

Lorrha Community Biodiversity Action Plan



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By Lorrha Development Association, County Tipperary

Prepared by Dr Anne Marie Mahon (Ecologist)

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Background

Funding was provided By the Community Foundation Ireland to Lorrha Development Association to create a community Biodiveristy Action Plan for Lorrha and Redwood Castle.

Lorrha is a small village, about 6 miles from Portumna, population just over 100 people. There are 2 Co Council housing estates, a primary school with a fair amount of ground around it, and 2 churches with a fair amount of ground around both of them, including a graveyard for each. A small park, Friars Park, was developed from a piece of waste ground about 10 years ago. The Lorrha River flows through the village, and we have lots of stone walls which were reconstructed about 30 years ago using Social Employment Schemes. A Community Hall, which houses a shop, run by volunteers. The village has a very rich ecclesiastical history, beginning with a monastic settlement in the 6th century and followed by the arrival of religious orders, Augustinians and Dominicans. The ruins of their abbeys, which are under the care of OPW, form a very prominent part of the village's-built heritage. A restored Norman Castle situated about 3 miles from the village has been included in the plan. Colessa Egan is doing her utmost to contribute to the potential of the area to attract visitors/tourists and has worked closely with Lorrha Development Association over the years and together they have organised events to mark the annual Heritage Week.

Aims of Lorrha Community Biodiversity Action Plan Project

Working in conjunction with local ecologist Dr Anne Marie Mahon, this project aims to;

- Increase awareness of the importance of biodiversity among the wider community
- Increase involvement/ownership of the community with proposed actions in the biodiversity plan
- Create a more active role of the community in enhancing and maintaining biodiversity in the urban area.

Methodology

Survey strategy

A series of workshops were run in the summer of 2022 (see Table 1) in two schools and in which the community were encouraged to take place in the habitat survey and informed about how to create more biodiversity-friendly planting in beds and borders. Habitats were classified using the Fossitt Habitat codes (Fossitt 2000) and the Faulks hedge row assessment guide (Foulkes et al., n.d.) was used for a hedgerow assessment within the study area. A separate family fun event held in the local park, Friar's Park, explored what could be enhanced for biodiversity. Records of species found were entered by the children into the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) online recording platform.

Table 1. Events which took place in 2022.

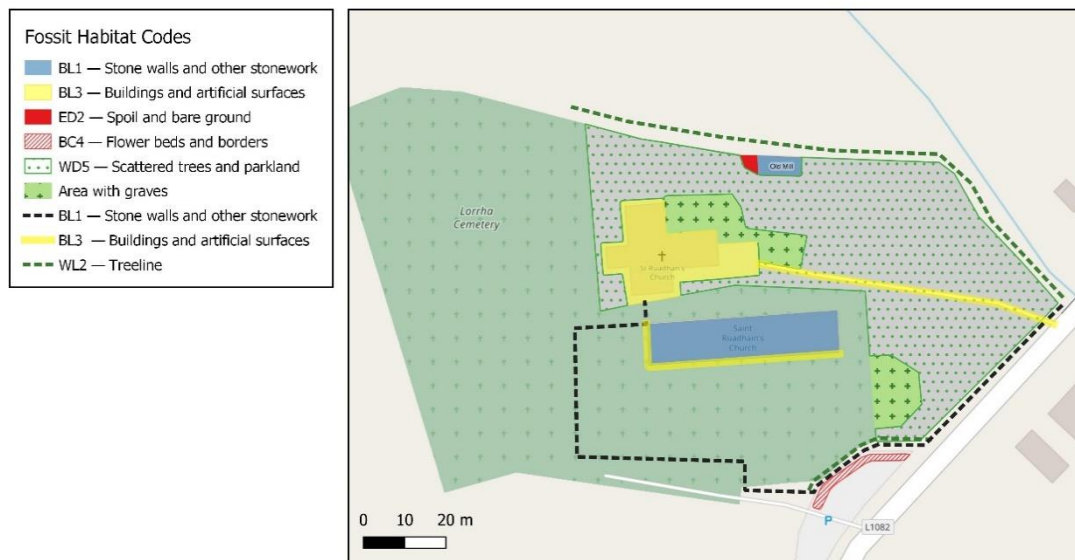
Event	Date	Description
Public Consultation Evening	March 15 th 2022	The project was discussed with the community.
Schools Visit at Lorrha Primary School	May 4 th 2022	The ground of the school was surveyed with the children. Facilitated by ecologist Anne Marie Mahon.
Container Planting Workshop	May 21 st 2022	A survey of existing containers and discussion on how it can be done to enhance biodiversity. Facilitated by ecologist Anne Marie Mahon and organic grower Des Jack.
Survey Of Hedgerows and Stone Walls May	May 22 nd 2022	A presentation on hedgerow survey techniques followed by hedgerow survey and wall survey at ST. Rudans Church. Facilitated by ecologist Anne Marie Mahon and organic grower Des Jack.
Survey Of Parklands and Redwood Castle Visit	May 29 th 2022	An ecological survey was carried out with by ecologist Anne Marie Mahon.
Schools' Activity and Survey At Redwood Castle	July 5,6 th 2022	An ecological survey was carried out with Children and turned into a fun day out. Facilitated by ecologist Anne Marie Mahon.

