



Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Northamptonshire
Peterborough

St Andrew's Churchyard



Acid Grassland



Pink Purslane



Mouse ear hawkweed on graves



Ivy leaved toadflax on wall

Biological Report March 2009
By Bedfordshire Wildlife Trust



Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Northamptonshire
Peterborough

St Andrew's Churchyard

Recorder: Laura Downton

Grid reference: TL03744 38329

District: Mid Bedfordshire

When visited: throughout summer 2008

Site description

The churchyard consists of semi-improved neutral and acid grassland on greensand with scattered trees and shrubs; a hedge and a sandstone wall.

The grassland area south of the church supports a high quality acid grassland (see map), containing abundant sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella acetosella*), common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), field wood rush (*Luzula campestris*), cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*) and ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*).

The grassland in the rest of the churchyard is more neutral in character with species such as common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), pignut (*Conopodium majus*), lesser stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and cowslip (*Primula veris*) being present. Of particular importance in the churchyard is the presence of meadow saxifrage (*Saxifraga granulata*) - a strong indicator of unimproved grassland. In some areas the sward is largely composed of coarse grasses such as false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), this grass is usually found in areas that have not been cut regularly.

There is a good population of mouse-ear hawkweed (*Pilosella officinalis*) (a strong indicator of unimproved grassland) on some of the graves.

Various ornamental and native trees are scattered around the churchyard, both broad-leaved and coniferous with mature hollies along the west edge of the north section of the churchyard. The native trees include pendunculate oak (*Quercus robur*), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and yew (*Taxus baccata*).

The wall along the south-east edge of the churchyard (see map) contains abundant reflexed stonecrop (*Sedum rupestre*). The wall along the western edge of the churchyard (see map) supports red valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) and ivy-leaved toadflax (*Cymbalaria muralis*), as well as numerous bryophytes and lichens.

Hedges are present around some areas of the churchyard, including an overgrown hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) hedge, present along the north and part of the eastern edge.

Varieties of poppy (*Papaver* sp.) are present scattered around the churchyard.

Plant list

Plants marked with:

* = neutral grassland indicator species.

^ = acid grassland indicator species.

** or ^^ = strong indicator plant.

Common name

Annual Meadow-Grass
Beech
Biting Stonecrop
Black Medick
Bluebell
Bramble
Broad-Leaved Dock
Cat's-Ear
Cleavers
Cock's-Foot
Common Bent ^
Common Bird's-Foot-Trefoil *
Common Chickweed
Common Knapweed *
Common Mallow
Common Mouse-Ear
Common Nettle
Common Poppy
Common Ragwort
Common Sorrel
Common Vetch
Cow Parsley
Cowslip *
Creeping Buttercup
Creeping Cinquefoil
Creeping Thistle
Cuckooflower *
Daisy
Dandelion
Dove's-Foot Crane's-Bill
Elder
False Oat-Grass
Field Bindweed
Field Forget-Me-Not
Field Horsetail
Field Madder
Field Wood-Rush ^
Garlic Mustard
Germander Speedwell
Great Mullein
Greater Plantain
Green Alkanet
Ground-Elder
Ground-Ivy
Groundsel

Scientific name

Poa annua
Fagus sylvatica
Sedum acre
Medicago lupulina
Hyacinthoides non-scripta
Rubus fruticosus agg.
Rumex obtusifolius
Hypochaeris radicata
Galium aparine
Dactylis glomerata
Agrostis capillaris
Lotus corniculatus
Stellaria media
Centaurea nigra
Malva sylvestris
Cerastium fontanum vulgare
Urtica dioica
Papaver rhoeas
Senecio jacobaea
Rumex acetosa
Vicia sativa
Anthriscus sylvestris
Primula veris
Ranunculus repens
Potentilla reptans
Cirsium arvense
Cardamine pratensis
Bellis perennis
Taraxacum officinale agg.
Geranium molle
Sambucus nigra
Arrhenatherum elatius
Convolvulus arvensis
Myosotis arvensis
Equisetum arvense
Sherardia arvensis
Luzula campestris
Alliaria petiolata
Veronica chamaedrys
Verbascum thapsus
Plantago major
Pentaglottis sempervirens
Aegopodium podagraria
Glechoma hederacea
Senecio vulgaris

