Church scheme) and Caring for God's Acre helped hugely with churchyard specific queries.

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How did you empower or involve others?

We opened up our rewilding efforts to the local community, working in tandem with the Dore Scouts and discussing future collaborations with Dore Primary School. We took suggestions and direction from congregation members, as well as from local and national charities. Our efforts are far from complete, and we wish to continue our rewilding project with as much input from others external to Christ Church as possible, making sure the space can be enjoyed by all.

How did it make you feel?

“The work is both very fulfilling and an incredible challenge. I have never undertaken a project like this before, and I’ve found myself learning so much as a result of diving headfirst into something almost entirely unknown to me.”

What changes have there been as a result of your actions?

We have seen an increase in the number of wildflowers in the churchyard since we drastically reduced the mowing regime, noticed more butterflies and pollinators attending these wildflowers, and all in all watched as the land appears healthier and more vibrant.

Have you had any memorable nature encounters while doing this?

Having a Red Admiral Butterfly flutter around me while visiting our wildflowers was absolutely wonderful, and to me exemplified exactly why rewilding is so important.



Photo credit: Rowan Shergold

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How have your actions been shared or inspired others?

Working closely with the Dore Scouts, Dore Primary School and other members of the community has meant that our rewilding project has become a joint effort around the village. The Scouts made bird boxes, we have people visiting to monitor wildlife as part of Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust's Nature Counts project, and have connected with other churches in the Diocese of Sheffield to share our ideas and objectives.

What's next?

Christ Church Dore is preparing to undergo some major renovations in our building, and we intend to increase our eco-friendly efforts in tandem with these changes – better heating and lighting systems, making more space in the grounds for wildflowers and native plants, installing bike racks and many more. We're excited for the opportunity and ability to consider more drastic measures to promote nature and assist its recovery.



Photo credit: Nicky Rivers