

Botanical Survey of St Augustine of Canterbury, West Monkton

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The Church of St Augustine of Canterbury, West Monkton

Introduction

The village of West Monkton is situated 2 miles northeast of Taunton. The church of St Augustine of Canterbury dates mostly from the Fifteenth Century. An information leaflet on the church gives an excellent overview of the history of the building. A plan of the churchyard indicates that there are three sections. The oldest and now closed burial ground is dated 1888, this is adjacent to an area dated pre-1952. To the east of the church is the open churchyard which is dated post 1952. All three areas of churchyard are grasslands with upstanding gravestones and monuments. Scattered trees and shrubs are present with hedgerows or stone walls forming the boundaries. A short passage links the old and new areas.

The Botanical Survey

The survey was carried out over a two-hour period by three experienced botanists from the Somerset Rare Plants Group. Each area was searched and all the native and naturalised plants found were recorded. All the records were uploaded on to the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland's database. A series of photographs were taken.

Results

In total 152 species of plant were recorded. This total includes a mixture of trees and shrubs (19 species) ferns (6 species) grasses (12) and over 100 species of herb. The vast majority of plants recorded (Over 80%) were native plants of the British Isles. A relatively small number of non-native garden escapes were recorded. None of these non-native species are known to be invasive.



Species rich grassland in old burial ground

Botanical Survey Results

Post 1952 Churchyard and Passage

At the time of the survey the grass in this area had been recently mown and the arisings left on the ground. Floristically this area is the least diverse of the three areas, indicating the age and current management of the grasslands. The area is surrounded by a 2m high hedge of Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) with some Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg*) with scattered mature trees including Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) of note were some fine specimens of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) one tree was supporting a wild honey bees' nest. The hedge at the eastern end was dominated by Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*). The grassland comprised a range of common grasses such as False Oat-Grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and Perennial Rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*). There were a range of herbs such as Bugle (*Ajuga reptans*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Lesser Hawkbit (*Leontodon saxatilis*) Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), Meadow Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) and Bulbous Buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*). At the western end a few garden plants were noted such as Spanish Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*). The short passage between the two areas supported Meadow Vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*) and Traveller's-joy (*Clematis vitalba*).



Post 1952 Churchyard

Older Churchyard

The older burial grounds supported a species rich grassland, with some fine specimen trees including a magnificent ancient Yew (*Taxus baccata*). The botanical importance of the grassland is probably due to the age of the churchyard and the current management of cutting the grassland later in the season.

The grassland comprised a range of common grasses such as False Oat-Grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and Perennial Rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*). There were a range of herbs such as Rough Hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*) and Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) Bugle (*Ajuga reptans*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Lesser Hawkbit (*Leontodon saxatilis*) Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*) Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*) Meadow Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) and Bulbous Buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*). Tall herbs such as Cow Parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) together with the lower growing Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), make a colourful spectacle and are vital source of nectar and pollen to moths, butterflies, bees and other insects. This type of grassland is now rare in the British Isles.

The wall surrounding the Churchyard was rich in plant life, such as the non-native Red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) which is well known for attracting Hummingbird hawkmoth (seen on the day). Small ferns such as Maidenhair Spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes subsp. quadrivalens*) were present on the wall, the wall was also home to a range of mosses and lichens. A patch of Common Nettle and some rough ground within the churchyard proves additional wildlife habitat.

Discussion on Wildlife Management

Churchyards are often the most biodiverse parts of a parish, floristically they represent a species rich grassland habitat that has been lost from much of the surrounding countryside. Churchyards are of great importance for their veteran trees. As a consequence, they are home to a wide range of common and rare wildlife.



The yew tree probably the oldest living thing in the Churchyard.

The Churchyard at St Augustine of Canterbury, West Monkton is an excellent example of an area that is well managed for its wildlife while respecting the church building and graves.

The current mowing management appears to be enhancing the wildlife interest of the Older Churchyard, cutting the grass in late summer prevents the build up of scrub and maintains the floral diversity and supports insects and small mammals.

