**St. Laurence’s Church, Church Stretton SO452936**

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

Report by Caroline Uff

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Image: C.Uff

**Introduction**

St. Laurence’s Church is situated in the centre of Church Stretton town. The churchyard is bounded by stone walls and has both open and shady areas. It is regularly mown except for a patch in the north-west which is left to flower. There have been several previous list/reports of the churchyard plants as follows:

* St Laurence’s churchyard flora. Helen Davidson 2004 (this also includes reference to a species list compiled by Sarah Whild in 1997).
* Report on Trees in the Churchyard of St. Laurence’s Church. Caring for God’s Acre / Peter Norman 1999.
* St. Laurence’s Churchyard Lichens recorded June 2006. Sue Swales.

**Survey details**

On 30/4/2014, member of SACWG were joined by staff from Caring for God’s Acre (CfGA) to assess the site.

**Ground Flora**: Species were recorded from a general walkover. Diversity was assessed in one or two quadrats (2x2m). Data was used to trial a ‘churchyard companion’ being developed by CfGA which aimed to classify the type of grassland present. Ferns on the walls were also identified, but lower plants were not.

**Trees**: The existing tree survey and map from 1999 was updated.

**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 within the churchyard were identified as far as possible. Seep nets and beating trays were used.

**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**

Ninety nine species were recorded – the full list is given at the end of the document. It was great to see a section left uncut to flower and set seed, as well as bird boxes on the site.

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|  | **# Species recorded** | **Comments** |
| **Ground Flora** | **60** | Worthy of note were ladies bedstraw, salad burnet, heath speedwell, mouse-ear hawkweed and black knapweed. These wildflowers are indicators of traditional species rich lowland grasslands which are becoming uncommon nationally. Harebell had been recorded in the past, but was not seen in 2014. However it is a late summer species so may still be present. |
| **Trees** | **10** | A mixture of ornamental and native species. Yew present with girth of 440cm |
| **Birds** | **5** | Bird boxes present but not checked. Too early to check for swifts. |
| **Insects** | **22** | Yellow meadow ant is a species associated with old grasslands |
| **Mammals** | **2** | Hedgehog droppings were worthy of note as hedgehogs numbers have plummeted in recent years. |
| **Reptiles** | **0** |  |
| **Grassland Type** |  | The ground flora was categorised as semi- improved neutral lowland grassland of moderate diversity, using the churchyard companion (CfGA). |

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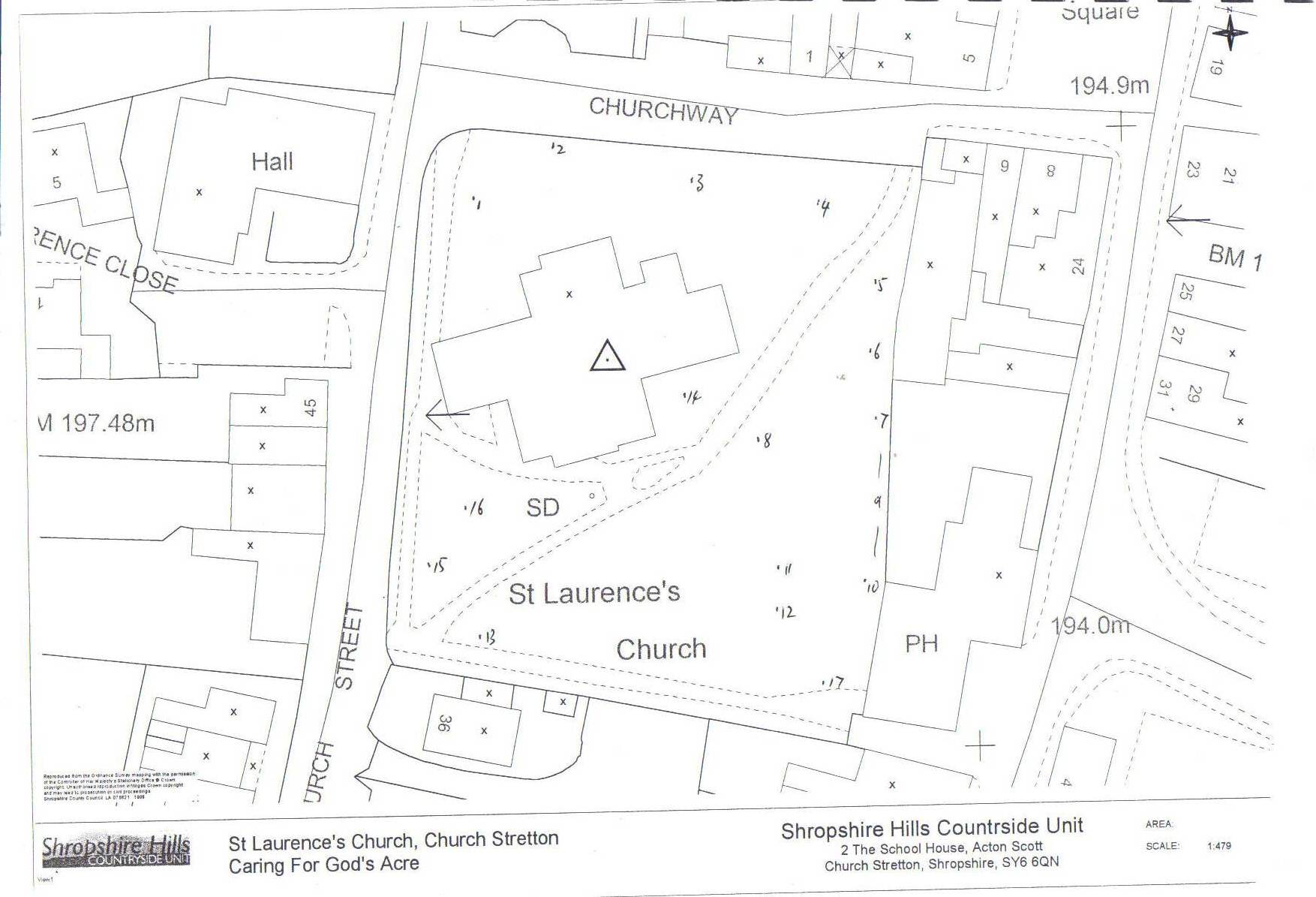
As well as providing a wonderful splash of colour during the summer , the seed heads go on to provide food and shelter for wildlife in the autumn. Image C.Uff

