Sopwell Nunnery

Discover the natural beauty of Sopwell Nunnery Green Space

Help us conserve it by:
• Protecting plants and animals
• Keeping dogs under control and using the bins provided
• Considering other users
• Preventing fires
• Taking your litter home
In addition, please do not damage or climb on the ruins.

Who to contact
If you would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, such as Braille, or in another language, please call 01727 819366.

Sopwell Nunnery Green Space is owned and managed by St Albans City and District Council.

For further information about Sopwell Nunnery Green Space please contact St Albans City & District Council’s Parks and Green Spaces team at: www.stalbans.gov.uk/greenspaces 01727 819366 or email: groundsmaintenance@stalbans.gov.uk

To find out more about allotments in St Albans visit: www.stalbans.gov.uk/allotments

Countryside Management Service (CMS) provides advice on the management of this green space. CMS works with communities across Hertfordshire to help them care for and enjoy the environment.

For more information contact us at: www.hertslink.org/cms or tel: 01462 459395

How to find us
By Public Transport: Sopwell Nunnery Green Space is a fifteen minute walk from St Albans City Train Station and a ten minute walk from St Albans Abbey Station.

Bus Information: There are regular buses to the Cottonmill area.

For more information about public transport contact: intalink Traveline on 0871 2002233 or www.intalink.org.uk

By Road: Sopwell Nunnery Green Space is situated off Cottonmill Lane, a mile south east of the centre of St Albans. There is limited car parking on Cottonmill Lane.

Explore these beautiful historic ruins, wet woodland, river and meadow habitats.
Sopwell Nunnery Habitats

Explore the variety of wildlife habitats Sopwell Nunnery Green Space has to offer.

Spring Wildflower Meadow

This area of wet grassland sometimes floods in winter. Wet grassland is home to specialist flowers and insects, it is increasingly rare in Hertfordshire where changes in agricultural practices and development pressure have lead to its loss.

Summer Wildflower Meadow

The wildflowers that flourish in this habitat provide an important nectar source for bees, butterflies and other invertebrates. Visitors might be fortunate to see a Green Woodpecker searching among the grasses for its favourite meal of ants.

Wet Woodland

These woodland types are dominated by mature Alder and Willow trees and are rare in Hertfordshire. The mature trees provide an excellent home for woodpeckers and bats. The insects on which they feed take advantage of loose bark, cracks and old Ivy which provide shelter and hiding places. You can enjoy walking through this woodland all year round using Fenny’s boardwalk.

Cottonmill Nunnery Allotments

The allotments have been designated a County Wildlife Site for the reptiles that live here. These creatures are typically shy of human activity but you may be privileged enough to see a Grass Snake or a Slow Worm basking in the sunshine or warming themselves on a compost heap.

River Ver

One boundary of this open space is formed by the River Ver. Chalk streams are fed from groundwater held in the sponge like chalk aquifer. The water emerges at ground level in the form of springs. These chalk streams support some of the most threatened plants and animals in Britain. Remarkably, although there are a number of chalk streams to be found across the south of England this is but one of only about 200 in the world! You can follow the River Ver Trail to walk its length looking out for Kingfishers and listening to the river as it rushes over its gravel bed.

For more information on the river and walking in the valley visit: www.riverver.co.uk
Sopwell Nunnery Ruins

The ruins and its grounds are steeped in history and are nationally protected. Commonly called Sopwell Nunnery, the ruins here should rightly be known as Lee Hall. The Nunnery or Priory, constructed around 1140 by Abbot Geoffrey, was of the Benedictine order and dependent on the Abbey. The land on which the ruins stood was purchased by Sir Richard Lee, an adviser to Henry VIII, who paid the Crown £13 and 6 shillings for full ownership following the Dissolution of the Monasteries. He demolished the nunnery and built a house on the foundations. Later in his life he began work to create a more fashionable, Tudor style building but died before this was complete. The main buildings lingered until the eighteenth century, with the gatehouse used in the 1950’s as a motorcycle repair shop. Visible remains include the gatehouse, one wing of an H-shaped structure, the adjoining cross-wing and a kitchen at the back.

Dame Juliana Berners, a 15th century Sopwell Prioress and angling author