

County: Dorset **Site Name:** Parley Common

District: East Dorset, Christchurch

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Local Planning Authority: Dorset County Council, East Dorset District Council, Christchurch Borough Council.

National Grid Reference: SZ 090990 **Area:** 168.1 (ha) 415.3 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 195 **1:10,000:** SZ 09 NE, SU 00 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1959 **Date of Last Revision:** 1977

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983 **Date of Last Revision:** 1988

Other Information:

A Nature Conservation Review site. Adjacent to the Moors River Site of Special Scientific Interest. Boundary revised by extension and deletion in 1988.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Parley Common, although only a small part of the original extensive heathland between the Moors River and the River Stour, retains much of the outstanding interest which has made the site famous for over one hundred years. Many of the characteristic and rare species associated with Dorset Heathlands are recorded, whilst the rich invertebrate fauna reveals interesting affinities with the heaths of the New Forest.

In general the northern and western parts of the common contain most of the dry heathland on Bagshot Sands; wet heath and bog are concentrated in the slightly low-lying areas of the south-east. The dry heath is typically dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris* and bell heather *Erica cinerea*; the wet heath has much cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and purple moor grass *Molinia caerulea*, bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* occurs in the wetter heath, together with hare's-tail cotton-grass *Eriophorum vaginatum*, which is rare in Dorset and marsh gentian *Gentiana pneumonanthe* which is a very localised and declining heathland plant. Gorse *Ulex europaeus* is widespread and acidic oak *Quercus* woodland occurs in the southern part of the site.

The interest of the characteristic heathland communities is enhanced by the occurrence of a number of rare and localised animals. These include Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata*, smooth snake *Coronella austriaca* and sand lizard *Lacerta agilis*. The invertebrate fauna includes many rarities, such as heath grasshopper *Chorthippus vagans*, the ant *Sifolinia karavajevi*, the beetle *Cryptocephalus biguttatus*, and the speckled footman moth *Coscina cribraria*. The spider fauna of Parley has at least 147 species which includes the very rare *Ero aphana*, *Xysticus robustus* otherwise found in only a few places in the New Forest and *Gnaphosa lugubris*, conversely not recorded in the New Forest, but widespread on dry heathland in Purbeck. The diverse fauna is intermediate in character between the heathlands of Purbeck and the New Forest and Parley Common is an important site in providing a habitat link between these heathland areas.

Site Notified to Secretary of State on 20 July 1988