The more frequent cutting of the Open Churchyard is required to maintain the area for more recent burials. If the grass cuttings could be removed this would help reduce soil fertility which would help enhance the floral diversity.

Much of the flora of the area is comprised native plants, these native species are of greater benefit to insects and other wildlife. Planting of non-native garden flowers should be avoided if possible.

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) can provide excellent advice on planting, especially for plants that are attractive to pollinators. See their website for details.



Areas of Common Nettle and scrub make excellent wildlife areas; however, these should be stopped for expanding in to areas of species rich grassland.

The hedgerows surrounding the area of significant wildlife interest, they provide excellent habitat for breeding birds, wintering birds and small mammals. Hedgerows require cutting in late autumn (when the berries have finished).

Allowing the hedgerow to grow out can be beneficial as thicker hedges tend to support more wildlife. However, this is always a balance between management as a burial ground and management for wildlife.

At the current time the hedgerows appear to be in good condition. Similarly, the boundary walls are a great wildlife habitat they currently support a wide range of flowering plants a great source for nectar and pollen for insects.

It is recognised that herbicides and other chemicals are sometimes needed to manage buildings and paths etc, their use should be kept to a minimum and used with care. It is often better to undertake regular and frequent management rather than big clearance projects.



Boundary walls are a great wildlife habitat they currently support a wide range of flowering plants a great source for nectar and pollen for insects.



Lichens and mosses are frequently found growing on monuments and gravestone. They do no damage to the stonework.

Results from Closed Churchyard

<i>Acer platanoides</i>	Norway Maple
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow
<i>Ajuga reptans</i>	Bugle
<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	Garlic Mustard
<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>	Meadow Foxtail
<i>Anagallis arvensis</i> subsp. <i>arvensis</i>	Scarlet Pimpernel
<i>Anisantha sterilis</i>	Barren Brome
<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	Sweet Vernal-grass
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow Parsley
<i>Arabidopsis thaliana</i>	Thale Cress
<i>Arctium minus</i>	Lesser Burdock
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False Oat-Grass
<i>Arum maculatum</i>	Lords-and-Ladies
<i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i>	Hart's-tongue
<i>Asplenium trichomanes</i> subsp. <i>quadrivalens</i>	Maidenhair Spleenwort
<i>Athyrium filix-femina</i>	Lady-fern
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy
<i>Betula pendula</i>	Silver Birch
<i>Bryonia dioica</i>	White Bryony
<i>Calystegia silvatica</i>	Large Bindweed
<i>Campanula poscharskyana</i>	Trailing Bellflower
<i>Cardamine hirsuta</i>	Hairy Bitter-cress
<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>	Cuckooflower
<i>Carex divulsa</i> subsp. <i>divulsa</i>	Grey Sedge
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Common Knapweed
<i>Centranthus ruber</i>	Red Valerian
<i>Cerastium glomeratum</i>	Sticky Mouse-ear
<i>Circaea lutetiana</i>	Enchanter's-nightshade
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle
<i>Clematis vitalba</i>	Traveller's-joy
<i>Conium maculatum</i>	Hemlock
<i>Conopodium majus</i>	Pignut
<i>Cymbalaria muralis</i>	Ivy-leaved Toadflax
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot
<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>	Male-fern
<i>Epilobium montanum</i>	Broad-leaved Willowherb
<i>Euphorbia lathyris</i>	Caper Spurge
<i>Euphorbia peplus</i>	Petty Spurge
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Beech
<i>Festuca rubra</i> agg.	Red Fescue
<i>Ficaria verna</i> subsp. <i>fertilis</i>	Lesser Celandine
<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	Wild Strawberry
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers

