

## **St Stephen's Canterbury (formally Hackington) draft churchyard management plan**

### **Introduction and Background**

Although the church is just a small village church seating around 150 people, it stands in the middle of quite a large piece of land (see plan 1). It has been suggested that the churchyard is larger than might normally be required for burial purposes because it is part or all of the piece of land acquired by Baldwin in 1185 with a view to establishing his College of Canons. Whether or not this is the case, its size means that it is potentially an important resource for the local community for quiet enjoyment, education and the promotion of wildlife.

The churchyard was closed for burials in 1985. There is a garden of remembrance to the north-west of the church building, where ashes were scattered/interred from 1970 onwards. Most of these are prior to the churchyard closure in 1985, but a few are more recent—probably the spouses or other relatives of those previously commemorated in this area. There is a more recent plot for the interment of ashes underneath small marker stones level with the surrounding grass to the south of the church. This is almost full and this plan includes provision for an additional area for this purpose.

Most of the churchyard is occupied by graves but as apart from a few new burials in family graves there are none less than 35 years old the majority are not visited or tended by relatives or friends of the deceased. Many have become overgrown by grass and other small self-seeded plants and in many cases there is no headstone and it is impossible to identify who is buried in the area without consulting records.

At the south east end of the churchyard there is a line of well-established lime trees, with an area of scrubby woodland behind it. This was until recently fairly impenetrable scrub of small bushes, brambles etc but last autumn it was cleared by the Council and is now quite open. The Council officer responsible has said that they plan to continue to clear this annually to prevent it becoming so overgrown in future.

There are also trees scattered around the churchyard, some deliberately planted, others self-seeded.

Since closure the trees in the churchyard have grown considerably, and old photographs show that the area is much more densely wooded than it was formerly. This has made some areas very shady, restricting the biodiversity, and also provided cover which has encouraged the use of parts of the churchyard (particularly the northern and eastern ends) for antisocial and illegal purposes. There are some fine trees, but there are a large number of Irish yews which appear to have been originally planted as small grave markers, but their growth has been unchecked and they are now far larger than they should be, and they are impoverishing the area beneath them. As part of the strategy the PCC will be considering what can be done to improve the appearance of these trees. An ecological survey was commissioned by the Environmental Adviser to the diocese in May 2019 and a copy of this is attached.

To the south of the churchyard lies a recreation ground and children's play area owned by Canterbury City Council; here the boundary is a solid brick wall of uncertain date. To the east there is a playing field owned by the King's School, separated from the churchyard by a substantial (and rather ugly) metal fence. The boundary on the north is a rather flimsy fence of wooden stakes, which separates the churchyard from Birdcage Walk, a bridle path managed by Kent County Council. The only legitimate entrance to the churchyard at present is through a gate in the brick wall at the west end, which gives on to the pavement at the lower end of Hales Drive.

### **Legal framework**

The responsibility for basic maintenance lies with Canterbury City Council, but they are only legally required to keep it as it was at the time of closure and have no surplus funds for development. The relevant officer has said that the Council would be prepared to consider modifications to the existing maintenance arrangements so long as these were cost-neutral.

The PCC retains responsibility for aspects of maintenance not covered by CCC's legal responsibilities, and also for approving any changes to the arrangements for carrying out those responsibilities.

The closure of the churchyard does not affect the need for work on the churchyard to be approved by the diocese under the appropriate procedures (Archdeacon's permission, faculty etc). Responsibility for obtaining this permission lies with the Council for work undertaken in fulfilment of its legal responsibilities—otherwise this is the responsibility of the PCC.

Insurance and health and safety are the responsibility of the Council for work undertaken at its request: otherwise they are the responsibility of the PCC.

The routine management of the churchyard is at present carried out by Serco under contract with the Council. They mow during the growing season according to a plan agreed with the churchwardens in 1990 (see plan 2). Broadly speaking they mow the grass as far as the east end (area 1) of the church and paths to the most easterly row of graves fortnightly during the growing season, maintaining it like a lawn; area 3 is treated as meadow grass and cut 4 times a year, whilst the more easterly section (area 4) is cut twice a year and is therefore often quite long grass; the soil under this area is therefore not much walked on or compacted by mowing, and is quite uneven; there are also often signs of mole activity.

