Caring for God’s Acre in the Shropshire Hills

This project was in two parts; a conference in October 2025 and three site visits to interesting and inspiring burial grounds.

Site Visits

All of the visits were to sites known for their biodiversity, Whitton and Longden Road Cemetery are both Local Wildlife Sites, Whitton for its flora, Longden Road Cemetery for its grassland fungi and flora. Acton Scott, the other site visited, has an interesting Lichen flora and this event was organised in partnership with the Shropshire Lichen Society and it took place during Love Your Burial Ground Week in June.

Posters for the three events

Attendance was limited to ensure that all present could be properly involved and hear the person leading the event:

Whitton: Event was held 25th May, after Whitton Sunday service.

Wildflower walk around the churchyard led by Rob Rowe. Attended by 19 people including most of the church congregation.

Acton Scott: Event run by the Shropshire Lichen Society, 13th June as a day-long drop in. There were 5 members of the SLS attending and 4 people dropped in.

Longden Road Cemetery: Fungal Foray run on the 23rd October. There were 12 attendees.

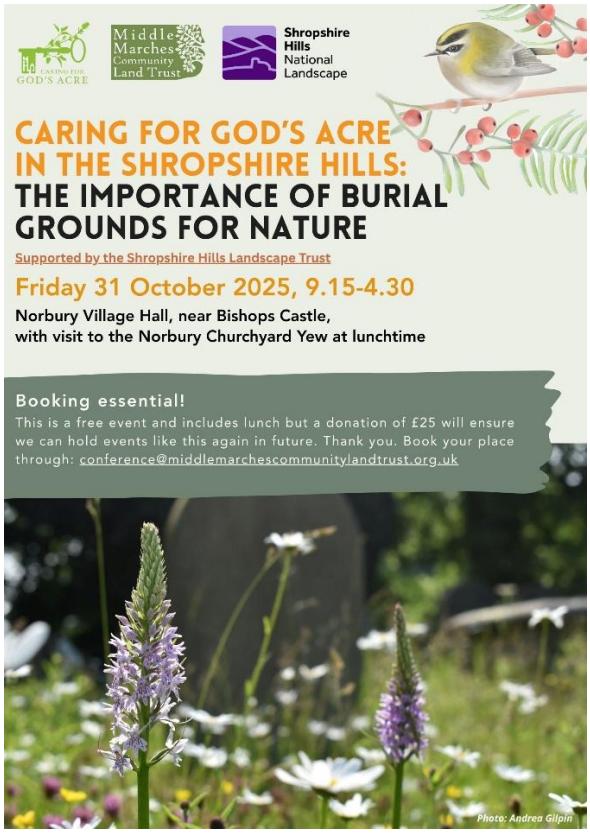
All three events were advertised locally with the Marches Meadows Group, the Middle Marches Community Land Trust and sent to the Shropshire Hills National Landscape staff.

Conference

The conference took place on the 31st October 2025. 114 booked onto the day, with 9 failing to turn up and 2 additional people coming without prior booking. We attracted national level speakers including Chris Knapman of the Ancient Yew Group and George Peterken, an expert on woodlands and meadows. We also attracted attendees from far and wide including four members of the national Church of England staff. Most attendees were local however.

Chris Knapman took the opportunity to visit several veteran trees within the National Landscape area whilst visiting Shropshire, photos of which will form part of a talk at the National Arboricultural Association AGM. During lunch, most people went to see the churchyard at Norbury, the veteran yew in particular.

Chris Knapman showing people the Norbury yew



As well as the poster logo, the Shropshire Hills National Landscape and the Conservation Fund were thanked by the Chair at start and close of the conference. People were encouraged to join all three organisations, CfGA, MMCLT and Friends of the Shropshire Hills and to consider becoming conservation volunteers.

