

COUNTY: DORSET                      SITE NAME: PUREWELL MEADOWS

DISTRICT: CHRISTCHURCH

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

Local Planning Authority: CHRISTCHURCH BOROUGH COUNCIL, Dorset County Council

National Grid Reference: SZ 168934                      Area: 12.6 (ha.) 31.1 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 195                      1:10,000: SZ 19 SE

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

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

Other Information:

A new site.

Reasons for Notification:

A series of unimproved wet meadows situated as a south easterly outlier of the Avon Valley SSSI. The complex system of fields and ditches presents a range of plant habitats including wet acidic grassland over peat and more neutral damp grassland which are an integral component of the meadows of the Avon Valley. Mature hedgerows, often with broad scrub margins, add to the interest and diversity of flowering plants of which 160 species have been recorded.

At the western end of the site the grassland is neutral in character, dominated by species of Bent *Agrostis* spp. and Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*. This has a range of plants typical of old damp meadows, a fast disappearing habitat type in lowland Britain. Of special note is the relatively uncommon Adder's Tongue Fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum* and a good colony of Green-winged Orchid *Orchis morio*. Further east the grassland becomes damper and more acid. The swards tend to be dominated by Brown Bent *Agrostis canina* with an abundance of Devil's-bit *Succisa pratensis*, Meadow Thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, Heath Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata* ssp. *ericetorum*, the sedges *Carex demissa* and *C. panicea*, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*.

Wetter areas along the lines of old drains are of great interest holding local marsh plants including Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris* and Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*. There are small areas of wet acid grassland over deeper peat which are dominated by Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and Brown Bent with Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, Star Sedge *Carex echinata*, Bristle Scirpus *Isolepis setacea* and Bog Myrtle *Myrica gale*.

The field margins hold Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, Birch *Betula pendula*, Sallow *Salix cinerea*, Oak *Quercus robur* and Holly *Ilex aquifolium* and the interest of the site is enhanced by scrub which is mainly Gorse *Ulex europaeus* and an unusual subspecies of Bramble *Rubus*

*fruticosus* agg. The local Climbing Corydalis *Corydalis claviculata* is widespread around the edges of the fields.

The fauna of this site has not been studied in detail. However, the bush crickets, Short-winged Conehead *Conocephalus dorsalis* and the very local Long-winged Conehead *C. discolor* recently have been found in abundance.