**Cherishing churchyard week June 2017**

St Mary’s churchyard volunteer group in Chirk organised a week of activities to celebrate and raise awareness of the treasures that our churchyards contain here in Chirk. There is a rich diversity of plants, animals and history that surrounds the church. It is a fabulous tranquil place and is open for all to use.

Over the week we organised various activities to encourage as many people as possible to come and enjoy, learn and discover the area.

There were three illustrated talks:

1. Butterflies with Jan Miller. This talk showed us what we should be planting and how to garden for the benefit of butterflies and bees. *www.northwalesbutterflies.org.uk*
2. Wild Flowers with ‘Caring for Gods Acre’ Sue Cooper. Sue showed us flowers and their meanings, and how to encourage the birds, bees and insects into our gardens. She also did a survey of the churchyard wild flowers. *www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk*

3) Family History with Dr Clive Weed from Clwyd Family History Society. Clive gave us an insight into searching your family tree/history. Marlene Jones helped people look at the church registers. Website [www.clwydfhs.org.uk](http://www.clwydfhs.org.uk)

Annual Plant Sale: Friends and members of the churchyard team raised and donated plants to raise money for the upkeep of the churchyard.

Graham Greasley, a local history enthusiast, gave several groups a history tour of the churchyard. These tours were very popular, over 50 people came to hear and learn about the history, even in the pouring rain! He is going to include the tours on his ‘Chirk tours’ during the summer months. Contact him directly graham@uk1.org

The Bell Captain, Peter Furniss and his team opened the Bell Tower and showed people how the bells work. (He also showed 50 children up the bell tower on the Friday)

Chirk Writing Circle led by Viv Ball took the challenge on to write poems about the churchyard. We had a very enjoyable morning listening to some of the work and lots of people have enjoyed reading them since. Mary played some beautiful music during the session. A booklet of the poems is available to view in the church. The project has inspired them to have themes in the work they do in the future. Some of their work will be on the ‘Caring for Gods Acre’ website. Chirk Writers Circle meet first Wednesday of the month at Craig Close Community Centre 10-12noon. Contact Viv on 01691 770104

On the Friday afternoon we invited Year 1 from Ysgol y Waun Primary School. 44 children were accompanied by 6 teachers lead by Natalie Edwards. Five of our St Mary’s Toddler Group Leaders helped to guide the children around 5 different activities. They came to explore the churchyard with NE Wales Wild Life Team. [www.newwildlife.org.uk](http://www.newwildlife.org.uk) We were given a grant by ‘Welsh Church Youth Fund’ to help fund this event. It was a huge success. We divided the children into 5 groups: Bug hunting with nets, Scavenger and discovery hunt, Making bird feeders, History tour (Mausoleum was open to show the lovely marble sculpture inside), Martin, a church youth leader, explored inside the church and Peter Furniss and his team explored the Bell tower. The children were very well behaved and really enjoyed their time here.

Pentre Controlled School children came on the Saturday to display their skills with Maypole dancing. It had to be held inside because of the wet weather. However, we have a very large Maypole for outside and a smaller one that we used in the church hall. It was a wonderful afternoon with strawberry teas, face painting, lucky dip, all organised by the church social team.

We finished the week on the Sunday afternoon with a short special service to remember all loved ones. This was held in the church hall because of the inclement weather. People were able to write a message/name on butterflies, which were then placed onto a tree.

The Social Team provided the refreshments for all the events during the week.

The week was aimed to encourage the wider community and visitors to see what we have on our doorstep. We had local people and lots of people from surrounding areas coming to explore this wonder peaceful space. It is for all to use.

We planted a Wild Meadow Flower Area this year and it is looking fantastic already, it is full of colour and insects. Come and see it for yourselves.

We would like to thank the whole Chirk community for all the help, support and encouragement we have had with this event.

St Mary’s Chirk Churchyard Volunteer Team

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