

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: OLD BODNEY CAMP

DISTRICT: Breckland

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

Local Planning Authority: Breckland District Council

National Grid Reference: TL 848991

Area: 32.2 (ha) 79.5 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 144

1:10,000: TL 89 NW & NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): N/A

Date of Last Revision: N/A

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site consists of an area of grass and lichen/moss dominated heathland, a type of habitat highly characteristic of the Breckland region but now much reduced in extent. The soils are sands with flints, overlying chalk, and part of the site exhibits “stone-stripping” a form of soil patterning created during freeze-thaw conditions at the end of the last glaciation. The heathland is maintained by rabbit grazing. Two rare species of moth are found here.

The “stone-stripping” pattern is evident over a large area in the eastern part of the site, running more or less east-west. The slightly raised stripes support lichen/bryophyte heath with abundant *Cladonia rangiformis* and *Peltigera hymenina*, mosses including *Polytrichum juniperinum* and *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus* and a number of calcifuge herbs such as Sheep’s Sorrel *Rumex acetosella*. Between the stripes are wider bands of acidic grassland dominated by fescues *Festuca rubra* and *F. ovina*, but the separation of grass and lichen heath is indistinct and both have a variety of low-growing herbs such as Storksbill *Erodium cicutarium*, Biting Stonecrop *Sedum acre*, Field Woodrush *Luzula campestris* and Thyme-leaved Sandwort *Arenaria serpyllifolia*. In addition the grassland areas contain several herbs more characteristic of neutral or basic soils including Small Scabious *Scabiosa columbaria* and Lady’s Bedstraw *Galium verum*. In the south-eastern corner a small area of Sand Sedge *Carex arenaria* is present.

Surrounding the stone-stripped area, and further to the west, are areas of neutral grassland largely dominated by tussocky grasses such as Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*. Where heavily rabbit-grazed however, this has a floral composition similar to acid grassland/lichen areas with extensive carpets of moss *Pseudoscleropodium purum*. Houndstongue *Cynoglossum officinale*, Wild Parsnip *Pastinaca sativa* and Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea* occur in disturbed areas, particularly near rabbit warrens. Anthills contribute further to diversity, and derelict roads and hut bases on the site are starting to vegetate over with a turf of somewhat similar floristic composition to the adjacent grassland.

The two nationally rare moths *Noctua orbona* and *Scopula rubiginata*, which are virtually confined to the Breckland region, are present on the site.

Several mature shelter belts are included in the site, which provide additional interest. Two are coniferous with a dense understorey of Privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, Elder *Sambucus nigra*, Oak *Quercus robur* and Snowberry *Symphoricarpos rivularis*. The third is deciduous consisting of Oak *Quercus robur* and Sweet Chestnut *Castanea sativa*. Small areas of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and of Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* scrub are also present.