



## ST GEORGE THE MARTYR SHIRLEY

### AN INVENTORY OF THE CHURCH GARDEN (REVISED) 2023







## ST GEORGE THE MARTYR, SHIRLEY: LOGGING THE WILDLIFE

## Introduction

This is, in 2023, the third revision of the original 2010 Inventory. If you see what the author has missed, please let us have your observations. Not many parishes have this sort of list, partial as it inevitably is. Many of our treasures have, individually, a short life. A poppy flower may last a day, but a poppy plant may have 400 flowers in a season. Never forget that there are more living (non-human) things in the "St George's space" at this present moment than there have been human visitors since the first church building opened in 1937.

Not all that long ago, what we now call Vicars (or Priests in Charge) were men (all men at that time) who got much of their income from farmland, and took a keen interest in the countryside around them. Some, like the 18th Century Parson Woodforde, were not just priests, but farmers, livestock owners, gardeners and hunters. Some, like Gilbert White of Selborne, were keen naturalists. The Rev William Wilks, Vicar of St John's Shirley, was Secretary of the Royal Horticultural Society, and cultivated the Shirley Poppy. For that great majority of churchgoers who lived in the country, the Church's Year and the Natural Year marched in step. Our flower arrangers still reflect something of this pattern. The Lady Chapel altar kneelers capture some of our local bird life.

As we place more of our environment under concrete, and drop more litter on the rest, we become more concerned about the environment that we are busy destroying. People sometimes talk of the land around a church as God's Acre, though it is a mistake to think that God only owns the churchyard and we own everything else! It is equally a mistake to think of the space around the church as empty space, or even as potential garden. Much of it has been shaped by us and our predecessors over centuries, but some of it is not man-made. The church grounds provide a rich environment for a great deal of "wildlife", some planned, much not. These notes celebrate that wildlife, including the human contributions. In a small, but important way, the land around the church is a visible statement that we take our responsibilities for God's world seriously.

The picture opposite shows a pond near the church in the 1920's when the site of the future church was part of Ham Farm - hence Ham View. The back inside cover picture shows Ham meadow land at that time. Great Gatton Close, Round Grove, Chaffinch Avenue, and Wilks Gardens also remind us of our past.

**An asterisk (\*) indicates a Bible mention. Mention of a tree etc, in an English translation of the Greek or Hebrew description, used centuries earlier by someone who wasn't a naturalist, doesn't of course guarantee that Moses or Jesus saw in the Middle East what we see in Shirley.**

### Trees and Shrubs

**Bamboo** - An invader from next door. As every gardener knows, bamboo will not stay where it is planted, and there are no koala bears to keep it under control

**Barberry** - Berberis vulgaris: A bush with spines and attitude. This is a good defence against unarmed intruders, but not easily managed. We also have a more colourful Berberis Thun, Admira,

**Blackberry (Bramble)** - Rubus fruticosus: Sprawling prickly arched stems that take root to form new plants. Leaves have 3-5 hairy leaflets. White or pink blossoms. The ripe fruits are black and delicious. Because bramble invades everywhere and fights back, it is commonly seen as a nuisance, but it shelters and feeds lots of wildlife, including shield bugs and moths and the flesh flies that dribble on the fruits and suck them from late September. There are some 2,000 varieties. (Don't believe the story that nature has only one sort of plant, which man then turns into endless varieties!)

**Buddleia** - Buddleia davidii: Long scented flower spikes; long pointed leaves. The Butterfly Bush came here from China via Russia in the 19th Century - or rather it was brought here, since it does spread rapidly but doesn't walk (or swim). It is named after Adam Buddle, a Lincolnshire clergyman. Buddleia Buzz Sky Blue Buddleia Buzz Vervel (purple). Buddleia is one of the few plants that can grow out of the side of a building, as was the case in Elmers End for many years.

**Ceanothus Blue Mound** - A shrub with blue flowers, also known as the Californian Lilac, though not up to lilac in terms of scent.

**Cherry Laurel** - Prunus laurocerasus: Bright green leathery/glossy pointed leaves; round red-black berries. A 16th Century import from South Eastern Europe that competes with the Rhododendron for popularity and nuisance value. Don't eat the leaves. Birds are OK eating the berries.

**Common Ash** - Fraxinus excelsior: Greenish grey bark, smooth when young, fissured when older; black buds; winged seeds; leaf stalks with 9-13 long-toothed leaves. In Norse mythology, Odin the greatest of the gods carved the first man out of a piece of ash wood. Yggdrasil, the Tree of the World, was a giantic ash with roots reaching down to hell, and branches reaching up to heaven. Ash trees seed themselves with gay abandon.

### The Bible and God's Creation

#### Psalm 104

What a wildly wonderful world, God!  
You made it all. with Wisdom at your side,  
Made earth overflow with your wonderful creations.

Oh, look - the deep, wide sea,  
Brimming with fish past counting,  
Sardines and sharks and salmon.

Ships plough those waters,  
And Leviathan, your pet dragon, romps in them.

All the creatures look expectantly to you  
To give them their meals on time.

You come, and they gather around;  
You open your hand and they eat from it.

If you turned your back,  
They'd die in a minute -

Take back your Spirit and they die,  
Revert to original mud;

Send out your Spirit and they spring to life -  
The whole countryside in bloom and blossom.

The glory of God - let it last for ever!  
Let God enjoy his creation!

Oh, let me sing to God all my life long,  
Sing hymns to my God as long as I live!





## The Bible and God's Creation (The Message Version)

### Psalm 8

God, brilliant Lord,  
Yours is a household name.

*Nursing infants gurgle choruses about you;  
Toddlers shout the songs  
That drown out enemy talk,  
And silence atheist babble.*

*I look up at your macro-skies, dark and enormous,  
Your hand-made sky-jewellery'  
Moon and stars mounted in their settings.  
Then I look at my micro-self and wonder,  
Why do you bother with us?  
Why take a second look our way?*

*Yet we've so narrowly missed being gods,  
Bright with Eden's dawn light.  
You put us in charge of your handcrafted world.  
Repeated to us your Genesis-charge'  
Made us stewards of sheep and cattle,  
Even animals out in the wild,  
Birds flying and fish swimming,  
Whales singing in the ocean deeps.*

God, brilliant Lord,  
Your name echoes around the world.



**Common Juniper** - Juniperus communis: Spiky, with berries, and a nice smell. The berries help in making gin, and the leaves in mummifying corpses. Please don't try either of these at home. We also have Juniper Chinensis Blue Alps.

**Common Yew** - Dark green flat needle leaves, with red berries. Yew is closely associated with churchyards, perhaps in part because it was a popular tree in pagan mythology, and many churches were built on pagan sites. English yew was almost used up to make English longbows. (Fortunately, during the 1939-45 War, the authorities grubbed up park and garden railings for armaments rather than yew trees.) St John's has many yew trees.

**Coprosma Tequila Sunrise** - Narrow leaves, blue berries. From the Greek for dung - the crushed leaves of some species are not very fragrant.

**Cotoneaster** - Sprawling low shrub with small round leaves and small red berries, along the church wall. Much loved by birds, and survives where other species would not. Architectural advice has cost us some of our wall-based specimens; but others survive.

**Crab Apple** - Malus Everest: Small green fruits, turning red; attractive in fruit and in blossom. This has gone down its own cultivation road, but the crab apple is the ancestor of all our cultivated apples. It is a native British tree - being re-established here after the retreat of the ice caps. We have two Crab Apples. The precise identity of the other one is not known. Birds love these trees.

