

Report on the ECLAS Project
awarded to St Clement's Church, Cambridge

Stewarding God's Creation in the Heart of Cambridge,
building on the Scientific Approaches of Carl Linnaeus

Dr David Bailey
June 2026

Summary

Over the past 9 months, we have:

1. Built a community at St Clement's which appreciates both the beauty and underlying complexity of the churchyard environment
2. Established a network of links with other local churches, churchyard organizations and gardening groups within Cambridge who share our biodiversity interests
3. Developed contacts with Cambridge colleges, scientists and theologians with a view to wider promulgation of a shared vision
4. Produced a template for congregations beyond St Clement's to build their own coalition of churchgoers committed to stewarding God's creation within a wider church community
5. Developed ideas for, and identified possible participants in a 'Linnaean Lecture' series, exploring creation through the eyes of modern scientists ('The Tree of Life'), following in the footsteps of Carl Linnaeus

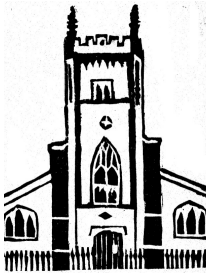
We have crystallized these ideas and activities in a website broadcasting this churchyard-centred mission:

www.churchyardbiodiversity.org

In the final 3 months of the project, we are concentrating on sharing the tools, technologies, publications and approaches developed during the project within our Cambridge partnership, leading to a sustainable platform of stewardship in action.

1. An Overview of the ECLAS Project at St Clement's

Botany was chosen as a focus for our ECLAS Science in Congregations (SiC) Project because many members of the St Clement's congregation are avid gardeners, while not knowing much about the science underlying plant development.



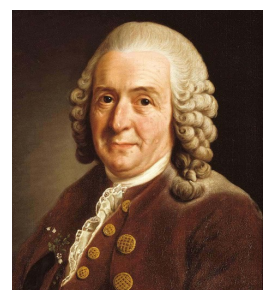
The churchyard is often a neglected aspect of our ministry: but the extinction of our native plants in particular are a continual reminder that our environment is under threat from climate change and other anthropogenic influences. Involvement with maintaining the churchyard and its biodiversity represents a major opportunity for improving both the spiritual and natural wellbeing of our community.

Dr David Bailey, the SiC Project leader, has post-doctoral experience in the plant biology area, knowledge which is being shared with the congregation and its associated community through weekly articles in the St Clement's Newsletter. The Newsletter reaches out to both local and far-off communities, providing an excellent way of communicating our environmental mission.



The botanical focus on the churchyard and its role in understanding the pressures on biodiversity to be found in the Bridge Street area has been an astonishing success. Quite apart from the over 50 articles which have been published on various aspects of churchyard botany, the vision has expanded to include a collaborative programme of individual 'Plant Sponsorship', involving both the congregation and, in growing measure, surrounding gardeners.

The ECLAS project has built on science to define plant biodiversity within our churchyard. Our taxonomic work is ultimately based on the binomial classification system developed by Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) whilst Rector at Uppsala University in Sweden. Linnaeus was a devout biblical creationist who believed his work in natural history was a divine task.



The famous motto ascribed to Linnaeus, "Deus creavit, Linnaeus disposuit" (God created, Linnaeus organized), reflects his conviction that he was fulfilling God's will by classifying all known species into a systematic order. He did not believe in evolution but in a fixed world created by God, seeing his classification system as an attempt to understand God's intended order.

We live in a post-Darwinian society, and Linnaeus's beliefs in a fixed world order seem outdated. However, his binomial system of plant classification endures. We have used Linnaeus's relational taxonomic approaches to illustrate the complex and evolving ecological relationships within God's creation, emphasizing the cosmic nature of the Creator, and providing a basis for Christian action in what can seem a hostile and meaningless world.

2. The Plants

We started the ECLAS project by defining the palette of plants already in the churchyard.

The ECLAS Project has benefitted from earlier studies of the indigenous plant populations in the St Clement’s churchyard, performed by the Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland (BSBI) under the guidance of the Plant Recorder for Cambridgeshire, Dr Jonathan Shanklin. An example of their work, which was undertaken in 2011-2022, is shown below. In their lists, plants are identified using both their botanical binomial and vernacular classifications. Altogether, 130 plants were identified on 3 different visits. Few were rare, and none appeared unique to St Clement’s.

