

## Wild Flower and Tree Compendium

In the spring and summer of 1998 the following flowers and trees were recorded:

Ash	Hairy Bitter-cress
Barren Strawberry	Hart's-tongue fern
Beech	Hedge Bedstraw
Bird's-foot Trefoil	Hedge Bindweed
Black Medick	Hedge Mustard
Bluebell	Hogweed
Box	Holly
Bramble	Honeysuckle
Broad-leaved Dock	Ivy
Broad-leaved Plantain	Knotgrass
Bugle	Lesser Burdock
Bush Vetch	Lesser Celandine
Cleavers	Lesser Stitchwort
Common Cat's-ear	Lords & Ladies
Common Chickweed	Mouse-eared Hawkweed
Common Hawthorn	Narrow-leaved Plantain
Common Knapweed	Nipplewort
Common Mouse-ear	Oxeye Daisy
Common Ragwort	Pellitory-of-the-wall
Common Sorrel	Prickly Sow-thistle
Common Vetch	Primrose
Cow-parsley	Privet
Creeping Buttercup	Purple Deadnettle
Creeping Cinquefoil	Red Clover
Crocus va.	Reflexed Stonecrop
Curled Dock	Scarlet Pimpernel
Cut-leaved Geranium	Scentless Mayweed
Daisy	Selfheal
Dandelion	Smooth Hawksbeard
Elder	Smooth Sow-thistle
English Stonecrop	Snowdrop
Field Bindweed	Stinging Nettle
Field Speedwell	Tufted Vetch
Garlic Mustard	White Clover
Germander Speedwell	White Stonecrop
Good Friday Grass	Wood Avens
Greater Plantain	Wood Dock
Groundsel	Yarrow
Ground Ivy	Yew

Please let us know if you find any more

## St Mary's Parish Church, Billingshurst Churchyard Conservation Project 2000



## GOD'S ACRE

*For centuries, churchyards were maintained simply by allowing farm animals, especially sheep, to graze. The Victorian era was characterised by church renovation and the introduction of more elaborate grave stones and memorials. At this time, animals began to be excluded and replaced by close-cutting of the grass with the newly invented lawn mower - thus the well-kept and 'manicured' graveyard became the norm.*

*The pendulum is now swinging in the opposite direction and the present generation has become deeply conscious of the needs of the environment. As more and more roads and more and more houses are built, wild-life is being driven out. However, a churchyard in a country parish should be a safe haven for birds and bees and butterflies and for wild flowers and grasses.*

## Churchyard History

St Mary's Church stands on a hill on the east side of the Old Roman road called Stane Street. Parts of the building date back some 800 years and it is probable that another place of worship pre-dated our own building. Over the years the churchyard has been extended as the village grew. Eventually there was no room for any more graves and the churchyard was officially closed in 1969. Since that date only caskets containing ashes may be interred. Our computerised records show that there are now over 1,900 memorials.

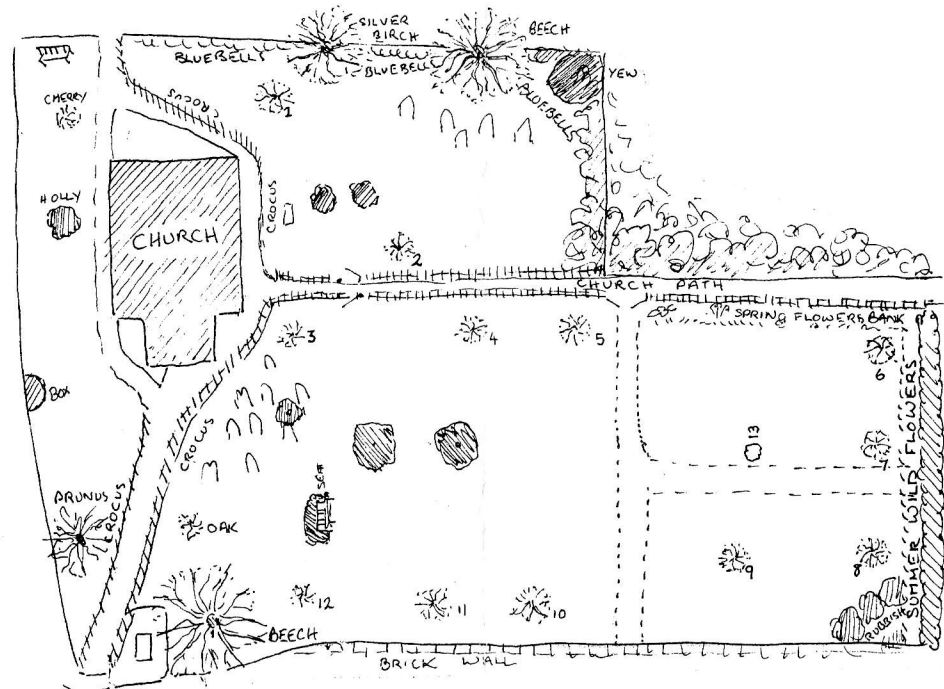
The project to improve the eco-friendliness of the churchyard began in the summer of 1996 with a visit to the village from West Sussex County Council's Countryside Services Department. With their encouragement, detailed plans were drawn up the following year by a small committee representing St Mary's Church, Billingshurst Parish Council and Billingshurst Society. Support was received from the Diocese, Sussex Botanical Recording Society and Brinsbury Agricultural College and, not least, from our own church family.

