

NOTIFICATION DATE: 31 MARCH 1989

COUNTY: STAFFORDSHIRE SITE NAME: MOTTEY MEADOWS

DISTRICT: South Staffordshire SITE REF: 5ODW

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

Local Planning Authority: STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL South Staffordshire District Council

National Grid Reference: SJ 840134 Area: 44.6 (ha.) 110.2 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 119 1:10,000: SJ 81 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1951 Date of Last Revision: 1968

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 Date of Last Revision: 1989

Other Information:

A nationally important site listed in 'A Nature Conservation Review', edited by D A Ratcliffe, Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Part of the site is a National Nature Reserve.

Site boundary alteration (extension).

Description and Reasons for Notification:

An outstanding, floristically-diverse \*mesotrophic grassland where traditional late hay cutting and aftermath grazing has been perpetuated, largely unaffected by modern agricultural practices. The site is important because of its large size, variety of grassland community types and presence of rare species. Furthermore it contains an extensive example of an alluvial flood meadow.

Alluvial flood meadows occur in river valleys of southern and central England and are now much reduced in extent. At Mottey Meadows they occupy the greater part of the site and overlie free-draining soils subject to winter flooding. The sward is typically rich in species, including mosses, and many grasses such as meadow foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis*, sweet vernal *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, and tall fescue *Festuca arundinacea*. Characteristic herbs are great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, pepper saxifrage *Silaum silaus*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* and devil's bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*. Unusually, a few woodland plants also occur such as wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and goldilocks *Ranunculus auricomus*.

Where soils are permanently wet a crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* – marsh marigold *Caltha palustris* community prevails, with a high cover of sedges, such as brown sedge *Carex disticha* and carnation sedge *Carex panicea*. A wide range of wetland herbs occur including marsh ragwort *Senecio aquaticus*, ragged robin

*Lychnis flos-cuculi*, southern marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica* and meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*.

A further six types of semi-natural grassland are present as lesser constituents. These range from relic fen-meadow on peaty soils through swards dominated by tussocks of soft-rush *Juncus effusus* to those with abundant leguminous plants, such as bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* on the drier, eastern side.

Snake's head fritillary *Fritillaria meleagris* occurs here sparsely in what is considered to be its most northerly native site in Britain and one of the very few extant localities outside the Upper Thames basin.

The conservation value is enhanced by the many hedgerows and old hedgerow trees including black poplars *Populus nigra*, whilst the flanking watercourse and ditches provide further wildlife habitats. The site is of local importance for breeding waders such as snipe and curlew, and plant-feeding beetles are well represented.

\*Mesotrophic grasslands are those typically of loams, alluvium or clays comprising species showing a preference for soils neither too acid nor too alkaline and neither too wet nor too dry. They constitute the majority of well-drained permanent agricultural grasslands used for grazing and mowing.