Survey results

St. Ruadhan's Catholic Church

This a pleasant area of grass, with mature horse chestnut trees and some other ornamentals trees forming a treeline along the boundary. Under this treeline, there are bluebells and lesser celandine. The main grassy area has mainly short species such as Speedwell but has potential for more species if mowing regimes were to alter. There are also stone wall habitats and the graves themselves provide substrate for lichens and mosses. To the front of the church on the curbside, there are some planters, which also offer potential for enhancement.

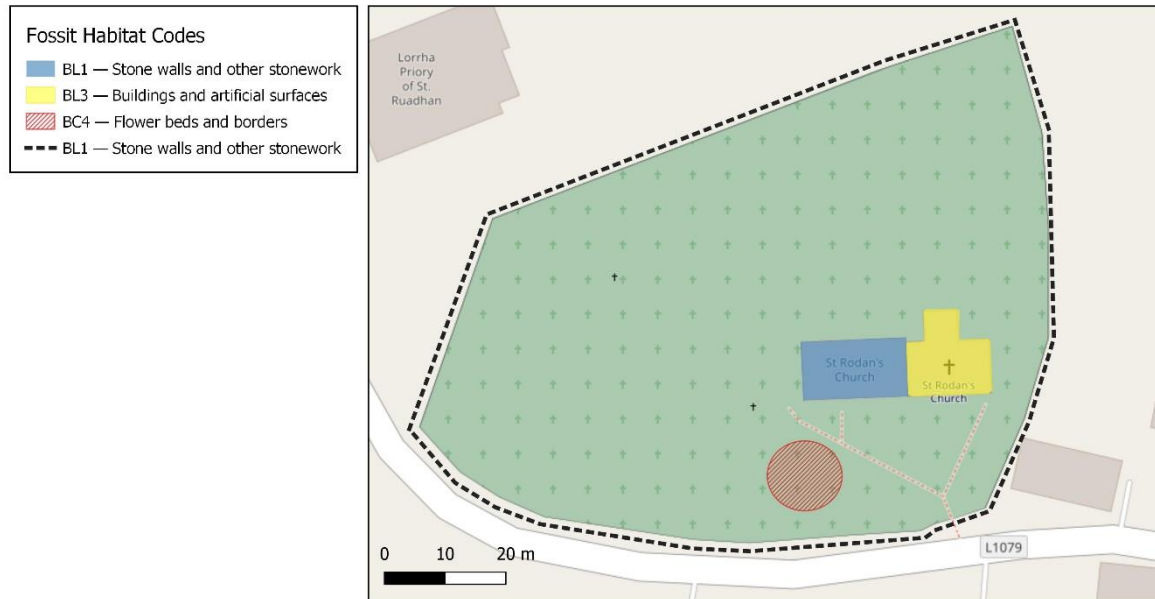
Figure 1. Habitat map of St. Ruadhan's Catholic Church.