**\*Cypress** - Cupressus Mac, Wilma. A silvery bush cypress. One of the most popular garden and park trees/bushes

**Dog Rose** - Rosa canina: A rambling rose with 5 or 7 leaflets to a thorned (with hooks) stem, 5 petal flat pink flowers and bright red rose hips. The dog name may come from a Roman belief that the roots helped cure bites from mad dogs. Rose hip (hips are the rose berries) syrup is good for you

**Eleagnus** - A large shrub with glossy green and yellow leaves and a powerful scent. Pause to sniff on your way to church.

**Elder** - Sambucus nigra: Five to seven toothed leaves on a stalk; creamy white flowers; black berries. This is a tree that has contributed a range of culinary delights, although as a tree it isn't all that impressive

**English Oak** - Quercus robur: The long leaves have four or five lobes each side. The acorn seeds in their cups are distinctive. Fissured bark The oak is the "typical" English tree, and a haven for wildlife. It was a sacred tree in the time of the Druids. Rich Autumn colour.

**European Larch** - Larix deciduas: An attractive dippy branch tree with needle leaves. Fast-growing and short-lived: in fact, almost human.

**\*Fig** - *Ficus carica*: Thick 3-5 lobed leathery leaves; small green-purple fruits. Another 16th Century import, from Western Asia. A special tree for Buddhists and Muslims, and familiar to readers of the Bible - not least as the source of modesty protectors for Adam and Eve. The fruit is both a laxative and a basis for brandy: nasty combination. It has been used for St George's jam.

**Hawthorn (Red May)** - *Crataegus Laevigata* Paul's Scarlet Deeply divided lobed leaves, red blossoms, red berries. In older traditions, the solitary Hawthorn was a fairy tree. In Christian tradition, Joseph of Arimathea brought his hawthorn staff to Glastonbury, and planted it there: the Holy Thorn. It blossomed at Christmas.

**\*Hebe** - *Hebe andersonii*: A shrub with longish leaves and small purply blue flower spikes. An import from Australia/New Zealand. Hebe was the Greek Goddess of Youth, and cup-bearer to the gods until replaced by male staff. There is also a Hebe O James Stirling.

**Himalayan Honey Suckle** - *Leycesteria Formosa* - An improbable shrub, with multi-tiered flower pendants that look as though they are Christmas decorations hung on the bush. Sometimes called Grandmother's Curling Papers. This was the logo for French Street Nurseries, now sadly closed. Our surviving specimen is savouring life on its own. having lost its Yew companion

**Holly** - *hex aquifolium*: Leaves are prickly and glossy. Only female \*trees have berries. It was once thought to be unlucky to cut down a holly tree, but not unlucky to chop it up for Christmas decorations. Lots of berries do not forecast a hard Winter but reflect a good summer for holly trees. We also have the variegated (green and yellow) holly *flex Aureomarginata*. and *hex Mesereae* B Maid.

**.Honeysuckle** - *Lonicera*: Yellow/white flowers recognisable by their scent. Our specimen is rather tucked away.

**Hydrangea** - *macrophylla*: A recent addition, colours vary with soil type, Being right outside hall, needs water and you can help...please..

**\*Hyssop** - A narrow-leaved purple-flowered herb. Used for purging in Biblical and Classical times, but has other healing uses. Thought to have been brought to Britain by Benedictine monks.

**\*Lavender** - *Lavandula Ang Hidcot*, and various other varieties, e.g. *Bandera*.. Grey-green narrow leaves and (mainly) purple sweetly scented flowers. Perhaps the most versatile of all the herbs: soaps, oils, perfumes, cakes, honey, etc., etc. Brought here by the Romans.

## Reference Sources

Reader's Digest Field Guide to the Wild Flowers of Britain

Reader's Digest Field Guide to the Birds of Great Britain

Reader's Digest Field Guide to the Trees and Shrubs of Britain

Reader's Digest Field Guide to the Butterflies and Other Insects of Britain

Reader's Digest Field Guide to the Animals of Britain

Octopus Field Guide to Garden Plants

Collins Mushrooms and Toadstools of Britain and Europe

Hamlyn Guide to Mushrooms and Toadstools

Collins Garden Wildlife

DK Pocket Nature: Insects and Spiders

Marshall Cavendish Encyclopedia of Gardening

John Birkett: Two Centuries of Croydon's Birds

RSPB Handbook of Garden Wildlife

Spiders: The Ultimate Predators: Stephen Dalton





## Fungi

Fungi caused naturalists a problem because they weren't "proper plants". They recycle dead material, and some of them help plants/trees to make use of the nutrition they need. They play a very useful role in the natural order of things, and should not be treated as aliens! Many are edible, sometimes after careful preparation, but - unless you know what you are doing - the best advice is "admire and leave" NOT "pick and taste". Anything listed here is liable to have disappeared by the time you read about it: most are not long-lived.

**Common White Inocybe** (?) - *Inocybe Geophyla*: Bell-shaped and fragile looking.

**Common Puffball** *Lycoperdon perlatum*: White spheres, eventually disintegrating in a puff.

**Field Mushroom** - *Agaricus campestris*: The older ones have large heads which are off-white rather than white, with a dark underside. They can be quite big. Do best in sheltered damp spots.

**Fly Agaric** - *Amanita muscaria*: A gem among fungi. Look but don't taste. I think I've seen this at St George's - maybe wishful thinking.

**Shaggy Ink Cap** . *Coprinus comatus*: White sort of acorn shape with a rough surface.



**\*Lawson Cypress** - *Chamaecyparis Lawsoniana*: Soft light green scale-like leaves in clusters, soft to the touch, with small round cone. Found when one 19th Century botanist was seeking a lost colleague. Sadly, he found the tree in Northern California, but not his colleague.

**Lilac** - *Syringa vulgaris*: A shrub with beautifully scented purple flower clusters. Imported into England in the time of Charles I,

**Magnolia** - *Magnolia Susan*: Purple waxy flowers in April, and quite magnificent for a short time. It is a Chinese shrub imported via France, and bearing the name of the French Director of the Montpellier Botanical Garden, Pierre Magnol.

**\*Maidenhair Tree** - *Ginkgo biloba*: Slender trunk; unusual two-lobed fan-shaped leaves. One of our most ancient trees - fossils have been found from 250 million years ago. Our specimen was planted in 1965 in memory of Sir Winston Churchill, and is the still modest-sized centre piece of the garden in front of the church.

**Mock Orange**—*Philadelphus Belle Etoile*: A lovely smell, and passingly pleasant to look at. Obviously, a multi-lingual shrub

**Myrtle** - *Myrtus communis* sp. *Turentina*:: This small freely flowering and strongly scented shrub deserves its popularity. It was well known in Palestine too.

**New Zealand Daisy Bush** - *Olearia Haastii* live-like leaves, daisy-like flowers

**Olive** *Olea Europea*: Look closely: we have olives as well as leaves. This shrub, with its little hard pale green leaves and matching fruit is a tribute to climate change. (You would have to be very fond of olives to think that their availability in the UK justifies the lousy stewardship that has promoted climate change)

**Pieris** - A shrub with thin leaves that change colour, and narrow erect flower heads. This is one of our "rescue" plants.

**Pin Oak** - *Quercus palustris*: Unusual lobed leaves that look like a large caricature of the familiar oak leaf. The acorns are small and squat. There are many varieties of oak tree. This one is attractive in the Autumn, with its red leaves. Big tree for small garden.

