



Churchyards for London

Brian Cuthbertson | Beauty in Tranquillity
St John's Wood Church | Thursday 16th July 2015

Churchyards for London

- Dioceses of London, Chelmsford, Southwark, Rochester
- Scope: Greater London only
 - Some 560 sites out of nearly 1200 in City of London and 32 other boroughs
 - Church curtilage, gardens and graveyards, including detached churchyards
 - Non-negligible size, evidence some green space and/or trees
 - Some redundant churches, but municipal cemeteries out of scope
- Phase A: *Churchyards Ecology Survey, 2013-2016/17?*
 - Desk-based research
 - Sampling
 - Professional surveys and report
 - The first such comprehensive study
- Phase B: 2015-
 - Churchyards for Communities*
 - Churchyards and Heritage*
 - Churchyards for Biodiversity*
- Phase C: 2021 –
 - Habitat enhancement, capital works



St John Erith, St Nicholas Chislehurst, St Mary Lambeth, St Luke Chelsea, All Saints Harrow Weald

“God’s Acre”
Saxon phrase

Purposes and benefits

- To assess content and state of fauna and flora
- Then apply learning for a range of community, heritage and biodiversity benefits
- To churchgoers and other visitors to churchyards, including the general public
- Access to and enjoyment of churchyards and wildlife
- Better care of wildlife in churchyards
- Appreciation and learning from wildlife in churchyards
- To recover a sense of belonging with nature



“I lingered among them under that benign sky, watched the moths fluttering among the heath and harebells, ... and wondered how anyone could have imagined unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth.”

Emily Brontë
‘Wuthering Heights’

Spanish or English?

Threats and opportunities

- Ash and oak tree pests
- Hibernation, breeding and food sources eg for hedgehogs
- Partly due to climate change
- Forward shift in spring, northern species drift
- Other endangered species eg bees
- Invasive species: Sycamore, *Buddleia davidii*, Japanese knotweed
- Refugia and stepping stones
- Keystone species (Plane, Lime, Ash), BAP priority species eg Redstart
 - Extensive biodiversity does still exist!
 - Bats: thriving in London churchyards!



“Most of the non-native species in London do not pose a threat to biodiversity and add to the individuality and richness of London's wildlife and heritage. However, some invasive non-native species are a cause for concern, and already threatening the value of London's natural environment.”

London Boroughs Biodiversity Forum

Professionals and volunteers

- Andy Lester, A Rocha UK
- AECOM Infrastructure and Environment UK Ltd
- Selection and tendering
- Ishpi Blatchley, British Lichen Society
- Alison Fairbrass, University College London
- Brian Cuthbertson, Project Administrator



St Mary Magdalene Holloway

“Churchyards may be maintained by parochial church councils or by local authorities. Some are laid out as public parks with flower gardens ... Insect and bird life depends for its sustenance on flora in churchyards and is also ubiquitous.”

Project summary

Research and sampling

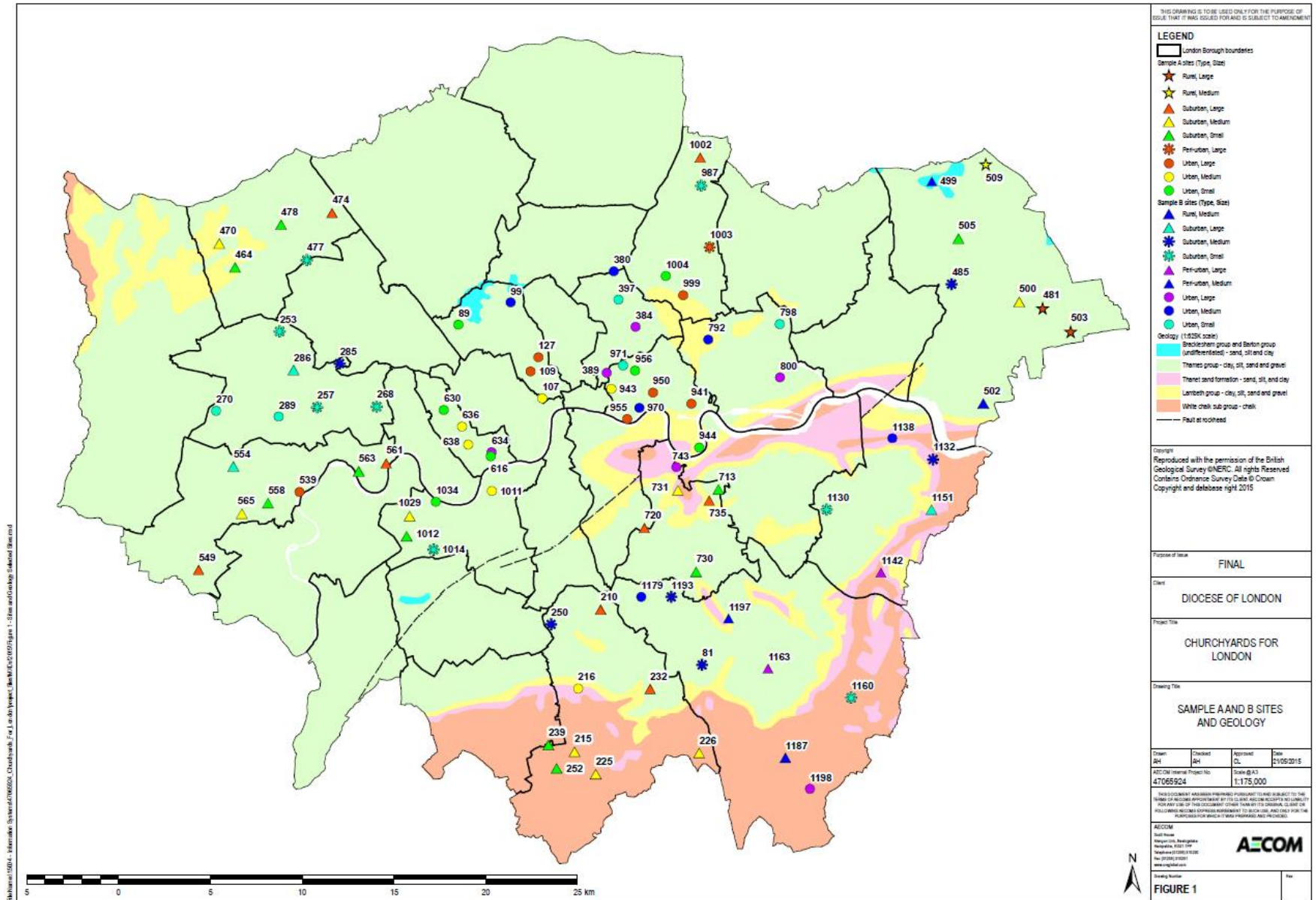
- Desk-based study
 - Spreadsheets and maps
 - Diocesan, library and web records, aerial photography
 - Extract from Greater London records office (GiGL)
 - Analysis of sites and environments
- Sampling
 - Selection of inner and outer London boroughs
 - Site selection, representative of urban, suburban, pre-urban and rural landscapes, site sizes, soil types, habitat potential



