Norley Wildflower Memorial Walk

A community project rooted in remembrance

In 2015, Norley Wildlife Group (NWG) established a network of wildflower areas around the village, linked by a three-mile walk. Along the route, 12 memorial plaques honour the Norley men who lost their lives in the Great War.

A thirteenth plaque, in the Wild Wood, remembers Rob Appleton, whose efforts helped bring the walk into being. Rob was the great-nephew of Arthur Palfreyman, one of the men commemorated along the route.

Although NWG established the wildflower areas, volunteer stewards from across the village care for the plots. Not all are NWG members, making this a truly community-wide project.

NWG continues to support the walk by funding repairs and maintenance to the signs and their stands, and purchasing seeds to enhance the planting. Over recent years, vehicles have damaged signs and driven over planted areas, while fallen trees temporarily made the Wild Wood section inaccessible. Thankfully, that section is now open again.

This year, we also replaced the two lecterns at the Village Hall and St John's Church. Our thanks go to Peter Hills for making and installing them. This work has been funded by NWG through donations and support from the Parish Council and CW&C.

NWG is currently seeking funding to replace the plaques along the walk. The new plaques will include a QR code linking visitors to the Wild Norley website, where they can find the route map, information about the walk and the stories of the men commemorated.

The walk brings to life the words “In honoured and grateful memory”, inscribed on the brass memorial plaque at St John's. Eighty-eight Norley men went to war more than a century ago; only 78 returned, and none came back unchanged. One, Chris Fletcher, died in 1920 from wounds sustained in 1916.

The project was inspired by a talk from Richard Scott, Former Director of the National Wildflower Centre, which helped us imagine barren verges and neglected ground transformed into carpets of flowers, alive with insects. The poems *Break of Day in the Trenches* and *In Flanders Fields* also shaped our thinking, connecting flowers, remembrance and the lives of those who served.

Where possible, plaques were placed close to where the men once lived, surrounded by poppies for remembrance and other wildflowers they might have known when walking through the village themselves.

Today, the walk offers an enjoyable and thoughtful way to explore Norley. In season, flowers bring colour to the route, attracting butterflies, bumblebees and other pollinators. Allow around two hours and wear sensible shoes or boots: some sections can be muddy.

You can also plan a refreshment stop along the way. The route passes the Tigers Head, The Stores, the Fortune Palace and The Carriers Inn.

A guide tells the stories of the men commemorated, alongside a wonderful map created by Ann Crawford. Copies of the map and guide can be purchased at The Stores, where there is also a collection box supporting the walk.

As we approach Remembrance Day on 11 November, we invite you to take time to remember the men of Norley who gave their lives, and to enjoy the living memorial the village continues to care for.

For more information: **www.wildnorley.com/wildflower-walk/**

Explore the walk

Walk map created by Ann Crawford