St. Rodans Church

This Cemetery and Church are entirely enclosed within a stone wall, from which a good species list was derived during the community survey. Behind the wall, there are some hedgerows. There are many mature yew trees in the graveyard, a box hedge, and other evergreens. There seems to have been some effort to create an area of flowering plants at one stage which has become dominated by a singular species.

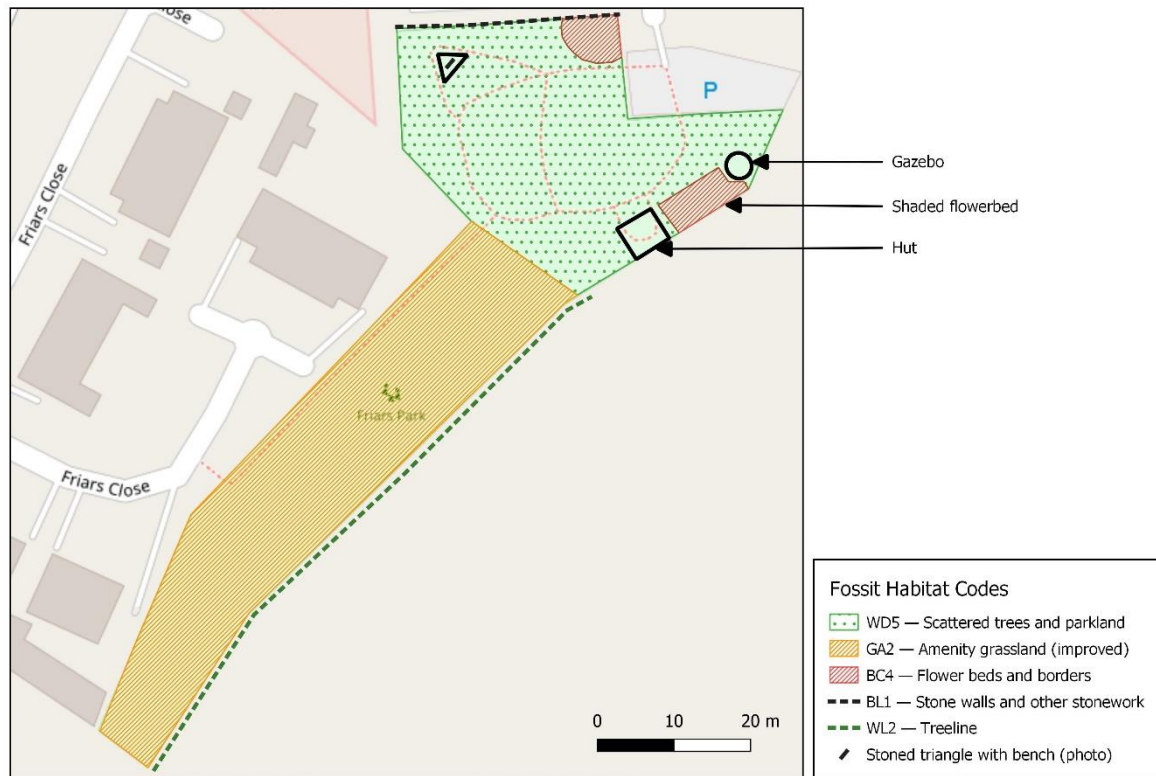
Figure 2. Habitat map of St. Rodens Church.



Friar's Park

The park is comprised of 2 distinct sections. The longer section is solely amenity grassland, which has an entrance from the adjacent housing estate of Friar's close. The second section, which is close to the main entrance through Pairc na Cile, has trees including Beech, Birch and Cherry. Some areas contain an overgrowth of spindle which should be managed to increase biodiversity. There are some structures including a hut, which could be used as an educational facility, and a Gazebo. There is also an area which has just stone and a bench in the middle. Again most of the species detected are characteristic of grassland which is frequently mowed. The area along the wall by Friars Close has also been treated with herbicide, where natural settlement of seeds would allow pollinator-friendly flowers to settle. The long stretch of the park seems to be underutilised. That is why a project to enhance biodiversity would be valuable from a biodiversity but also from a social and awareness point of view.

