

Meadow Saxifrage at Bridgenorth Cemetery Dan Wrench

Conservation charity Caring for God’s Acre, is set to put burial grounds on the heritage map, thanks to £586,700 National Lottery funding.

The Beautiful Burial Ground project will highlight the valuable buildings, landmarks and wildlife to which thousands of burial grounds across England and Wales are home.

Burial grounds are widespread, free, and often fully accessible. Due to their unique environment, they are also important places for history and wildlife.

The undisturbed grassland found in these sites, which is now rare in the wider countryside, provides a sanctuary for all kinds of colourful flowers and meadow grasses, which in turn support an extraordinary variety of animal life, from birds, bees and butterflies to frogs, toads, mice and voles.

Gravestones are of supreme importance for lichen conservation. Of the 2000 British species over 700 have been found in churchyards. Almost half of these are rare and seldom, if ever, occur in other places. Many sites have well over 100 species.

Despite their importance, most burial grounds are under-recorded and relatively unknown.

Unlocking the natural heritage of burial grounds

[quote=Ros Kerslake, HLF Chief Executive]"Our burial grounds are truly precious community spaces; now this project will allow visitors to appreciate their unique wildlife and history"[/quote]

This project will enable budding naturalists and historians to unlock the secrets of these fabulous places and share that information with everybody. It will reach out to families, and people with disabilities or mental health problems, utilising burial grounds as precious community space.

By creating a lasting and accessible record of the built heritage, social history and biodiversity of thousands of these precious community sites, the project aims to encourage more people to visit them, and ensure they are cared for into the future.

Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive of HLF, said: ‘We are delighted to award this grant to the Beautiful Burial Grounds project. Our burial grounds are truly precious community spaces; now this project will allow visitors to appreciate their unique wildlife and history, as well as the calm, reflective atmosphere they provide.”



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Harriet Carty, Caring for God’s Acre National Project Manager



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Back from the Brink will protect key threatened species such as the sand lizard Chris Davis

England’s threatened wildlife to be brought ‘back from the brink’