

Green Watch report - January to December 2024

Environmental Activities at All Saints 2024

All Saints at the beginning of 2024 was still in a vacancy and the emphasis was on ensuring that services and caring for the congregation took priority. During this period our Environmental activities slowed down.

On May 18, Josh Kalms, from Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, gave a Green Watch talk on Ponds and the Importance for Wild Life of Water in Gardens. Josh gave us a comprehensive, well-illustrated talk, explaining the variety of wildlife we can expect if there is accessible water in our gardens. He also stressed the ease with which water can be provided in a garden.

On July 13, Christopher Benton's enthusiastic and detailed Green Watch talk on Spiders opened up a world of the spiders all around us, many of which we are largely unaware. Christopher shared photographs of spiders, and some live specimens which he had found in our own grounds as well as in nearby areas. Christopher's love for spiders and his detailed knowledge of the different species and their habits was inspiring.

On 9 November, 2024, Rowan Byrne, Director of Projects by Ocean Science Consulting, spoke on 'Threats and Challenges Facing Our Oceans and the Solutions'. In his talk, Rowan concentrated on plastics, fragments of which have now infiltrated everywhere on land and sea and are found in everything and everybody. Once in the water, fragments cannot be avoided, but there are millions of larger items that are dangerous and should never be in the water at all. Plastic bags have the appearance of jelly fish, and as a result, can be eaten by sea turtles, which are normally very long lived, but then suffer a slow and agonizing death. The fragments of plastics ingested can lead to an increased risk of cancer, including in the human population.

Much of our clothing and other items contain man-made fibres with high plastic content. Fragments and "fluff" are discharged into our drains every time we do our laundry. Rowan's talk was a wakeup call indeed, but he was insistent that we should not give up on it. Humans have caused this, so humans must – and hopefully can – clear up the mess.

The All Saints Environment Day took place on September 21st 2024. We were fortunate to be joined by 2 speakers from St Andrew's church - Jenny Mant and Tim Hagyard. Jenny treated us to an uplifting talk titled 'The Good News on the Environmental Front', and Tim shared his experience of walking Hertfordshire's chalk rivers, also making available his book of the same title.

John Cherry spoke on 'Whatever the question, the answer is right under your feet.' John shared with us the many benefits of looking after our soil: soil health leads to plant health onto animal health. human health and planetary health. A vast and highly significant topic which left us with much to mull over.

Nigel Braggins shared a selection of poems relating to Environment, Climate and Hope from his anthology 'Rhyme of our Time'.

The final speaker was Donato Cinicolo who spoke on Repairing and Conservation: A journey of discovery. Making things, understanding how things work, is not merely practical. It teaches us that there is logic at work in say, how a mechanical clock functions. One gear affects another gear and via springs and balances mechanical drive is created. Such understanding can be applied to the solving of abstract problems too. By defining something difficult to solve as a

problem, there must be, by definition, one or more solutions. Calling something a challenge is open ended and can lead nowhere. Donato has been involved in making and repairing things for all of his life. From his early beginnings in Southern Italy, where he was born, he began making small toys from the offcuts of wood from the local carpenter held together with nails from the town cobbler. When he attended Colney Heath Primary School near St Albans he was making wooden swords for his schoolmates so that they could stage mock battles in the playground (not possible nowadays!). Following his marriage and his first home, a 17thC cottage, he had to learn new skills such as wattle and daub, plastering, old construction techniques etc. A love of old buildings has meant that he is very much involved in conservation and maintenance of ancient structures. A lifetime of such work needs to be passed on to new generations, and Donato has been doing just that; it is the duty of the old and experienced craftsmen to pass on knowledge, and he is proud to do so.

Tim Hill from Herts and Middlesex Wildlife trust chaired a Panel Discussion to bring the day to a close, picking up the threads from each of the talks.

In addition to the main speakers, the Environment Day was supported by many different stall holders who willingly shared their very positive contributions to preserving the natural environment. These included Clive Fleming from the Hertford Swift Group and Julia Gough on Walking and Cycling and the opportunities offered by the public rights of way network and cycle routes.

Other stalls were manned by Stan Kitchiner from the South East Herts RSPB Members' Group, Alan Muhr who introduced us to the Sele Road Community Garden "Lovely Grub Garden", Hertford, Mia Arundel who shared the aim of rewilding - bringing the wild things back to Britain.

Christopher Benton provided an introduction to different species of spider, showing how spiders have an essential role in our ecosystem. Rachel Johnston of the St Albans Diocese Eco Church, working together towards Net Zero, shared resources and inspiration on taking action on climate and nature, while David Utting of the Hertfordshire Natural History Society offered opportunities for volunteers to help to conserve our county's wildlife. Jo Whitaker from the Herts Amphibian Reptile Group introduced some of Hertfordshire's native amphibians and reptiles

Alison Maitland introduced Active Hope Workshops for People and Planet focusing on leadership and environmental and social wellbeing. Chris Parker and Alison George from RSPB Rye Meads nature reserve enticed us to visit this delightful wetland reserve. Kirsty Shanahan represented Ecofurb – the Low Carbon Home Service with ideas on how to make your home more energy efficient, warmer and cheaper to run. Alex Daar and Veronica Fraser Raised the flag for Bengo, including the Neighbourhood Plan and other Bengo projects like Bengo Community Garden, Bengo Lower Railway and Bengo Field.

We are very grateful to all the speakers and participants who give freely of their time, and add so much interest and vigour to these events at All Saints, as they enthusiastically share their interests and expertise with us all.

There is also a very supportive group of friends from All Saints who regularly assist with catering and organising for these events. We could not manage without them. Thank you to you all.