More recently, we have identified several new plants in the churchyard, amongst which are obvious garden ‘escapes’ alongside several specific introduced ‘gifts’ from the congregation. We estimate the current total plant biodiversity quotient of the churchyard at around 150 species.

Code	Taxon	Vernacular	Authority	Records	Individuals	First Record	Last Record	Status
5	Acer pseudoplatanus	Sycamore	Linnaeus	2	0	2017	2022	
20	Aegopodium podagraria	Ground-elder	L.	1	0	2019	2019	
21	Aethusa cynapium	Fool's Parsley	Linnaeus	1	0	2019	2019	
39	Agrostis stolonifera	Creeping Bent	L.	2	0	2019	2022	
88	Alcea rosea	Hollyhock	Linnaeus	1	0	2011	2011	
69	Allium paradoxum	Few-flowered Garlic	(M. Bieb.) G. Don	2	0	2017	2022	
74	Allium triquetrum	Three-cornered Garlic	L.	1	0	2017	2017	
84	Alopecurus myosuroides	Black-grass	Huds.	1	0	2017	2017	
99	Anagallis arvensis	Scarlet Pimpernel	Linnaeus	1	0	2017	2017	
113	Anisantha sterilis	Barren Brome	(Linnaeus) Nevski	2	0	2017	2022	
125	Anthriscus sylvestris	Cow Parsley	(L.) Hoffm.	2	0	2017	2022	
169	Arrhenatherum elatius	False Oat-Grass	(Linnaeus) P.Beauv.	1	0	2018	2018	
177	Arum italicum	Italian Lords-and-Ladies	Mill.	1	0	2017	2017	
1466	Asplenium scolopendrium	Hart's-tongue	L.	2	0	2017	2022	
225	Ballota nigra	Black Horehound	Linnaeus	2	0	2017	2022	
231	Bellis perennis	Daisy	Linnaeus	2	0	2017	2022	
81	Brachythecium rutabulum	Rough-stalked Feather-moss	(Hedw.) Schimp.	1	0	2017	2017	
269	Bromus hordeaceus	Soft-brome	Linnaeus	1	0	2017	2017	
277	Buddleja davidii	Butterfly-bush	Franch.	1	0	2017	2017	
289	Buxus sempervirens	Box	L.	1	0	2017	2017	Rare
325	Capsella bursa-pastoris	Shepherd's-purse	(Linnaeus) Medikus	1	0	2017	2017	
329	Cardamine hirsuta	Hairy Bitter-cress	Linnaeus	3	0	2011	2022	
406	Carex divulsa subsp. leersii	Many-leaved Sedge	(Kneuck.) W. Koch	2	0	2017	2022	
404	Carex pendula	Pendulous Sedge	Hudson	1	0	2017	2017	
455	Centranthus ruber	Red Valerian	(Linnaeus) DC.	2	0	2011	2017	
467	Cerastium fontanum	Common Mouse-ear	Baumg.	2	0	2017	2022	
515	Cirsium arvense	Creeping Thistle	(Linnaeus) Scop.	2	0	2017	2022	
522	Cirsium vulgare	Spear Thistle	(Savi) Ten.	1	0	2017	2017	
544	Convolvulus arvensis	Field Bindweed	Linnaeus	1	0	2017	2017	
735	Conyza canadensis	Canadian Fleabane	(Linnaeus) Cronquist	1	0	2017	2017	
592	Cymbalaria muralis	Ivy-leaved Toadflax	P.Gaertner, Meyer & Scherb.	2	0	2017	2022	
607	Dactylis glomerata	Cock's-foot	Linnaeus	2	0	2017	2022	
646.1	Dipsacus fullonum	Wild Teasel	Linnaeus	1	0	2022	2022	
665	Dryopteris filix-mas	Male-fern	(L.) Schott	4	0	2011	2022	
688	Epilobium ciliatum	American Willowherb	Rafin.	1	0	2017	2017	
692	Epilobium hirsutum	Great Willowherb	Linnaeus	1	0	2017	2017	
695	Epilobium montanum	Broad-leaved Willowherb	Linnaeus	1	0	2019	2019	
696	Epilobium obscurum	Short-fruited Willowherb	Schreb.	1	0	2019	2019	
2771	Epilobium x interjectum	E. montanum x ciliatum	Smejkal	1	0	2019	2019	
772	Euphorbia helioscopia	Sun Spurge	Linnaeus	1	0	2017	2017	
777	Euphorbia peplus	Petty Spurge	Linnaeus	2	0	2017	2022	
824	Festuca rubra agg.	Red Fescue		1	0	2017	2017	
1649	Ficaria verna	Lesser Celandine	Huds.	2	0	2017	2022	

