

COUNTY: NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

SITE NAME: ORSTON PLASTER PITS

DISTRICT: RUSHCLIFFE

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

Local Planning Authority: RUSHCLIFFE BOROUGH COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: SK 763402                      Area: 4.72 (ha.)                      (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 129                      1:10,000: SK 74 SE

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

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

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

The site comprises one of the best mixed-habitat sites in Nottinghamshire and contains examples of neutral and calcareous grassland and eutrophic open water communities which are representative of these habitats in central and eastern England.

Biology

The north-eastern part of the site comprises ridge and furrow pasture developed on soils derived from clays of the Triassic Keuper Marl series. The sward is characterised by the abundance of common bent *Agrostis tenuis*, crested dog's tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, yellow-oat grass *Trisetum flavescens* and cock's foot *Dactylis glomerata*, and by a wide range of herbs including lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*, bird's foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, cowslip *Primula veris*, hayrattle *Rhinanthus minor* and pepper saxifrage *Silaum silaus*. In the centre of the site calcareous grassland has developed on mineral soils associated with the past extraction of gypsum. Here, the sward is characterised by the abundance of upright brome *Zerna erecta*, *Trisetum flavescens*, creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera* and glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*, and by a rich herb flora which includes fairy flax *Linum catharticum*, salad burnet *Poterium sanguisorba*, tway-blade *Listera ovata*, *Lotus corniculatus*, dwarf thistle *Cirsium acaulon*, wild parsnip *Pastinaca sativa* and bee orchid *Ophrys apifera*. To the north-west lie a number of water-filled clay pits which vary in character but typically possess emergent stands of bulrush *Typha latifolia*, lesser bulrush *T. angustifolia* and common reed *Phragmites australis*, and also strong colonies of amphibious bistort *Polygonum amphibium* and water plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica*. The aquatic flora reflects the calcium-rich status of the water and is characterised by the presence of thread-leaved water crowfoot *Ranunculus trichophyllus*, horned pondweed *Zannichellia palustris* and stonewort *Chara* sp. Adjacent areas of scrub provide additional interest while the mix of habitats present provides feeding and breeding conditions for a wide range of birds and insects.