

COUNTY: NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

SITE NAME: WILWELL CUTTING

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 567348

Area: 7.26 (ha.) 17.93 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 129

1:10,000: SK 53 SE, SK 53 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1980

Date of Last Revision: 1981

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983

Date of Last Revision: –

#### Other Information:

The site is included within a larger area declared as a Local Nature Reserve by the Rushcliffe Borough Council under Section 21 of the 1949 Act.

It is managed by the Nottinghamshire Trust for Nature Conservation Limited.

#### Reasons for Notification:

The site contains some of the best examples of neutral grassland and marsh remaining in Nottinghamshire and is representative of these habitats in Central and Eastern England.

#### Biology

Present habitats have developed on the site of a former railway cutting and borrowpit which exposed strata of the Triassic Keuper Marl series. Occasional springs issue from skerry bands and much of the site floor is damp or waterlogged. On the drier slopes and terraces neutral grassland has developed characterised by the abundance of silver hair-grass *Aira caryophyllea*, narrow-leaved meadow grass *Poa angustifolia* and red fescue *Festuca rubra* and by a herb flora which includes wild carrot *Daucus carota*, fairy flax *Linum catharticum*, oxeye daisy *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*, mouse-ear hawkweed *Hieracium pilosella*, meadow saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata* and, locally, green-winged orchid *Orchis morio*. On somewhat damper soils the dominant grasses include *Poa angustifolia*, false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, tall fescue *Festuca arundinacea* and *F. rubra*. These damper swards are characterised also by an abundance of herbs such as false fox-sedge *Carex otrubae*, hay rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, adder's tongue fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, *Saxifraga granulata* and, locally, *Orchis morio* and southern marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*. East of the former railway track the soils of the cutting floor are waterlogged. The northern end of this area carries marsh typical of somewhat base-rich soils and is characterised by yellow sedge *Carex demissa*, long-stalked yellow sedge *C. lepidocarpa*, cotton grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and hemp agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum*. To the south the marsh gives way to tracts of scrub dominated by willows, sallows *Salix* spp. and birch *Betula verrucosa*. Here the bryophyte mat is well developed and contains tussocks of bog moss *Sphagnum* spp.

Additional interest is provided by the variety of the breeding bird community; it is also used by birds for roosting. The variety of habitats present supports a diverse insect fauna.