

COUNTY: KENT            SITE NAME: TROTTISCLIFFE MEADOWS

DISTRICT: TONBRIDGE AND MALLING

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

Local Planning Authority: TONBRIDGE AND MALLING DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TQ 643595      Area: 5.00 (ha.) 12.35 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 188      1:10,000: TQ 65 NW

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1990

Other Information:

The site is within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Reasons for Notification:

This site is one of few remaining examples of unimproved meadow in Kent and it supports a number of species scarce in the county. In recent years this habitat type has become increasingly uncommon as most fields have now been ploughed or drained with a resulting loss of interest.

These meadows lie on gault clay but are crossed by calcareous (calcium-rich) streams flowing from the point where the chalk meets the less permeable clay. They are farmed on traditional lines with an annual hay cut and winter grazing. The combination of relatively infertile conditions coupled with traditional management has led to the development of a rich flora containing a total of approximately 130 plant species. A wide variety of grasses and sedges occurs together with typical meadow species such as pepper saxifrage *Silaum silaus*, lesser knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris* and cuckoo flower *Cardamine pratensis*, whilst in the dampest areas rushes *Juncus* spp. and meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* are frequent. Also present are species which are rare or scarce in Kent, such as marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica* and three sedges: carnation sedge *Carex panicea*, brown sedge *C. disticha* and 'common' sedge *C. nigra*. The fen areas also contain fen bedstraw *Galium uliginosum* along with ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*. A drier section of the most northerly meadow contains a large population of meadow cranesbill *Geranium pratense* which is scarce in Kent. Orchids found on the site include common spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* and hybrids between this and the southern marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*.

The damp areas support a range of mosses including *Calliergon cuspidatum*, *Brachythecium rutabulum* and a rare calcareous marsh species *Cratoneuron filicinum*.

The meadows are surrounded by old hedges which provide a habitat for woodland plants such as bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, traveller's joy *Clematis vitalba* and honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*.