The St Clement’s ECLAS Plant Catalogue

As part of the ECLAS Project, we have assembled a catalogue of our plants, together with a note of whereabouts in the churchyard we have found them. Interestingly, these locations seem to change quite markedly from year to year, with plants like the teasel popping up in quite diverse sites. We attribute this to random seed dispersal by wind and birds.

Sometimes this distribution has ecosystem implications. For example, Common Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) occurs in several sites, but only plants in specific locations harbour the associated Cinnabar Moth (*Tyria jacobaeae*) whose distribution depends on both the egg-laying activity of the parent moth as well as the previous season’s pupation sites. Ragwort is not beloved by many visitors to the churchyard, but such ecosystem implications also characterise more attractive species combinations, such as the Common Ivy (*Ilex aquifolia*) / Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*) pairing, indicating how important it is to maintain a balanced ecosystem if you want to promote biodiversity.

Although we don't have time to make systematic natural history observations, a record of the most interesting plant / insect observations is kept on a stochastic basis. Individual photos are collated, and natural history 'vignettes' compiled and published on a regular basis in the Church Newsletter, for the benefit of the congregation and visitors. This is an important part of our stewarding mission.

 **St Clement's
CAMBRIDGE**

 **St Clement's
CAMBRIDGE**

 **St Clement's
CAMBRIDGE**

Sedum spectabile

We have started a new 'plant sponsorship' scheme in the churchyard. Any member of the congregation can name their favourite plant, and we will add it to the other 150 species in the garden. The first 'plant sponsor' is Ann Walton who has chosen *Sedum spectabile* (L.4), a specimen of which has been harvested from her garden in Cambridge and will be planted on the sunny bank facing Bridge Street.

Sedums are succulent plants [L.5] with fleshy leaves and flat, nectar-rich flowers headed by bees to several other pollinators. They are popular with gardeners as they flower late in the summer and provide late garden colour while providing insects with late seasonal sustenance. They also withstand long periods of drought by carrying out a specialised form of water-saving photosynthesis, known as Crassulacean Acid Metabolism (CAM). CAM plants such as succulents and cacti, open their stomata at night to absorb CO₂, storing it biochemically as malic acid, while closing their stomata and preventing photosynthesis during the day, thereby markedly reducing water loss and increasing drought tolerance.

Sedums comprise a large genus within the Crassulaceae family; the GBIF (Global Biodiversity Information Facility) database recognises 555 species. Two main forms have been described – a taller form known as 'border sedum' and a ground cover variety known as 'stonecrop'. The type species is *Sedum acre* (L.3).



Sedums cope well with poorer, well-drained soils, although they can get a bit floppy and collapse from the middle out when growth is rapid, a feature reduced by carrying out the 'Chelsea Chop' which involves reducing stem length by half. Traditionally around the time of the Chelsea Flower Show in May, plants become more compact and stems branch out and develop numerous heads instead of one top-heavy one. A recent RHS Trial of Herbaceous Sedums (6), published by Christopher Whistler, Keeper of the Wisley Herbarium, found that several popular garden varieties looked fabulous but were not attractive to insects. One of the best for insects was *Sedum 'Aureum'*, a cross between *S. spectabile* and *S. zeyherianum* (5). *Sedums* are also a popular replacement for grasses on 'green roofs', where, in addition to insulation and water retention, they provide habitats for insects and ground-nesting birds such as skylarks. The largest sedum-covered roof in the UK is the 8-acre roof at the Rolls-Royce factory in Goodwood, West Sussex (7). Helpfully, when planted on travertine as in panel (8), the sedum markedly reduce rain noise and vibration.

