

# 1. The Five Steps to Churchyard and Burial Ground Care



*This sheet will help you to start thinking about how to manage your site. It will give you a framework for getting going and for helping people to become involved.*

Planning the management of any site helps to keep work under control. Rather than responding to problems or overdue tasks, there is an opportunity to consider carefully what resources you have (this could be people, money, tools) and what can reasonably be achieved. By going through these five steps you will produce a management plan that is realistic and sustainable. You may also find that this planning process gathers momentum across the community and draws new volunteers to the site.

**1. Research** existing records on the Beautiful Burial Ground portal within the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas. Check the Church Heritage Record if in England or the Church Heritage Cymru if in Wales. The Churchyard pages will give you an idea of what is known about your burial ground, and whether it is designated or contains listed structures (see useful contacts at the end of this sheet).

**2. Map** the site and start to fill in what you know and what you find out about plants, animals and built features.

**3. Plan** what you want to do and how you will manage the site. Talk to people and reach an agreement on management.

**4. Inform** people about the plans and invite them to become involved. Run events and training days, help people to learn more about the site.



**5. Review** the plan; is it working? Check to see how practical it is and how people feel about it.

## 1. RESEARCH

### Insurance

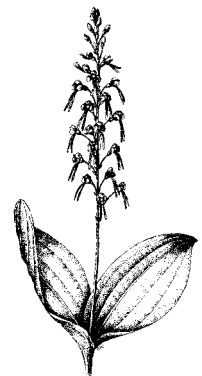
It is sensible to check what level of insurance your site has. You may be running events, working with volunteers and encouraging children to explore. As burial grounds are open to the public they are likely to have the right insurance but it's best to check.

### Planning protection

#### *The natural environment*

Burial grounds are important sites and may well have special protection. For example, a number of burial grounds are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), which is a legal designation.

Is your burial ground within a National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty? Local authorities and wildlife trusts have lists of sites with particular wildlife interest such as 'Wildlife Sites' or 'Sites of Nature Conservation Importance'. These vary from county to county and give an indication of whether there are features recognised as rare or of particular interest. Your burial ground may also contain 'protected species' such as bats, great-crested newts or slow worms.



*Twayblade*

Check the Churchyard pages on the Church Heritage Record or Church Heritage Cymru for information on designations and protected species known to be present. NB if a species is not recorded you cannot assume that it is absent.

#### *Built heritage*

There are a range of designations from individual monuments to archaeological sites and designed landscapes. Burial grounds may be within wider heritage designations, such as a Conservation Area.

Consult the Church Heritage Record or Church Heritage Cymru for designations and listings. Alternatively you can go directly to Historic England or Cadw for the same information. This information can also be useful when planning interpretation such as leaflets or displays.

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If your site does have a designation or contains protected species then you may wish to contact Caring for God's Acre or the statutory agencies for advice (see useful contacts at the end of this sheet).

### If you want to know more...

There is further information available should you have a particular interest:

#### Biological records

Plants and animals which have been previously recorded in your burial ground are held in biological records which are listed in the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas. Caring for God's Acre and NBN have worked in partnership to produce a Burial Ground system within the Atlas. See Useful Contacts for this system or contact Caring for God's Acre directly to learn more.

#### Archaeological and historical records

For further information on built structures such as monuments or memorials contact the local authority **archaeological department**, the historic environment record, and in the case of Anglican sites, the **diocesan advisory committee** or **church head office**.

