

**Thursday 22 May:** Wildlife survey, SS Mary & John Churchyard, 6.30pm. Led by the Oxford Urban Wildlife Group. Please bring identification books if you have them. Survey forms will be provided. Contact Ruth Conway at [m.r.conway@virgin.net](mailto:m.r.conway@virgin.net).

**Sunday 1 June: Conservation Sunday**

*Abingdon:* Peter Harris of A Rocha is preaching in services at Christ Church, Abingdon, 9.30am & 11.15am.

*Oxford:* Conservation Sunday service, Holy Trinity, Headington Quarry, 10.00am. Followed by a picnic and walk. See the article on the front page for details. Contact [info@sageoxford.org.uk](mailto:info@sageoxford.org.uk).

**Tuesday 10 June:** Birdwatching Evening, SS Mary & John Churchyard, 7.30pm. Led by Ivor Rhymes of the Oxford Ornithological Society. Contact Ruth Conway at [m.r.conway@virgin.net](mailto:m.r.conway@virgin.net).

**Saturday 14 June:** *A Celebration of the Minet Country Park*, Function Room, Yeading Football Club, Southall, London, 12.00 to 5.30pm. Organised by A Rocha. Contact [uk@arocha.org](mailto:uk@arocha.org).

**Monday 23 June:** Sage prayer meeting, 150 Leiden Road, 7.30pm. Contact Caroline on 01865 432600 or [davesteel@ntlworld.com](mailto:davesteel@ntlworld.com).

**Tuesday 24 June:** A Christian Response to the Environment (AChRE) meeting: Farm walk/ride, Northmoor Organic Farm, 7.00pm. Numbers limited to the first 30 people who book by 14 June. Contact Christopher Hall at [achall@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:achall@globalnet.co.uk).

**Sunday 29 June:** *Walk with the Creator:* 5-mile circular walk along the River Thames. Meet at St. Denys Church, Northmoor, Oxon (OS Explorer Map 180, GR 421029), 2.00pm. Approximate duration 2.5 hours. Bring refreshments. Contact Caroline at 01865 432600 or [davesteel@ntlworld.com](mailto:davesteel@ntlworld.com) if you need a lift or if weather is poor.

**Monday 7 – Friday 11 July:** *A vision of the creator: Creation, ecology and spirituality:* course led by Prof Alistair McGrath of Wycliffe Hall. The course can be used for credit, and it is also possible to attend individual teaching sessions. More information at [www.wycliffe.ox.ac.uk](http://www.wycliffe.ox.ac.uk).

**Sunday 13 July:** Martin Hodson is preaching on *Conservation* in the speaking in the morning service at St Clements, Oxford, 10.30am. Contact [info@sageoxford.org.uk](mailto:info@sageoxford.org.uk).

**Monday 21 July:** Sage prayer meeting, 150 Leiden Road, 7.30pm. Contact Caroline on 01865 432600 or [davesteel@ntlworld.com](mailto:davesteel@ntlworld.com).

**Saturday 16 August:** Sage barbeque, 34 Binsey Lane, from 6.30pm. Contact Karl on 01865 727924 or [karl@wallendszus.co.uk](mailto:karl@wallendszus.co.uk).

Sage relies on donations from supporters to fund its work.

If you would like to contribute, please send a cheque payable to **Sage** to:

Karl Wallendszus, Sage Treasurer, 34 Binsey Lane, Oxford OX2 0EX

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[www.sageoxford.org.uk](http://www.sageoxford.org.uk)

## Conservation Sunday in Oxford and Abingdon

Conservation Sunday will be celebrated in at least two churches in the Oxford area on 1 June this year. Every year Sage aims to take part in a special service to mark the day, and after last year's successful service in Grove,

generally happens on the first Sunday of June. All over the country churches and other groups will be marking the event. This year's theme is *The Bible, Creation and Celtic Christians*.



*Holy Trinity, Headington Quarry*

this year we will be heavily involved in the 10am morning service at Holy Trinity, Headington Quarry, Oxford. It will be the first time Sage has taken part in a service at Holy Trinity, but the church has been running a churchyard wildlife project for some years, described in Caroline Steel's article inside. After the service we are hoping to have a picnic if the weather is suitable, and then go for a walk to the nearby Shotover Country Park.

Conservation Sunday is co-ordinated by A Rocha, Christians in Conservation, and

Sage has also learnt that Peter Harris of A Rocha will be speaking at both morning services (9.30am and 11.15am) at Christ Church, Abingdon on Conservation Sunday. The services will be the first in a series entitled *Mission and Spirit*.

