

County: Cheshire

Site name: Quoisley Meres

District: Crewe & Nantwich

Site ref: 15WCC

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

**Local Planning Authority: Cheshire County Council
Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council**

National grid reference: SJ549456

Area: 28.25 (ha) 69.8 (ac)

Ordnance survey sheet: 1:50,000: 117

1:10,000: SJ 54 NE

Date notified (Under 1949 Act): 1963

Date of last revision: 1979

Date notified (under 1981 Act): 1987

Date of last revision:

Other information:

Site boundary alteration (extension & reduction)

Description and reasons for notification:

The Meres & Mosses of the north west Midlands form a nationally important series of open water and peatland sites. These have developed in natural depressions in the glacial drift left by the ice sheets which covered the Cheshire-Shropshire plain some 15,000 years ago. The majority lie in Cheshire and north Shropshire, with a small number of outlying sites in adjacent parts of Staffordshire and Clwyd.

The origin of most of the hollows can be accounted for by glaciation but a small number have been formed at least in part by more recent subsidence resulting from the removal in solution of underlying salt deposits.

There are more than 60 open water bodies known as 'meres' or 'pools' and a smaller number of peatland sites or mires known as 'mosses'. They range in depth from about one metre to 27 metres and have areas varying between less than a hectare to 70 hectares.

Although the majority of the meres are nutrient rich (eutrophic) the water chemistry is very variable reflecting the heterogeneous nature of the surrounding drift deposits. Associated fringing habitats such as reedswamp, fen, carr and damp pasture add to the value of the meres. The development of these habitats is associated with peat accumulation which in some cases has led to the complete infilling of the basin. During this process the nutrient status of the peat surface changes and typically becomes nutrient poor (oligotrophic) and acidic thus allowing species such as the bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) to colonise it. the resulting peat bogs are the 'mosses'. In a few cases colonisation of the water surface by floating vegetation has resulted in the formation of a quaking bog known as a 'schwingmoor'.

Quoisley Meres has been selected to represent a type of mere with nutrient rich open water and well developed fringing habitats. The site also includes areas of damp grassland.

Quoisley Big Mere has a narrow border of both white and yellow water-lilies (*Nymphaea alba* and *Nuphar lutea*). A continuous narrow reedswamp surrounds the mere and consists of a mixture of species including lesser reedmace (*Typha angustifolia*), common club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*) and greater pond-sedge (*Carex riparia*). The reedswamp grades into a species-rich fed community which includes the locally rare tufted-sedge (*Carex elata*). The narrow woodland fringe is dominated by alder (*Alnus glutinosa*).

Quoisley Little Mere provides an interesting contrast to Big Mere as it has a large population of white lily and an extensive reedswamp, but with fewer species.

The aquatic invertebrate fauna of the meres is good, particularly for beetles (*Coleoptera*) and bugs (*Hemiptera*). A number of locally and nationally rare invertebrates have been recorded.

The damp grassland areas are moderately species rich and include purple small-reed (*Calamagrostis canescens*) and brown sedge (*Carex disticha*). Marsh fern (*Thelypteris thelypteroides*) and meadow thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*) – two species which are rare in Cheshire – also occur.