

Living Churchyard Day 13th July 2019, St Mary the Virgin, Potton.

The event was full to capacity and everyone seemed to enjoy the day. There were requests for the event to be held annually or biennially and be over two days. While pleased that this sentiment was expressed, I don't know where the funding would come from as the day cost approximately £100 per head, plus many hours of volunteer time. We are all extremely grateful to the National Lottery for covering all the costs of this event.

The rector, the Rev. Gill Smith began the day by describing the consternation in the parish and church as the grass in the churchyard got taller and taller under the town council's new wildlife-friendly mowing plan in 2016. She then spoke of the coming together of members of the town council, the mowing contractor, the Beds Wildlife Trust and Judith Evans who promotes the Living Churchyard project in the diocese to develop a management plan that was acceptable to all. She finished by saying how pleased and proud she is of the result.

Cllrs. Andrew Gibb and John Day then spoke about the development of the management plan from their perspective and how its success has prompted them to change the management of grassland in other areas in Potton.

A talk on grassland and the importance of maintaining grass of different lengths was given by Sue Cooper MBE and then everyone went outside to see the churchyard.

A short reflective talk on the theology of churchyards was given by the rector followed by Angela Gilpin of CfGA talking about inspiring others to manage their churchyards in a wildlife-friendly way.

The morning finished with another talk by Sue Cooper, this time on CfGA's DIY approach to developing a management plan for a burial site.

The afternoon consisted of workshops on Care of Monuments, memorials and stonework in burial sites, Introduction to raising funds for community-led conservation projects, Swifts and how churches can support them, Gardening for butterflies, moths and other wildlife, Constructing a nest box to take home, Ecology and care of churchyard trees, Ecology and care of churchyard lichens and Engaging with schools.

The day concluded with a Q&A session to the speakers.

Judith Evans, Promoter of Living Churchyards in St Albans Diocese and event organiser