[illegible]

St Clement's
Magdalene College Gardens

1
16 March 2017

2
16 March 2017

3
16 March 2017

4
16 March 2017

5
6 October 2023

6
21 March 2017

7
7 October 2014

8
21 March 2017

9
6 October 2023

The gardens at Magdalene are beautiful at any time of the year, but the daffodils beside the Cam in the Fellows Garden in Spring are unforgettable! (1) Autumn is just as colourful, with the russets and yellows of accumulating leaves providing spectacular back-drops, as well as a seasonal challenge for the small team of College gardeners – Damien, Sam and Caro, led by Head Gardener Mark Scott (6). At the edge of the Fellows Garden in Spring, explosions of viburnum candelis (5) join the breaking 'ticky baob' (8) of the horse chestnuts, while golden showers of weeping yellow (7) and a spectacular flowering cherry (9) adorn the College's riverside walk, delighting punters and strollers along the Boardwalk on the other side of the river.

David Logan's 1588 print of the College (2) shows the enclosed Fellows Garden as meadowland. Viciously known as 'pondy yard', barbedies, the orchard, the grove, the close, and the field, the Fellows Garden was the site of the original Benedictine monks' 7 fish-ponds until 1586. Rights to grazing the meadow were held by the Master until Victorian times – there is even a 16th century account of cows straying from the meadow into hall at meal-times! The field was landscaped in 1590 as a garden in the era of the celebrated architect and Master of the College, A.C. Benson, creating avenues of lime, alders and poplars, with Japanese cherries (Prunus longipes cv. 'Shinsaku Sakurai') being added more recently. Multitudes of wallflowers are distributed throughout the College of Spring, followed by a wide range of colourful bedding plants, a task which requires considerable advance planning (8).

Our activities in the churchyard are a natural magnet for visitors walking into town. We exemplify the aims and objectives of the ECLAS project through posters attached to the churchyard railings and plant labels in the churchyard, directly complementing our articles in the Newsletter and on the Website.




St Clement's
 CAMBRIDGE

The Churchyard Garden in February

The churchyard is beginning to spring into life!
 Here are a few of the new arrivals, with their labels...

Accession # 2020051

Plant Name **Taraxacum officinale**

Named by Freshfield Hereward Wigley (1746-1811)

Distribution Europe / Eurasia

Wild? ☐

Provenance

Accession # 2020051

Family **Dandelion**

Common Name



Leaf



Flower



Seed

2020062

Primulae

Cyclamen hederifolia
Ivy-leaved Cyclamen

Mediterranean William Aiton (1751-1805) Cultivated




2020053

Ranunculaceae

Helleborus niger
Christmas Rose

European Alps Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) Cultivated



2020064

Ranunculaceae

Helleborus orientalis
Lenten Rose

Greece Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1826) Cultivated



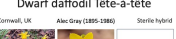
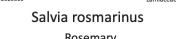

2020055

Primulae

Galanthus nivalis
Common Snowdrop

Europe Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) Cultivated



			
The Churchyard Garden in March Spring arrived astronomically at the vernal equinox on 20 March, together with the primulas and other spring flowers			
2020006	Primulaceae		
Primula vulgaris Primrose			
Europe	William Hudson (1780 – 1790)	Cultivated	
			
2020007	Primulaceae		
Primula veris Cowslip			
Europe & W. Asia	Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778)	Cultivated	
			
2020008	Primulaceae		
Primula elatior Oxlip			
Europe	John Hill (1714 – 1775)	Cultivated	
			
2020009	Amaryllidaceae		
Narcissus Dwarf daffodil Tête-à-tête			
Cornehill, UK	Alex Gray (1885-1986)	Storied hybrid	No seed
			
2020010	Lamiaceae		
Salvia rosmarinus Rosemary			
Mediterranean	Friedrich Sprenger (1798-1841)	Cultivated	
			
2020011	Liliaceae		
Fritillaria meleagris Snake's Head Fritillary			
European	Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778)	Cultivated	
			

 St Clement's CAMBRIDGE			
The Churchyard Garden in April			
2020012	<i>Brassicaeae</i>	2020013	<i>Malicaceae</i> ~~~~~
Lunaria annua Honesty		Alcea rosea Hollyhock	
Southern Europe Linnaeus (1760-1776)	9018	China Linnaeus (1760-1776)	Cultivated
			