**Plum** - *Prunus [cerasifera]*: White flowers in Spring, toothed glossy green leaves, small fruits, One or two left here and there, from the large numbers that used to be found on the Church Cottage side of the church.

**Privet** - *Ligustrum Vulgare*: Small green oval leaves, scented white flowers in the Summer. Goes back to Elizabethan times as a hedge. It has been adapted/adopted for window boxes, though birds don't think much of the window box variety for nesting. We also have variegated privet, combining yellow and green.

Privet gets taken for granted. It shouldn't be so. The ordinary (vulgar) privet creates a rich environment.

\***Rosemary** - *Rosmarinus officinalis*: Tough woody stems and tough needle-like leaves, with a very distinctive aroma. One of those herbs that flavours e.g., roast lamb beautifully, but that you can't actually eat. Known for many centuries; and in "Bible" legend Mary sheltered under a Rosemary bush during the flight to Egypt, whereupon the white flowers turned blue to match the colour of Mary's cloak. (If you are going to invent the cloak and the colour, you might as well invent the bush!)

**Roses** - *Rosa*: We have half-standards (the tall ones in the memorial bed), Hybrid T's (with single blooms on the thorned stems), and Floribunda (with clusters of flowers). Some are beautifully scented, all are beautiful in that unique rose way, and all have thorned stems. Our familiar roses were, other than the dog rose, probably not familiar in Biblical times; but Mary of Nazareth is often linked to a Rose.

**Rowan (Mountain Ash)** - *Sorbus aucuparia* *Asplenifolia*: A graceful tree, with white flowers followed by red berries. Each leaf has several pairs of long stalkless leaflets. Once planted to ward off witches, but witches have not been a major problem in recent years. Our specimen died and is awaiting replacement.

**Scots Pine** - *Pinus sylvestris*: Fissured trunk with red showing through; long needle leaves; round cones. A survivor tree, that fought back after the end of the Ice Age. (Not our specimen: It isn't that old!)

**Silver Birch** - *Betula pendula*: Silvery white trunk and feathery branches, with dainty ragged edged leaves, and catkins. Not only a sacred tree in many old cultures, but the birch has been claimed as the only tree to grow in Paradise

**Skimmia Fragrans**: Another shrub bought for its scent. Of its two second names, Japonica perhaps has a slight edge on Rubella

**Stag's Horn Sumac** - *Rhus typhina*: An attractive shrub with stems of 11-29 pointed saw-tooth leaflets and red or yellow flower spikes. Leaves change colour to vivid reds and yellows in the Autumn. It suckers freely, and even competes with brambles.

**Sycamore** - *Acer Pseudoplatanus*: Very large five-fingered leaves on a red stem; grey trunk ageing to pinkish brown; winged seeds. For those with a taste for history, it was under a sycamore tree in Dorset that almost the first trades union was formed. The Prophet Amos was 'a dresser of sycamore trees'.

\*

## Other Creatures

You need a microscope to see many of the other creatures, so this inventory sticks to what you can see without special aids.

**Common Centipede**- *Lithobius forficatus*: Number of legs varies from 35 to 354, but lots of segments and a pair of legs to each segment, and anxiety to scurry back into darkness and dampness, say it all. No eyes: they sense their prey. Comes out at night - seen in daytime only if disturbed.

**Common Earthworm** - *Lumbricus terrestris*: If you don't know what a worm looks like, ask a robin., though Robins often only get part of the worm, and the rest lives on. About 3 million per acre, though who's counting? According to Darwin, who was rather obsessed with worms (as his children noted), worms bring 8 or more tons of soil to the top of their acre each year. Rich soil needs four types of worm

**Dark-lipped Banded Snail** - *Cepaea nemoralis*: Smaller and more colourful, usually yellow shell with dark bands. This one is really NOT an enemy of gardeners.

**Garden Snail** - *Helix aspersa*: Slug with circular mobile home. The lime shell helps prevent the snail drying out. The shell grows as the snail grows—up to about 38mm wide and 35mm high.

**Great Black Slug** - *Anon ater*: The name says it all really. Can grow up to six inches if it doesn't dry out or get chopped or eaten. Can live up to 3 years. (Imagine watching a slug for 3 years to see how long it lives!)

**Millipede** - *Tachipodoilus niger*: Two pairs of legs per segment, and black, and curls into a ball for protection. This is a relatively good bug: vegetarian, and helps soil fertility by recycling (every day and not just alternate Wednesdays).

.





## Spiders

**Cobweb Spider** Tegenaria Duellica: Builds a rather tangled web (rather than a circle) with a funnel-shaped tube. A dark spider with longish legs.

**Ground Spider**- Gnaphosidae (Zelotes): Big and dark and hides under stones or logs during the day, hunting at night

**Harvestmen Spider**. Phalarigium Opilio: A lot of leg and not much body. This one is active by day, and not just by night.

**Orb Web Spider** . Agalenatea Redli: Variably marked reddish brown spider with a big body.

When church or house is not regularly dusted, you see just how quickly spiders set up shop. The webs are annoying for those addicted to tidiness, but remember that the webs catch critters you like even less than you like the webs.... And don't you wish you could create something half as beautiful as a spider's web in the morning dew?



**\*True Laurel/Sweet Bay** - Laurus nobilis, Evergreen alternate leaves, green berries turning to black In ancient Greece, sacred to Apollo. Laurel wreaths were awarded to poets and warriors—hence our Poet Laureate.

**\*Viburnum (Tinus)** - Eve Price: Fruits and flowers and scent, and variety... and easier to say than some popular shrubs. Likes to be spelt with two U's, and who am I to argue

**.Weeping Cherry** - Prunus serrelata: A flowering cherry with trailing branches.. A gift from Japan, where cherry trees have become a cult and not just a spectacle. We also have other Cherry types, including Prunus drooping nearly to the ground. Our original memorial tree died, as even trees do, Amanogawa - a narrow column-shaped tree, and Prunus padus, the Bird Cherry.

**Weeping Willow** - Salix Babilonica: A sort of tree fountain, with branches coming down nearly to the ground. Long thin leaves. The trunk is greyish brown, criss-crossed with ridges. The Latin name is taken from Psalm 137 - in which the Israelite exiles hung their harps/lyres on the "willows" of Babylon while they wept to remember Zion. In fact, the waterside trees of Babylon were poplars! (Recently pruned by the slaughter method.)

**\*White Poplar** - Populus alba: The underside of the leathery five-fingered green leaves is white and hairy, and the constant whispering movement in any breeze



Pin Oak



Olive, Ash Tree, Hawthorn, Eleagnus, Blackberries, Roses,, Figs., Sycamore

## Amphibians

**Frog** *Rana temporaria*. Three inches or thereabouts of plump smooth leaping creature, with big eyes and a long tongue. Colour may be dark greenish grey, chestnut or yellow - with dark blotches and bars. Almost everyone likes frogs, not least gardeners; but a lot of animals and birds like eating them. They hibernate in winter, and stay in the water for spring egg-laying.

**Common Toad** - *Bufo bufo*, Colours vary, but commonly brown (or nearly black) dry warty skin with darker spots. Webbed hind feet, three-clawed front feet. They can live for ten years or so.





## Mammals

**Badger** - *Meles meles*. The male is about 3 feet long. It has a distinctive black and white head and a grey/black body, with very strong forepaws. Probably the most endearing of our native mammals (though ground-nesting birds might not agree). Not often seen, because it prefers hunting at night.

