**St. Michael’s and All Angels, Cwm Head SO423887**

**A Wildlife Survey by Strettons Area Community Wildlife Group (SACWG)**

Report by Caroline Uff

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Image: C.Uff

**Introduction**

St Michael’s and All Angels Church is situated in a rural location on the roadside at Cwm Head (between Marshbrook and Horderley). It has a carriage shed and stable, but no graves. There is a retaining wall along the roadside, but it is otherwise surrounded by oak paling on the east and west and stock fencing against pasture to the south. A previous survey of the churchyard was carried out by J.Thompson in 2005

**Survey details**

On 21/6/2014 members of SACWG assessed the site. The site was revisited on 6th September.

**Ground Flora**: Species were recorded from a general walkover. Ferns were also identified.

**Trees**: The existing map from 2005 was checked and updated if necessary.

**Mammals**: A baited hedgehog tunnel was left for several nights to collect mammal footprints. Tracks and signs of other mammals were also recorded. Bats were not assessed.

**Birds**: Any birds seen or heard within churchyard were recorded. Those seen in flight were only recorded if it seemed likely they were using the site. Signs of nesting were noted.

**Invertebrates**: Any species encountered within the churchyard were identified as far as possible.

**Results and management comments**

In all 92 species were recorded and summarised below. They included a really good number of grassland indicator species which are becoming increasingly uncommon nationally as traditional hay meadows are lost. Although small, the site appears good enough to achieve County Wildlife Site status.

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|  | **# Species noted** | **Comments** |
| **Ground Flora** | **59 (+1 lichen)** | The flora was exceptionally rich for such a small site. There was a breath-taking display of common spotted orchids (an estimated 700 flowering spikes), and a closer look revealed a fabulous range of species typical of old flower rich meadows which are becoming so rare these day. Twaybades (22 spikes), cowslip, bird’s-foot trefoil, common knapweed, mouse-ear hawkweed, heath speedwell, ladies’ mantle, rough hawkbit, oxeye daisy, quaking grass, pignut and devil’s- bit scabious are just some of the species worthy of note. The latter species, along with bulbous buttercup were predicted by Thomson to be present, but not seen in 2005. |
| **Trees** | **6** | A refreshing lack of exotic tree and shrub species is in keeping with the simple rural character of this church. |
| **Birds** | **5** | Although only a few of birds were recorded on the visit to this tiny churchyard, those that were, were worthy of note, particularly nesting swifts. Swifts are suffering huge declines nationally, so to have them nesting here is a real privilege. Swallows were nesting in the carriage shed, and robins also appeared to be nesting. |
| **Insects** | **19** | Although no particularly notable species were recorded, the presence of herald moth wings scattered in the porch throughout the autumn were a sign of bat activity. |
| **Mammals** | **3** | Mouse/vole and shrew footprints. Also signs of bats (see above) |
| **Reptiles** | **0** |  |
| **Grassland Category** |  | Species rich neutral grassland of fine quality. Although the flora was not surveyed as thoroughly as the previous survey by J.Thompson, the site appears to be maintaining its diversity, with both orchid species showing a significant increase. |



The grassland is managed as a hay meadow, with just the path sides kept short in the summer. This allows the very rich grassland flora to flower and set seed and is clearly benefiting the site. The cut grass is raked off which is good practice. If it is felt that the grassland is starting to get coarser (as sometimes happens with repeated late cuts), an earlier cut every few years will not harm the plants which are perennials. Traditional hay meadows would have been cut varying times from July onwards, depending upon the weather.

Image: C.Uff

Details of managing longer grassland in churchyards can be found on the Caring for God ’s Acre website. <http://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/>

Twaybalde in bud: Image C.Uff



Image: <http://northeastwildlife.co.uk/>

In addition to the flora, it was great to find swifts nesting. Swifts are a species of conservation concern as their numbers have declined rapidly in recent years. Loss of nest sites due to modern building techniques is thought to be a contributing factor, and churches such as Cwm Head are often valuable nesting sites. It is important to look after these sites and ask for advice if any building works are planned for the roof - the Shropshire swift group can be contacted at <http://www.shropshireswifts.org.uk/>

Image: <http://northeastwildlife.co.uk/>

Plants recorded 2014 (English names used where possible)