			
2020014	<i>Thymelaeaceae</i>	2020015	<i>Asperulaceae</i>
Daphne odora Winter Daphne		Convallaria majalis Lily-of-the-Valley	
China Carl Thunberg (1743-1828)	Cultivated	N. Europe & Asia Linnaeus (1760-1776)	Cultivated
			
			
2020016	<i>Caryophyllaceae</i>	2020017	<i>Borraginaceae</i>
Silene dioica Red Campion		Pentaglottis sempervirens Green Alkanet	
Europe Joseph in Cuvier (1742-1801)	9018	S.W. Europe Liberty Hyde Bailey (1818-1904)	9018
			
			

The Churchyard: building a sustainable ecosystem

Our long-term aim is to establish an infrastructure for the churchyard that enables its use as a resource for renewal and refreshment by both congregation and visitors – as well as wildlife. This will require active support from the congregation, but by combining the spiritual aspects of renewal within our ancient church and the natural ambience of its churchyard, we hope to create a space in which God’s presence penetrates the heart of busy Cambridge.

Creating such a sustainable ecosystem is not an overnight affair. It will take several seasons. However, a sustainable ecosystem supporting both plants and animals is emerging, from beautiful butterflies and moths to urban foxes. Examples of the gradual development of a stable ecosystem include the repeated presence of holly and ivy-dependent Holly Blue butterflies, ragwort-dependent Cinnabar moth caterpillars and a great range of other insect - flower combinations, all of which create an ecosystem which is being understood, nurtured and carefully tended.



3. People

Our Congregation

We have a relatively small congregation, comprised of several individuals and married couples, but very few families. Most see St Clement's as a rather tranquil spiritual home. Few see it as a scientific or even theological powerhouse, although the fact that we have very active bell-ringing and choir groups suggests that St Clement's is seen as a natural focus for group activities, which could include botany and even theology!

Over the past 9 months, 20 members of the congregation have committed to various aspects of our botany programme, especially the '**Sponsor a Plant**' scheme (see next section for details).



Gardening Groups in the City

There are around 40 churchyards in the city and its close surroundings, many of which have active gardening groups - but these are not networked. One long-term aim of our ECLAS Project is to get these teams talking and working together.



To date, we have contacted and are developing relationships with 8 other gardening teams (those at St Giles, St Peter's, Mill Road Cemetery, The Ascension Burial Ground, and Magdalene, Caius, Murray Edwards and St John's colleges).

Several members of each of the 40+ churchyards have pledged to join Bridge Street Botany (BSB, see below). To encourage this, I write articles describing both the people in the individual gardening groups and the biodiversity to be found within their gardens. Spirituality and botany are natural bedfellows, and celebrating team accomplishments is often very welcome in the face of everyday garden maintenance imperatives!

College Gardeners

Another aspect of the Cambridge gardening and biodiversity scene lies within the closed environs of College Gardens. It is surprising to see how isolated college gardeners can become, trapped between the College Garden Committee and the all-powerful Fellowship. Gardeners are pleased when their efforts recognized (as here in the case of Mark Scott and his small team of autumnal gardeners at Magdalene).



4. Bridge Street Botany

We have established a 'Bridge Street Botany' (BSB) club as an umbrella to provide a local foundation for our biodiversity initiatives. As well as lectures in the church and gardening activities in the churchyard, the BSB group also visits local gardens and science labs to see what's going on. Many elements of the programme have already been achieved, although establishing a dedicated lecture series is taking longer than we thought it would!

BSB activities are a good way of building relationships between members of the congregation and beyond, providing a relaxed way to exchange ideas about botany and its place in Creation, as well as engendering a sense of community. Shown (right) is the BSB's recent visit to a neighbouring garden at Madingley Hall just outside Cambridge. Similar visits to Dowcra Manor in Shepreth and Anglesey Abbey in Lode to celebrate the arrival of Spring have been well supported.



Local Schools



Another important aspect of our ECLAS work centres on working with local schools, amongst which our local school, Park Street Primary, has featured prominently (left).

To date we have over 70 people on the BSB circulation list, which will undoubtedly grow as we promote our activities through social media and a dedicated website (see below).