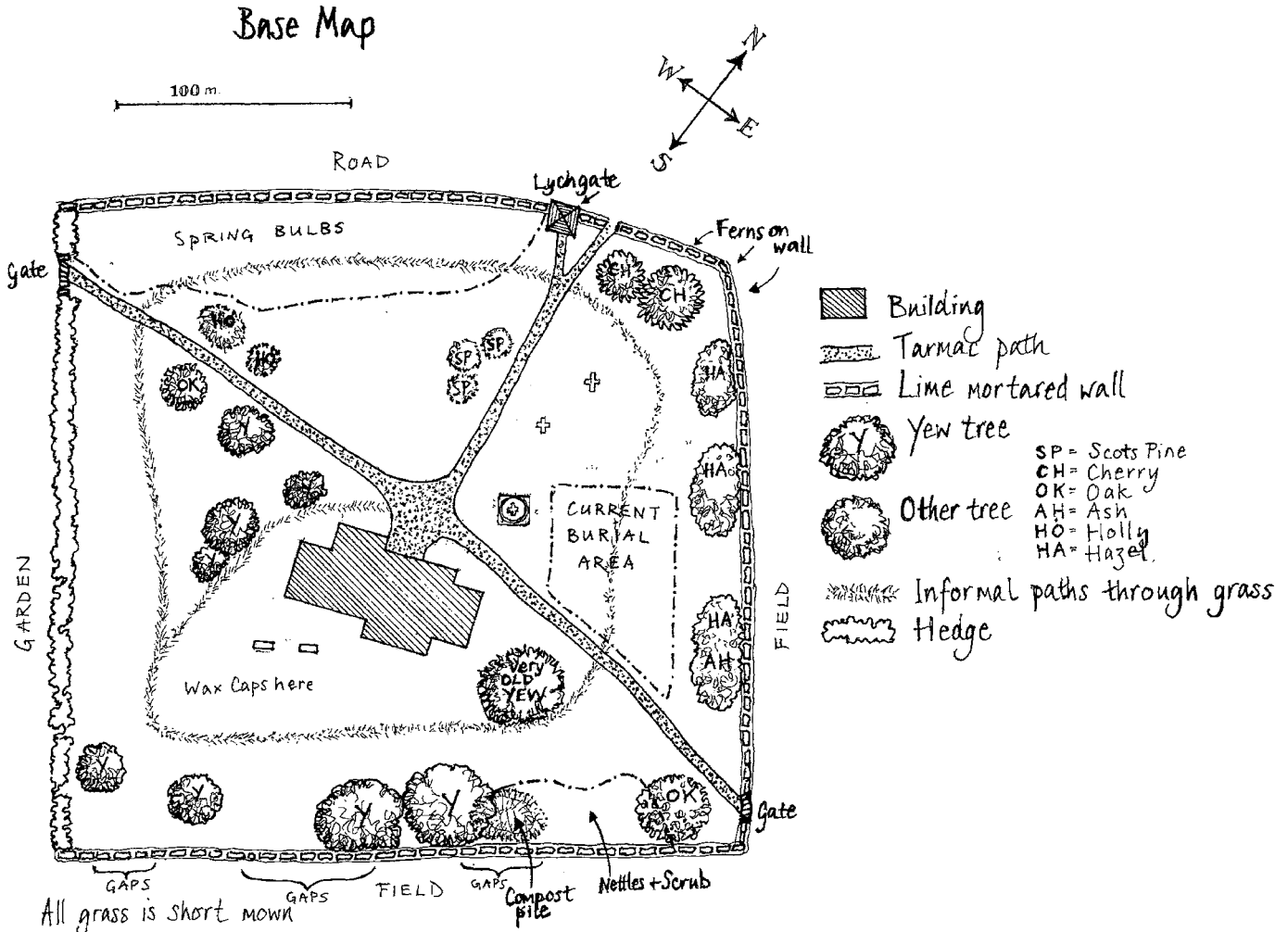
## 2. MAP THE SITE

There may well be an existing map or draw one by looking at a map on the internet. Alternatively buy one from Ordnance Survey or the local authority planning department (sketch several copies of this basic site map).

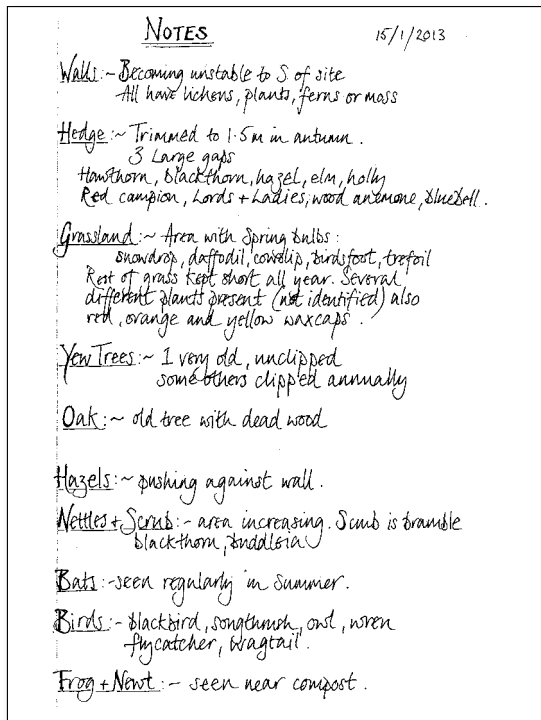
### Mark on the following key features:

- The entrances, boundaries, paths and building footprint.
- The scale of the map or area of the burial ground.
- Orientation – North, South, East, West. This can be done either by referring to an Ordnance Survey map or with a compass.
- Areas of current use: where do new burials take place, are there any war graves, is there a war memorial where wreaths are laid annually?
- Structures or regularly visited graves.
- Existing management: areas of short mown grass, long or tussocky grass, areas currently unmanaged.
- Trees, shrubs, flower beds, spring bulbs, compost heaps. Where possible identify tree and shrub species.