A sunny area of the churchyard was left uncut and this had very good grassland diversity and included some of the more significant indicator species. This patch was still uncut in November, providing seed heads for birds and overwintering insects. If left uncut in the long term, the patch may start to deteriorate, and will benefit from a late summer cut some years. Details of managing longer grassland are in the ‘*managing churchyards &burial grounds’* action pack available for free download on the Caring for God’s Acre website <http://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/>

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| Tree  no | Common Name | No. in group | Circumference (cm.) | No. of trunks | Height (m) | Spread (m) | Age Class | comments |
| 1 | **Douglas Fir** | 1 | 336 | 1 | 40 | 16 | Early maturity |  |
| 2 | **English oak** | 1 | 198 | 1 | 25 | 17 | Early maturity |  |
| 3 | Douglas fir – felled Feb 2014 | 1 | (366) |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4 | **Silver birch** | 1 | 178 | 1 | 16 | 16 | Mature |  |
| 5 | Holly – no longer present |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6 | Cypress – no longer present |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7 | **Deodar** | 1 | 288 | 1 | 30 | 15 | Mature | Some branches removed |
| 8 | **Yew** | 1 | 440 | 7 | 10 | 12 | Mature |  |
| 9 | Lawsons Cypress-felled Feb 2014 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10 | Lawsons Cypress – felled Feb 2014 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11 | Douglas Fir – felled Feb 2014 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12 | Holly – long dead |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 13 | **Rowan ‘Joseph Rock’** | 1 | 55 | 1 | 4 | 4 | Young |  |
| 14 | **Japanese cherry** | 1 | up to 76 | 3 | 10 | 7.5 | Young |  |
| 15 | **Snakebark maple** | 1 | 48 | 1 | 2 | 3 | Young | Diseased/ dying |
| 16 | **Holly** | 1 | Up to 54 | 9 | 6 | 4 | Young |  |
| 17 | **Yew** | 1 | 22 | 3 | 3 | 2 | Young |  |
| 18-21 | **Yew** |  | 2 | 1 | 0.5-1 | 0.5 | Young |  |

As well as this patch, there were also some diverse areas in the shorter grassland, and providing grass clippings are removed, these species should persist even if mown regularly. The shaded areas were less diverse and several large trees had recently been felled and were awaiting removal. The tree survey and map from 2000 was updated below.

Above: 2014 List of trees updated from Peter Norman’s Survey 1999 of St. Laurence's Churchyard, Church Stretton. The positions of the trees are mapped below.



