

Eco Walk 7th July

Fiona Earle

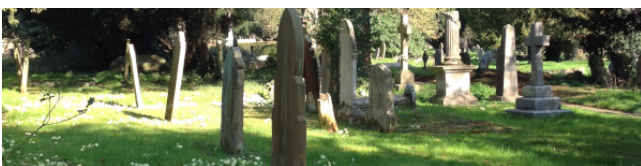
All Saints Welcomes Everyone



The second of our All Saints Ecowalks will take place after the Family Service on Sunday, 7th July. Interested people of all ages are welcome to join us straight after coffee and the craft activity, or at around 11.15, if not attending church.

Fiona will bring her binocular microscope and some butterfly wings etc. so that anyone can look at these while waiting before we start, or if we have rain!

At the end of the first walk, when we looked at the churchyard at the beginning of spring, we decided that we would return to the churchyard at the beginning of summer.



We shall be looking at living things, aspects of nature. Our churchyard is really useful in that it supplies food for some of the insects, birds and mammals that live there, or visit. These can be insects, grubs, worms etc. or nectar from flowering plants, as well as suitable plants for caterpillars to eat, specific to species. The churchyard also needs to supply homes for all creatures, from the squirrels, the birds and the bats, to all the tiny forms of life that form the basis of the food chain.

Since the April walk, swift nest boxes have been installed on the north side of All Saints, and the 'call' system is in operation from 6 – 9 am and 6-9 pm – times when the birds would normally visit their nests. So far we have not heard of any swifts being seen. Fiona thought she heard some one evening, and our Vicar Jo has heard some once in the town, so hopefully a few are in the vicinity. Nick Hoyle says he has heard some swifts around Hertford North Station.

We may have to wait a while for them to find and use the boxes but we have done what we can. The weather was bad for them returning from Africa. All the way from Spain to our shores there have been storms and heavy rain, and many fewer birds than normal have been arriving, and they have been later than usual. Please look out for any swift activity around the boxes and let us know what you see.

Meanwhile there has been a horrific report in the scientific journal Nature about modern mechanical methods being used to gather olives for the large scale production of olive oil in Portugal. Apparently the best time to harvest olives is after dark, the flavour is better, BUT the birds are then roosting in the olive trees and they are gathered in along with the olives. Around 100 songbirds are found dead in each truckload – robins, wagtails, warblers etc. – possibly our British birds that have migrated for the winter. Swifts would not be involved, but swallows and martins could be.

We cannot afford this loss, on top of more natural causes of death due to disease, birds of prey and the massive numbers killed by domestic cats. While we still have MEPs, we should all write to them, asking him or her to act before the autumn/winter harvest of olives – at least to insist on scaring the birds away from the trees about to be harvested, by law. (We have 7 MEPs for East of England. If you wish to raise an issue concerning the EU you may approach any or all of them – European Parliament Liaison

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Office in the UK, Europe House, 32 Smith Square, London SW1P 3EU. Tel.no. 020 7227 4300, email: eplondon@ep.europa.eu
Facebook: www.facebook.com/EPinUK).

One of the aims of the ecowalks is to enable us to link things together. A tree is a host to other life, below and above ground (an oak tree in particular supports more life forms than any other British native tree, including over 300 species of lichens and a staggering number of invertebrates).

Plants are also hosts. Insects and birds move nimbly among the more static trees and plants, but all are important and when we start putting names to things we will begin to see the vast four-dimensional web of life and we will learn what to look for and where. Then we will see things. It is easy to walk blindly, be in a 'virtual' world, but it is far more exciting to walk in the real world, and recognise the wonders of nature, our fellow inhabitants of the planet, and what is going on all around us.

Trees are one of the biggest and most dramatic beings around us, with a far longer lifespan than us humans. Insects are some of the smallest things, with a short lifespan, especially in the final mature stage of life – but they are equally important: think pollinators, or breaking down vegetation into fertile soil. What could be more important than that? Everything - trees, plants, fungi, birds, mammals, invertebrates, fish, every living thing is interconnected.

Nature is multi-dimensional, and the fourth dimension is TIME. An oak tree can live for 900 years – think 1066! It can grow for 300 years, live for another 300 years, (and be host to billions of species), and it will slowly lose vigour and die over another 300 years (if no one rushes to cut it down for firewood, or to 'tidy it up'). An insect on the other hand may live for just a few hours as a mature being.

The timescale of nature is staggering, and we humans have an immense responsibility to respect all of it and look after it. To quote Christina Rossetti 'Tread softly! All the earth is holy ground'. We could also remember the

part of the Hippocratic Oath that all doctors used to have to take, maybe they still do, 'Do No Harm'.

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Family Service with the BLESSING of PETS

SUNDAY 7 JULY 2019
10.00am



Followed by Refreshments and ...



Everyone welcome, with
or without your PET

Families and their pets are invited to join us for a short walk after the Family Service at 11.00am.
 The walk will be through the churchyard, and the aim will be to look closely at our environment, discovering the plants and trees, looking for insects and other creatures, watching for birds and this time, focusing on how the greenery has changed as the churchyard moves from Spring into Summer.
Families who only want to join us for the walk will be most welcome.

ALL SAINTS CHURCH - Queens Road, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG13 8AY
www.allsaintshertford.org

On the July walk we will be looking out for butterflies – so important as highly sensitive indicators of the health of the environment as well as being pollinators of plants. We will also be looking to see what flowering plants are around to attract insects to the churchyard.

It was recently reported that scientists have been able to measure that when some flowers can hear bees buzzing, they are able to increase the sugar content of their pollen in response – to reward a pollinator! Research is showing amazing strategies emanating from plants and trees that previously have been dismissed as beings with no intelligence...

We look forward to seeing you on the 7th July, and please feel free to spread the word to friends or family members who may be interested.