

All Saints Churchyard Clifton



Ivy Broomrape



Lady's Smock



Common bird's foot trefoil

Management Recommendations March 2010

By Bedfordshire Wildlife Trust



Grass cutting

- ◇ *Conservation areas* – St Albans Diocese through the Living Churchyard Scheme (supported by Bedfordshire Wildlife Trust) is encouraging the development of wildlife areas in many of its churchyards. In All Saints Churchyard, we recommend that two areas are managed as wildlife areas:
 - Area 1 by the rose bed (see map) - regular cutting of this area should continue as normal until the beginning of June, after this time the plants should be allowed to flower and set seed for about 8 weeks before commencing regular cutting again at the beginning of August with the cuttings removed.
 - Area 2 (see map) – leave this area uncut for 8 weeks from the end of April to allow the plants in this area, including lady's smock (*Cardamine pratensis*), a chance to flower and set seed. Regular cutting should commence at the beginning of July with the cuttings removed.
 - Ivy Broomrape (*Orobanche hederæ*) - is rare in Bedfordshire and is only found in a few sites, so the presence of this species in the churchyard is particularly special and worth mentioning on its own here. It grows as a parasite on ivy by sapping nutrients from the root of the ivy. This plant grows in a tiny area in the east corner of the churchyard behind the holly (see map). This species flowers in June and July. Try and ensure that this area is maintained in its present state by ensuring that holly and any other species, apart from ivy, do not become dominant where this species is growing.

Removing cuttings

- ◇ Grass cuttings should be raked up and removed from the churchyard. This is especially important in areas that have not been cut for a while. By removing the cuttings it will prevent the vegetation underneath from being smothered and killed and also prevent the build up of soil nutrients which will encourage the spread of weeds (e.g. nettles, docks and thistles) at the expense of the fragile and rare wildflowers and fungi.

Trees and shrubs

- ◇ Parishes can undertake the routine maintenance of trees such as pruning but please try and keep this to the absolute minimum as too much pruning can permanently damage trees. Any major work such as pollarding, coppicing or felling requires a faculty and

should be carried out by trained Arborists - consults your District Arboricultural Officer for more information.

- ◇ Churchyards are popular homes for bats, which have rapidly declined across the UK and both bats and their roosts are protected by law. Before any major works occurs to trees it is highly recommended that you consult your local Natural England office as the work could result in the disturbance of bats or their roosts.
- ◇ *Log piles* - valuable to wildlife (e.g. invertebrates, mammals, fungi). Placing log piles in the shade around the back of the churchyard would encourage a wide variety of wildlife.
- ◇ *Dead wood* - valuable to wildlife (e.g. invertebrates, fungi). Try to leave some on standing trees, larger hedgerow shrubs and on the ground, where possible.
- ◇ *Planting new trees* - this is not always environmentally friendly and in most cases we recommend that planting should only be considered when old trees are felled or they are approaching the end of their life and new ones are required to replace them. However, if you wish to plant a tree then we would always recommend planting native varieties. These should be sited in an area of grassland where there is the least amount of biodiversity because planting new trees on grassland will shade out and eliminate many of the important higher (e.g. lady's smock, common bird's foot trefoil) and lower (e.g. fungi) plants that live in churchyards.

Ivy on trees

- ◇ Ivy provides a very valuable habitat to wildlife; it is not a threat to healthy trees unless it has grown extensively into the crown and covers the host tree's foliage. It should not be prevented from growing up the tree. If however there are concerns that the ivy is causing harm to the tree then it should be removed by cutting the ivy at the base and allowing it to die before being pulled off the tree, to prevent damage to the bark.

Mosses, liverwort and lichens

- ◇ Gravestones and stone walls are important sites for mosses, liverworts and lichens, particularly when there are no natural outcrops of rock. Of the 1700 species found in Britain, 300 have been found growing on churchyard stone in lowland Britain. Almost half of these species are rare and seldom occur in any other habitat. They also grow on the barks of trees and particularly like to grow on ash, elder, oak and willows. These species like sufficient light and moisture to colonise and grow. They grow very slowly, sometime no more than half a millimetre a year and many are long-lived. Some may be as old as the gravestone and tree bark on which they live. Damage to stoneworks

by lichens is minimal. Walls and gravestones built of good quality stone have shown little deterioration, other than that caused by natural weathering. A good covering of lichens may actually protect them.

- ◇ They are best managed through a balanced management plan. Strimming the vegetation or spraying around the base of gravestones to discourage weeds may damage the stonework and existing communities and leave unpleasant stains, therefore please resist spraying herbicides around the bases of stoneworks and if strimming is required please undertake this with great care. Bramble, ivy or cow parsley can overshadow the gravestone causing these species to wither and die through lack of light. Please try and remove these plants where they are starting to shade out the lichens, mosses and liverworts.

