

SITE NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON THE 21ST
JULY 1989

COUNTY: NORFOLK SITE NAME: DEREHAM RUSH MEADOW

DISTRICT: BRECKLAND

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

Local Planning Authority: Breckland District Council

National Grid Reference: TF 976140 Area: 20.6 (ha.) 50.9 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 132 1:10,000: TF 91 SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1989 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site comprises an area of winter-flooded meadowland and alder carr along the valley of a small tributary of the River Wensum, and exhibits a wide range of grassland and woodland communities which are particularly unusual in Norfolk. The stream has been diverted to a new cut further up the valley-side and a distinctive series of wet, unimproved grassland communities has developed in the old valley basin. These diverse communities are maintained by a traditional management of light grazing by horses.

The lowest-lying ground, by the old stream-course, is shallowly flooded and dominated by bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, tubular water dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa* and narrow-leaved water-parsnip *Berula erecta*. This is a particularly diverse area and other notable plants include blunt-flowered rush *Juncus subnodulosus*, southern marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica*, marsh arrow-grass *Triglochin palustris*, marsh cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* and lesser spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*.

On slightly higher ground, with seasonal flooding, is a large area dominated by marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus* and creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*. Characteristic species of this community are water mint *Mentha aquatica*, jointed rush *Juncus articulatus* and creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera*.

These wet, grazed communities grade into areas of tall fen vegetation dominated by common reed *Phragmites australis* with reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, greater tussock sedge *Carex paniculata*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and angelica *Angelica sylvestris*.

On the eastern area of the valley floor one of the few areas of sump alder *Alnus glutinosa* woodland in west Norfolk has developed. Alder and grey willow *Salix cinerea* dominate over a ground flora characterised by large bitter-cress *Cardamine amara*, gipsywort *Lycopus europaeus*, lesser pond sedge *Carex acutiformis* and the uncommon marsh fern

Thelypteris palustris. In contrast carr woodland further downstream is influenced by the movement of slightly calcareous groundwater, giving rise to the presence of bird cherry *Prunus padus* and guelder rose *Viburnum opulus* in the shrub layer. Dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* dominates much of the ground layer and associates include opposite-leaved golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, small teasel *Dipsacus pilosus*, pendulous sedge *Carex pendula* and nettle-leaved bellflower *Campanula trachelium*.

The site is also of interest for its breeding bird population including snipe, lapwing, sedge warbler and reed warbler, and winter floods are periodically used by waterfowl.