

COUNTY: LEICESTERSHIRE

SITE NAME: CAVE'S INN PITS

DISTRICT: HARBOROUGH

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

Local Planning Authority: HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: SP 538 795

Area: 5.7 (ha.) 14.1 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 140

1:10,000: SP 57 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1981

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

The site contains some of the best remaining areas of neutral marsh in Leicestershire; this interest is supported by the presence of other wetland, scrub and grassland habitats. The marsh and open water habitats are representative of base-rich wetland communities in eastern and southern England.

Biology

Cave's Inn Pits comprises a small area of disused gravel workings which since their abandonment in the 1940's, have developed great habitat diversity. The floor of the gravel workings is occupied by areas of marsh, scrub and open water. The marsh is characterised by the abundance of soft rush *Juncus effusus*, hard rush *J. inflexus*, cyperus sedge *Carex pseudocyperus* and marsh orchids *Dactylorhiza* sp. and beneath by a dense bryophyte mat. Adjacent shallow-water pools are dominated variously by mare's tail *Hippuris vulgaris* and by bulrush *Typha latifolia*, while the large western pond is partly fringed by reedswamp dominated by the common reed *Phragmites australis* and partly by diverse marginal and emergent wetland vegetation. Fairly extensive areas of scrub dominated by willows *Salix* spp. occur in the floor of the pits and on the adjacent banks; locally the ground flora is diverse, including such species as the wood horsetail *Equisetum sylvaticum*. To the north of the site, on higher ground, species-rich grassland occurs. This community, which has affinities with the grassland of calcareous clay soils, is dominated by sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* and red fescue *Festuca rubra* and is notable for the variety of orchid species which have been recorded there. The complex of habitats present on the site is reflected in the presence of a varied breeding bird community.