Hairy Bitter-Cress
Hairy Tare
Hawthorn
Hedgerow Crane's-Bill
Hogweed
Holly
Honesty
Horse-Chestnut
Ivy
Ivy-Leaved Speedwell
Ivy-Leaved Toadflax
Lady's Bedstraw *
Lesser Celandine
Lesser Stitchwort *
Lesser Trefoil
Long-Headed Poppy
Lords-And-Ladies
Meadow Buttercup
Meadow Foxtail
Meadow Saxifrage **
Mouse-Ear-Hawkweed **
Oxeye Daisy *
Pedunculate Oak
Perennial Rye-Grass
Petty Spurge
Pignut *
Pineapple Weed
Pink Purslane
Primrose
Red Dead-Nettle
Red Fescue
Red Valerian
Reflexed Stonecrop
Ribwort Plantain
Rough Hawkbit **
Rowan
Selfheal
Sheep's Sorrel ^
Shepherd's-Purse
Silver Birch
Smooth Hawk's-Beard
Smooth Meadow-Grass
Smooth Sow -Thistle
Spear Thistle
Spring Beauty ^
Sweet Vernal Grass
Sweet Violet
Wall Speedwell
White Bryony
White Clover
White Dead-Nettle
Yarrow
Yew
Yorkshire-Fog

Cardamine hirsuta
Vicia hirsuta
Crataegus monogyna
Geranium pyrenaicum
Heracleum sphondylium
Ilex aquifolium
Lunaria annua
Aesculus hippocastanum
Hedera helix
Veronica hederifolia
Cymbalaria muralis
Galium verum
Ranunculus ficaria
Stellaria graminea
Trifolium dubium
Papaver dubium dubium
Arum maculatum
Ranunculus acris
Alopecurus pratensis
Saxifraga granulata
Pilosella officinarum
Leucanthemum vulgare
Quercus robur
Lolium perenne
Euphorbia peplus
Conopodium majus
Matricaria discoidea
Claytonia sibirica
Primula vulgaris
Lamium purpureum
Festuca rubra sens.str.
Centranthus ruber
Sedum rupestre
Plantago lanceolata
Leontodon hispidus
Sorbus aucuparia
Prunella vulgaris
Rumex acetosella acetosella
Capsella bursa-pastoris
Betula pendula
Crepis capillaris
Poa pratensis sens.str.
Sonchus oleraceus
Cirsium vulgare
Claytonia perfoliata
Anthoxanthum odoratum
Viola odorata
Veronica arvensis
Bryonia dioica
Trifolium repens
Lamium album
Achillea millefolium
Taxus baccata
Holcus lanatus

Management Recommendations

Grass cutting

- ◇ *Conservation areas* – St Albans Diocese through the Living Churchyard Scheme (supported by Bedfordshire Wildlife Trust) is encouraging the development of wildlife areas in many of its churchyards. In St Andrews Churchyard, we recommended that two areas are managed as wildlife areas:
 - Area 1 (south-east of the church) - acid grassland. Regular cutting of this area should continue as normal until the beginning of May, after this time the plants should be allowed to flower and set seed for 6 - 8 weeks before commencing regular cutting again.
 - Area 2 (north-west of the church) - neutral grassland. This area should be treated as a hay meadow, with an annual cut taken in June with the cuttings raked up and removed afterwards.
 - This area contains bramble and nettle patches, although both provide protection and food for wildlife they can spread if left unmanaged. The bramble should be prevented from invading further into this area by annual trimming around the edge between September and February.
 - The size of the nettle patch should ideally be reduced. This can be achieved by repeated cutting of the nettles to prevent them from flowering and setting seeds. The cuttings need to be removed. This will help to weaken these plants and allow the grasses and herbs to successfully compete and spread back into some of these areas.

Removing cuttings

- ◇ Grass cuttings should be raked up and removed from the churchyard. This is especially important in areas that have not been cut for a while. By removing the cuttings it will prevent the vegetation underneath from being smothered and killed and also prevent the build up of soil nutrients which will encourage the spread of weeds (e.g. nettles, docks and thistles) at the expense of the fragile and rare wildflowers. The best place for the cutting is on a compost heap.

Trees

- ◇ Parishes can undertake the routine maintenance of trees such as pruning but please try and keep this to the absolute minimum as too much pruning can permanently damage trees. Any major work such as pollarding, coppicing or felling should be carried out by trained Arborists - consult your District Arboricultural Officer for more information.
- ◇ Churchyards are popular homes for bats, which have rapidly declined across the UK and both bats and their roosts are protected by law. Before any major work occurs to trees it is highly recommended that you consult your local Natural England office as the work could result in the disturbance of bats or their roosts.
- ◇ *Dead wood* - valuable to a large number of invertebrates. Try to leave some on standing trees, larger hedgerow shrubs and on the ground.
- ◇ *Planting new trees* - This is not always environmentally friendly. Planting new trees on grassland will shade out and eliminate many of the important plants that live in churchyards (e.g. cowslips, meadow saxifrage and pignut). Planting should only be considered when old trees are felled or they are approaching the end of their life and new ones are required to replace them. Trees will often propagate themselves naturally by seedlings or suckers which will produce healthier saplings however they should be removed quickly from areas where they are not wanted (i.e. from grassland and monuments).

