

## All Hallows Bardsey and our journey to a Bronze Eco Award

All Hallows is a small rural church in the village of Bardsey between Leeds and Wetherby. We are part of the Church of England and are in the Diocese of Leeds. We have an Anglo Saxon heritage (circa 850) with many historical features, and as such the church is listed Grade one. The church is situated in the centre of the village and is surrounded by a large churchyard of approximately 3 acres. More information including all our activities can be seen on our website [www.bardseyeparish.com](http://www.bardseyeparish.com)

As a rural church we have always been committed to protecting and celebrating the wonderful environment that we see around us, though until recently this did not add up to a coordinated approach. However this changed in Spring 2020 when the Covid pandemic forced a significant shift in how we do 'church' as services were cancelled and all the normal and routine practices of the church year ceased.

As a parish we responded to Covid, and to a call from our Bishop, by seeking to find new ways to continue to serve God and fulfil our Christian mission. At the same time we also heard that at Synod the Church of England had voted to become carbon neutral by 2030 and that the Diocese of Leeds had gained an Eco Diocese bronze award from A Rocha UK.

We therefore asked what we could do as a parish to work towards the 2030 goal and we based our actions within the fifth key of Christian mission:

### **To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth**

We discussed the matter at our Parochial Church Council (PCC) meeting April and our commitment to our new environment policy was agreed. Following this we adopted the A Rocha UK award scheme to guide us on our eco journey

Our initial foray into the award scheme soon found that we were already achieving many of the goals set out there, especially in our worship and teaching and to the commitment of our PCC in 2016 to commence transforming a large part of our churchyard from an area of neglected scrub land into a welcoming garden - now called the Glade - where people and nature can live in harmony. This transformed area of land has proved a great benefit during the Covid pandemic as it has provided a safe meeting place for many of our village people and, as the western



edge follow joins to the Leeds County Way, it has become a resting place for our passing walkers.

We also quickly realised that our environment journey was not just about the 'church' and 'our' response to climate change but also about our village community as so many of the eco church questions did not only require a 'church' answer but a village answer as well. So we looked to see what our community is already doing with the church congregation taking part in. For example our parish council has an annual litter pick and parish boundary walks, our school collects empty crisp packets as part of the TerraCycle scheme and our Women's Institute looks after a disused telephone box which has become our village library where books are available for all to read and return. And though not strictly part of the Eco Church



programme our support of the food bank at St Aidan's has encouraged our villagers, and especially our children, who are so enthusiastically involved, to question how our world's resources are shared between those who have and those who have not.

Other parts of the award scheme were more difficult to achieve due to the impact of the pandemic, which prevented us meeting together, however with initiative and enthusiasm we were able to overcome most of these obstacles. The Internet and Zoom have been of great help here and we have had a Zoom talk from a local eco campaigner and an on line bakery competition where we asked for cup cakes decorated with an environment theme. We have started a parish letter which goes fortnightly to all those for whom we have a web address (the list continues to grow) and here, as well as church news, we always include an eco message,

the first asking our readers to do a carbon footprint at <https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/> We also have a new Village Newsletter which can be accessed via our web site or is available to those without the Internet as a hard copy sent by post. Here we always include an eco message and we ask other local groups to do the same. In our November edition we asked people to give a 'Christmas present with a difference' by Twinning a toilet as World Toilet took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> of the month and Bardsey Horticultural Society encouraged readers to care for the wild life in their gardens. Our most recent edition is promoting Fair Trade Fortnight.

We now look forward to working towards a Silver award though we have some problem areas to overcome especially our church building, which though very beautiful has no insulation, an old gas boiler and lots of drafts! We have already taken steps to keep it dry by repairing the roof, replacing old guttering and repointing the walls. Now we will look to see if we can now make steps to keep it warmer whilst not increasing our kilowatt hours. We already buy green electricity and will move to a 'green' supplier for gas later this year.

To all those churches thinking about starting Eco church I would say just do it – and when you do you will not want to stop!

I hope this short summary has given some insight into our work for our Bronze award. If you have any more questions do get in touch – [bardseyparishchur@btinternet.com](mailto:bardseyparishchur@btinternet.com)