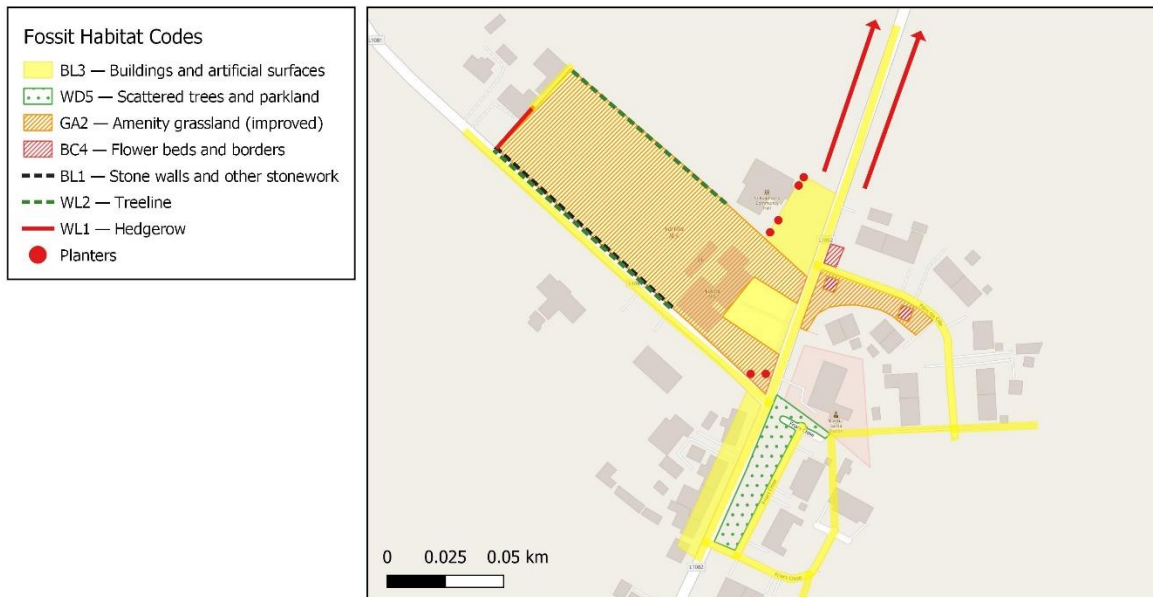
Figure 3. Habitat map of Friar's Park.



Streetscape (Including National School)

Lorrha has a high number of beds and planters around the town. Some of these contain plants, which are butterfly and pollinator friendly, however, some had shrubs which are older and take up space which reduces the amount of potential variety to wildlife including pollinating species. The school survey revealed the cuckoo flower. This species is important particularly about the orange tip butterfly association, meaning that some mowing management could help this species as well and increase the overall variety of food plants for wildlife. A border was let grow long prior to the school visit so children could compare the species list and this highlighted the benefit of leaving the longer grass border. The only hedge row included in this survey revealed more than 40 plant species and it is therefore important that it is protected.