It is early days, but there is an enthusiastic audience of amateur and expert gardening colleagues waiting to be tapped. We see our ECLAS programme as a conduit for this enthusiasm. Encouragingly, the number of people on the BSB circulation list is growing and is more than enough to justify establishing a formal WhatsApp or Instagram Group.

'Sponsor a Plant'

An idea that has achieved considerable impact has been our Plant Sponsorship programme. Members of the congregation have been asked to name (and in some cases provide from their own gardens) a plant of their choice, which we then introduce into the churchyard. If possible, the sponsor plants it themselves and looks after it through the seasons. I undertake to observe the plant's development and feedback information on this to both the sponsor - and other members of the congregation - through the Newsletter.

One of the members of the congregation has commented that this programme was one of the best things to have happened at St Clement's. It certainly provides a talking point at coffee sessions after Mass on Sundays!

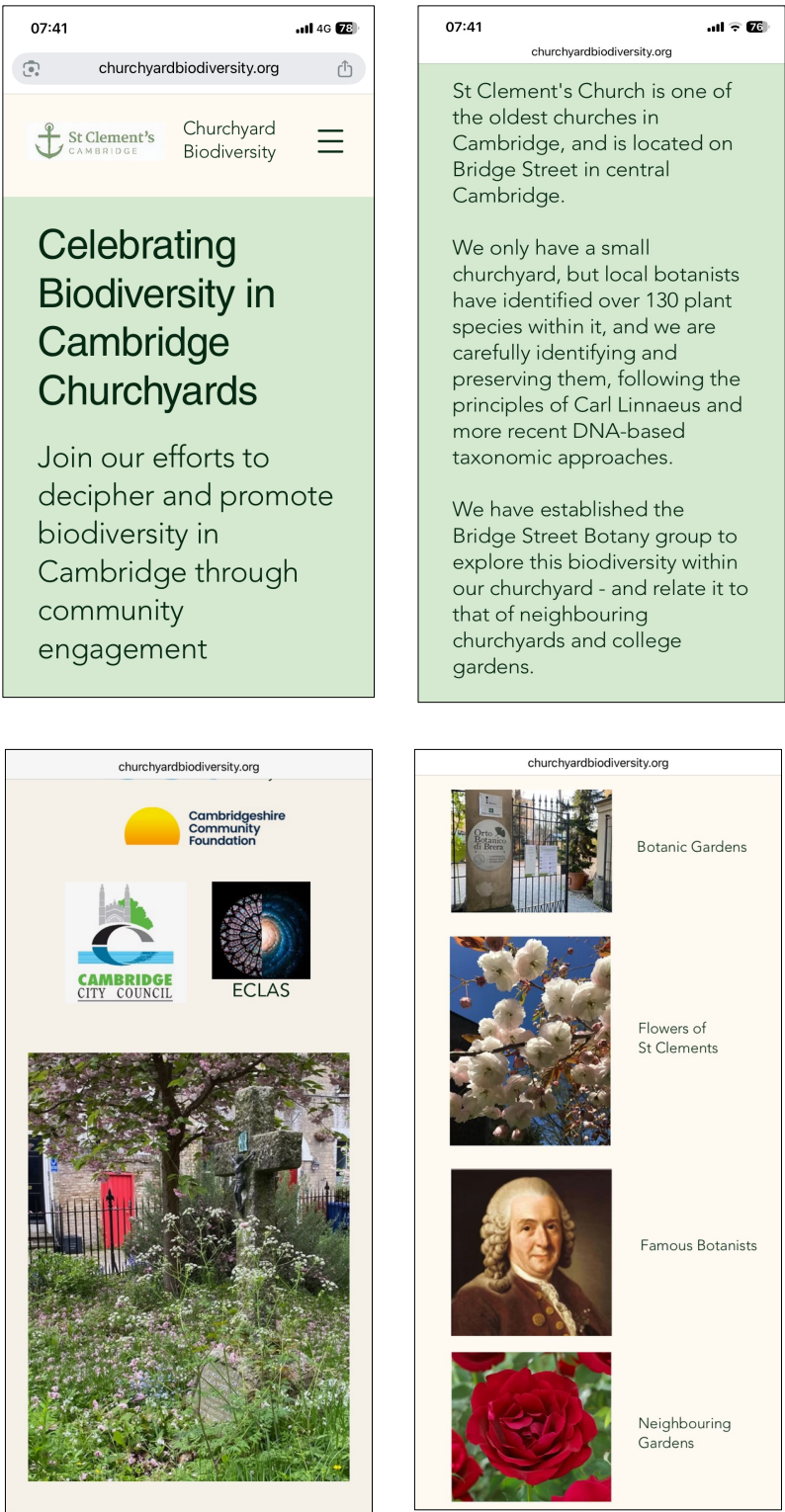
5. Sharing Experience through a dedicated Website

