

COUNTY: KENT            SITE NAME: PETERS PIT

DISTRICT: TONBRIDGE AND MALLING

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

Local Planning Authority: TONBRIDGE AND MALLING DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TQ 717629            Area: 24.0 (ha.) 59.3 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 178/188            1:10,000: TQ 76 SW

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

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

Other Information:

A new site.

Reasons for Notification:

This site supports one of the largest populations of the great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* in Britain, a species afforded special protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Two other newt species also breed here together with frogs and at least two species of reptile. Little is known about the rest of the fauna of the site, although the areas of scrub are thought to support a number of breeding birds.

An active chalk quarry until about 20 years ago, Peters Pit has an undulating terrain in which many rain fed ponds, of various sizes, have developed. Those which dry up early in the season are of less interest, but five ponds are sufficiently large to support very substantial populations of amphibians, particularly the great crested newt. The value of the site for newts is enhanced by the presence, around the edges and between the ponds, of areas of scrub with loose rock which serve as day and winter refuges. Aquatic vegetation provides shelter in the pond environment.

Terrestrial habitats represented include chalk grassland and ruderal vegetation as well as scrub and developing woodland. Many herbs characteristic of the chalk are present such as bee orchid *Ophrys apifera*, autumn gentian *Gentianella amarella* and basil thyme *Acinos arvensis*. Lime-loving shrubs are also widespread; wild privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and the climbing traveller's joy *Clematis vitalba* being particularly frequent. Two aquatic plants which are scarce in Kent are found in the ponds, viz mare's tail *Hippuris vulgaris* and the water crowfoot *Ranunculus aquatilis*.

In addition to the large numbers of great crested newts, smaller numbers of the smooth newt *T. vulgaris* and palmate newt *T. helveticus* also occur, along with

the common frog *Rana temporaria* and two reptiles: the grass snake *Natrix natrix* and the adder *Vipera berus*. Birds recorded from the site include nightingale and several species of warbler.