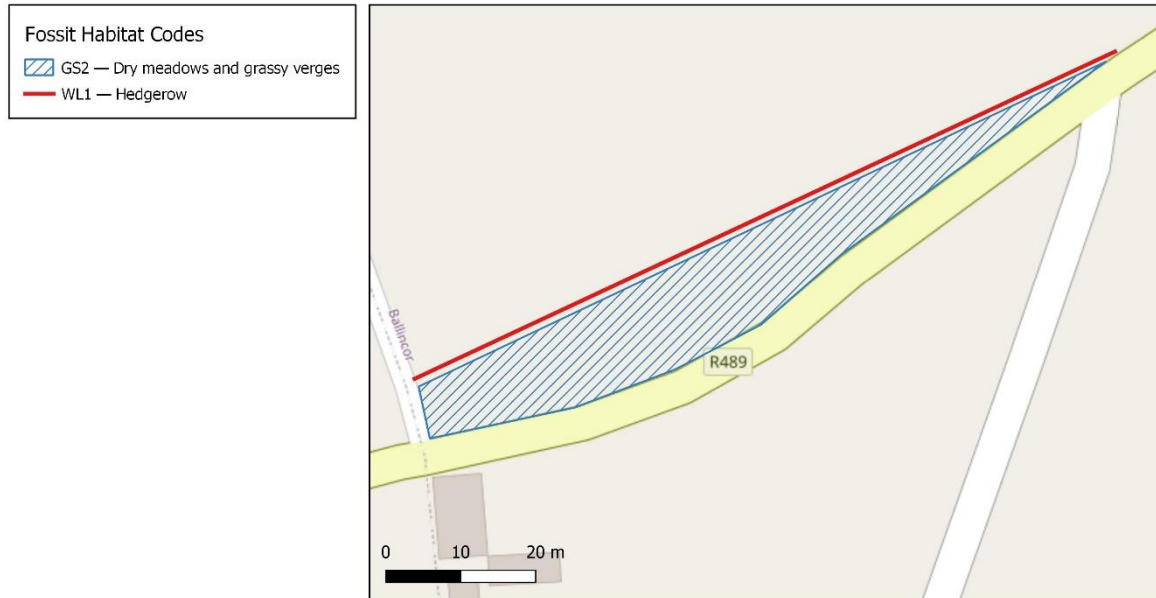
Figure 4 a and b. Habitat maps of Streetscape 1.



Roadside Verge

This site is overgrown with grass but is of interest to the community group and they have access to enhance it. It is quite a large area.

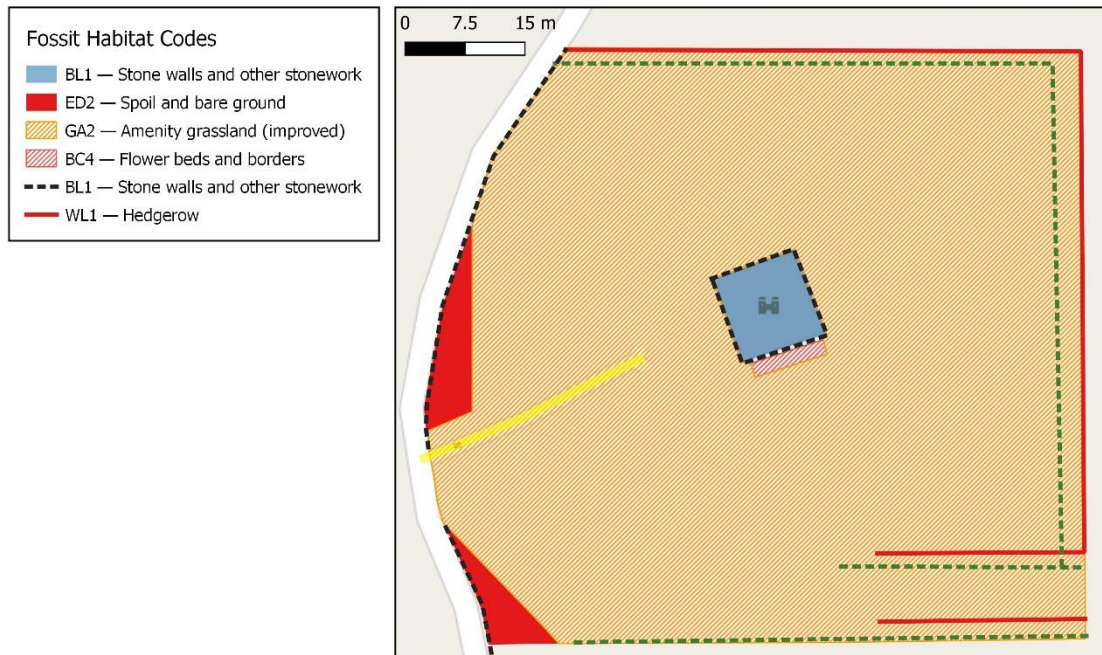
Figure 5. Habitat map of roadside verge.



