

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: BURGH COMMON AND MUCKFLEET
MARSHES

DISTRICT: Great Yarmouth

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

Local Planning Authority: Broads Authority

National Grid Reference: TG 440117 Area: 118.0 (ha) 291.6 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 134 1:10,000: TG41 SW, TG 41 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1959 Date of Last Revision: 1981

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

The boundary has been amended by several minor deletions.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Burgh Common and Muckfleet Marshes lie in a shallow valley at the western end of Filby Broad and drain to the River Bure by way of the Muck Fleet. The site lies on fen peats and retains a high water-table throughout the year. The area is one of the most important unreclaimed wetlands in Broadland and large areas are still managed by traditional grazing and mowing regimes. A wide range of habitats is present, the most important being the fen meadows, tall fen vegetation and the drainage dykes. These are floristically-rich and contain an assemblage of rare plants. The site has, in addition, an entomological and ornithological interest.

Marshy grassland, dominated by Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus* and Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, covers a large part of the site. The majority of the area is grazed by horses and cattle but some parts are mown and a diverse flora has been retained by this traditional management. Species present include Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, Greater Tussock Sedge *Carex paniculata*, and the locally rare Pugsley's Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza traunsteineri* and Marsh Fern *Thelypteris thelypteroides*. Higher ground is present along the northern edge of the site and here there is a gradation to unimproved neutral grassland.

A tall fen community has developed on wetter, low-lying ground where the land slopes to the Muck Fleet. This habitat is dominated by Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, Reed Sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima* and Saw Sedge *Cladium mariscus*. Other species present include Purple Small-reed *Calamagrostis canescens*, Angelica *Angelica sylvestris* and the uncommon Marsh Pea *Lathyrus palustris*, Marsh Sow-thistle *Sonchus palustris* and Milk Parsley *Peucedanum palustre*.

The drainage dykes on the grazing marshes contain clear waters and support a wide range of aquatic plants and invertebrates. The rare Water Soldier *Stratiotes aloides* is dominant in most of the dykes with frequent Spiked Water-milfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum*, Frogbit *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*, Water Violet *Hottonia palustris*, Opposite-leaved Pondweed *Groenlandia densa*, Stoneworts *Chara* spp. and the uncommon Fen Pondweed *Potamogeton coloratus*.

The invertebrate fauna includes several rare species, including the Norfolk Aeshna dragonfly *Aeshna isoceles*, Swallowtail *Papilio machaon*, and a freshwater snail, *Anisus vorticulus*.

Mixed scrub on fen peats has developed where the tall fen vegetation is no longer cut. Grey Sallow *Salix cinerea* and Alder *Alnus glutinosa* are frequent and the ground flora includes Meadowseet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Bittersweet *Solanum dulcamara* and Royal Fern *Osmunda regalis*.

A wide range of marshland breeding birds is present including Reed Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler and the rare Cetti's Warbler.