This is your **base map** giving a starting point for



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deciding what to do where. It doesn't matter if you can't identify everything at this point; you will gradually build up a more detailed picture as time passes.

### If you want to find out more

You may want to identify wild flowers, find out whether you have slow worms or see what birds are nesting and where...

### Do your own surveys

- There is lots of interesting wildlife and history to be discovered by visiting a site regularly through the seasons and making a note of what you see. Identification field guides are useful and the Field Studies Council fold-out sheets are a great starting point. Try our **Botanical Companion** to help you identify whether the grassland is rich in wildflowers.
- Take a photo of things which you can't identify and note the date; sooner or later you will find someone who can tell you what it is! You can send photos to iSpot where enthusiasts will try and identify them. See Useful Contacts.
- Please upload your findings onto our recording system (see Useful Contacts). You do not need to be an expert to add to this growing body of information. If you can identify a holly, yew, molehill or magpie then that is a good place to start!

### Ask for help

There may be local experts and enthusiasts willing to help:

- Use the local media to tell people what is happening and to ask for volunteers with particular skills or information. Botanists, local historians or photographers perhaps?
- Caring for God's Acre may be able to link you with another group doing a similar project nearby.
- Contact; the wildlife trust, the local authority ecologist, the staff at a nearby nature reserve, local interest groups. Ask them for help or suggestions of who else might help.

### Seek training and apply for a grant to cover costs

- Members of your community may be interested in learning identification of wildlife, recording of monuments or other new skills. See sheet B10, Surveying Plants and Animals for further survey techniques and sheet D5, Applying for Grants.

**This additional information gathering can take place at any time. It does not need to happen before you produce the base map and plan management.**

## 3. PLAN WHAT YOU WANT TO DO

Once you know your site then you can start to plan how to care for it. It is important to involve people and to talk through issues at this stage. In particular talk to those people who are responsible for the site and also to the people who visit.

A plan drawn up by several people is more likely to succeed. People are likely to volunteer once the plan is becoming clear and they can see that things are happening.

It works well to have aims for management, for example:

'This burial ground is cared for in a way which makes it pleasant and attractive for visitors, a place in keeping with the function of burials, a fit setting for the church and a haven for wildlife.'

The two main considerations for management are '**where**' and '**when**'.

### Management map to plan 'where'

Take a clean copy of your map and start to consider which areas are suitable for particular management:

- Are there areas of spring bulbs where you don't mow until they have finished flowering?