Herbicides and fertilisers

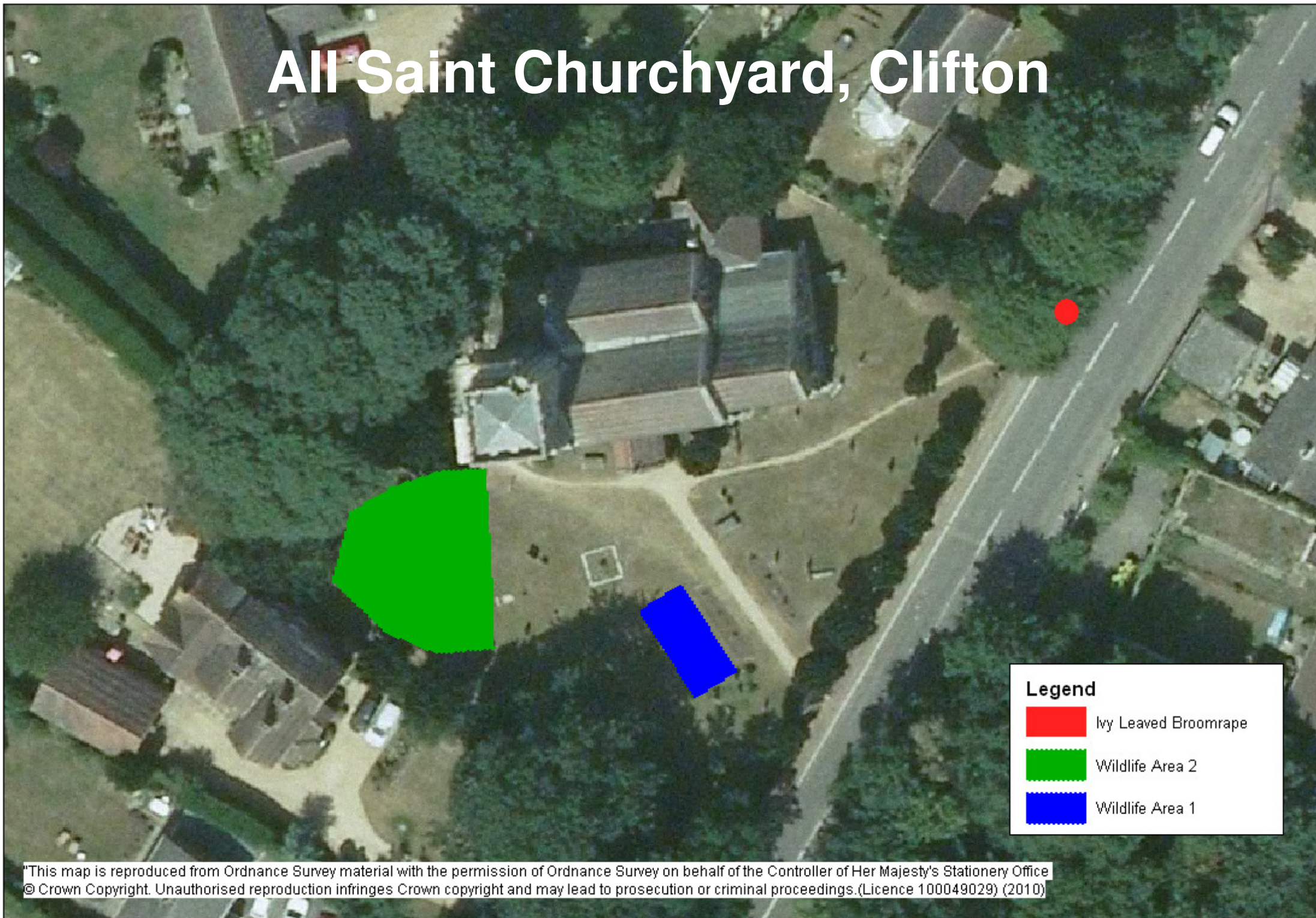
- ◇ Biodiversity rich sites are easily damaged if fertilizers and herbicides are sprayed. Application of these chemicals will encourage vigorous grass production which will out-compete the fragile wildflowers and fungi, leading to a wildflower poor sward dominated by a few coarse grasses and weeds.

Bird and bat boxes

- ◇ These would provide valuable shelter and/or nesting sites for birds and bats. There are a number of outlets which sell these products. Alternatively they can be easily made from cheap material. The RSPB provide a nest box blue-print on their website. The time of year, location and direction are important factors when erecting boxes and they vary for different species. A facility is not required if they are fixed to trees but may be required if you want to fix them to a building.

For detailed information about the wildlife present in the churchyard and for more detailed management recommendations, please see the report produced by Alan Outen entitled 'All Saints Church Clifton, An Ecological Management Plan for Churchyards'.

All Saint Churchyard, Clifton



Legend

-  Ivy Leaved Broomrape
-  Wildlife Area 2
-  Wildlife Area 1