Redwood Castle

Redwood Castle itself is a walled habitat, which contains many species that like to grow in or around walls. Although there is mostly grassland surrounding the castle there are a number of trees in this area, including holly and ash. There is also a tree line with mostly poplar which leads to the rear of the property. Two areas of soil and bare ground were highlighted as potential areas for improvement, which are most well-suited for planting a wildflower meadow.

Figure 6. Habitat map of Redwood Castle.



Recommendations

Table 2. Recommendations.

Location	Description of recommendations
St. Ruadhan's Catholic Church	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A change in the mowing regime, leaving grass uncut from May to September would allow for the taller meadow species to thrive. A cut track would allow for people to walk through creating an atmosphere and appreciation for the increased wildlife. 2. The development group should contact the appropriate persons regarding the care of the existing mature horse chestnut trees. 3. Existing tree stumps should be left in place to allow for insect life and signposted for biodiversity. 4. Care for the walls should be gentle and if possible allow for some species to thrive as biodiversity was low on the perimeter walls. 5. A possibility for the area beside the Old Mill marked as 'spoil and bare ground' could be to plant herbs, which used to be grown there and were used extensively by the monks.
St Rodan's Protestant Church	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. With such good biodiversity on the walls and interesting perimeters at the base of the walls, I think continuing current practices would be an option to protect the biodiversity. 2. Continue to manage ivy on the exterior walls so it doesn't become a hazard. 3. In the round area, with the lilac tree currently in the centre, clear growth and turn into a wildflower area.
Friar's Park	<p>There are several options to enhance biodiversity within the park, particularly on the longer strip, which is currently underutilised.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ideally, sprayer should cease against the wall to allow for natural colonisation and perhaps augmentation with some wildflower seeds. In addition, for enhancing the walls, Aubrieta plants could be used, given that they are pollinator friendly and would be a colourful point of interest. 2. Part of this parkland could be left for tall meadow species to thrive with a path woven through to enhance user awareness and appreciation. 3. Having a seating area in this new parkland area and some signage would be nice.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. In the bottom section of the park closest to the gate there is an area which is underneath a short row of weeping willow in which spindle has taken over. This shaded area is perfect for the planting of some winter and spring bulbs, such as native bluebells and the Grape Hyacinth, which would add a lot to the park and biodiversity. It is recommended, therefore to strip out this area and plant appropriately. 5. The flower bed on the right, which was dominated by a bush, could be planted with some butterfly bee-friendly perennials. 6. The stone area on which the bench sits could be an ideal location for a planter or some wildflowers, which are contained. 7. Enhance the hut as a nature hut, creating an educational space, that could include a nature magnifying glass, bolted to a table, to observe insects, plants, etc. and information boards.
Streetscape	<p>The numerous planters and flower borders could be dramatically improved for biodiversity and a list of plant species, which could be used in the Annex. Sites include all the approaches to the town where many planters exist. Outside the community hall, outside Friars Tavern and some other sites along the street. The school should continue to leave a longer grass strip around the edges of the field which will increase biodiversity and continue the awareness of the children created by last year's school visit.</p>
Roadside Verge	<p>This is quite a big area but could be visually quite attractive as well as enhancing biodiversity. This area would need to be covered for a whole season and then seeded with wildflowers seen in the autumn to be successful.</p>
Redwood Castle	<p>The areas of spoil particularly to the east of the site would be ideal for planting with wildflowers. The same school children could be involved in this process. Some apple trees could also be planted at the higher site near the gate to help with the pollinators at a different time of year. Again, it would be good to have a section along the perimeter of the property, which is not mown during the summer.</p>

References

- David Maloney. 2018. Picture extracted from https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Tourism-g2708211-Lorrha_County_Tipperary-Vacations.html#/media/2708211/. Visited 17th May 2023.
- Fossitt, Julie A. 2000. *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland*. Heritage Council of Ireland Series. Kilkenny: Heritage Council/Chomhairle Oidhreachta.
- Foulkes, Neil, Janice Fuller, Declan Little, Shawn McCourt, and Paul Murphy. n.d. 'Hedgerow Appraisal System'.

Annex

Table 3. List of all species recorded.