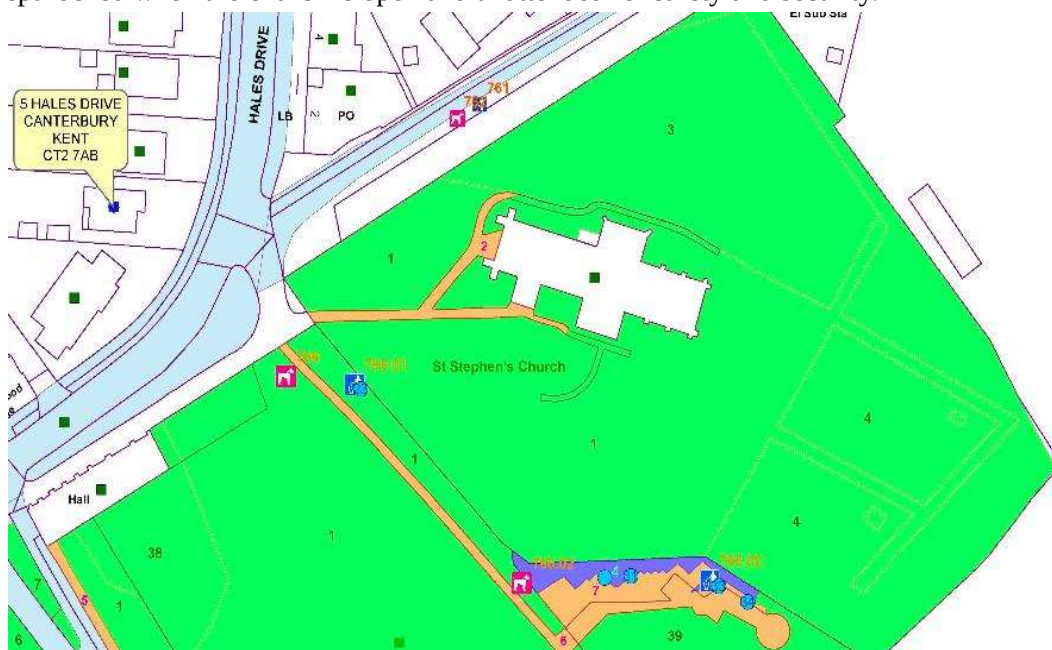
The Council are also responsible for removing dangerous or unhealthy trees and are required to assess this situation every two years. A site visit was undertaken with them in August 2019 as a result of which they identified a number of trees which needed pruning or removing. This work has now been done. The visit also identified a number of healthy trees which would benefit from pollarding but this did not fall within the Council's remit, and the process of obtaining a quotation for this work, PCC and Archdeacon's approval is currently underway.

Serco on behalf of the Council will also make safe any hazards which appear in the churchyard,—unstable gravestones, holes in the ground, used needles etc.

Apart from the work done by the Council, a few members of the congregation and others voluntarily collect litter, sweep up leaves, weed etc. Although what is done is extremely valuable, the volunteer resources are inadequate for what is needed. This work is not undertaken according to any overall strategy and according to protocols agreed by the churchwardens and PCC, and issues of legal responsibility, health and safety and insurance are not clear. Those most active in this work are elderly and are aware that they may not be able to continue as at present for much longer.

The west end of the churchyard is frequently visited by a variety of people out for walks with their children and dogs or alone. There is a bench near the west door where people are often to be seen sitting— sometimes enjoying the peace and the sun, sometimes also enjoying a drink.

The church building is open from early morning to dusk during British Summer-time; in the winter it is open when activities are taking place. There is a CCTV camera covering the nave and the vestry and tower are kept locked when the church is open and unattended for safety and security.



There are tarmac paths north and south of the church as far as the transepts; beyond that the ground is grassed and uneven so people are less inclined to venture unless they are visiting graves or wish to do things they would prefer were not seen. There is also a path to the area for burial of ashes, although it is circuitous and rather slippery due to moss so most people seem to take a more direct route over the grass. The attention of the Council has been drawn to the mossy paths and they have agreed to take action on this, including the

path to the burial area, although this is not strictly their responsibility since it was laid since closure of the churchyard.

