

File ref:

County: Lincolnshire **Site name:** Woodnook Valley

District: South Kesteven

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

Local Planning Authority: South Kesteven District Council

National Grid Reference: SK 936324 **Area:** 9.2 (ha) 22.7 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000: 130 **1: 10 000:** SK 93 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1968 **Date of Last Revision:**

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

Other Information:

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site provides a very good representative example of calcareous grassland developed on soils derived from Eastern Jurassic Limestone. It is particularly important in South Lincolnshire in being an unusually large site, consisting of two cattle-grazed fields lying either side of a glacial valley. Most of the remaining grassland of this type in the county is confined to roadside verges and disused quarries which are not managed in a traditional manner.

Since the fields are grazed, grasses are not dominant over most of the site, and characteristic limestone herbs are very well represented. The southern field has a northern aspect and is rich in mosses. The turf is short over much of the field, with sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* being the dominant grass along with common rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor* and stemless thistle *Cirsium acaule*. In the areas where the grazing has been less heavy, more coarse grasses such as upright brome *Bromus erectus* and tor-grass *Brachypodium pinnatum* occur, but the typical limestone herbs such as greater knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa*, wild thyme *Thymus praecox*, fairy flax *Linum catharticum* and common milkwort *Polygala vulgaris* are still abundant. Hawthorn scrub *Crataegus monogyna* is confined to the north-eastern corner of this field and a few isolated bushes, and provides additional habitat.

The south-facing field to the north has a similar species composition, and plants such as carline thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, mouse-ear hawkweed *Hieracium pilosella*, harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, glaucous sedge *Carex flacca* and common centaury *Centaureum erythraea*. Towards the western edge of the field the herbs are less abundant, and false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* and upright brome begin to dominate.

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Woodnook Valley (cont...)

Several species of orchid are present on the site, including early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula*, bee orchid *Ophrys apifera* and man orchid *Aceras anthropophorum*, which, at this site, is nearing the northern limits of its distribution in Britain.