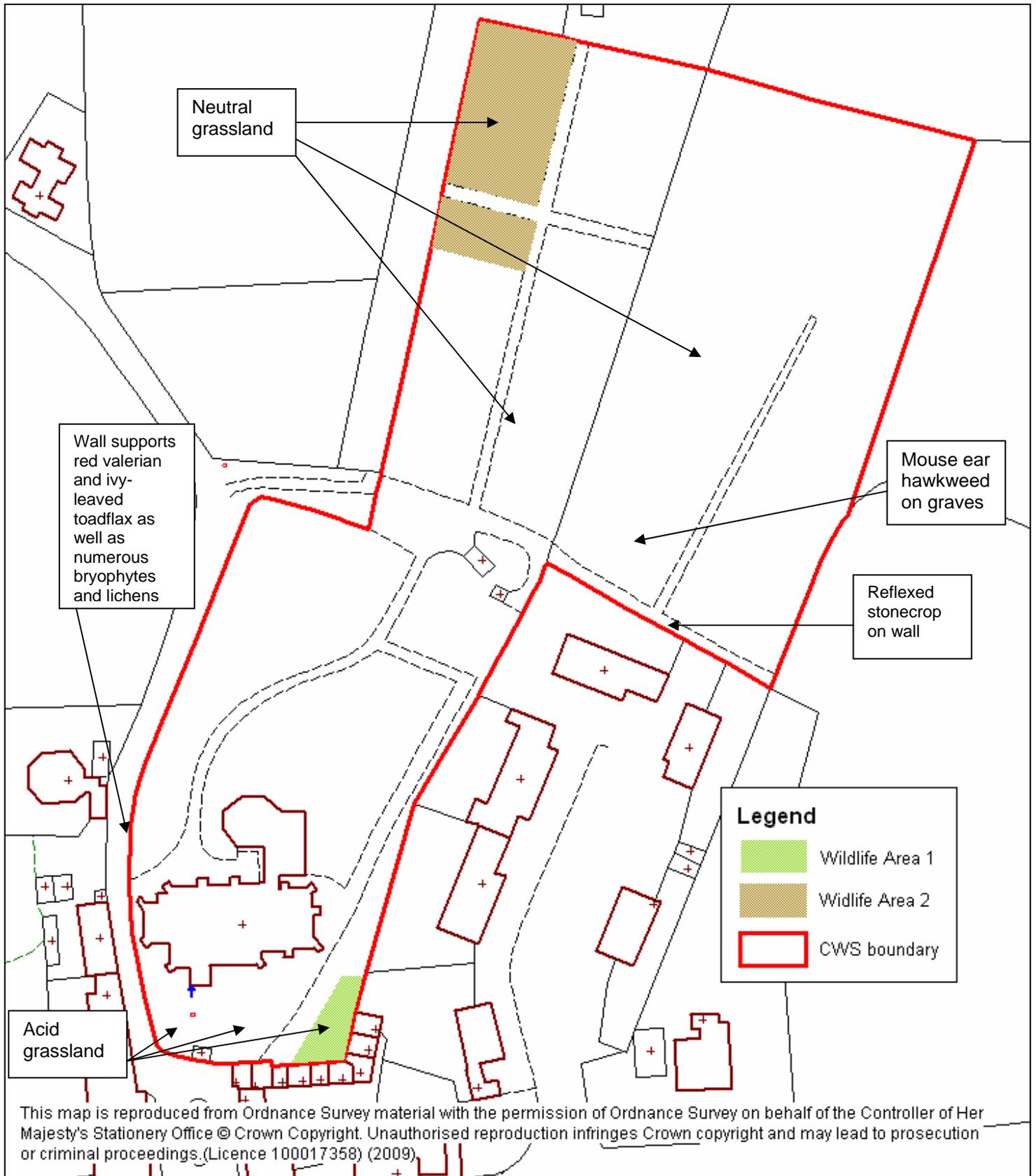
Gravestones and stone walls

- ◇ There is a variety of plants, bryophytes and lichens found on the walls - some of the lichens may be as old as the wall itself. Please try to leave these untouched, where possible.

Herbicides and fertilisers

- ◇ Flower rich sites are easily damaged if fertilizers and herbicides are sprayed. Application of these chemicals will encourage vigorous grass production which will out-compete the fragile flowering plants, leading to a wildflower poor sward dominated by a few coarse grasses and weeds.

Map of St Andrews Churchyard



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