Common Name	Species Name
Sycamore	<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Oak	<i>Quercus</i>
Birch	<i>Betula spp.</i>
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>
Maple	<i>Acer</i>
Rowans	<i>Sorbus spp.</i>
Horse chestnut	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Grey willow	<i>Salix cinerea</i>
Pussy willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>
Weeping willow	<i>Salix Babylonica</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus momgyna</i>
Poplar	<i>Populus spp.</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Cherry	<i>Prunus spp.</i>
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>
Black Medic	<i>Medicago lupulina</i>
Meadow grass	<i>Poa spp.</i>
Couchgrass	<i>Elymus repens</i>
Yorkshire fog grass	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>
Rye grass	<i>lolium perenne</i>
Common nettle	<i>Urtica doica</i>
Groundsel	<i>Sencio vulgaris</i>
Herb robert	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>
Dock	<i>Rumex spp.</i>
Broadleaved willowherb	<i>Epilobium montanum</i>
Fringedwillow herb	<i>Epilobium cillatum</i>

Ivyleaved toadflax	<i>Cymbalaria muralis</i>
Red valerian	<i>Centranthus ruber</i>
Pellitory of the wall	<i>Parietaria judaica</i>
Shepards purse	<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>
Sowthistle	<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>
Silver weed	<i>Potentilla anserina</i>
White clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>
Red clover	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Self heal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>
Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>
Birds foot trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>
Bush vetch	<i>Vicia sepium</i>
Lady's bed straw	<i>Galium verum</i>
Broad leaved plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>
Ribwort Plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Creeping thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>
Sow thistle	<i>Sonchus asper</i>
Pineapple weed	<i>Matricaria discoides</i>
Chickweed	<i>Stelaria medica</i>
Hedge mustard	<i>Sisymbrium officinale</i>
Hairy bittercress	<i>Cardamine hirsuta</i>
Hawksbeard	<i>Crepis bursifolia</i>
Forget-me-not	<i>Myosotis arvensis</i>
Nipplewort	<i>Lapsana communis</i>
Cow slip	<i>Primula veris</i>
Persian speedwell	<i>Veronica persica</i>
Doves foot cranesbill	<i>Gerasnaoum molle</i>
Dead nettle	<i>Lamiun purpureum</i>
Prostrate knotweed	<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>
Hogweed	<i>Haracleum sphondylium</i>
Japanese knotweed	<i>Fallopia japonica</i>

Petty spurge	<i>Euphorbia peplus</i>
Cinqfoil	<i>Potentilla reptans</i>
Autumn hawkbit	<i>Scoroneroides autumnalis</i>
Oxeye daisy	<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>
Polypody	<i>Polpody vulgare</i>
Dog Rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>
Rose	<i>Rosa spp.</i>
Hairy lady's mantle	<i>Alchemilla monticola</i>
Cushion moss	<i>Leucobryum spp</i>
Rustyback	<i>Asplenium ceterach</i>
Fern moss	<i>Thiudium spp.</i>
Wall rue	<i>Asplenium ruta-muraria</i>
Virginia creeper	<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>
Mahonia	<i>Mahonia spp.</i>

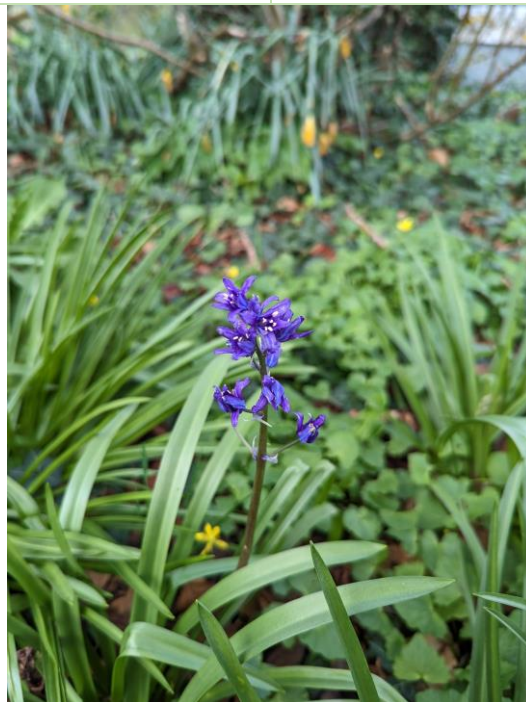


Photo 1. Native bluebell in St. Ruadhan's Catholic Church.



