

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: FORNCETT MEADOWS

DISTRICT: South Norfolk

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

Local Planning Authority: South Norfolk District Council

National Grid Reference: TM 166926

Area: 5.4 (ha) 13.3 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 144

1:10,000: TM 19 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): N/A

Date of Last Revision: N/A

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Reasons for Notification:

Fornsett Meadows form one of only three examples of unimproved meadow now remaining in the valley of the River Tas. An interesting mosaic of grassland types has developed in response to natural variation in soil type and wetness and to a long period of stable non-intensive grazing management.

The upper parts of the valley slope support a short rabbit-grazed sward with frequent anthills. The chalky nature of the soil is reflected in the rich variety of species present which include Common Quaking Grass *Briza media*, Hairy Sedge *Carex hirta*, Bird'sfoot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Cowslip *Primula veris*, Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*, Crosswort *Cruciata laevipes*, Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum* and the locally rare Green-winged Orchid *Orchis morio*. This community grades into damper grassland with Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* as the dominant grasses. Associated species include Common Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, Twayblade Orchid *Thymophrasa ovata*, Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, Cuckoo Flower *Cardamine pratensis* and the locally rare Adder's Tongue Fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum*.

Wet, marshy grassland occupies much of the lower valley slope where a seepage line is active and here, two species of rush *Juncus subnodulosus* and *J. inflexus* and lesser Pond Sedge *Carex acutiformis* form the predominant species. Characteristic associates include Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Marsh Valerian *Valeriana dioica*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Southern Marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and Early Marsh Orchid *D. incarnata*.

Additional interest is provided by areas of drier partially improved neutral grassland on alluvial soils in the valley bottom, small areas of bramble and hawthorn scrub, clumps of alder trees and ponds created when the river was straightened in 1943.