We have made substantial progress in developing our stewardship project over the last 9 months. To share this with a broader audience, we have established a website relating the biodiversity found within St Clement’s to that in other churchyards and botanic gardens.

We selected the URL: <https://www.churchyardbiodiversity.org> with the aim of applying the broader objectives of our project, originally entitled ‘Beyond the Churchyard Railings’, towards a mission-focused programme covering the whole of Cambridge, beyond St Clement’s.

We see this as a powerful tool not only to document our findings but also to share them within the larger ECLAS community, thereby maintaining and sustaining it beyond the time period of our original funding.

Here are some screen-shots from the current mobile site:



6. Taxonomy and Biodiversity in Cambridge and Beyond

We have been out and about, listening to Cambridge scientists as they talk about botany and biodiversity. It has been great fun, finding out about the origins of plant life on the Earth, observing the technologies that genome scientists are using for chromosome sequencing and assembly, and even learning about the geological history of the local stones that were used to build St Clement's. But we need to be more than interested observers. We need to catalyze developing science.

Establishing a Linnaean Lecture Series

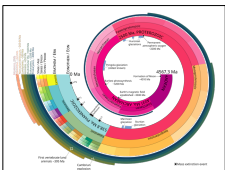
One way of doing this may be to provide a forum for discussing new technologies and their applications in botany and biodiversity, placing our programme at the epicentre of a constellation of Cambridge science. To this end, we are exploring the possibility of establishing a Lecture Series in the area of modern molecular taxonomy, named for Carl Linnaeus, the father of taxonomy.

Several possible speakers have shown interest in giving a talk, ranging from members of our congregation to senior figures from the University, including representatives of the Sanger Institute and several university professors working at the forefront of current botany and biodiversity. Here is a partial list of speakers whom we have approached to talk.

Brian Eversham, Chief Executive of the county Wildlife Trust
'3000 years of natural history, trends in wildlife and its study, and some personal thoughts on where it's all heading - and where the next generation of naturalists might come from'



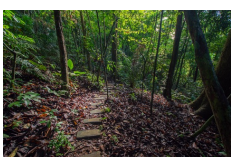
Mark Blaxter, Sanger Centre:
'Busy 'bout the Tree of Life:
genome sequencing of
biodiversity'



Edwin Roses, Department of the History & Philosophy of Science: 'Decoding Nature: British Knowledge-Making in the Age of Exploration'



Edmund Tanner, Plant Sciences Department:
'Celebrating 50 years of
Rain Forest Devotion'



We aim to kick off the lecture series at the start of the new academic term in October 2026.

7. Expanding Project Participation

One of the concerns I have about our ECLAS programme is maintaining enthusiasm for the churchyard and its activities beyond the initial set-up phase. It is easy to engender enthusiasm among participants at the start of a programme but maintaining it over the years is much more difficult.

On the other hand, I have been surprised at how much recognition our Stewardship programme has achieved both inside and outside St Clement's itself. Many casual contacts have mentioned that they have seen our Posters on their way into town, and appreciate all the information that has been provided, both through the Newsletter and Website as well as posters and talks.

However, we still need to encourage long term participation. There are several ways in which we can achieve this:

Within the St Clement's congregation

by building participation in the Plant Sponsorship process. The aim over the next year is to get every member of the congregation to donate a plant (under a certain amount of guidance)

Outside St Clements

by describing our work to other churchyard and gardening groups. Gardeners are quite competitive, and the sound and sight of other groups is always invigorating. We have already given a well received talk to Great St Mary's about our programme and will repeat it to other churches upon demand!

