

COUNTY: DORSET                      SITE NAME: THRASHER'S HEATH

DISTRICT:    PURBECK

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

Local Planning Authority: PURBECK DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: SY 971838                      Area: 13.1 (ha.) 32.3 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 195                      1:10,000: SY 98 SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984                      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

A small remnant of heathland on the acidic Bagshot Sands, lying between the larger heathland blocks of Hartland Moor and Godlingston Heath. In the past, the site has been worked for clay and parts provide interesting examples of recolonisation by heathland plants and animals.

In damp and wet heathland, mainly in the north west, the very local Dorset Heath *Erica ciliaris* is abundant together with Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* and Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*. On the higher centre of the site, there is dry heathland with Ling *Calluna vulgaris* and Bell Heather *Erica cinerea*. Gorse *Ulex europaeus* and pines *Pinus sylvestris* and *P. nigra* have invaded some of this heathland, and locally form dense stands.

The area of old clay workings possesses a variety of habitats including dry heath on the banks and wet heath and bog in the lower lying areas. The bogs support several species of *Sphagnum* moss including the local *S. pulchrum*, Bogbean *Meneanthes trifoliata*, Cotton Grass *Eriophorum angustifolium* and Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*. The pools complete the transition from dry heath and support aquatic plants typical of acidic waters including Bulbous Rush *Juncus bulbosus* and pondweeds *Potamogeton* spp. They hold several species of dragonfly in abundance.

The mature dry heathland with areas of bare ground on the slopes of the old workings is particularly attractive to the rare reptiles, Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis* and Smooth Snake *Coronella austriaca*, which are present in good numbers.