A public meeting in July 2019 and a follow up meeting the next month indicated an interest amongst residents' associations and other individuals and groups for greater involvement in the management of the churchyard and support for making it more accessible and better used as a community resource, and increasing the security of the area and diminishing antisocial use and its consequences e.g. littering. It was agreed that a voluntary group would be set up, under the aegis of the PCC, to organise and foster this involvement and the PCC has approved this concept in principle. This management plan is part of the process to implement this strategy.

### **Aims of the Management of the Churchyard**

The following aims have been agreed by the PCC:

- 1) to pay proper respect to those buried in the churchyard and to enable relatives, friends, descendants and others to visit those graves they wish to and place appropriate tributes in their memory.
- 2) to enable and encourage local residents and visitors to the area to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the churchyard safely and securely,
- 3) to enable the churchyard to be used as an educational resource by local schools and visitors of all ages.
- 4) to encourage biodiversity in the churchyard so that wildlife may be protected and flourish in the area.
- 5) to find ways in which those who are not part of the worshipping community of St Stephen's can contribute to its maintenance and development.

It is recognised that these aims may at times conflict, and where this is the case the strategy outlined below attempts to be a reasonable compromise between them.

The full implementation of this development plan will require considerable sums of money and also involve organisation, obtaining quotations and in many cases faculties and planning permission. It is not therefore intended that the full plan should be implemented at once, but in stages of a considerable number of years. Arrangements for deciding which elements to progress, how and when, are outlined below.

Achieving the first four aims will require the involvement of local people beyond the worshipping community of St Stephen's'; this is seen as not merely a means to the end of achieving these aims but as a good in itself as part of the mission of the church, and a contribution to aims 2 and 3, and so has been included amongst the aims.

### **Aim 1: Respect for the departed and facilitation of mourning**

#### ***Grave identification***

A large-scale plan of the churchyard together with the register of graves will be made available in the church to those wishing to identify a particular grave.

There are war graves in the churchyard; these will be identified on the plan above, and poppy crosses will be placed on each grave every year on Remembrance Sunday and will remain on the grave throughout the year. We have been approached by the War Graves Commission to say that they are launching a volunteer scheme for the care of such graves; we will aim to make such volunteers welcome and include them in the wider churchyard management strategy

The ashes of more than 100 people have been interred or scattered in the Garden of Remembrance.

The Garden of Remembrance will be maintained as a specific identifiable area of the churchyard, and plants and shrubs placed there to make it an ornamental garden will be maintained and replaced as necessary. Where they can be traced relatives and friends of those commemorated in this area will be encouraged to contribute to this financially and/or by assisting in maintenance under the volunteer scheme.

A memorial board will be installed near the Garden of Remembrance where ashes have been scattered, listing the names of those commemorated in this area. (This will require financial support and both planning and faculty permission).

The current area for interment of ashes will be maintained as at present, with the grass between and around the stones and between the area and the steps to reach it being cut regularly and maintained as a lawn. The tarmac path will be kept clean and moss etc which makes it dangerous to walk on removed (hopefully by the Council but we cannot insist on this as it is not strictly their responsibility). A bench will be kept in the area

so that those who wish to can sit comfortable for their period of contemplation close to their departed loved ones.

A new area for interment of ashes will be identified (see plan A). This and access areas to it will be maintained in a similar way to the present area. A faculty will be needed to allow this area to be used for interment.

Although primarily intended to contribute to Aim 4, the 'Adopt a Grave' programme will also contribute to this aim.

**Aim 2: To enable and encourage local residents and visitors to the area to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the churchyard safely and securely, Security and safety**

Police advice is that CCTV cameras covering the gate and the north east of the churchyard would be valuable additions to the security. The former would capture anyone entering the churchyard, and the latter area is hidden from public view and particularly suitable for anti-social behaviour (as instanced by the recent vandalism to the window in the north transept). Some believe the churchyard is part of a 'CCTV free' route from the Hales Place estate into the City, and if this is the case then it is particularly likely to attract antisocial behaviour; conversely CCTV would 'block' this route. Given the ease of access to the churchyard day and night these would need to be night vision cameras.

The planned work to coppice the group of Irish yews to the north of the church will make this coverage possible and improve sight lines for general visibility of this part of the churchyard.