“There is a high degree of connectivity to Canons Park and its notable habitats ... The desk study has revealed a number of current and historic records of notable fauna species within the study area; including birds, bats, mammal and amphibians ... The site appears to contain semi-natural habitats including grassland and trees as well as numerous gravestones ... It is foreseeable that the site could support notable and common plants, birds, invertebrates, mammals (including bats and notable small mammals such as hedgehog) and possibly reptiles. The gravestones may support assemblages of lichens and mosses.”

St Lawrence Whitchurch, Little Stanmore, Desk Study

Research and sampling



Surveys and reports

- AECOM Ecologists' visits: one or two to each site
- All London, Southwark and Chelmsford so far, 2015 mainly Rochester
- Sound recordings of bats and birds, by Alison Fairbrass
- Bird IDs by Andy Lester of A Rocha
- Lichen lists by Ishpi Blatchley and British Lichen Society volunteers
- Interim reports; full project report to come



“The Biodiversity Strategy sets out the direction for biodiversity policy for the next decade, on land (including freshwaters) and at sea. The Government’s mission, stated in this document, is to ‘halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy, well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.’ ”

Natural England/DEFRA ‘Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystem services’

Results and lessons

“Interim results are being compiled (including analysing sound recordings). Data compiled at the first stage suggested that churchyards in Greater London occupy a total of 270 Ha, or 1/6th of 1% of the land area of Greater London (157,215 Ha). The ecological potential of these sites appears disproportionate to their size, after considering their distributed locations and contribution to connectivity between other green spaces in London. The range of species observed within a 0.5 km radius of just 50 sites bears witness to this – more than 200 significant species on GiGL’s database; and no fewer than 114 designated sites within a short distance of these 50 churchyard sites ... The master higher plant species list from the first 15 sites visited comprised no fewer than 272 of God’s woody and leafy creatures. The lichen lists are a marvel ... There are also numerous birds, and evidence of bat activity on almost every site – up to 6 different species on a site!”



Buddleia globosa at St Pancras Gardens

“Habitats within our churchyards have the potential to support protected species such as the slow worm and the lizard *Zootoca vivipara*; or amphibians including the smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*, as well as the common frog and toad.”

Parish newsletter, Christmas 2013

Budgets and funding

- Phase A

Project budget £63,000

£33,000 raised or promised

Contributions from all four dioceses

In proportion to their size and numbers of churches

London also contributes staff time

Grants from Natural England and two trusts

Free data from GiGL

Volunteering

£30,000 to be raised

No charge to parishes

New external fundraising effort, autumn /winter 2014-2015

Crowd funding?



- Phase B

Approximate budget £100,000

- Phase C

Indicative £250,000?

Communication, guidance and training

- ‘Beauty in Tranquillity’ – London-wide workshop with CfGA
St John’s Wood Church and Churchyard, 16 July 2015
- Diocesan websites
www.london.anglican.org/kb/churchyards-and-wildlife/
www.london.anglican.org/kb/biodiversity-action-plans/
www.london.anglican.org/kb/churchyards-for-London/
- The above pages need re-visiting and overhauling
- Parish newsletters
- Uniform London-wide policies?
Dioceses of London, Southwark, Chelmsford, Rochester
- Churchyards for London Phase B
Long-term engagement and education programme



“We would like to see country-level biodiversity strategies implemented more effectively and further UK-level coordination where appropriate.”

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation

www.arctrust.org