Badging St Clement's as a 'Linnaean Churchyard'

making our churchyard a focus for spreading the science of botany and taxonomy in Cambridge. Creating a focal point, which those interested in botany can see, is important. Ideas to underpin this include a Noticeboard near the posters on the churchyard railings, and an interactive Digital Display inside the church.

Having 'Open Days' and 'Tours of the Churchyard'

These are already undertaken on an informal basis, but we should regularise and advertise them more. We need to develop a team of volunteers to undertake this.

Develop a much wider 'Schools Programme'.

This has been started with Park Street School, but I sense a much wider audience for exemplified science-based education in the church communities I have visited in Cambridge. The availability of a pre-packaged Botany tutorial, perhaps badged as the 'ECLAS Linnaean Project at St Clement's', could be an asset for hard-pressed science teachers.

Expand the Bridge Street Botany concept

to embrace other organisations with more heft - such as the colleges. Creating a link with St John's through the Dean of Chapel, the Reverend Canon Dr Victoria Johnson, herself a former cell biologist, in association with their Head Gardener, David Austrin, may be a way forward. Another college with a great botanical vision is Murray Edwards, where Caitlin Sparksman and her team provide an attractive vision of what can be achieved on a relatively small scale.

8. Acknowledgments

In conclusion, our ECLAS experience has been entirely excellent. With a small amount of financial support, we have built an infrastructure that is both fascinating at the botanical level, and rewarding to members of the congregation and beyond.

It goes without saying that the success of this project has relied heavily on the support and encouragement given to it by the Vicar, the Rev'd Andrew Day - and the entire congregation of St Clement's!

I also much appreciate the constructive support of the project by our ECLAS mentor, Michael Harvey, and have included his comments and suggestions as an Appendix to this Report.

Continuing information on the Project can be obtained from our website:

www.churchyardbiodiversity.org

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Bailey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Dr David Bailey

St Clement's Church, Cambridge

Appendix: Post-Project Strategy (as suggested by Michael Harvey)

Phase 1: Consolidate (Summer–Autumn)

Before expanding, capture what has been learned

Deliverables

- Final report completed by June 30th.
- Public-facing summary booklet (8–12 pages).
- Collection of plant vignettes and congregational stories.
- Case study documenting outcomes, lessons learned, and testimonies. September exhibition and celebration event.

The goal is to move from “project” to “resource.”

Phase 2: Develop a Pilot Toolkit

Create a practical package that another church could use.

Possible contents:

- How to start a church garden project.
- Congregation engagement ideas.
- Storytelling templates.
- Biodiversity and local ecology activities.
- Science-faith discussion prompts.
- School engagement suggestions.
- Community partnership examples.

Success should not depend on having a botanist. The model must become reproducible by ordinary churches.

Phase 3: Build a Cambridge Network

Rather than thinking nationally immediately, establish proof of concept locally.

Potential partners:

- Great St Mary’s
- St John’s
- Murray Edwards
- Local schools
- Cambridge Botanic Garden
- Interested environmental groups

The aim would be to create a visible “Churches and Creation Network” across Cambridge.

Phase 4: Create a Science, Faith and Creation Initiative

The strongest future opportunity appears to be the intersection of: Creation + Congregation + Community + Science

This would broaden the vision beyond gardening.

Possible themes:

- Biodiversity
- Climate and stewardship
- Origins and evolution
- Faith and science dialogue
- Churchyards as learning environments
- Community wellbeing

This aligns naturally with existing Science and Congregations objectives while creating a stronger public-facing identity.

Phase 5: Seek Strategic Funding

The conversation suggests funding is unlikely to come from traditional church sources alone.

Potential routes include:

- Environmental trusts
- Biodiversity funds
- Educational foundations
- Science engagement grants
- Community wellbeing grants
- Heritage and churchyard conservation funding

Funders are often more interested in measurable outcomes such as wellbeing, education, biodiversity, and community participation than purely theological objectives.

A Possible Long-Term Vision

The project may ultimately be pointing toward something larger:

- A network of churches that use creation, gardening, biodiversity, and local ecology as a means of restoring agency, building community, connecting generations, and creating meaningful conversations between science and faith.

The church garden is not the destination. It is the prototype.

What has emerged is a practical demonstration that when people are invited to plant, name, nurture, discover, and share, they do not simply learn about gardens—they rediscover their place within creation, community, and ultimately the story of God.