The replacement of the wooden stake fence, which acts as a boundary marker but not as a barrier, with a hedge will increase security. The priority for this is at the east end of the Birdcage Walk boundary where there is less public visibility. Originally this was suggested as a way to improve wildlife and its implementation is discussed further under aim 4.

The path to the north of the churchyard and that to the area for burial of ashes have been neglected and are covered with moss which makes them slippery in bad weather. A maintenance programme to keep these clear has been discussed with the Council and will be monitored as part of this strategy.

**Welcome. Gates**

Ideally in order to make people feel welcome to the space the gates should be open at all times. As the south wall is easily scaled and the gates are not lockable closing them offers no benefits in terms of security; on the contrary by discouraging bona fide visitors they increase the risk of antisocial behaviour.

In autumn and windy weather however open gates allow dead leaves and litter to blow into the churchyard, making the management of litter discussed below more difficult.

The removable notice on the right hand gate indicating that the church is open, together with keeping the left hand gate open, has been successful in encouraging visitors to the building. This will continue to be used when the building is open during daylight hours. An additional notice will be purchased which says 'The churchyard is open. Please come in' will normally be put in place when the church building is shut. A third notice stating 'The churchyard is open. Please shut the gate to keep out leaves and litter' will be available to be used in autumn and winter at times when this is a problem.

No other notices should be attached to the gates or elsewhere without explicit permission of the PCC

**Welcome. Paths**

The extension of the existing paths into a network, completing the circle around the church and towards the east end of the churchyard would make it easier—particularly for those with mobility difficulties—to access the whole of the churchyard. An appropriate permeable surface would need to be laid on the areas currently under grass.

This would require considerable financial resources, planning permission and a faculty.

In the short term the Council has suggested a revision to the mowing plan, so that a network of paths is mown fortnightly and area where people are less likely to walk will be managed as meadows i.e. cut in early spring, in June and then twice more at about six-week intervals. A plan of this proposal is attached to this document. It is proposed that this should be adopted for a trial period of one year and then reviewed with the Council.

Now that the scrub has been cleared a woodland walk and seating area in the wooded area beyond the line of trees can be developed. A natural path already exists and with use could be maintained as a beaten earth path to the eastern part of the churchyard. This may require some management above and beyond the Council's annual clearance of undergrowth.

As part of the above or in a different area the creation of a 'Quiet Garden' with appropriate planting and seating and resources would help people make use of the area of quiet. Advice on creating such an area will be available from the Quiet Garden Trust, but they are not in a position to contribute funding.

Both the last two above would involve both set up costs and volunteer labour for maintenance as well as probably planning permission and faculties.

### **A North East passage**

Creation of a north-eastern entrance to the churchyard would be likely to encourage legitimate usage of the whole of the area but it would also give access to those with less good intentions. Given the risk of antisocial behaviour in this part the security advice is that in addition to being covered by the CCTV mentioned above, this entrance should have a lockable and unscalable gate which should be closed in winter and at night all the year round. In addition to building costs of gates and pathways this would require planning permission, a faculty and consultation and collaboration with KCC who manage Birdcage Walk; and would add the task of locking this gate to locking the building for those who open and close the church. This is not therefore considered to be a priority, but an option to be kept under review.

### **Litter**

At present the only option for refuse is either to take it away or to put it in the bins, which are usually placed discreetly on the north side, as they are not attractive

Provision of litter bins clearly visible near the entrance to the churchyard may help with the litter problem, and options for this will be explored and tested. Permanent arrangements will certainly require faculty and planning consent; whether temporary trials will be exempt from this requirement will need to be explored.

So far dog waste has not been a particular problem in the churchyard. If however improved access leads to increased usage including by dog walkers then that may change. The situation will be kept under review and appropriate provision made should this be necessary.

### **Aim 3: to enable the churchyard to be used as an educational resource by local schools and visitors of all ages.**

The church building and churchyard are resources of considerable educational value. Links already exist with St Stephen's primary school, the Archbishop's School and the University of Kent under which from time to time groups make use of these resources for educational purposes. Under this strategy these links will be maintained and strengthened.

The churchyard provides a rich source for learning about history and wildlife, and resources will be developed to make these more accessible to visitors. These will include:

Leaflets: On the trees in the churchyard. A survey was done some years ago and merely needs updating and making available.