More details of both events will be posted on the Sage web site as they become available ([www.sageoxford.org.uk](http://www.sageoxford.org.uk)). If you know of any other Conservation Sunday events in or around Oxfordshire, please send the details to [info@sageoxford.org.uk](mailto:info@sageoxford.org.uk) and we will add them to the website. For details of events in your area, contact A Rocha at [uk@arocha.org](mailto:uk@arocha.org).



*Christ Church, Abingdon*

# Rapid progress in Cowley Road churchyard project

The Churchyard Conservation Project at SS Mary & John, Cowley Road, Oxford, has been progressing rapidly thanks to a concerted commitment from members of the local community, guided by the British Trust of Conservation Volunteers (BTCV), and the local Church, to complete the restoration of the churchyard to its original (Victorian) environmental design. For an overview of the project visit the church project display or the website: [www.sageoxford.org.uk/churchyard.htm](http://www.sageoxford.org.uk/churchyard.htm).

The Wednesday Evening group has been concentrating their efforts on clearing the Magdalen Entrance, which is already markedly less cluttered, more spacious and verdant. Part of the boundary has been turned and cleared to prepare the ground for the mixed conservation hedgerow that will skirt the perimeter. Removing the matting of ivy and creepers knitting the grave plots together has given conservation-enhancing flora greater room to diversify and revealed headstones and grave plots which transcribers can more easily record and map in their Monday afternoon sessions. The added space and selective planting will provide a haven for indigenous plant and animal species.

Work has begun on a Memorial Garden, running along part of the westerly Respite wall. Oxford University Conservation Society supplied volunteers on Environment Day (3 May) to help with canopy and ground clearance, replanting and path laying. Work has also begun on the carving of seating from the fallen limbs of the great oak in the grounds. These are to be set around the Memorial.

A wildlife survey led by the Oxford Urban



*The Bishop of Oxford presents a Parish Pump Priming Award of £450 from the Conservation Foundation to Ruth Conway of the SS Mary & John churchyard project.*

Wildlife Group (22 May) will chart the biodiversity already existing in the churchyard and will monitor subsequent changes throughout the year. Independently, an ornithologist from the RSPB has reported 13 species of bird in the churchyard, including the resident ducks, finches, robins and sparrows. Bat boxes are scheduled to be in place by the end of the summer.

As summer approaches, the churchyard is already awash with a vibrant display of natural colour, sound and community activity. However, day-by-day the weeds take a greater hold! Any help would greatly accelerate the transformation of the churchyard into a safe, tranquil space for family and friends. Please contact Ruth Conway for volunteering opportunities at [m.r.conway@virgin.net](mailto:m.r.conway@virgin.net).

*Chris Holland*

# Quarry churchyard project maintains wildlife haven

Holy Trinity churchyard, famous as the burial place of CS Lewis, is a tranquil, wildlife haven in Headington Quarry. The churchyard is bordered by a meadow, small wood and gardens and is a delightful mix of trees, grassland herbs and garden flowers, the latter in borders and graves. In the early 1990s, two botanists recorded 150 species of plant, and since 1997 I have been helping to lead walks in the churchyard about 3 times a year to identify the flora and record any other wildlife interest. The botanical interest has been increased by the 'adopt a grave' policy where volunteers are encouraged to adopt an overgrown grave and replant with flowers of their choice. This scheme was put into action by Janet and Peter Lever, two enthusiastic members of the church, who have been instrumental in caring for the churchyard, and making sure the wildlife interest is maintained. Sensitive mowing allows notable plants to flourish such as primroses in the spring and ox-eye daisies in the summer, and butterflies to breed in the

longer grass areas.

Like many churchyards, the area supports a variety of other habitats such as old limestone boundary walls, a hedgerow, old yew trees, lichen-encrusted headstones, compost heap (used by frogs and slow worms) and the church building itself. Bats and birds are encouraged to breed in boxes which have been erected on some of the taller trees. Janet Lever keeps a churchyard diary for all the wildlife records and management tasks, and each year a summary is published in the church newsletter.

If you would like to see some of the churchyard's natural riches for yourself, coming to the Conservation Sunday service at Holy Trinity will provide the perfect opportunity! The service starts at 10.00am, and will include participation by a number of Sage members. After the service (weather permitting!) we will take a walk on Shotover, and this will include a picnic on route, so please bring a packed lunch.

*Caroline Steel*

## Maggie remembered in arboretum

A wonderful memorial service for Maggie Stevens was held at Nuneham Courtney Arboretum on the first anniversary of her death, Sunday 13 April. An oak tree, the plaque for which is shown opposite, had been planted in memory of Maggie in the bluebell wood, and about 50 people, including many Sage members, gathered to share memories, anecdotes and poems. The weather was perfect, the birds sang, and we remembered.