Galium verum	Lady's Bedstraw
Geranium dissectum	Cut-leaved Crane's-bill
Geranium lucidum	Shining Crane's-bill
Geranium molle	Dove's-foot Crane's-bill
Geranium robertianum	Herb-Robert
Geum urbanum	Wood Avens
Hedera helix agg.	Ivy
Heracleum sphondylium	Hogweed
Holcus lanatus	Yorkshire-fog
Humulus lupulus	Hop
Hyacinthoides x massartiana	Hybrid Bluebell (H. non-scripta x hispanica)
Hypochaeris radicata	Cat's-ear
Ilex aquifolium	Holly
Iris foetidissima	Stinking Iris
Juglans regia	Walnut
Lamium purpureum	Red Dead-nettle
Lapsana communis	Nipplewort
Leontodon hispidus	Rough Hawkbit
Lepidium coronopus	Swine-cress
Leucanthemum vulgare	Oxeye Daisy
Lotus pedunculatus	Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil
Luzula campestris	Field Wood-rush
Malva sylvestris	Common Mallow
Mercurialis perennis	Dog's Mercury
Myosotis arvensis	Field Forget-me-not
Narcissus agg.	Cultivated Daffodil
Papaver orientale	Oriental Poppy
Papaver somniferum	Opium Poppy
Parietaria judaica	Pellitory-of-the-Wall
Pentaglottis sempervirens	Green Alkanet
Petasites fragrans	Winter Heliotrope
Plantago lanceolata	Ribwort Plantain
Poa annua	Annual Meadow-grass
Poa nemoralis	Wood Meadow-grass
Poa trivialis	Rough Meadow-grass
Polypodium vulgare sens. lat.	Polypody
Polystichum setiferum	Soft Shield-fern
Potentilla reptans	Creeping Cinquefoil
Potentilla sterilis	Barren Strawberry
Primula vulgaris	Primrose
Primula x polyantha	False Oxlip (P. veris x vulgaris)
Prunella vulgaris	Selfheal
Prunus avium	Wild Cherry
Prunus lusitanica	Portugal Laurel
Quercus robur	Pedunculate Oak
Ranunculus acris	Meadow Buttercup
Ranunculus bulbosus	Bulbous Buttercup
Ranunculus repens	Creeping Buttercup

<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common Sorrel
<i>Rumex sanguineus</i>	Wood Dock
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Common Ragwort
<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	Groundsel
<i>Silene dioica</i>	Red Campion
<i>Sison amomum</i>	Stone Parsley
<i>Soleirolia soleirolii</i>	Mind-your-own-business
<i>Sonchus asper</i>	Prickly Sow-thistle
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	Smooth Sow-thistle
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Rowan
<i>Tanacetum parthenium</i>	Feverfew
<i>Taraxacum</i> agg.	Dandelion
<i>Taxus baccata</i>	Yew
<i>Trifolium dubium</i>	Lesser Trefoil
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red Clover
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover
<i>Ulmus</i> agg.	Elm
<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	Navelwort
<i>Veronica arvensis</i>	Wall Speedwell
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Germander Speedwell
<i>Veronica hederifolia</i>	Ivy-leaved Speedwell
<i>Veronica persica</i>	Common Field-speedwell
<i>Vicia sativa</i>	Common Vetch
<i>Vicia sativa</i> subsp. <i>sativa</i>	Common Vetch
<i>Vicia sepium</i>	Bush Vetch
<i>Vinca major</i>	Greater Periwinkle
<i>Viola riviniana</i>	Common Dog-violet

Results from Passage

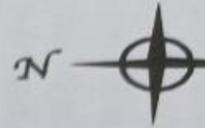
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow Parsley
<i>Arum maculatum</i>	Lords-and-Ladies
<i>Clematis vitalba</i>	Traveller's-joy
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot
<i>Festuca rubra</i> agg.	Red Fescue
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb-Robert
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	Wood Avens
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground-ivy
<i>Hedera helix</i> agg.	Ivy
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire-fog
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly
<i>Lapsana communis</i>	Nipplewort
<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	Meadow Vetchling
<i>Pentaglottis sempervirens</i>	Green Alkanet
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain
<i>Primula vulgaris</i>	Primrose
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder
<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>	Hedge Woundwort
<i>Symphytum officinale</i>	Common Comfrey
<i>Taraxacum</i> agg.	Dandelion
<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	Navelwort
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common Nettle
<i>Veronica persica</i>	Common Field-speedwell
<i>Vicia sepium</i>	Bush Vetch