On other plant life in the churchyard: the ecological survey provides the basis for this.

On the history of some of those buried in the churchyard: the information has been collected as part of the survey of graves conducted recently and just needs to be written up.

Further resources such as guided walks, quizzes etc will be developed when resources allow. This will depend on volunteers who are prepared to do this work. Opportunities for pupils and students to do this sort of thing as a project will be explored.

Initially these leaflets can be made available in the porch, but an outside leaflet box should be installed so that they are available to visitors when the church is closed. These will require some form of faculty permission.

A temporary notice board near the entrance giving general information about the churchyard and the development plan (for example changes in the mowing plan, tree work) will be installed. Further permanent signage to guide people around the churchyard and give information may be installed as and when this becomes appropriate and affordable. These will require some form of faculty permission.

The history of the church has recently been revised and this has now been made available in paper form within the church. Both this history and the leaflets discussed above will be also made available in electronic

form on the parish website, and QR codes placed in appropriate places to enable visitors to access them, and possibly published in paper form for sale in due course.

**Aim 4: To encourage biodiversity in the churchyard so that wildlife may be protected and flourish in the area.**

**A number of activities will contribute to the achievement of this aim:**

- Provision of nesting boxes for birds, insect hotels, wood piles and composting bins which would encourage wildlife and enhance biodiversity (there would be purchasing and installation costs involved—the latter could be reduced by volunteering). Faculty and planning permission not required.
- Replacement of some or all of the wooden stake fence to the north of the churchyard by a hedge of native species. This has security as well as environmental benefits. Plants for this are available with adequate notice from the Woodland Trust free of charge, but adequate volunteers would be needed to be assured not merely to plan the hedge but to maintain it. Some funding would probably also be needed at some point to employ a professional to lay the hedge to ensure a strong base. Faculty and planning permission probably required. Some plants have already been offered by a local RSPB representative for planting in autumn 2020. A decision on whether to accept this offer is needed.
- Adopt-a-Grave scheme. The idea of this is that individuals, families or groups agree to take responsibility for planting and maintaining a small area of the churchyard (usually though not necessarily a grave bounded by an edging stone) in an agreed manner which both contributes to the beauty of the churchyard and makes it more attractive to wildlife. There was considerable interest in this idea when it was mooted at the second public meeting last August. An outline plan of how this will work is attached.
- Creation of wood and leaf piles where fallen material should be gathered together to enrich the biodiversity. Such sites already exist mostly on the boundary with the King's school playing fields; these and others created when necessary will be clearly labelled so that all volunteers are aware of them and use them. Other than in exceptional circumstances all dead wood, leaves and other plant material will be composted or left to rot within the Churchyard so that the area becomes the site of a self-sustaining biological cycle.

**Aim 5: Encouraging and supporting voluntary input**

The present volunteer workforce is small, elderly and lacks strategic guidance and protocols under which to work safely and securely.

In order to enlarge the volunteer workforce it is proposed that a St Stephen's Churchyard Supporters' group be set up. Individuals, families and organisations can join this group on payment of a subscription of £5 for individuals, or £10 for families and other groups. Simple ways in which people can do this, online and otherwise, so that the list of supporters with names and email addresses can be kept by the parish in ways which conform with data protection legislation and their contributions, by subscription and by other fund raising activities will be devised.

Supporters can contribute to the aims of this strategy in one or more of these ways:

- By donation of funds or specific objects (the latter with the agreement of the Churchyard Management Group) to support the aims above
- By taking part in churchyard working parties which will be organised under the auspices of the Churchyard Management Group from time to time.
- By agreeing to undertake regularly specific tasks to maintain the churchyard (collecting litter, sweeping up leaves, weeding etc) in accordance with the aims of this strategy as agreed with the Churchyard Management Group, and in accordance with the guidance for volunteers which will be developed as an annex to this strategy.
- By agreeing to fund and undertake the planting of a specific area with appropriate plants from an approved list to enhance wildlife in the churchyard and to maintain that area for an agreed period under the 'adopt-a-grave' scheme (outlined in annex Z).

All those volunteering to work in the churchyard will agree to do so in accordance with aims of this strategy, any specific guidance from the Churchyard Management Group and the general guidance for volunteers and will receive appropriate training and supervision.