Violet

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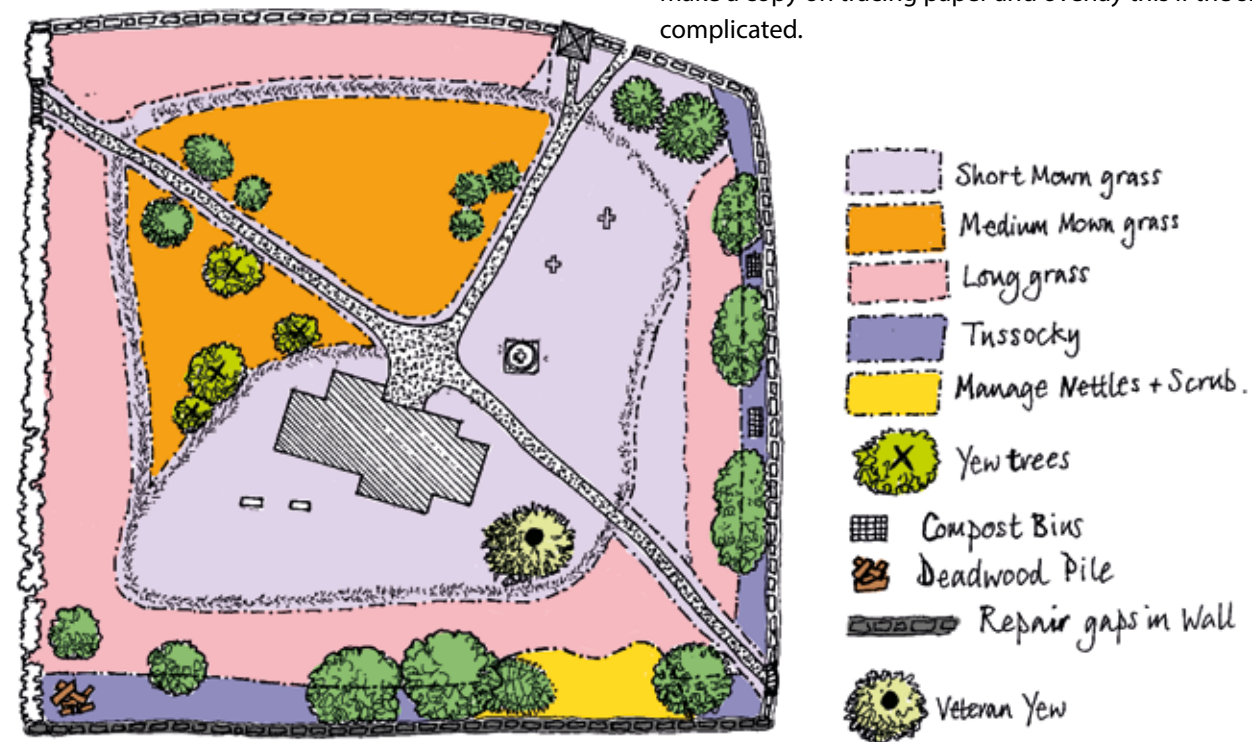
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- Are there places where monuments with interesting inscriptions and lichens are becoming covered in brambles?
- Is the entire site managed as short grass and could there be areas with different mowing times?
- Is there a boundary wall in need of rebuilding?

Whilst planning your management keep the site map that you produced in step 2 to hand. It can be useful to make a copy on tracing paper and overlay this if the site is complicated.

### Management Map

100 m



### Management Notes

20/1/2013

Walls: - Repair the gaps in the southern wall; volunteer days with professional waller. Remove plants first, keep moist and replant after. Gaps measure 3m, 5m, 1m,

Hedge: - Low priority, leave gaps for now.

Short grass: - No change except collect all cuttings and put into compost bin.

Medium grass or spring meadow. Cut after bulbs have flowered, following that cut regularly with mower blade set to 10cm.

Long grass: - Pet shop keen to buy small sales. Make a hand baler + then introduce long grass cut followed by haymaking. Council will take cuttings if weather too bad for hay making.

Tussocky grass: - Cut half each year and compost

Nettles + Scrub: - Cut nettles when doing long grass cut + include in hay. Cut scrub to ground every 3 years, so trees don't establish.

Yew Trees: - Remove ivy from all yews  
Cut elder + other plants under yews every year.

Hazels: - Low priority, leave now but plan to coppice in the future.

Compost Bins: - Make 2 bins from pallets + use one annually. Put old compost heap into a bin or take home for gardens.

Woodpile: - Stake the 4 corners of the woodpile and start to stack deadwood in it.

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### Annual Work Plan

KEY	WHAT	ACTION	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
	Tussocky grass	Cut once per year or every other year												
	Long grass / summer meadow	Cut and remove or make hay												
	Nettles	Cut with long grass												
	Medium grass	Cut regularly and remove												
	Short grass	Cut regularly and remove												
	Veteran yew	Remove ivy, remove elder beneath												
	Other yews	Remove ivy												
	Other trees/shrubs	Prune shrubs												
	Volunteer tree inspection	Check all trees												
	Scrub	Cut to ground level												
	Compost bins	Rotate use, mix/empty												
	Walls	Repair wall remove new ivy growth												
	Woodpile	Create and top up												

### Three Year Work Plan – no need to include tasks which take place annually

ACTIVITY	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
Repair wall			
Prune shrubs			
Build compost bins			
Start managing for long grass and nettles			
Start managing for tussocky grass			
Remove ivy and elder from yews			
Cut scrub			

The Management Map, Annual Work Plan and Yearly Work Plan together form the **Management Plan**

### Calendar to plan 'when'

Once the management work has been agreed, produce a timescale for doing tasks.

Plan what needs to be done each year as well as over the longer term; three years works well. This allows you to phase in works, starting with small and manageable changes. Equally it can highlight an urgent job such as repairing a dangerous wall.

### 4. INFORM PEOPLE

Once the plan is drawn up then tell your local community and gain their support. This is best done in a variety of ways, depending on resources and what works well in your area.

