

WALPOLE OLD CHAPEL

Our conservation policy for the burial ground

One of the valuable assets possessed by the chapel is its surrounding area of herb-rich grassland – a type of grassland which once was characteristic of the lighter soils of Suffolk. Our management of the burial ground is designed to conserve its rare flora.

In 1999 The Historic Chapels Trust commissioned a survey of the chapel ground by an officer of Suffolk Wildlife Trust. The report particularly remarks on the abundance of Orpine (*sedum telephium*), a member of the stonecrop family associated with old grassland and hedgebanks. It occupies a sizeable area towards the field gate.

The report explains that ‘flower-rich grassland has been degraded or destroyed in Suffolk to such an extent that only 1.1 per cent of the area of the county remains as unimproved grassland. It is estimated that 96 per cent of the area of flower-rich grassland that was present in 1939 has since been fertilised, ploughed or neglected such that it has lost its former wildlife value. The fragments that remain, such as at Walpole Old Chapel, are now vital refuges for this meadow flora and its associated wildlife, and have the added benefit of enabling people to enjoy wildflowers that are becoming so scarce elsewhere. In an increasing number of Suffolk parishes the churchyards are the only significant area of herb-rich grassland remaining.

As far as is known, herbicides have never been used in the chapel ground. While access paths are kept mown, the areas on which the gravestones stand remain deliberately uncut until late July or early August. In the Orpine area cutting takes place even later to allow the plants to flower and seed.

In total 39 species were identified by the surveyor of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. We hope to conserve all these species, except for the increasingly invasive ragwort (*senecio jacobaea*) which is dangerous to farm stock and should be pulled out wherever it appears.

WALPOLE OLD CHAPEL BURIAL GROUND

Species found in the grassland

(compiled by Susan J Stone, June 24 1999)

<i>BOTANICAL NAME</i>	<i>COMMON NAME</i>
achillea millefolium	yarrow
aegopodium podagraria	ground elder
agrostis capillaris	common bent grass
alopecurus pratensis	meadow foxtail
anthoxanthum odoratum	sweet vernal grass
anthriscus sylvestris	cow parsley
arrhenatherum elatius?	false oat grass
bromus sterilis	sterile brome
centaurea nigra	knapweed
cerastium fontanum	mouse-ear
crepis capillaris	smooth hawksbeard
dactylis glomerata	cocksfoot grass
galium aparine	cleavers
galium verum	lady's bedstraw
heracleum sphondylium	hogweed
holcus lanatus	yorkshire fog
hypericum perforatum	common st john's wort
hypochaeris radicata	cat's ear
linaria vulgaris	toadflax
lolium perenne	perennial rye grass
malva sylvestris	common mallow
phleum bertolinii	small cat's tail
plantago coronopus	buck's horn plantain
plantago lanceolata	ribwort plantain
poa trivialis	rough meadow grass
potentilla reptans	creeping cinquefoil
ranunculus acris	meadow buttercup
rumex acetosa	sorrel
rumex acetosella	sheep's sorrel
sedum reflexum	reflexed stonecrop
sedum telephium	orpine
senecio jacobaea	ragwort
silene dioicea	campion
trisetum flavescens	yellow oat grass
trifolium arvense	hare's foot clover
trifolium campestre	hop trefoil
trifolium repens	white clover
vicia hirsuta	hairy tare
vicia sativa	common vetch

Maple Hill & Grounds June 1911