Supporters will receive regular updates on activities and developments in the churchyard and will be sent the minutes of the annual review by the Churchyard Management Group. From time to time they will also be

invited to events which encourage and celebrate the richness of the churchyard. (e.g. Rogationtide, Corpus Christi, Harvest, Remembrance etc).

## **General maintenance**

### **Council Mowing and maintenance**

It is proposed that modifications to the mowing pattern be agreed with the Council to encourage wildlife by managing appropriate areas by strimming 3–4 times per year and mowing a network of paths which ensures good access to graves and to the more distant areas of the churchyard for visitors. Any changes need to be cost neutral; thus it will involve leaving some areas at the west end of the churchyard currently mown to grow longer (other than mown paths) to free up resources to mow paths in areas currently managed by occasional strimming. This will contribute to all the aims above.

The Council is responsible for dealing with any dangers which arise in the churchyard; for example unstable gravestones or possibly infected needles or other sharps. Procedures for informing the responsible officer of any dangers identified will be included in the guidance for volunteers (to be developed)

The Council is responsible for assessing and carrying out any work needed on trees in the churchyard as a result of them becoming dangerous or unhealthy. The next review is due in summer 2020. Tree work by volunteers should be done only with proper regard to health and safety and in accordance with this strategy and the advice received by arboreal experts at or as a result of the annual review.

### **Arrangements for implementation and review of this strategy.**

A meeting will be held at least once a year between the churchwardens and representatives of the PCC and the Council (to be known as the Churchyard Management Group). Appropriate representatives of the diocese will be invited to this meeting to advise on the legalities of any actions suggested. Appropriate representatives of the volunteer register and of relevant local organisations (schools, residents' associations, other voluntary organisations) will also be invited to attend this meeting to give their views.

The meeting will

1. review the implementation of this strategy over the previous year and consider any actions needed to improve this.
2. consider whether it is practical and prudent to implement any of the development proposals in the current strategy and procedures for doing so including where necessary obtaining faculties or other permissions and raising funds (by obtaining grants, soliciting donations or other fund raising activities).
3. produce an annual plan for the management and development of the churchyard within this strategy over the next year and proposals for the triennial revision of the strategy.
4. review the guidance to volunteers and agree any changes needed to procedures outlined in that document
5. authorise one or more people to approve and monitor voluntary contributions to the churchyard management and other aspects of the plan for the coming year on a day-to-day basis.
6. Prepare a written report of its deliberations to be sent to the PCC and to all registered Supporters within one month of the meeting.

The PCC will consider this report at its next meeting and also receive and approve an account of income and expenditure relating to the churchyard (subscriptions from supporters, fund-raising, grants etc). This account will be made available on request to registered supporters.

### **Priorities in the above plan.**

The view of the PCC at the time of the adoption of this plan is that this is list of elements in the plan is in order of priority for their implementation. Some elements involve little or no cost or legal permissions; these can be done as soon as possible. Others involve finance and legal complexities to varying degrees and so can only be undertaken when the necessary resources are this may of course change according to circumstances—for example if funding becomes available for an expensive element in the plan this may give it priority over a cheaper but unfunded element.

Group A. actions which can be implemented immediately (or at least within the next six months)

1. Create a Supporters' group.
2. Finalise adopt and disseminate volunteer guidance and training programme
2. Launch Adopt a Grave scheme
3. Find sponsors for nesting boxes and insect hotels

4. Agree changes to mowing plan with Council
5. Publish updated church history in paper and online
6. Develop and publish information leaflets about the churchyards
7. Obtain notices to implement gate policy
8. Improve planting in Garden of Remembrance
9. Install CCTV cameras
10. Decide on priorities and timing for work on the Irish Yews.

### **Longer term action**

11. Memorial Board for Garden of Remembrance
12. New area for Ashes
13. Outside leaflet dispensers
14. Educational Boards
15. Hedge
16. Path extension
17. Woodland Walk
18. Quiet Garden
19. North East Passage

### **Adopt a Grave scheme**

Following public consultation and advice from relevant experts in churchyard maintenance, ecology, legal processes and security the PCC has agreed a management strategy for the churchyard with the following aims:

- 1) to enable the friends, relatives and descendants of those buried in the churchyard to visit those graves they wish to and place appropriate tributes in their memory.
- 2) to enable local residents and visitors to the area to enjoy the peace and tranquility of the churchyard safely and securely,
- 3) to enable the churchyard to be used as an educational resource by local schools and visitors of all ages.
- 4) to encourage biodiversity in the churchyard so that wildlife may be protected and flourish in the area.
- 5) to find ways in which those who are not part of the worshipping community of St Stephen's can contribute to its maintenance and development and thus feel they have a stake in this beautiful space.

