

# St Denis' Churchyard

County Wildlife Site



Grid reference: TL285505

## The Wildlife Importance of St. Denis' Churchyard CWS

This churchyard surrounding a disused church is an area of grassland managed as a local nature reserve. The grassland is classified as neutral grassland because the species in it are those typically associated with soils with neutral pH. Although it mainly qualifies as a County Wildlife Site for its neutral grassland, there are some calcareous grassland and woodland indicator species present as well. It is particularly species rich, with a very good variety of grasses and wildflowers.



Hoary plantain



Rough hawkbit

St. Denis' Churchyard is one of 470 County Wildlife Sites in Cambridge and Peterborough. These sites that have been recognised as being especially important for wildlife cover about 3% of the county's area. Found on public and private land they play a vital role in the conservation of the UK's natural heritage. More details on County Wildlife Sites can be found at [www.wildlifebcn.org](http://www.wildlifebcn.org)

**For further information on your County Wildlife Site, the Wildlife Sites System, or management advice, contact:**

The Wildlife Trust, The Manor House, Broad Street

Great Cambourne, Cambridgeshire

CB23 6DH

Tel: 01954 713509. Email: [sian.williams@wildlifebcn.org](mailto:sian.williams@wildlifebcn.org)



Species-rich grasslands are now a scarce resource and are one of the most valuable habitats in Britain. In the last fifty years around 97% have been lost or destroyed. Those that remain continue to be under threat from conversion to arable, ploughing and re-seeding, application of chemical fertilisers and herbicides, and a shift from hay-cropping to silage production. Abandonment of cutting or grazing management has also been detrimental, allowing coarse grasses and scrub to expand at the expense of smaller plants.

### Management Recommendations

- Mow the southern section of the site in early March, and late April, removing all arisings (see area marked as semi-improved neutral grassland on site map).
- Mow the entire site in mid-July and September, again removing all arisings.
- Pile all arisings in discrete areas around the edge of the site, or remove from the site, to prevent build-up of nutrients which would encourage weeds.
- Continue annual pulling of nettles around base of church.
- In autumn/winter, trim some branches of the scrub/trees around the site to prevent them spreading into the grassland.

Leaving the northern section of the site un-mown at the beginning of the year will allow the woodland species such as oxlips and bugle to flower and set seed. More frequent mowing of the rest of the site will help to reduce nutrient levels, which is key to reducing the abundance of species such as nettles and coarse grasses, and assisting the spread of wildflower species.

The scrub/hedge along the western edge of the site in particular is starting to encroach on the grassland a bit, so should be cut back periodically to prevent it shading out the grassland. This cutting should be done in autumn or winter, to avoid disturbing birds during the nesting season.