**Cats** - Cats visit regularly, though not for services. Our Bengal cat has moved. It looked more like an escapee from the zoo than a domestic moggy. Dark spots on a fawn background, and a ringed tail. It didn't move like an ordinary cat... and it was fussy about who it talked to. (Bengals result from cross-breeding with a wild leopard cat—as Scottish wildcats inter-breed with moggies in the UK.)

**\*Dogs** - No regulars at present. Canine visitors tend to be escorting owners collecting their children, or being walked by owners. . . .which is fine if poop bags are used, but not fine without. (Dog owners throwing poop bags over the church wall merit an Old Testament punishment.) Biblically, dogs played an unsavoury part in the end of Queen Jezebel... *"and the dogs licked her blood"*.

**\*Fox** *Vulpes vulpes*. Males over 2 feet long, red-brown coat, amber eyes, pointy face, white on underside and tip of bushy tail, black legs. Along with rats and squirrels, the urban fox has adapted very successfully to urban living, and is often seen around St George's—sometimes in numbers as they have adopted the church as a meeting point. Some will stop to talk.

**Grey Squirrel** - *Sciurus carolinensis* 10" body, 8" bushy tail shaped like a question mark, silvery grey with white underside in winter, some brownish yellow in summer; and acrobatic "tree rat". Not introduced until the mid 19th Century, but now found practically everywhere. Part-endearing (fun to watch), and part-irritating (digs things up).

**Wood Mouse/Long-tailed Field Mouse** - *Apodemus sylvaticus*. Small sandy brown creature with white underside (and yellow breast streak), big eyes and ears, longer tail than body. Normally only enters the house in the jaws of a cat. Cats apart, our most wide-spread and common mammal. Rather endearing, and not smelly like house mice.



## Birds

**Blackbird** - *Turdus merula*: Male black, female brown; the young are spotted, showing that they are thrushes. Eats fruit, berries, worms and insects. Sings beautifully from a vantage point - to the blackbird on the next vantage point, which in turn....

**Black-headed Gull** - *Larus ridibundus*: The most usual gull in Shirley, often on the church cross or circling overhead. Chocolate brown head in Winter, just a dark spot behind the eye in Summer. They are still popularly called seagulls, though most of them have never seen the sea. They don't like confined spaces, so seldom land in the grounds.

**Blue Tit** - *Parus caeruleus*: Bluish back, yellow underparts; white face with black eye stripe; blue cap; single white wing bar. Young ones have yellow faces. Everybody likes these little birds, even when they have a go at milk bottles [which, for the cardboard carton people, is how some of us get our milk].

**Buzzard** - *Buteo buteo*: Another big bird of prey that you can't expect to see, but might see because it has been seen. Predictable on the North Downs; and they are not far away.

**Canada Goose** - *Branta Canadensis*: Honking skeins of these big birds are often seen flying over the church; long neck, white chin patch, slow wing beats, commonly V formation. The CG was introduced in the 17th Century, for "sport". However, it proved poor quarry for shooters, and has taken over everywhere with water and grass. South Norwood Country Park, Kelsey Park and Milers Pond, are the main destinations of the birds we see over the church,

**Carion Crow** - *Corvus corone corone*: Large and black and noisy, and surprisingly shy and cautious. Sometimes likes the tower cross as a parking space.

**Chaffinch** - *Fringilla coelebs*: The handsome male is easily recognisable: slate blue crown and neck, chestnut back, pinkish brown under parts, white wing and shoulder flashes. The females are more muted, but have the same wing and shoulder markings.

**Coal Tit** - *Parus ater*: About the same size as the Blue Tit, but greyer, and distinguished by white nape, white cheek, on a black cap; double white wing bar. We are lucky to have a good prospect of seeing 4 of the 7 British tits in Shirley, and getting the hang of them is a good starting point for a would-be casual bird watcher.

**Collared \*Dove** - *Streptopelia decaocto*: Grey/pink dove up to about 12 inches, thin black half-collar, Our most successful bird story, with a huge expansion in recent decades. Well deserved: it is the neatest and nicest of birds. Like the woodpigeon, it doesn't know how to finish its (slightly boring but soothing) coo song. May raise five broods a year. (It must really like children!)

**Common Gull** - *Larus canus*: Not all that common here, as compared with the Black-headed Gull. Green legs if you see it close-up.

**Cormorant** - *Phalacrocorax carbox*: A sort of Pelican, but one with strangely inadequate water-proofing—hence the wing drying routine. A bird you expect to see on the Thames, but it has been seen overhead here

**Domestic /Feral Pigeon** - Scorned by some bird books as a man-made bird, but one of our most familiar birds and a London favourite, Descended from the Rock Dove - *Columba livia*,

**Goldfinch** - *Carduelis carduelis*: A little gold, red and black charmer, with a constant tinkling call. It is seldom alone, and its groups are called "charms". Loves weed, including thistle, seeds.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** - *Dendrocopos major*: Roughly Starling size, but a striking bird dressed in black, white and red; often identified by its drumming on tree trunks (or, optimistically, on telegraph poles). This is the most widespread of the British woodpeckers.

**Great Tit** - *Parus major*: Black cap, white cheeks, black stripe down yellow front. Our largest tit (corrupted from Old Icelandic 'titr', meaning a small bird). A metallic sounding singer with a wide vocabulary. An enterprising and voracious feeder, noted for its liking for milk bottles (or rather the contents, accessed through the metal top).

**Greenfinch** - *Carduelis chloris*: Greenish brown, with yellow wing patches and tail edges; dipping flight; a rather pleasant twittering, and departing chi-chi -chi-chi. Keen birdwatchers turn their Greenfinches into the much less common Siskin or Serin.

**Green Woodpecker** (Yaffle) - *Picus viridis*: Not many birds laugh. This one does, and loudly. Over a foot long: olive green, yellow rump, red head. Likes ants, grubs and bees. (Why not wasps?)

**Hedge Sparrow** (Dunnock) - *Prunella modularis*: Easily confused with a sparrow (House Sparrow), but the two are unrelated. A quiet shy bird, with slate grey head and under parts, and a reddish brown streaked back. A good song bird: you notice the song more than the bird.

**Hornet** - *Vespa crabro*: Very large and not very common - chestnut brown and yellow. Not to be tackled with anything short of a shotgun

**Honey Bee** - *Apis mellifera*: Smaller and more slender than bumble bees, and brown with black stripes rather than the wasp's yellow with black stripes. Most honey bees are not owned by anyone and kept tidily in hives. The church has had more than one experience of them taking up residence in the grounds.

**Hover Flies** - *Syrphidae*: If it looks like a bee or wasp but if it hovers and moves backwards and sideways as well as forward, it is a hover fly. HF's are entirely harmless, and the larvae eat aphids.

**Woodlice** - *Oniscus asellus*: Shiny little black creatures with their own armour. They are crustaceans, and ought to be at sea; but make do with damp places on land.





### Other Insects

**Ants** - Formicidae: We have both *Lasius Niger* (the black ones) and *Myrmica Rubra* (the red ones). While fascinating to children, because they are so busy doing nothing in particular and doing it very well, ants may sting, bite or spray acid, and really don't make good pets.

**Blackfly**- *Aphis fabae*: Also known as the Black bean aphid. As for greenfly, only different colour, and likes nasturtiums. In turn, it is liked by ants, which feed on the honey dew it deposits. There are male aphids, though since the females reproduce by parthenogenesis, it isn't clear what the males are for.

**Bumble Bee** - *Bombus terrestris* (Buff-tailed Bumble Bee): two yellow stripes and a buff tail; *Bombus hortorum* (Large Golden Bumble Bee): two yellow stripes and a white tail; *Bombus lucorum*: White collar only. Bumble bees are very endearing, and there is a temptation to stroke them. Very painful experience suggests that the temptation should be resisted.