#### Written information

- Put up a poster on the notice board explaining what

you are doing.

- Write articles and letters for local magazines and contact the local press. Give regular updates.
- Produce a permanent poster based on the management map with pictures, and display it on notice boards.

#### Spoken information

- Explain to local people, who are not involved, and ask your vicar (or other leader) to speak about the plan. Speak on the local radio, consider holding a public meeting, use websites and social media.

#### Run events and work parties

- Once there is a plan then you can start working to it. This may involve organising people to take on tasks, running volunteer work parties and training days.
- Activities require planning; sheet D1, Involving

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Volunteers can help with planning events, keeping people safe and managing work parties. There are suggestions on volunteer events, useful contacts and ways of engaging new volunteers.

#### **Involving children and schools**

- Caring for God's Acre has an Education Pack to help teachers and youth group leaders make the most of their local churchyard or burial ground (see sheet D3, Recreation and Learning – Things to Do).

#### **Statement of significance**

Include important discoveries in your Statement of Significance (this relates to Church of England/Church in Wales sites).

### **5. REVIEW THE PLAN: IS IT WORKING?**

Review your management plan at the end of each year. After all, it is only a guide and can be changed if anything is not working.

#### **Ask the volunteers**

Arrange an annual meeting of all who have been involved with the site. This can take the form of an annual celebration with business at the start of it.

Discuss:

- How has the year gone?
- Were the tasks appropriate, enjoyable, and practical?
- Does the group have suitable tools and are they still in good condition?
- Is the scale of the management plan reasonable considering your resources?
- Is there an opportunity for useful training?
- Does anybody have ideas or new projects they would like to discuss?
- Were the risk assessments useful and appropriate? Did they reflect the actual risks of the site and task? (see sheet D2, Health and Safety).

- Are there any lessons to be learnt from the accident book? (see sheet D2, Health and Safety).

During the annual meeting it is worth referring back to the original aims of the project (see step 3 – the management plan). Is this being fulfilled?

Keep notes of these discussions.

#### **Ask the local community and other visitors**

Give local people an opportunity to express their views about the plan and any changes they may have noticed. If comments are positive then this is encouraging to volunteers. Please remember to put into perspective any negative comments made by just a few people.

- Hold an annual open day for visitors and invite feedback; this may also be a fund-raising event.

#### **Records**

- Gather together any records from volunteers or members of the public. It is often people working on a site who see the most wildlife and hear the most feedback from visitors.
- You may wish to repeat surveys of species or habitats. This does not need to be annual; a 3 or 6 yearly survey is timely as management may not produce quick changes.

#### **The management plan**

Three years is a good time to review or rewrite your management plan.

- Mark any changes onto the plan: wall repair, tree felling, hedge management etc.
- Consider new tasks which you now have the resources for.
- Look where work may be needed due to deterioration.

Three years is also a good time to look at what's been achieved, to celebrate your work, to re-publicise the project and seek new volunteers.

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#### **Useful contacts**

Caring for God's Acre, [www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk](http://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk)

Church of England, ChurchCare, [www.churchcare.co.uk](http://www.churchcare.co.uk)

Church Heritage Record [www.facultyonline.churchofengland.org/churches](http://www.facultyonline.churchofengland.org/churches)

Church in Wales, [www.churchinwales.org.uk](http://www.churchinwales.org.uk)

Church Heritage Cymru [www.churchheritagecymru.org.uk/](http://www.churchheritagecymru.org.uk/)

Local authority – how to access the biological record and the archaeological record

NBN Burial Ground Atlas [www.burialgrounds.nbnatlas.org/](http://www.burialgrounds.nbnatlas.org/)

Wildlife Trusts, [www.wildlifetrusts.org](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org)

#### *Statutory government agencies:*

Cadw, [www.cadw.gov.wales](http://www.cadw.gov.wales)

Historic England, [www.historicengland.org.uk](http://www.historicengland.org.uk)

Historic Scotland, [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk)

Natural England, [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

Natural Resources Wales, [www.naturalresourceswales.gov.uk](http://www.naturalresourceswales.gov.uk)

Northern Ireland Environment Agency, [www.daera.gov.uk](http://www.daera.gov.uk)

Scottish Natural Heritage, [www.nature.scot](http://www.nature.scot)

#### **Useful reading**

Field Studies Council – fold-out identification charts

Caring for God's Acre Education Pack

The Caring for God's Acre Botanical Companion



*Sweet Vernal Grass*