

Swifts are in serious decline; they already nest in several places around Lymington so we hope extra nest sites will help to create new colonies.

Our 'Messy Church' families created the **bug hotel** at the far end of the churchyard. This is a refuge for insects (and probably small mammals too).



We've also left some fallen wood. Decaying wood is important for wildlife, and we've been excited to see the rare lesser stag beetle. If you are lucky you might see one, or even a greater stag beetle.



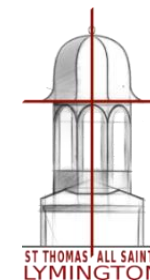
We know that **bats** feed in the churchyard so if you walk through around dusk (or dawn!) during summer months you might see common or soprano pipistrelles.

Hedgehogs are in decline and need our help. We've provided several areas for them to shelter and hibernate. They can find beetles and worms in the dead wood.



Churchyards are key places for the conservation of **lichen**, many species of which are rare and seldom occur in other places. Lichens, which grow very slowly and are long-lived, are a combination of two organisms, fungus and algae. A survey identified 59 species here.

Our **compost heap** is a receptacle for dead flowers, veg peelings, and grass cuttings, but it's much more than this. As this all breaks down it's full of worms and other small creatures, which in turn attract robins and blackbirds. When the compost is well rotted it goes to enrich the soil in gardens or allotments.



St Thomas' Church Lymington

Our Living Churchyard



What to see in St Thomas' Churchyard

We hope you enjoy your visit. If you spot something unusual, please let us know at office@lymingtonchurch.org

There has been a church in Lymington for 800 years, and burials have taken place here since that time, marked since the 1700s by gravestones. It's an old area of green space at the heart of the town. Here people have come over the centuries, to remember their loved ones and to contemplate the big questions of life.

Through all that time the churchyard has been relatively undisturbed, and has become a haven for wildlife. You can find flowery grassland, an abundance of trees, lichen-covered stonework and many creatures which find refuge within our boundaries.

Christians believe that God created all living things and calls us to care for them. We want the churchyard to be a peaceful space, where endangered species can find a place, mammals, birds, insects and plants can thrive, and everyone can enjoy them all.

This is a brief guide to what you might see if you walk or sit quietly and look.

Most obvious are the trees. **Yew trees** are often found in churchyards, and we have five, one (near the back of the Church Hall) planted as part of a Millennium project. There is one east of the hall and three at the far end.

There are about 13 other species of tree/bush, including lime (in the avenues), horse chestnut, oak, beech and holly.

The community of grasses and **flowers** may have been here for many centuries. In spring, look for the first snowdrops, followed by primroses, and later bluebells. Later you might see buttercups and celandines, speedwells, Mexican fleabane, thistle, white and red clover, red campion, scarlet pimpernel, violets, borage, and ox-eye daisy.



Red Clover



Ox-eye daisy

Our mowing regime allows areas of grass to grow long so that flowers can flourish, supporting a range of insects, including butterflies and bees.

In summer you might see **butterflies** such as the red admiral, holly blue, meadow brown, gatekeeper and speckled wood, as well as bees and other insects.

We deliberately leave some areas untidy, and let some **nettles** grow, as they are important food plants for several butterflies and moths.

In the 'garden' areas near the church we have added **plants for pollinators**, including rosemary, lavender, mahonia, hyssop and flowering currant.

In autumn look out for grassland **fungi** such as colourful waxcaps and spindles.



Birds such as robins, blackbirds, song thrushes, and wrens can be seen all year round, nesting in trees and bushes. You might also see goldfinches, house sparrows and starlings.

In the last few years we've put up bird boxes and swift boxes: can you spot them?