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| **Group** | **Plant name** |
| Ferns | Male fern |
| Flowers | Bird's-foot-trefoil |
| Flowers | Bluebell |
| Flowers | Bramble |
| Flowers | Bugle |
| Flowers | Buttercup, bulbous |
| Flowers | Buttercup, creeping |
| Flowers | Buttercup, meadow |
| Flowers | Cat's-ear |
| Flowers | Celandine, lesser |
| Flowers | Cleavers |
| Flowers | Clover, red |
| Flowers | Clover, white |
| Flowers | Cowslip |
| Flowers | Daisy |
| Flowers | Dandelions |
| Flowers | Dog/field Rose |
| Flowers | Dog-violet, common |
| Flowers | Hawkbit, rough |
| Flowers | Hawkweed, mouse-ear |
| Flowers | Herb-Robert |
| Flowers | Hogweed |
| Flowers | Ivy |
| Flowers | Knapweed, common |
| Flowers | Lady's mantle |
| Flowers | Lady's smock |
| Flowers | London's pride |
| Flowers | Meadow-sweet |
| Flowers | Mouse-ear, common |
| Flowers | Oxeye daisy |
| Flowers | Pignut |
| Flowers | Plantain, ribwort |
| Flowers | Scabious, devil's-bit |
| Flowers | Selfheal |
| Flowers | Sorrel, common |
| Flowers | Speedwell, germander |
| Flowers | Speedwell, heath |
| Flowers | Stinging nettle |
| Flowers | Stitchwort, greater |
| Flowers | Strawberry, barren |

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| **Group** | **Plant name** |
| Flowers | Strawberry, wild |
| Flowers | Thistle, marsh |
| Flowers | Vetch, bush |
| Flowers | Vetchling, meadow |
| Flowers | Willowherb, broad-leaved |
| Flowers | Willowherb, rosebay |
| Flowers | Yellow archangel |
| Flowers | Twayblade, common (22) |
| Flowers | Spotted-orchid, common (700) |
| Grasses | Cock's foot grass |
| Grasses | Crested Dog's Tail |
| Grasses | Foxtail, meadow |
| Grasses | Oat-grass, false |
| Grasses | Quaking-grass |
| Grasses | Rye grass, perennial |
| Grasses | Sheep's fescue |
| Grasses | Sweet Vernal Grass |
| Grasses | Yorkshire-fog |
| Lichens | Lepraria vouauxii? |
| Trees and Shrubs | Ash |
| Trees and Shrubs | Hawthorn |
| Trees and Shrubs | Hazel |
| Trees and Shrubs | Rose - field |
| Trees and Shrubs | Sycamore |
| Trees and Shrubs | Yew |

Animals recorded 2014 (English names used where possible)

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| **Group** | **Animal Name** |
| Bird | Chiff chaff |
| Bird | House Sparrow |
| Bird | Swallow (nesting) |
| Bird | Swift (nesting) |
| Bird | Robin (nesting?) |
| Coleoptera (Beetles) | ground beetle, *Nebria brevicollis* |
| Coleoptera (Beetles) | longhorn beetle, *Grammoptera ruficornis* |
| Diptera (Flies) | hoverfly, *Syritta pipiens* |
| Diptera (Flies) | hoverfly, *Eristalis pertinax* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | mason bee, *Osmia laeiania* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | solitary wasp*, Crossocerus elongatulus* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | solitary wasp, *Crossocerus dimidiatus* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | ruby-tailed wasp, Chrysis sp |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | mining bee, *Lasioglossum calceatum* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | bumblebee, buff-tailed |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | solitary wasp, *Pemphredon lugubris* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | leaf cutter bee, *Megochile willughbiella* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | bumblebee, white-tailed |
| Lepidoptera (Butterflies and moths) | moth, herald |
| Lepidoptera (Butterflies and moths) | butterfly, small tortoiseshell |
| Lepidoptera (Butterflies and moths) | butterfly, speckled wood |
| Mammal | bat (droppings) |
| Mammal | mouse/vole (footprints) |
| Mammal | shrew (footprints) |
| Snail | snail, common garden |
| Snail | snail, glass (probably more than one sp) |
| Snail | snail, white lipped garden |