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| **Group** | **Plant name** |
| Flowers | Alkanet, green |
| Flowers | Bedstraw, lady's |
| Flowers | Bittercress, hairy |
| Flowers | Bramble |
| Flowers | Buttercup, bulbous |
| Flowers | Buttercup, creeping |
| Flowers | Buttercup, meadow |
| Flowers | Carrot, wild |
| Flowers | Cat's-ear |
| Flowers | Celandine, lesser |
| Flowers | Chickweed, common |
| Flowers | Cleavers |
| Flowers | Clover, white |
| Flowers | Daisy |
| Flowers | Dandelions |
| Flowers | Dock, broad-leaved |
| Flowers | Feverfew |
| Flowers | Field/wood forget-me-not |
| Flowers | Garlic mustard |
| Flowers | Groundsel |
| Flowers | Hawkweed, mouse-ear |
| Flowers | Herb-Robert |
| Flowers | Honesty |
| Flowers | Ivy |
| Flowers | Knapweed, common |
| Flowers | Lady's smock |
| Flowers | Lamb's Lettuce |
| Flowers | Lettuce, wall |
| Flowers | Mallow, common/musk |
| Flowers | Mouse-ear, common |
| Flowers | Nipplewort |
| Flowers | Oxeye daisy |
| Flowers | Petty Spurge |
| Flowers | Plantain, ribwort |
| Flowers | Primrose |
| Flowers | Salad burnet |
| Flowers | Sorrel, common |
| Flowers | Sow Thistle, smooth |
| Flowers | Speedwell, germander |
| Flowers | Speedwell, heath |
| Flowers | Speedwell, thyme-leaved |
| Flowers | Speedwell, wall |

Plant species recorded 2014 (English names used where possible)

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| **Group** | **Plant name** |
| Flowers | Square-stalked willowherb |
| Flowers | Strawberry, barren |
| Flowers | Thistle, spear |
| Flowers | Vetch, common |
| Flowers | Wavy bittercress |
| Flowers | Willowherb, broad-leaved |
| Flowers | Willowherb, rosebay |
| Flowers | Wood avens |
| Flowers | Wood-rush, field |
| Flowers | Woundwort, hedge |
| Flowers | Yarrow |
| Ferns | Hart's tongue |
| Ferns | Wall Rue |
| Grasses | Cock's foot grass |
| Grasses | Sheep's fescue |
| Grasses | Sweet Vernal Grass |
| Lichens | several |
| Mosses | several, incl *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus* |
| Trees and Shrubs | Deodar |
| Trees and Shrubs | Douglas Fir |
| Trees and Shrubs | Elder |
| Trees and Shrubs | Holly |
| Trees and Shrubs | Oak, English |
| Trees and Shrubs | Ornamental cherry |
| Trees and Shrubs | Rowan |
| Trees and Shrubs | Silver Birch |
| Trees and Shrubs | Snakebark Maple |
| Trees and Shrubs | Yew |

Animal species recorded 2014 (English names used where possible)

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| **Group** | **Animal name** |
| Bird | Blackbird |
| Bird | Blue tit |
| Bird | Chaffinch |
| Bird | Chiffchaff |
| Bird | Robin |
| Mammal | Hedgehog (droppings) |
| Mammal | mouse/vole (footprints) |
| Coleoptera (Beetles) | cardinal beetle, *Pyrochroa serraticornis* |
| Coleoptera (Beetles) | ground beetle, *Bembidion quadrimaculatum* |
| Coleoptera (Beetles) | ground beetle, *Pterostichus maddidus* |
| Coleoptera (Beetles) | ladybird, 7-spot |
| Coleoptera (Beetles) | ladybird, larch |
| Coleoptera (Beetles) | ladybird, pine |
| Diptera (Flies) | fly, St Mark's |
| Diptera (Flies) | hoverfly, *Chrysotoxum sp* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | ant, yellow meadow |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | bumblebee, buff-tailed |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | bumblebee, common carder |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | bumblebee, white-tailed |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | Honey Bee |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | mason bee, *Osmia caerulescens* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | mason bee, *Osmia bicornis* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | mining bee, *Lasioglossum calceatum* |
| Hymenoptera (Ants, bees and wasps) | solitary bee*, Andrena bicolor* |
| Lepidoptera (Butterflies and moths) | butterfly, large white |
| Lepidoptera (Butterflies and moths) | butterfly, orange tip |
| Lepidoptera (Butterflies and moths) | butterfly, small tortoiseshell |
| Lepidoptera (Butterflies and moths) | micromoth, 20-plume |
| Lepidoptera (Butterflies and moths) | moth, spruce carpet |