

ST CLEMENT'S CHURCHYARD REDISCOVERED

THE OPEN LEGACY FUND

I am delighted to tell you that our churchyard project is one of the six successful community projects that has secured funding from the Green Initiatives Grant Programme that forms part of the Open Legacy Fund provided by the R&A.

Each of the six programmes is committed to offering social, environmental as well as health and well-being benefits for the town and its residents.

As readers of my regular articles in *The Signal* will be aware we began to work in partnership with Dover District Council (DDC) on the closed churchyard three years ago. Our joint ambition was to return St Clement's Churchyard to its former glory as a place of where our ancestors can rest in peace and where the current congregation and community have the opportunity to reflect and relax in beautiful surroundings. Initially, through the energy and enthusiasm of a small group of volunteers we made excellent progress in clearing the grounds and providing space for indigenous flora to flourish. Unfortunately, the pandemic stalled many of our plans for the churchyard and our application to the Heritage Lottery Fund had to be abandoned. That said, thanks to a Kent County Council Member's Grant we were able to purchase our first beehive and this spring we welcomed our first swarm of honey bees.

Before the pandemic in 2020, through a national project entitled *Caring for God's Acre* we began to better understand how important our churchyard was in providing a natural habitat for protecting local animals, insects and plants. As a consequence, we decided to extend our ambition by developing these aspects and elements of the churchyard and looked for ways to encourage members of the congregation, the community and visitors to become more aware of, and involved in, this special place.

To assist us in developing our ideas we prepared and submitted a bid to The Open Legacy Fund. We described our aims and ambitions thus:

The aim of the overall project is to restore a neglected Churchyard into a space of spiritual peace and tranquillity, whilst at the same time establishing a detailed historical record of the Sandwich residents interred in the Churchyard and developing a valuable environmental resource as a haven for local flora and fauna as well as bees, butterflies and insects. Once established the site will also become a rich educational resource that we trust will be used to enable people of all ages appreciate, recognise and understand the value of the natural world.

The postponement of The Open in Sandwich last year because of the pandemic meant that no decision was possible in 2020. Once The Sandwich Open was played this summer the proposals were evaluated and we were informed earlier this month that our proposal had been successful and awarded £3,691.27. These funds will help us enhance the local flora across the churchyard, increase the number of honey bees and develop information materials for visitors.

If you would like to know more about our plans or would like to join our group of volunteers working to improve the facilities and opportunities in the churchyard please do not hesitate to be in touch.

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