Feedback from the conference

We asked attendees to fill in a short questionnaire, here are the results of this:

1. How much did you enjoy the conference on a scale of 1 - 5?

53 Responses

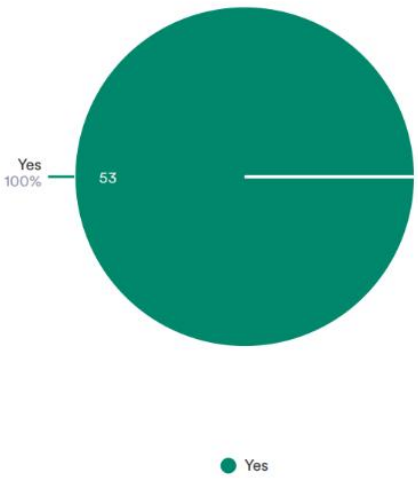
4.85
Avg. Response

53
Responses

Data	Response	%
★★★★★	45	85%
★★★★☆	8	15%
★★★☆☆	0	0%
★★☆☆☆	0	0%
★☆☆☆☆	0	0%

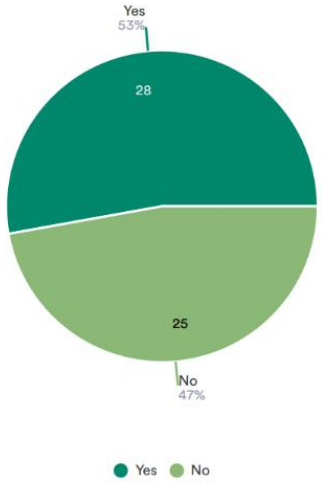
2. Did you learn anything new at the conference?

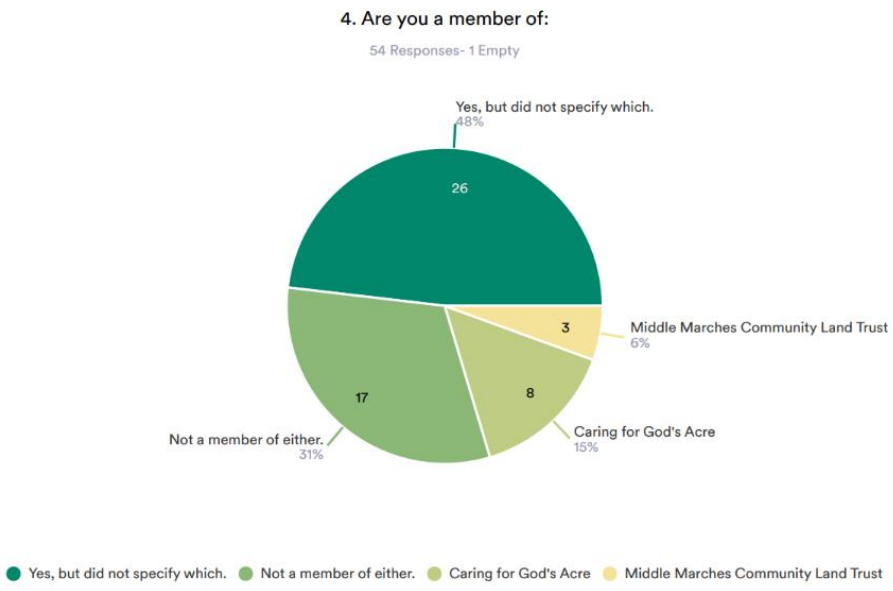
53 Responses



3. Are you directly involved in caring for a burial ground?

53 Responses





The other two questions invited open responses, these were:

If yes (to question 3) has the conference given you any new ideas for your burial ground

> Most responses suggested that people had gleaned new ideas with the Church Stretton exemplar particularly mentioned.

Is there any way that we could have improved the day or are there other comments that you'd like to make.

> All v. interesting- more! Please
>
> Excellent – Good speakers, good time keeping, good food
>
> Thought it was excellent

We also received several suggestions for improvements or follow-ons. Here are a few of them:

> How climate change is affecting land management of churchyards. How can nature be used to combat climate change.
>
> Would be interesting to have display maps showing where CfGA has worked.
>
> Pity no fungi mentioned in a talk about them.
>
> I suppose a little bit about urban cemeteries

There are many different responses to these questions and we can supply you with a spreadsheet of all of these if requested. We also received emails after the event including the following comments:

Thank you so much for putting on such a fantastic conference. There was so much there to hear about and learn and be inspired by. We couldn't stop talking about it over the weekend.

A great day on Friday, thoroughly enjoyed it all… great speakers and an excellent spread of subjects.