**Bush Cricket** - *Pholidoptera griseoptera*: Much longer antennae than grasshoppers. The tall end looks like an offensive weapon, but isn't.

**Common Lacewing** - *Chrysopidae*: Green body and transparent lacy wings. A "good" insect: it eats aphids, though not enough of them. Worth looking at closely, but in a friendly way.

**Common Wasp** - *Vespula vulgaris*: Yellow stripes on thorax, small anchor-shaped mark on face; folds wings beside its body. Wasps eat many garden pests, which is good; but become a nuisance themselves, especially in the Autumn.

**Crane Fly** (Daddy-long-legs) - *Tipulidae*: Slender bodies, thin wings, and an enormous amount of leg. The crane fly itself isn't a problem for humans, but don't try to make friends with them: the legs come off very easily. The larvae (leatherjackets) are good bird food and not much fun for lawns.

**Earwig** - *Forficula auricularia*: Reddish brown armoured body; six legs at the front, and long curved forceps at the rear. Not everybody's favourite, though it is unlikely to end up in your ear.

**Grasshopper** - *Omocestus viridulus* (Common Green Grasshopper): Not always totally green, Short antennae. Powerful long hind legs for jumping. The males use their legs to play on their wings.

**\*Greenfly** - *Macrosiphum rosae*: Likes roses, hence the name: small, slow, soft and destructive; never alone. Reproduces at an incredible rate.

**\*Heron** - *Ardea cinerea*: Three feet of grey, white and black - long beak, long legs, long wings; neck hunched in flight. Seen flying over the church grounds on its way to more interesting (from a heron's point of view) places such as neighbours' ponds.

**Herring Gull** - *Larus argentus*: A big (and successful) (and noisy) gull, with a big and very varied diet. Also a long-lived bird.

**House Martin** - *Delichon urbica*: White underparts, white rump; shorter tail than Swallow.

**\*House Sparrow** - *Passer domesticus*: A small fairly noisy bird with streaked brown back, and grayer underside; the male with a grey crown and black bib. You don't usually see just one sparrow. Sparrows are keen on humans as a food and shelter source. They never were the commonest British bird, and numbers

**\*Jay** - *Garrulus glandarius*: 13.5 inches, pinky buff, a streaky crest, blue wing flashes against white and black, white rump, black moustache, undulating flight, raucous voice. The jay is mainly a vegetarian, but will eat most things - including the young of other birds.

**Kestrel** - *Falco tinnunculus*: The supreme wind-hover (hence its nickname). Chest, nut back; grey head and tail,

**Lesser black-backed Gull** - *Larus fuscus*: A handsome bird, and big bird; but always over-shadowed by its very big relative the G B B G.

**Long-tailed Tit** - *Aegithalos caudatus*: More tail than bird, making the wings look very short in flight; black, white and pink; almost always part of a group, and almost never stops twittering. Needs to pack in a lot of insects and spiders, hence the constant movement.

**Magpie** - *Pica pica*: 18 handsome inches, including the long tail; glossy black and blue, with white underside and large shoulder patches. Very noisy. Wedge-shaped tail shows in flight. You know when a magpie is around. Their nest wins the untidy prize.



**Mallard** - *Anas platyrhynchos*: Ducks flying overhead are most likely to be Mallard; close up, the drakes have bottle green heads and maroon breasts; the ducks have violet blue wing patches on a speckly brown background  
**Mistle Thrush**—*Turdus viscivorus*. Storm singer supreme. Rare these days.

**Mute Swan** - *Cygnus olor*: Given that these are seen in Kelsey Park and in South Norwood waters, it isn't surprising that this magnificent bird is seen over Shirley. You can't tell from ground level which ones belong to the Queen.

**Pied Wagtail** - *Motacilla alba yarrellii*: Undulating flight and undulating call; a small black, white and grey bird with a long tail that constantly wags up and down. A really delightful bird often seen and heard in the Woodmere Avenue/ El-



stan Way area.

**Ring-necked Parakeet** - *Psittacula krameri*: Brilliant green and very very noisy, even when it ought to be concentrating its energies on flying. Has been likened to a noisy tourist, determined to be seen and heard. Has been about in Croydon since the late 1960's, breeding successfully for some 40 years

**Red Kite** - *Milvus milvus*: Long wings, forked tail, big bird. Kites drift a long way very easily - hence one see over the church this year. Once seen, never forgotten.



**Robin** - *Erithacus rubecula*: Brown back, red/orange face and breast with pale grey border; white under parts. Perhaps the most human-friendly of all our garden birds: seeing humans as a useful food source. Other birds leave when the gardener appears. The Robin

arrives. Defends its own territory with superb song, and physically if necessary. Young ones look like mini-thrushes.

**Song Thrush**—*Turdus philomelos*. A lovely singer; and once a common singer. Now not often seen. Thrush absences mark the sad decline of what we once took for granted.

## Beetles

**Cardinal Beetle** - *Pyrochroa serraticornis*: Bright red, as you might expect... if you know anything about cardinals. Also called fire-coloured beetles.

**Green Shield Bug** - *Palomina prasina*: Shield-shaped, bronze green wings, black "tail". Unusual among insects, in risking its life to protect its young: another way of looking at "shield". Also called stink bugs, because they can produce a powerful defensive smell,

**Stag Beetle** - *Lucanus cervus*: The biggest beetle you are likely to see in this country. Reddish brown and black. The male has (relatively) massive mandibles (jaws). The stag beetle has made a bit of a come-back since we started being less keen on getting rid of rotting logs. The larvae of the stag beetle may take several years to develop in their rotting log. (So please don't disturb our log piles.)

**Seven-spot Ladybird, etc** - *Coccinella septempunctata* Round, black head, red body, seven black spots. Ladybirds have lots of different colour combinations. The bright colours are intended to tell predators that they don't taste very nice. (You can see why creatures would be reluctant to advertise that they do taste nice.) We also have the nasty American illegal immigrants.

**Violet Ground Beetle** - *Carabus violaceus*: Feeds on slugs (as well as other things) ,if this lovely beetle needs a recommendation





**Painted Lady** - *Cynthia cardui*: A large orange, black, white and brown butterfly, with attractive under-wings: Visits in May and June from South west Europe and North Africa. The butterflies hatched here appear in September! October. It seems that both the in-comers and those born here die out in the Winter, with no survivors in any form for the following season. though with global warming...?

**Peacock** - *Inachisio*: One of our bigger butterflies, The underside of the wings is almost black. The tops of the wings are stunning purply red with four big "false eyes". Quite long-lived by butterfly standards, and may over-winter inside.

**Red Admiral** - *Vanessa atalanta*: Red bands on a black background, with white markings on fore-wings: The name probably comes from "admirable" rather than admiral. Another early Summer continental visitor, producing a native generation for the Autumn. Likes windfall apples. Sometimes flies at night.

**Small Tortoiseshell** - *Aglais urticae*: Orange and black wings, bordered with blue half-moons. This butterfly over-winters as a butterfly. It may hibernate as early as August - through to March. There are also immigrant tortoiseshells. These butterflies are quite territorial.

**Small White** - *Arctogeia rapae*: Smallish with dark wing tips, and either one or two spots: Our second most common butterfly. A smaller and less well-marked version of the Large White.