Photo 2. Stone area at Friar's Park, which is a potential location for planters or wildflowers



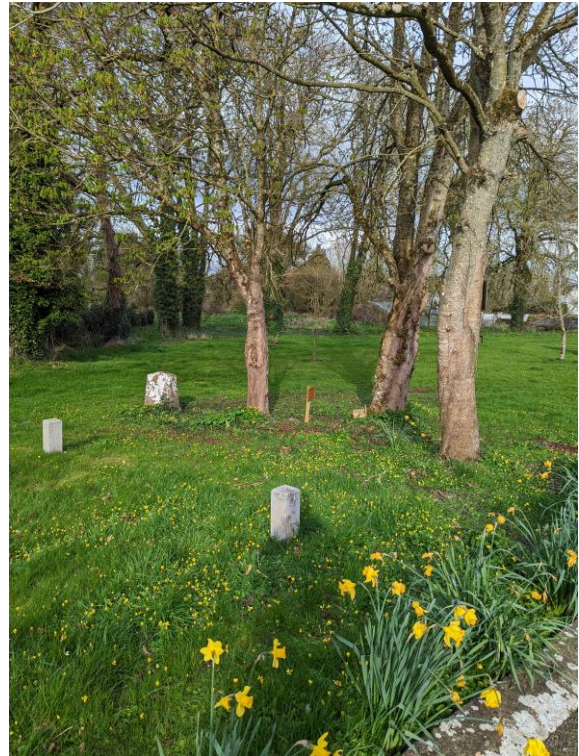
Photo 3. Mural on the wall of Friar's Park



Photos 4 and 5. Hut in Friar's Park (outside and inside), which could be enhanced as an educational space



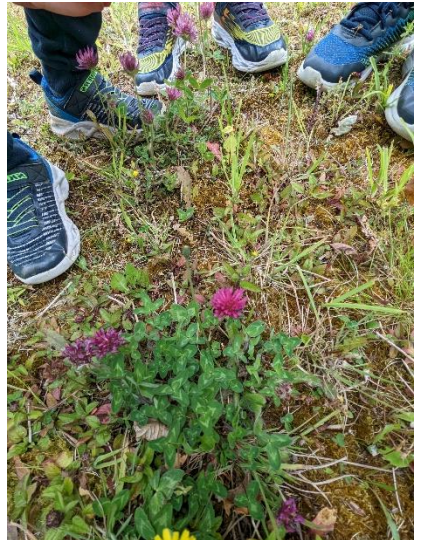
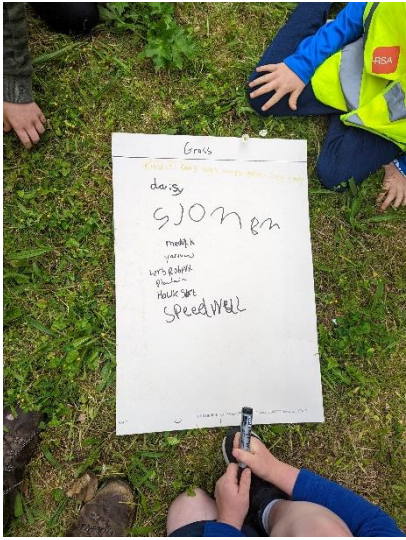
Photos 6 and 7. Containers outside Friar's Tavern suitable for enhancement.



Photos 8 and 9. St. Ruadhan's Catholic Church's grounds and cotainers suitable for enhancement



Photos 8 and 9. St. Ruadhan's Catholic Church's grounds and cotainers suitable for enhancement



Photos 10 and 11. Redwod National School surveying Redwood Castle in July 2022.



Photos 11 and 12. Heritage week event in friars Park 2022.



Photo 13. Initial survey of potential wildflower area of redwood castle.