The prime responsibility for maintaining the churchyard passed on closure to Billingshurst Parish Council but the church's own maintenance team looks after the areas immediately surrounding the church itself. Unfortunately, with the growth of the village, houses crowd around the churchyard to the west and south overlooking what must once have been a quiet and peaceful meadow.

## Encouraging New Life

The main elements of our conservation scheme are the re-introduction of local wild flowers and a grass-cutting regime designed to encourage them. We are fortunate in having a number of mature trees in the churchyard, including beech, oak and yew.

Our plan for the 'beautification' of the churchyard included the planting of small flowering trees, new shrubs, a bluebell bank and two special wild flower areas. Crocuses and snowdrops have been planted along the sides of the main east/west public footpath and the wilderness area bordering the Vicar's garden has been cleared.



Outline of St Mary's Churchyard

Work commenced in the autumn of 1997. Church members enthusiastically gave money to buy the trees and bulbs and financial help was additionally received from West Sussex County Council. Students from Brinsbury dug the holes and planted the trees.

In the winters of 1997 and 1998 the following small trees were planted:-  
 one *Prunus Subhirtella Autumnalis*<sup>(1)</sup>  
 one *Malus 'John Downie'*<sup>(2)</sup>  
 one *Halesia Monticola*<sup>(3)</sup>  
 two *Malus 'Profusion'*<sup>(4 & 5)</sup>  
 one *Sorbus 'Pink Pagoda'*<sup>(6)</sup>  
 one *Amelanchia Canadensis*<sup>(7)</sup>  
 one *Robinia Pseudoacacia Frisia*<sup>(8)</sup>  
 one *Crataegus Oxycantha 'Paul's Scarlet'*<sup>(9)</sup>  
 two *Malus 'Floribunda'*<sup>(10 & 11)</sup>  
 one *Sorbus 'Joseph Rock'*<sup>(12)</sup>  
 and one *Ilex Golden King*<sup>(13)</sup>.

In the same period a mixture of wild bluebells and commercially grown bluebell bulbs were planted, also a number of *Viburnum Lauristinus* and small yews to help rebuild the hedge between the churchyard and vicarage garden. In the spring of 1999 wild flowers were planted in the chosen areas.

In October 1999 the church received two tiny Millennium yew trees grown from cuttings taken from the Tandridge yew in Surrey, estimated to be two thousand five hundred years old. These cuttings were produced by the Conservation Foundation and blessed by Bishop Eric at a special service in Chichester Cathedral. They will be planted in the churchyard when they grow a little larger.

More work needs to be done in the years to come to maintain what has been planted and to add to it.

## Place of Contemplation

Our aim is to recreate an atmosphere of peace and contemplation in the churchyard, which itself is at the very centre of a fast-expanding village. Our hope is that people can visit the graves of their loved-ones and pause to enjoy their surroundings.

Many people walk through the churchyard every day on their way to or from the High Street or attending a church service. In summer, visitors from home and abroad come to admire our beautiful old church. We hope all these people will enjoy the beauties of nature at work in our churchyard, whether it be trees, flowers and grasses or the humble lichen on the tombstones.