

East of
England
COOP

THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Norwich



Churchyards for wildlife



The Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) Churchyard Conservation Scheme (CCS) was established to encourage those responsible for churchyards to consider the needs of wildlife during routine management of the churchyard, as well as during works to the buildings, churchyard walls and tombstones.

The main purpose of churchyards isn't wildlife conservation. However, churchyards that are havens for wildlife can also have the desired tidy, cared and loved for appearance wanted by most. The two purposes can be brought together to create a beautiful place for people to rest and reflect. Areas where wildflowers are left to flourish are great places for bees and butterflies to thrive, but also add beauty for all to enjoy.



Saving **Norfolk's Wildlife** for the Future



Why are churchyards good for wildlife?

Norfolk was once rich in wildflower meadows with sympathetic management practices such as cutting and grazing allowing them to flourish. However, since the Second World War this traditional management has been replaced by widespread application of fertilisers, herbicides and large scale reseeding and ploughing up of wildflower meadows.

It is estimated that since 1945, 98 percent of English wildflower meadows once widespread in the countryside have vanished. Many Norfolk churchyards are remnants of these meadows (often present before the church itself) and vital to the survival of six wildflower species in Norfolk, where at least 50 percent of their populations are in churchyards.

Churchyards are often a mosaic of habitats - grassland, hedgerows, scrub, veteran trees and woodland - which are great for wildlife. Even the gravestones and the churches themselves form an important part of the churchyard habitat. The stone is of particular importance for lichen and other stonework plants.

Churchyards tend to be chemical free and relatively undisturbed, making them very attractive for wildlife both in towns and the countryside. They are often the last refuge within a parish for the wildlife and habitats they support.



IDENTIFYING WILDFLOWERS

Coping with bats in the church

All species of British bats are protected by law. You must seek expert advice before carrying out work likely to affect areas where they occur. Advice on living with bats is available from the Bat Conservation Trust (www.bats.org.uk).

Repairs to the church and work affecting tombstones

Routine maintenance to the church itself can have a damaging effect on plants living on church walls. Some of these plants are unusual in Norfolk and it is recommended that advice on ways to minimise damage is sought before work starts. Moving or cleaning tombstones can have a damaging effect on lichens, which often protect stones from weathering. Advice on the care of stonework and associated plants is available from the Diocesan Advisory Committee. Their details can be found in the NWT *Caring for lichens and other stonework plants* information sheet.

How can Norfolk Wildlife Trust help you?

NWT provides a range of free services and information to assist churches with churchyard management for wildlife conservation, including:

- A plant survey carried out in spring/early summer by a team of volunteer plant surveyors.
- A list of the wildflowers found in the churchyard.
- A sketch map of the churchyard, showing areas where there are plants of interest.
- Suggestions for areas to manage as Conservation Areas; a Conservation Area is a part of the churchyard set aside for wildlife. In most cases, this is the area of greatest interest in terms of wildflowers, and will need careful management to maintain the wildflower interest.
- Management advice, including areas in need of extra work to restore or maintain their interest.
- Advice on hedges and trees, as well as plants found on church walls.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) and other people interested or involved in the management of the churchyard will receive a copy of the completed survey and may be invited to meet with surveyors when they visit. We aim to re-survey churchyards that are of special interest every few years, but it is wise to monitor the grassland carefully and adjust management if there are any notable changes.

To find out if your churchyard has been surveyed by NWT in the past, or to request a plant survey for the future, please contact the NWT Churchyards Team at Norfolk Wildlife Trust.



HORSTEAD CHURCHYARD



BARN OWL ON GRAVESTONE



Information available from Norfolk Wildlife Trust

- **Caring for grasslands booklet:** gives general advice on how to manage churchyard grassland for wildflowers and wildlife more generally.
- **Caring for lichens and other stonework plants information sheet:** provides information on the species that can be found in churchyards and on sensitive management of stonework.
- **Churchyard wildlife information sheet series:** Bees and butterflies, Amphibians and reptiles, Fungi, Bats, Small mammals, Birds and Hedgerows.
- **Churchyard species identification card:** has photos of species you are likely to find in churchyards including wildflowers, fungi and lichen.
- **Outdoor plaque:** when a church joins the NWT Churchyard Conservation Scheme, it is provided with a plaque to display in the churchyard, stating that it is part of the NWT Scheme. This sign ensures that visitors to the churchyard are made aware of the management in place.
- **Poster:** detailing the management of the churchyard. To be displayed in the church porch or on the church notice board.
- **Funding advice:** If you are struggling to find funding for a specific wildlife conservation project in your churchyard please contact Norfolk Wildlife Trust who will be able to provide advice on potential funding pots.
- **Practical help:** If the parish does not have the resources to carry out the management of the churchyard, NWT is able to put them in touch with the Norfolk and Suffolk Probation Trust (NSPT), a partner of the NWT CCS. NSPT carry out churchyard ground management work for a small fee.

Further help

For copies of the information mentioned above, please visit the Norfolk Wildlife Trust website or contact:

NWT Churchyard Team
Norfolk Wildlife Trust
Bewick House
Thorpe Road, Norwich
NR1 1RY
Tel: 01603 625540
Email: churchyards@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk
Website: www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk



Images by: Emily Nobbs,
Gary Smith, David North

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