**St. Andrew’s Church, Hope Bowdler**  **SO475924**

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

Report by Caroline Uff

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Image: C.Uff

**Introduction**

St. Andrew’s Church is situated in the centre of the village of Hope Bowdler. It has quite a large churchyard, largely surrounded by hedges with only a short section of wall. Two previous surveys were available. A vegetation survey by John Thompson in 1999, and a tree survey by Peter Norman in 2000.

**Survey details**

On 11th July,2014, members of SACWG were joined by Members of Caring for God’s Acre as well as several visiting specialists, Hilary Wallace (botany), Keith Fowler, (hemiptera) and Jim Cresswell (general invertebrates) to assess the site. An earlier visit 4th June was abandoned due to heavy rain.

**Flora**: Species were recorded from a general walkover. Diversity was assessed in one or two quadrats (2x2m). Data were used to trial a ‘churchyard companion’ being developed by CfGA which aimed to classify the type of grassland present. Ferns on the walls and trees were also identified and the existing maps from 1999 and 2000 were checked.

**Mammals**: a baited hedgehog tunnel was left for two 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 or netted within the churchyard were identified as far as possible.

**Reptile mats**: Two mats (felt roofing tiles) were left *in situ* for approx 1 month around the period of the visit to act as refuges for reptiles.

**Results and comments**

One hundred and twenty one species were recorded – the full list is given at the end. The churchyard has both open and shaded areas, with the main path being densely shaded by an avenue of Yew trees. It was good to see an area of grassland in the southern section which was left uncut to allow flowering.

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|  | **# Species noted** | **Comments** |
| **Ground Flora** | **53** | Although mostly mown quite short it is still possible to identify some moderately diverse areas of grassland which contain species typical of old flower rich meadows. Such grasslands are becoming increasing rare in our countryside. Species worthy of note include harebell, lady’s bedstraw, mouse-ear hawkweed, meadow vetchling and yellow oat grass. The position of some of these species are shown on the map |
| **Trees and shrubs** | **10** | The over-arching avenue of Irish yews lining the path is very striking. There is a healthy Holly Hedge. The Lawson’s cypress hedge along the western boundary was noted in 2000 by Norman to be 6m high and unmanageable. It has now been reduced to a well maintained 1m high hedge. There appear to have been several recent plantings of non-native ornamental shrubs. |
| **Birds** | **9** | Swifts were active around the church tower and presumed to have nested as there appeared to be a dead fledgling caught up near the top of the tower. There were also at least 3 house sparrow nests. |
| **Insects etc.** | **48** | There were 2 observations worthy of note. There was a communal nest of the solitary mining bee, *Andrena carantonica* on the bank by the path to the lychgate. Nearby on a Cypress tree was a Juniper Shieldbug. This bug used to be very rare in UK, but is increasing its range across the country and often found, as this one, on cypress trees. |
| **Mammals** | **1** | Although it was not possible to be 100% certain, the footprints collected in the tunnel appeared to belong to a polecat. |
| **Reptiles** | **0** |  |
| **Grassland Type** |  | Semi-improved neutral grassland of moderate species richness using criteria from CfGA’s churchyard companion. |