**Speckled Wood** - *Pararge aegeria*: Dark brown with buff spots and black "eyes" with a small white centre. Once known as the "Enfield eye" or "Wood argus". Two to four generations a year, with the Autumn caterpillars surviving the Winter (if not eaten by birds or destroyed by over-tidy gardeners)

**T Moth / Plume Moth** - Rather fond of the Lady Chapel door. It shows up well there.



**Sparrow Hawk** - *Accipiter nisus*: Slightly bigger than the Kestrel, though that doesn't help you much unless you see them side by side. Rounder wings and less likely to fan tail. Fond of wood pigeons - to eat not watch.

**Starling** - *Sturnus vulgaris*: Slim, brown, noisy, and sociable; except that adults are actually black with purple and green gloss and white spots. From Autumn into early Spring, we get Continental visitors joining the native Starlings; and we are more likely to get the circling flocks of Starlings

**Swallow** - *Hirundo rustica*: Bluish-black back, russet throat, white under parts, long forked tail; may perch on telephone wires. If the insects fly low, the swallows fly low - almost down to ground level. The 18th Century Rev Gilbert White suspected that swallows spent the Winter buried in the mud of ponds, since they gathered by ponds in the Autumn before disappearing.

**Swift** - *Apus apus*: A sickle-winged Summer visitor from Africa that does almost everything on the wing and rarely lands. It consumes insects in millions. This is flight at its best. A touch of Summer in the sky above St George's, though for all too short a time.

**Woodpigeon** - *Columba palumbus*: 16 inches long, generally grey, with pink front, white wing patches, white neck patches; barred tail. A fat intruder in the eyes of farmers, gardeners, and small bird feeders; and infinitely annoying to some dogs, which hate its wing-clapping as it climbs and glides. Not the brightest of birds intellectually, but still seems to thrive. Very fond of our crab apples in winter. Famous for its incomplete "song".

**Wren** - *Troglodytes troglodytes*: The only bird with more voice than bird: tiny, speckly brown, cocked tail, rounded wings. Vulnerable in Winter, because it is tiny, but an all year round British favourite. A small colony may share a box for warmth in winter. The Greek name means cave-dweller: crevices yes, caves no.



## Flowers and Plants

**Aaron's Rod** - *Verbascum thapsus*: Tail spikes of yellow flowers rising from stems cased in downy pale leaves. The rod of Levi, on which Aaron's name was inscribed sprouted when placed in the Tabernacle. Great Mullein (this plant's other name) roughly fits the description of a sprouting staff (if you have enough imagination)

**Annual Meadow Grass** - *Poa annua*: The broad-leaved one that grows and renews itself while the posh stuff dies out. Despite the name, it doesn't necessarily die each year.

**Aster Victoria (Michaelmas Daisy)**. Dwarf lilac and rose, free-flowering, 'feel as good as they look. From the Greek for a star, and in flower when Michael the Angel gets celebrated.

**Aubrieta** (usually miss-spelt as *Aubretia*, sometimes known as Purple rock cress) - *Cruciferae*: Clumps with masses of four-petalled purple or blue flowers. Perhaps the best of all ground-covering plants.

**Bindweed** - *Convolvulus arvensis* or Hedge Bindweed - *Calystegia sepium*: Trumpet-shaped flowers, The first is pink, the second is white. Leaves are shaped like arrow heads. The plant winds everywhere, like a strangler on the loose. Both types are pretty; both are hard to remove if you don't want them.

**Black Nightshade** - *Solanum nigrum*: Whitish flowers with yellow centres, and green berries which turn black. Not recommended eating, though the leaves were once used to make a mouthwash.

**Bluebell** - *Endymion hispanicus*: Stems of blue hanging bells on a fleshy stem. *Endymion* was a beautiful youth who slept on a mountain kissed by the moon - odd for naming a plant more often found at ground level in the shade. We have both the bigger bolder Spanish version, and the more delicate-looking and droopier native English version: *Hyacinthoides non-scriptus*. We also have (nature being nature) white variants of *Endymion*.

**Bugloss** - *Anchusa arvensis*: A sort of giant-leaved forget-me-not. Sometimes called "Ox Tongue" - a wonderful reminder of times when lots of people had seen inside the mouth of an ox.

**Calabraghoa** - Also called Million Bells. That is a bit of an exaggeration, but the small yellow flowers are delightful.

**Chinese Lanterns/ Cape Gooseberry** - *Physalis alkekengi*: Joined us from Church Cottage. Originated in Japan, not China. This is a delightful intruder, with its vermilion lanterns. (Philosophical question: are we attracted because it is inherently lovely, or because it is relatively unusual?)

## Moths and Butterflies

**Brimstone** *Gonepteryx rhamni*: Shades of yellow, with four orange spots. Has a long tongue, but you don't see this unless you get very close as it tucks into primroses. The name "butterfly" was probably first applied to the Brimstone. It over-winters, and can be seen as early as February and as late as November. Likes purple flowers as well as the yellow primrose. The caterpillars need Buckthorn

**Cinnabar Moth** - *Tyria jacobaeae*: Like a small dart when at rest - black upper wings with red border and two red spots. A day flying moth that is relatively safe from predators because it looks scary and tastes nasty. Prefers ragwort and groundsel.

**Comma** - *Polygonia c-album*: A beautiful orange-brown butterfly with dark brown spots; ragged edged wings: Two generations each year: the first produced by over-wintering parents. Both butterflies and caterpillars are experts at disguise

**Gatekeeper** - *Pyronia tithonus*: A smallish orange-brown butterfly with brown wings to the borders, and false eyes on the fore-wings, small dots on the underwings. The males have a dark band on the fore-wings. The caterpillars over winter

**Humming Bird Hawk-moth** - *Macroglossum stellatarum*. Grey with orange underwings; the body seems too big for the 2 inch wings; distinctive flight, like a miniaturised humming bird. It was seen hovering over the Valerian, probing with its wonderfully long tongue and darting between hovers. Those with good hearing can hear the wing beats. Those who stay to observe will notice that this moth seems to forget where it has been, and go back to the same flower. Generally a Summer visitor from the South of France—escaping the English tourists?.

**Jersey Tiger Moth**—*Euplagia quadripunctaria*. White, red, and black; and day-flying. Seeing this beauty was a high light of years of nature observing at St George's. One of those wow moments.

**Large White** - *Pieris brassicae*: White, with black wing tips; the female has two black spots on each fore-wing: Some come from Europe; but there are two native generations each year. This butterfly is very fond of the cabbage family

**Meadow Brown** - *Maniola jurtina*: Big brown butterflies with a touch of orange; single false "eye" on underside of fore wings: Our commonest butterfly, but still special! The females are bigger and brighter than the males. A native species, that lasts only a month, but provides next years butterflies.





Daffodils, Cowslips, Bluebells, Primroses

**Columbine Aquilegia:** Spurred flowers, with sepals and petals often different colours.

**Common Forget-me-not** - *Myosotis arvensis*: Small pale blue five petal flowers with a yellow centre. The branched upright stems have leaves that are not much to write home about. The name was popularised in this country in a poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge; but it is a German legend that a knight trying to pluck flowers for his beloved fell into the river in his armour and drowned. In a dying act of love he threw her flowers crying "Vergisz mein nicht". You may not think much of either the knight's common sense or his choice of flowers.

**Common Groundsel** - *Senecio vulgaris*: Tiny yellow shaving brush flowers which produce parachute seeds. The bright green leaves are lobed. A useful feed for rabbits and canaries. .though the church grounds are short of both.