To this end this spring we are launching an 'adopt-a-grave' programme under which individuals, families and groups can agree to take responsibility for planting and maintaining one of the graves which is not currently being tended.

There are more than 50 graves in the churchyard which have an edging stone around them. Some of these also a headstone in situ, some do not. In either case many of them are no longer visited and maintained by friends or relatives of the deceased and are just full of grass and other self-seeded plants, although some of them have bulbs and other plants which are worth preserving. These are just strimmed from time to time by Serco as part of their management plan.

The flora of the churchyard is not particularly rich, and adding plants which would provide food for insect life would not only make the area more attractive to wildlife but also enhance its beauty.

We have initially identified 15 graves with edging stones around them which are suitable for "adoption". If however anyone has a particular empathy with a deceased parishioner even if they are not a relative and wishes to adopt that grave then this can probably be arranged.

Those who wish to 'adopt a grave' will agree to pay for and plant one of these bordered areas with suitable plants from the list below which has been agreed with our wildlife advisors. The plants chosen should also be suitable for the site of the grave, some of which are in full sun and others which are in partial or deep shade which affects what can be grown there. Also the nature of the soil differs somewhat from grave to grave. The choice should be discussed with those managing the scheme before purchasing plants. Information on where to obtain suitable plants is given below.

Adopters will also agree to maintain it for a period of time—ideally three years, but longer or shorter periods are possible.

Generally it is better both for look and for maintenance if the each grave is planted with one particular plant as a block so that it acts as ground cover and keeps down weeds although planting both with spring bulbs and herbaceous plants which flower in the summer is possible, and ground cover and a small bush (e.g. a rose) is



also possible. The amount of maintenance would vary somewhat according to what was planted there but many of the low growing shrubs and herbaceous plants which have been suggested could be kept in reasonable order with 3 or 4 visits a year. Advice on how to maintain the species chosen will be provided. Those who wish to contribute financially but cannot undertake the maintenance of a grave can sponsor a grave by making a one-off contribution for the planting, and/or a regular donation to pay someone else to maintain it. Conversely those who would like to volunteer to maintain a grave but are not in a position to pay for its planting can adopt a sponsored grave.

Prior to launching the scheme it will be necessary to prepare the graves which have been identified as suitable for adoption, to clear the weeds and level the soil within the area to be planted. A working party to do this will take place at which all are welcome, whether or not they plan to adopt a grave.

We would like to get as many graves planted in time for the official launch of the programme which will be on Rogation Sunday which is the day when the Church traditionally celebrates Creation and prays for the crops and other plants growing in the coming year.

If you are interested in adopting a grave, would like to take part in the preparatory working party, or have any questions please contact.

### **List of plants suitable for grave planting**

The aim is to have the graves planted with species which look attractive to visitors, which are beneficial to wildlife, which provide good cover for the grave area to prevent growth of weeds and which are easily maintained. Ideally native species are preferred to imports or cultivated varieties as these tend to be better for wildlife. Species which have been suggested which meet these criteria include:

marjoram	lavender	primroses	ox eye daisies
Michaelmas daisies	periwinkle	thyme	crocus
bluebells (native, not imported varieties)		Poppies (native not imported varieties)	
bugle			

Any of those from the RHS list of pollinators (attached) suitable for the site may also be suitable.

Other suggestions will be welcomed and considered by the churchyard management group.

There are some pictures here: [http://www.kentphotoarchive.com/kpa/search/mappics.php?startnumber=0&feature\\_id=637&lat=51.28695871899013&lng=1.0915802947998567&zoom=14&type=roadmap](http://www.kentphotoarchive.com/kpa/search/mappics.php?startnumber=0&feature_id=637&lat=51.28695871899013&lng=1.0915802947998567&zoom=14&type=roadmap)