

County: Lancashire **Site Name:** White Coppice
Flush

District: Chorley

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

Local Planning Authority: Chorley Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SD 622197 **Area:** 0.46 (ha) 1.14 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50 000 109 **1:10 000** SD 61 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1979 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Other Information:

1. Site boundary remains unchanged.
2. Site formerly notified as White Coppice Flush, Heapey.

Reasons for Notification:

The site is located g km north of the hamlet of White Coppice in the parish of Heapey, about 3 km east of Chorley, at an elevation of 152 m OD. It occupies a level strip of rough sheep-grazed land sandwiched between the open aqueduct known as the Goit and the foot of the steep scarp of Heapey Moor. The adjacent hillside is underlain by the massive Fletcher Bank Grit of the Carboniferous Millstone Grit Series, but the site lies right on the Brinscall Fault which delineates the western edge of the Anglezarke Moors.

The botanical interest is centred on calcareous springs which have created base-rich flushes with a rich flora containing elements of two plant communities which are rare nationally, and several plant species which have very restricted distributions in Lancashire. Smaller areas of acidic flushes are also present affording striking contrasts with the base-rich areas. Flushes in general are a habitat which has become increasingly scarce due to drainage and agricultural improvement, and this site provides the best example of base-rich flushes in lowland Lancashire.

The water emerges from a line of springs along the foot of the hillside in the southern half of the site. It is so rich in lime that calcareous deposits are forming and the springs have carpets of lime-loving bryophytes in which the moss *Cratoneuron commutatum* is characteristic and

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conspicuous. Around the springs are pools, stony places and patches of bare peaty soil and here the insectivorous plants sundew and butterwort, which have very restricted distribution in Lancashire, occur. The water then seeps down onto the lower part of the site forming a base-rich flush dominated by tussock sedge *Carex paniculata*, itself characteristic of calcareous ferns, and purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*. Many other species of plants occur, including ten species of sedges. This species-rich *Molinia* association is rare nationally, and in the presence of long-stalked yellow sedge *Carex lepidocarpa*, tawny sedge *C. hostiana* and butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris* suggests affinities with flushes usually associated with limestone, themselves a rare habitat in national terms. In the south-west corner of the site is a small area of acidic flush and soft rush and *Sphagnum* and *Polytrichum* mosses contrasting sharply with the adjacent base-rich areas.

The middle, narrowest part of the site is crossed by two spring-fed streams rich in watercress. The streams and the boundaries between them have been planted with alders, forming a square within which the vegetation is dominated by tussock sedge with very few other species. Beyond the streams there is a transition to more acidic conditions, with acidic flushes and patches of bracken along the Goit side. The ground rises towards the northern end providing drier conditions, and this area has the same vegetation as the adjacent hillside and (with the addition of purple moor-grass tussocks) mat-grass, bilberry and sheep's fescue. Thus the northern half of the site demonstrates the transition from basic to acidic and wet to dry conditions.