**Common Mallow** - *Malva sylvestris*: A relation of the Hollyhock. Once used for hangovers - treating not getting. A lovely pink wanderer. Again a reminder that "common" and "ordinary" are often special.

**Cotton Thistle (Scottish Thistle)** - *Onopordon acanthium*: The tall spiky one, with big spiky leaves coming straight out of the spiky stem, and large purple flower heads protected by more spikes. In good Scottish tradition, useful for medicinal, cooking, and mattress stuffing purposes. (Don't try to put the whole thistle in the mattress!) Maybe a reminder that the Rev Bowman (1956-63) was ordained into the Scottish Episcopal Church.

**Cow Parsley** - *Anthriscus sylvestris*: A tall rampant early Spring flower, sometimes called Queen Anne's Lace. A bit like Hemlock, but don't experiment: it isn't like in that way.

**Cowslip** - *Primula veris*: Like the primrose, but taller, and the blooms are tighter and more drooping. According to legend, where St Peter dropped his keys, the first cowslip grew, looking like a bunch of keys. (Legend makers must have had either very vivid imaginations or very poor sight,) The St George's specimens came from the Easter Garden.

**Creeping Thistle** - *Cirsium helenium*: Multiple stems and flower heads - everything prickly, especially the lance-shaped long leaves. Not a favourite with gardeners: spreads easily, underground and overground, and is hard to remove.

**Creeping Tormentil** - *Potentilla reptans*: Leaves like strawberry leaves, and five petal flowers a bit like yellow strawberry flowers. Even the most weed-averse gardeners have to admit that this one is attractive. It used to be thought good for easing toothache,

\*

**Crocus** - *Crocus neapolitanus*/*Crocus chrysanthus*: Small Spring flowers with big (often purple or yellow) flower heads on short stalks. 516 petals opening to show a yellow stamen. There are also Autumn-flowering crocuses. *Gladiolus* - Sword shaped leaves with spikes of trumpet-shaped flowers - not very good at growing up straight.

**Cyclamen** - Small neat deep red, white, or pink swept-back flowers above broad arrow-shaped leaves. The name (a circle) comes from the coiling of the stems after flowering.

**Daffodil** - *Narcissus*: Spring's yellow trumpets. Most of ours are the long trumpet type. There are also some miniatures - Tete a Tete.

**Daisy** - *Bellis perennis*: A many-petalled white circle with a yellow centre, coming from a rosette of spoon-shaped leaves. The name "day's eye" isn't a bad fit. This common little plant was a favourite with Chaucer (who said it softened all his sorrow) and Shelley (who called them earthbound stars).

**Dandelion** - *Taraxacum officinale*: Long deeply divided leaves, often flat to the ground, with tall yellow multi-petalled flowers that fade to leave the familiar globe of seed parachutes. It is the leaves that give it its nickname, "dent de lion" (lion's teeth); though you need some imagination to make that comparison. A very useful food and drink plant, though don't just pull one up and munch it.

**Dianthus** Ideal (Pinks). Five ragged edged petals in a circle, with a contrasting centre, scented. Means flower of the god, the god being Zeus. *Dianthus* (Indian Star). . Also *Dianthus Peman*.

**Field Poppy** - *Papaver rhoeas*: A poppy flower may last a day, but a single plant may produce 400 blooms in a year. Ceres the corn goddess wore a wreath of poppies: extravagant use of weed killer has soured that special relationship. Remember Flanders: poppy beauty among human devastation

**Foxglove** - *Digitalis purpurea*: A tall hairy plant with tooth-edged oval leaves, and clusters of tubed spotted purple flowers. The popular name probably comes, in corrupted form, from the Anglo Saxon for fairy bells, rather than from any daft notion that the flowers would make gloves for foxes. The source of the drug digitalis. (Some of our foxgloves were planted; other just came.) We also have some of the white variety.

**Fuchsia** - *Phygelius* (Candydrop Purple): Bushy with purple pendants

**Gerbera** *Gardenia* Cindy, *Gerbera* *Gardenia* Ornagina. Large daisy —like flowers in brilliant colours, on long stems. Another German botanist.

**Virginia Creeper** - *Parthenocissus quinquefolia*: The five-lobed leaves explain the quinquafolia. This wandering plant goes everywhere, wanted or unwanted. In Autumn, the colours justify the intrusions.

**Welsh Poppy** - *Meconopsis cambrica*. A lovely yellow.

**White Clover** - *Trifolium repens*: Leaves with three leaflets, white or rosy flower heads, creeps along the ground with great determination. Don't sit down to watch it creep, unless you have plenty of time on your hands. Bees love the nectar, even though gardeners would often like lawns without clover

**White Dead Nettle** - *Lamium album*; **Red Dead Nettle** - *Lamium purpureum*: Not born dead, but living without stinging. You can impress children by stroking these nettles; but please do so responsibly. Bees love

**Wild Teasel** - *Dipsacus fullonum*: The heads trap water and insects, drowning the latter in the former... and then digesting them.

**Woody Nightshade** - *Solanum dulcamara*: A climber with blue-purple flowers with yellow centres, and red berries. Not nearly as nasty as the white-flowered black-berried Black (or Deadly) Nightshade, but eating the berries can make you sick. (Stem, leaves and berries, taste bitter at first, then sweet. Hence the nickname Bittersweet.)





**Ribwort** - *Plantago lanceolata*: Thin veined leaves, long stems with spear-like flower heads. Goes back to the Stone Age, and still one of the commonest plants. Survives mowing, as it sprouts readily from the base.

**Rosebay Willowherb** - *Epilobium angustifolium*: Pinky purple flower spikes, narrow wavy leaves. Celebrated for colonising the London bomb-sites, and notorious for colonising almost any space not already occupied. It spreads by clouds of seed above ground, and wandering roots which create new shoots. \**yucca* - An umbrella of downward-pointing fleshy spear-shaped leaves, that might one day have a spike of bell-shaped white flowers. Sometimes called Adam's Needle, which gives it the right to be in what was envisaged as a Biblical flower bed.

**Rose Campion** (*Agrostema*, *Lychnis*) - One of our most striking wild/garden flowers, with Greek origins.. Grows by the church path if left in peace by grass cutters. Leaves resemble rabbits' ears. Said to be deer resistant—not much tested, though Munkjak Deer has been seen locally.

**Selfheal** - *Prunella vulgaris*: Close packed purple flower heads, on creeping stems that spread widely in short grass. Once used to make a syrup to treat internal injuries.

**Snowdrop** - *Galanthus nivalis*. (There are other snowdrop varieties in the grounds too.) Drooping white blossoms hanging from a green cup. The three spreading sepals are longer than the three green-lipped petals. Flowers February or earlier, and promises Spring rather than delivering it.

**Stinging Nettle** - *Urtica dioica*: Probably the one wild plant that everyone knows, by touch if not by sight. The whole plant bristles with stinging hairs that make an acid wound with a painful rash. Deftly described as "needed, used and hated" by mankind: it has been used to make cloth, food and medicine, and was used by monks to whip themselves as a penance. Please don't.

**Sun Spurge** - *Euphorbia helioscopia*: Green flowers tinged with yellow, in groups of three or four at the top of a branched stem. A mixture of fours and threes, when you examine it closely. A common but fascinating little "weed" that fires seeds which attract ants, The ants then carry them further afield, and eat only the nice oily part. Named after the physician to a 1st Century King of Mauretania

**Sweet William** - *Dianthus barbatus*: A sweet-scented annual with clusters of small flowers. Unusual in being recommended for graves.