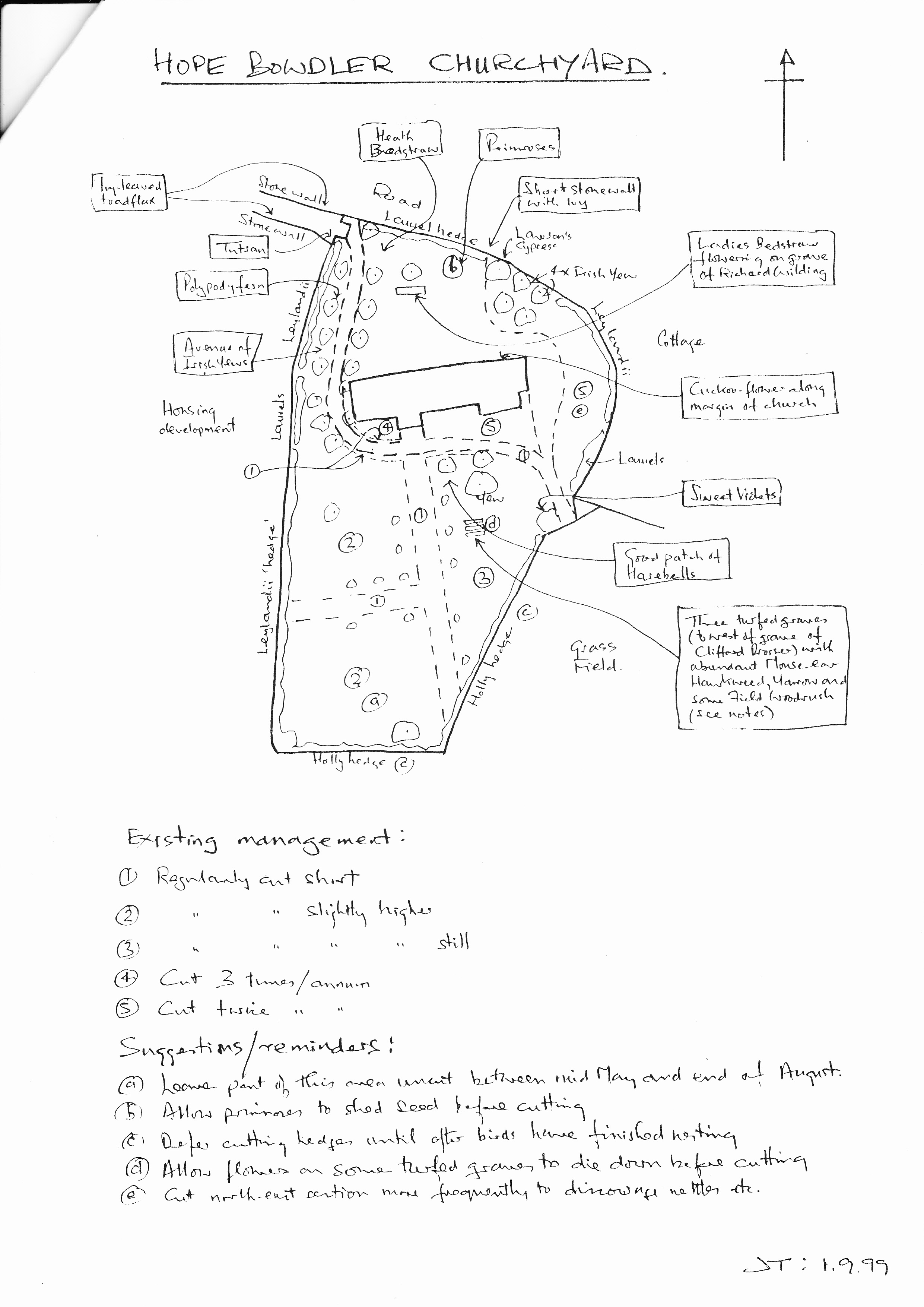
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Image: M. Furber & W. Putter

Image: C.Uff

Avenue of Irish Yew and the uncommon juniper shield bug

John Thompson’s sketch map (below) from 1999 remains relevant today. Many of the nice grassland species such as harebell, ladies bedstraw and heath bedstraw still survive despite regular mowing. Providing grass clippings are removed these species are likely to persist. However, these much loved and increasingly uncommon meadow species would benefit and may even spread if allowed to flower and set seed some years.

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A small sunny area in the southern part of the churchyard was left uncut and this had good grassland diversity and included indicator species of old meadows. It appeared that this section was left uncut all year round, providing seed heads for birds and over-wintering insects. If it is felt that this patch of grassland is starting to get more course (as sometimes happens with repeated late or no 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. Management advice given in Thompson’s 1999 survey is still appropriate. Details of managing longer grassland can also be downloaded for free from the ‘*managing churchyards &burial grounds’* action pack available from the Caring for God’s Acre website <http://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/>

Leaves of harebell were found in a mown area of grassland. Image C.Uff

In the south eastern section (marked as ‘3’ on the map) there have been a number of new, mainly exotic shrubs planted which are around 2-3 m high. Shrubs planted in groups provide good shelter, food and nest sites for birds such as the house sparrows recorded here.



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

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 Hope Bowdler 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/>

Plants recorded 2014 (English names used where possible)

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| **Group** | **Plant name** |
| Ferns | Male fern |
| Flowers | Bedstraw, lady's |
| Flowers | Bramble |
| Flowers | Buttercup, creeping |
| Flowers | Cat's-ear |
| Flowers | Celandine, greater |
| Flowers | Cleavers |
| Flowers | Clover, white |
| Flowers | Cow parsley |
| Flowers | Daisy |
| Flowers | Dandelions |
| Flowers | Fox and cubs |
| Flowers | Garlic mustard |
| Flowers | Ground elder |
| Flowers | Ground ivy |
| Flowers | Harebell |
| Flowers | Hawkbit, autumn |
| Flowers | Hawkweed, mouse-ear |
| Flowers | Herb-Robert |
| Flowers | Hogweed |
| Flowers | Honesty |
| Flowers | Ivy |
| Flowers | Mallow, common/musk |
| Flowers | Mouse-ear, common |
| Flowers | Nipplewort |
| Flowers | Oxeye daisy |
| Flowers | Plantain, ribwort |
| Flowers | Primrose |
| Flowers | Selfheal |
| Flowers | Sorrel, common |
| Flowers | Sow Thistle, smooth |
| Flowers | Speedwell, germander |
| Flowers | Stinging nettle |
| Flowers | Strawberry, barren |
| Flowers | Strawberry, wild |
| Flowers | Vetch, common |
| Flowers | Vetchling, meadow |
| Flowers | Wood avens |
| Flowers | Wood-rush, field |
| Flowers | Yarrow |