Results from Open Churchyard

<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow
<i>Ajuga reptans</i>	Bugle
<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	Garlic Mustard
<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>	Meadow Foxtail
<i>Anisantha sterilis</i>	Barren Brome
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False Oat-Grass
<i>Arum maculatum</i>	Lords-and-Ladies
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy
<i>Bromus hordeaceus</i> subsp. <i>hordeaceus</i>	Common Soft-brome
<i>Cardamine hirsuta</i>	Hairy Bitter-cress
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Common Knapweed
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Common Mouse-ear
<i>Chaerophyllum temulum</i>	Rough Chervil
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle
<i>Conopodium majus</i>	Pignut
<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	Dogwood
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Beech
<i>Festuca rubra</i> agg.	Red Fescue
<i>Ficaria verna</i> subsp. <i>fertilis</i>	Lesser Celandine
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers
<i>Galium verum</i>	Lady's Bedstraw
<i>Geranium dissectum</i>	Cut-leaved Crane's-bill
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb-Robert
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	Wood Avens
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground-ivy
<i>Hedera helix</i> agg.	Ivy
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire-fog
<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	Bluebell
<i>Hypericum androsaemum</i>	Tutsan
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Common Ragwort
<i>Juglans regia</i>	Walnut
<i>Lapsana communis</i>	Nipplewort
<i>Leontodon saxatilis</i>	Lesser Hawkbit
<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	Oxeye Daisy
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-grass
<i>Lonicera nitida</i>	Wilson's Honeysuckle
<i>Luzula campestris</i>	Field Wood-rush
<i>Malus pumila</i>	Apple

<i>Myosotis arvensis</i>	Field Forget-me-not
<i>Narcissus</i> agg.	Cultivated Daffodil
<i>Pentaglottis sempervirens</i>	Green Alkanet
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain
<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual Meadow-grass
<i>Poa trivialis</i>	Rough Meadow-grass
<i>Potentilla sterilis</i>	Barren Strawberry
<i>Primula vulgaris</i>	Primrose
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Selfheal
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Pedunculate Oak
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow Buttercup
<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>	Bulbous Buttercup
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup
<i>Rosa canina</i> agg.	Dog-rose
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble
<i>Rubus ulmifolius</i>	Elm-leaved Bramble
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common Sorrel
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved Dock
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder
<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	Groundsel
<i>Silene dioica</i>	Red Campion
<i>Sison amomum</i>	Stone Parsley
<i>Sonchus asper</i>	Prickly Sow-thistle
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Rowan
<i>Stellaria media</i>	Common Chickweed
<i>Taraxacum</i> agg.	Dandelion
<i>Taxus baccata</i>	Yew
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common Nettle
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Germander Speedwell
<i>Veronica filiformis</i>	Slender Speedwell
<i>Veronica hederifolia</i>	Ivy-leaved Speedwell
<i>Veronica montana</i>	Wood Speedwell
<i>Veronica persica</i>	Common Field-speedwell
<i>Veronica serpyllifolia</i>	Thyme-leaved Speedwell
<i>Viola odorata</i>	Sweet Violet
<i>Viola riviniana</i>	Common Dog-violet
<i>Viscum album</i>	Mistletoe
<i>Lamium hybridum</i>	Cut-leaved Dead-nettle
<i>Hyacinthoides hispanica</i>	Spanish Bluebell
<i>Valerianella carinata</i>	Keeled-fruited Cornsalad

Outside Plan



Post 1952
Churchyard

Pre 1952
Churchyard

Mulberry
trees

Yew tree

Stocks

1888
Churchyard

Church

Gate

Gate

Path

Car park