**\*Thyme** - *Thymus vulgaris* (*Serpyllum*). Small aromatic shrub with green leaves and pink or white flowers. Wide culinary use and medicinal use. Thyme extract is used in some toothpastes

**Germander Speedwell** - *Veronica chamaedrys*: Dainty small blue flowers with a white centre, with one of the four petals smaller than the others, pairs of toothed oval leaves. The name may reflect the belief that the plant helped healing.

**Geum** - *Geum borisil*: Dense green hummocks with orange scarlet flowers

**Gladiolus**—Sword-shaped leaves with spikes of trumpet-shaped flowers—not very good at growing up straight.

**Goldenrod** - *Solidago virgaurea*: Tall stems of small yellow flowers. Grows very readily, but rather inclined to fall over after reaching a dominating height. Imported at great cost because of its supposed healing properties, but then found growing wild,

**Grape Hyacinth** - *Muscari armenacum*: Miniature blue nobby spikes - spread rapidly. Scent is not a prime characteristic of these tiny hyacinths.

**Great Plantain** - *Plantago major*: Big broad leaves flat to the ground, and longish stems with spear-like flower heads. Another survivor, which requires hand-weeding if you don't want it there.

**Ground Elder** - *Aegopodium podagraria*: One of our least favourite plants, and not a native menace. (Why should anyone import ground elder?) We think it may have been an early vegetable, so if you are fed up with sprouts.....

**Hawkweed**-*Hierarchium umbellatum*. Lance-shaped leaves with deep yellow florets enclosed in dark green bracts. A tallish plant. There may be 20,000 species of Hawkweed worldwide, mainly because lots of Hawkweeds (all daisy family) don't depend on fertilisation to produce seeds, and so produce seeds that grow into plants exactly the same as "mum" and different to Hawkweeds in other areas.

**Hellebore**— *Helleborus niger* (Christmas Rose): Handsome divided leaves and white saucer-shaped flowers with a yellow centre

**Herb Robert** - *Geranium Robertianum*: A delicate little plant with five lobed frondy leaves and little pink flowers with five petals. Stems and leaves turn red in Autumn. Wordsworth liked this one. It used to be thought useful for staunching the flow of blood (because of the Medieval logic of the red colouring) - one of those healing ideas based on theory rather than practical experience.

**Heuchera** Midnight Rose, *Heuchera* Southern Comfort, *Heuchera* Georgian Peach, *Heuchera* Tapestry - Handsome leaves in a variety of striking colours and spikes of flowers. Named after a German botanist.

**Hollyhock** - *Altea rosea*. A tall flower spike usually on the pink/red/purple spectrum. Our specimens come from Hever village: the garden of the house beside the Leicester Arms. (Bought, not casually acquired.)

**Honesty** - Lunana annua - Purple flowers, round (money-shaped) silvery seed heads a gift for dried flower arrangers. Called Moonwort, and the Money Plant. Great good to be honest with money

**Hops** - Humulus lupulus: Yes, we have hops! I can only guess it was a beer-drinking pigeon that fell on this flower bed.

**Hyacinth** - Hyacinthus orientalis: Short spikes of highly scented flowers in the Spring. One of the more useful imports from the Middle East

**Iris Danfordiae and Iris Reticulata** - Miniature irises - one of the delights of Spring. Danfordiae are yellow and Reticulata usually blue or purple

**Ivy** - Hedera helix: Various versions of, well, ivy-shaped leaves, also flowers and berries. Climbs everywhere with its rooty stems. People argue over whether Ivy is decorative or intrusive - really depending on whether you wanted it there, and what else you wanted there. It was once used to help control house goblins at Christmas-time. It is a great favourite with moths, butterflies, wasps, flies, and birds. Recently classed as house protector rather than destroyer

**Lesser Yellow Trefoil** - Trifolium dubium: One of the most popular candidates to be the Shamrock St Patrick used to illustrate the Holy Trinity. A low-lying plant with leaves consisting of three leaflets and a little yellow flower.

**Love-in-a-mist** - Nigella damascene: Branching stems with finely cut leaves and blue inch plus flowers with multiple petals and a raised green centre. One of the loveliest flower names - not a very exciting flower

**Lupin** - Lupinus polyphillus: Tall handsome spikes rising from attractive palm-shaped leaves. Slugs and snails love lupins, and they seem to have loved our lupins to death.

**Meadow Rue** - Thalictrum aquilegifolium: Tall erect plant with sturdy branching stems covered with divided leaves; delicate flowers with prominent stamens.

**\*Meadow Vetchling (Lady's Slipper)** - Lathyrus pratensis: A slender scrambling plant with small yellow slipper-like flowers. Although this is the Biblical tare, farmers actually like it because it improves soil nitrogen, and adds to the food value of hay.

**Montbretia** (Lucifer) - Crocosmia masonorum: Tall sword-shaped leaves, with tall stems of brilliant red flowers. Naming it after the devil justifies its inclusion in the sort of Biblical flower bed.

**Nasturtium** - Tropaeolum majus: Ivy-like leaves and trumpet-shaped flowers of strong colours, usually in the orange/yellow/red spectrum. South American origins, but the Latin name comes from "trophy" and the alleged likeness to the shields and helmets captured in battle. Can be eaten, if the blackfly don't get there first.

**Osteospermum**: Beautiful purple daisy-like flowers. Spreading format

**Ox-eye daisy** - Leucanthemum vulgare, Shasta daisy - Leucanthemum maximum: Large white daisy-like flowers with yellow centres on tall stems, with long deeply indented leaves. The second one is a Spanish import, and tends to be bigger: flowers up to 3 inches across, as compared with up to 2 inches. Once used to treat runny eyes.

**Pansy/Viola** - Viola wittrockiana: Four big petals, of a wide range of colours, and often mixed colours, with black or brown markings. Our specimens include survivors from Easter Gardens.

**Physostegia Rosea** - Obedient Plant (don't ask!): Tall branching four-sided stems covered with stiff toothed leaves; pinky red flower spikes.

**Prickly sow-thistle** - Sonchus asper: Smooth sow-thistle - Sonchus oleraceus. Both plants have clusters of small dandelion-like flowers at the top of tall stems. Longish ribbed leaves. The prickly one is indeed prickly. The plants are popular with insects; the leaves are eaten by humans - though something from the green-grocer or the allotment may be better,

**Primrose** - Primula vulgaris: Long-stemmed pale yellow flowers growing from a rosette of wrinkled toothed leaves. It isn't the first Spring flower, unless you ignore all those flowers that come out before March; but it is one of the most popular. Most of our primroses are survivors from the Easter Garden

**Ragwort** - Senecio Jacobaea. (The very similar but posher sounding Oxford Ragwort has the much less posh Latin name Senecio squalidus,) Dark green deeply divided leaves on a tall stem with yellow daisy-like flowers with the petals bent back. Called Stinking Billy in Scotland, after the hated Duke William of Cumberland: much more apt as a description of the plant than the Latin naming after St James, the Patron Saint of horses. It can destroy livestock livers.

**(Red) Valerian** - Centranthus ruber: Red, pink or white branches of flowers on tall stems. Dominates the centre bed and the bed in front of the Hall, and any paving cracks available. This is one of the complications of the plant world. True Valerian (Valerian officinalis) is rather different and unrelated, and is said to have value as a medicine. (The French do make soup from RV leaves, but don't try them raw: they are very bitter.) As to whether our RV is cultivated or wild, who knows! It very definitely does its own thing. In the 16th Century it was imported from the Mediterranean, but it has made its own way since then.

