

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: POTTER'S CARR, CRANWORTH

DISTRICT: Breckland

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

Local Planning Authority: Breckland District Council

National Grid Reference: TF 980041

Area: 5.7 (ha) 14.1 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 144

1:10,000: TF 90 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1968

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Description and Reasons for Notification:

The site consists of an area of alder carr and wet pastureland situated in the upper reaches of the river Blackwater on the northern fringes of the Breckland region. The site forms an excellent example of the carr woodland–wet grassland habitat complex characteristic of local river valleys and is unusual in supporting a nationally scarce woodland stand-type with a rich ground flora typical of ancient woodland.

Throughout much of the carr neglected Alder *Alnus glutinosa* coppice dominates, intermixed with Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* at the north-western end. Bird Cherry *Prunus padus* is abundant throughout the shrub layer in association with Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and Guelder Rose *Viburnum opulus*. Willows are largely confined to the woodland edge, adjacent to the river Blackwater.

The ground flora is very diverse and although the wood appears from historical evidence not to be ancient, many of the plants present are characteristic of this woodland type. Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and Nettle *Urtica dioica* dominate the ground layer, with Herb Paris *Paris quadrifolia* occurring frequently throughout. Early Purple Orchid *Orchis mascula*, Common Twayblade *Listera ovata* and Nettle-leaved Bellflower *Campanula trachelium* are present, together with Moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina* and Woodruff *Galium odoratum*. A series of overgrown drainage ditches supports wetland species including Lesser Pond Sedge *Carex acutiformis*, Yellow Flag *Iris pseudacorus* and Water Avens *Geum rivale*. The northern strip of woodland is drier and consists of Oak *Quercus robur* standards over Hazel *Corylus avellana* coppice with a more limited ground flora.

Wet neutral pasture to the north-west of the carr is dominated by Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Lesser Pond Sedge *Carex acutiformis* and rushes *Juncus* spp. Fen Bedstraw *Galium uliginosum* is present and the Crowfoot *Ranunculus penicillatus* occurs in shallow ditches, while to the north-west Reed Canary Grass *Phalaris arundinacea* dominates. On drier ground Downy Oat-grass *Avenula pubescens* and Hairy Sedge *Carex hirta* are present.

The site is a wintering ground for snipe and water rail, and green sandpiper have been recorded.