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| **Group** | **Plant name** |
| Grasses | Bent grass |
| Grasses | Brome, barren |
| Grasses | Cock's foot grass |
| Grasses | Fescue red |
| Grasses | Foxtail, meadow |
| Grasses | Meadow grass, smooth |
| Grasses | Oat-grass, false |
| Grasses | Oat-grass, yellow |
| Grasses | Rye grass, perennial |
| Grasses | Sweet Vernal Grass |
| Grasses | Yorkshire-fog |
| Mosses | several |
| Trees and Shrubs | Berberis |
| Trees and Shrubs | Cherry |
| Trees and Shrubs | Cypress, Lawsons |
| Trees and Shrubs | Elder |
| Trees and Shrubs | Hawthorn |
| Trees and Shrubs | Holly |
| Trees and Shrubs | Philadelphus |
| Trees and Shrubs | Rhododendron |
| Trees and Shrubs | Yew (Irish and English) |

Animals recorded 2014 (English names used where possible)

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| **Group** | **Animal name** |
| Bird | Goldfinch |
| Bird | Great tit |
| Bird | House Martin |
| Bird | House Sparrow (3+ nests) |
| Bird | Jackdaw |
| Bird | Starling |
| Bird | Swallow |
| Bird | Swift (nest) |
| Bird | Wood pigeon |
| Mammal | Polecat (footprints) |
| Arachnids (Spiders etc) | Garden spider |
| Arachnids (Spiders etc) | harvestman, *Dicranopalpus ramosus* |
| Coleoptera (Beetles) | soldier beetle, *Rhagonycha fulva* |
| Coleoptera (Beetles) | beetle, *Anthrenus fuscus* |
| Coleoptera (Beetles) | beetle, *Lagria hirta* |
| Coleoptera (Beetles) | beetle, *Oedemira nobilis* |
| Coleoptera (Beetles) | ladybird, 14-spot |
| Diptera (Flies) | soldier fly, *Chloromyia formosa* |
| Diptera (Flies) | soldier fly, *Pachygaster leachii* |
| Diptera (Flies) | hoverfly, *Helophilus pendulus* |
| Diptera (Flies) | hoverfly, *Syritta pipiens* |
| Diptera (Flies) | hoverfly, *Episyrphus balteatus* |
| Hemiptera (bugs) | *Anthocoris nemorum* |
| Hemiptera (bugs) | Common froghopper |
| Hemiptera (bugs) | *Cicadula sp.* |
| Hemiptera (bugs) | *Euscelis incisus* |
| Hemiptera (bugs) | *Megophthalmus scabripennis* |
| Hemiptera (bugs) | *Acetropis gimmerthalii* |
| Hemiptera (bugs) | *Campyloneura virgula* |
| Hemiptera (bugs) | *Closterotomus norwegicus* |
| Hemiptera (bugs) | *Liocoris tripustulatus* |
| Hemiptera (bugs) | *Stenodema calcarata* |
| Hemiptera (bugs) | *Stenotus binotatus* |
| Hemiptera (bugs) | *Cacopsylla peregrina* |
| Hemiptera (bugs) | shieldbug, Green |
| Hemiptera (bugs) | shieldbug, Juniper |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | solitary bee |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | solitary wasp*, Ancistrocerus nigricornis* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | solitary wasp, *Crossocerus podagricus* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | solitary wasp, *Passaloecus singularis* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | mining bee, *Lasioglossum calceatum* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | mining bee, *Lasioglossum cupromicans* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | ant, *Myrmica scabrinodis* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | ant, *Myrmica ruginodis* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | bumblebee, common carder |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | Common wasp |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | Tree wasp |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | ant,Yellow meadow |
| Lepidoptera (Butterflies and moths) | micromoth, *Agriphila straminella* |
| Lepidoptera (Butterflies and moths) | butterfly, comma |
| Lepidoptera (Butterflies and moths) | butterfly, gatekeeper |
| Lepidoptera (Butterflies and moths) | butterfly, large white |
| Lepidoptera (Butterflies and moths) | butterfly, meadow brown |
| Lepidoptera (Butterflies and moths) | butterfly, ringlet |
| Lepidoptera (Butterflies and moths) | butterfly, small tortoiseshell |
| Lepidoptera (Butterflies and moths) | moth, marbled beauty caterpillar (a lichen feeder) |
| Orthoptera (Grasshoppers etc.) | grasshopper, Common green |