



# ST. MARY'S Churchyard POTTON



**Key:**

- Grass area A
- Grass area B
- Grass area C

5 metres  
(Approximate scale)

Photograph: John Day

Photograph: Rebecca Cartwright

## St Mary's Church burial grounds

Since the first church was built on the site of St Mary's in Potton some time before 1094, little has been done to damage this half hectare of grassland, such as adding fertilisers or mowing it so much that it damaged the grass and flowers.

The churchyard was closed to burials in 1882. As a closed churchyard, responsibility for its continued upkeep lies with Potton Town Council. The town council are dedicated to maintaining the grounds as a tidy and peaceful place for past, present and future parishioners and for the benefit of the wildlife which calls it home.

## What finds its home at St Mary's?

In 2017 the Wildlife Trust undertook a full plant survey of the churchyard. A copy of their report can be obtained from the Town Council website.

Lots of interesting plants were found to be growing. The most unusual is the Wild Clary; some other plants of note are Wood Sorrel which is only found at a few places in Bedfordshire and Spring Beauty which only grows on unfertilised acidic soil. In grass area C of the map, ten locally important plants were identified - an indication of the potential of the churchyard.

Photograph: Laura Downton (BCNWT)

## A great partnership

St Mary's Church is in the Diocese of St Albans and has joined with the Diocese to participate in the Living Churchyard Project, which aims to help churches manage their grounds in a wildlife-friendly way while recognising their function as a resting place for the dead and a quiet place of contemplation for the relatives and friends of those buried there. Over 6,000 churches across the country have signed up to the project.

The project is partnered across the country with local Wildlife Trusts who advise churches on the best way to manage their grounds for nature. At St Mary's, the partner is the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust (BCNWT).

Photograph: John Day

## Managing the churchyard for people and nature

During summer, areas of grass will be cut at different frequencies.

- A** Every two weeks
- B** Every four weeks
- C** Every two weeks with an eight week 'no cutting' gap during the middle of summer.

Different lengths of grass are very important for all kinds of insects and encourage wildflowers to bloom which will provide nectar for pollinating insects such as bumblebees and butterflies.

Each time the grass is cut, it will be no shorter than 5cm. Clippings will be removed from **Area B** after the monthly cut and from **Area C** after the eight week 'no cutting' gap. This is important as it stops the soil being enriched which would cause stronger plants to overtake the beautiful wild flowers we all want to see growing. Cutting to no less than 5cm protects the vulnerable bases of the flowers and makes the grass more resilient to dry weather.