

Report on Holy Trinity churchyard by CPRE Devon

(The Devon branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England)

The first thing apparent was a nice new sign board visible beyond the wooden entrance gates that rest between stone pillars. The next was the sheer abundance of wildflowers blooming profusely across the entire churchyard.

The hard path leading towards the ruined church was in good condition with small trees either side, some in bloom and five bird boxes were noted, one proving of interest to an inquisitive bee. A bench beside the path provided a fine spot to listen to the bird song and admire the majestic mature trees deeper into the grounds. It is understood that swift nest boxes have been installed in the old church spire, to attract these enigmatic birds and hopefully encourage successful breeding.

The Cabell Tomb is a feature with its historic connections and proved to be a convenient place to post notices, which included a plan showing the areas designated for wildlife throughout this large churchyard and displayed the Devon CPRE Certificate awarded in 2022. The church is now a dangerous structure and signposts clearly advise visitors accordingly.

A few years ago, this churchyard was in need of attention, but it is now a feast for sore eyes and an excellent haven for wildlife of all description. There are no manmade bat boxes or bug hotels as it is self-evident that items such as large fallen trees have been 'managed' to create a natural habitat for insects and it's known that there are caves beneath the churchyard that house bats.

There is a policy of not installing waste bins with several notices of explanation to encourage disposal in a more caring environmental way, that is, "take it home!" Away from the hard paths are trails through the ancient graves inviting visitors to wander at will and at one with nature, despite the distant sound of traffic from the A38.

An overspill area has been provided for new graves and monuments. This was also managed for both people and wildlife with benches and grass cut to variable lengths, respecting the new graves but complimenting the overall natural feel to the area.

Various plaques and commemorative items are placed alongside specially planted trees, protected as necessary from perhaps deer or rodents. Next to the entrance gates is a water butt and can, the rain water being captured by pipe from the roof over the gates. Elsewhere the War Memorial contained more than 20 wreaths of remembrance, all bright and fresh (albeit made from synthetic material) and where the scouts had made a 'poppy tree' from old plastic bottles and painted red in the past, was, despite some evidence of weathering, still a bright and poignant feature.

This is a fascinating place, attracting visitors to explore not only the Cabell monument but the grounds as well, because of careful and sympathetic management.