

**County:** Hampshire **Site Name:** Ron Ward's Meadow with Tadley Pastures SSSI

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

**Local Planning Authority:** Hampshire County Council, Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council

**National Grid Reference:** SU 601606

**Area:** 11.3 (ha) 27.92 (ac)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 174, 175

**1:10,000:** SU 56 SE, SU 66 SW

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 29 August 1991

**Date of Last Revision:** –

**Confirmed:** 27 February 1992

### **Other Information:**

#### **Reasons for Notification:**

Ron Ward's Meadow at Tadley Hill lies on a south-facing hillside sloping down towards Honeywell Brook, with plateau gravels at the top, succeeded by exposures of Bracklesham Beds, Lower Bagshot Sands and a little alluvium at the foot of the slope. The main meadow comprises an unimproved, herb-rich grassland, managed traditionally as a hay meadow with after-math cattle grazing: adjacent meadows have been included within the boundary, as they support grasslands managed by grazing alone and are thus markedly different in terms of species composition. There are 28 species indicative of ancient grassland present, of which a number are regionally uncommon, making it one of the finest surviving hay meadow/pasture complexes in Hampshire.

The sward is dominated by red fescue *Festuca rubra*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* with quaking grass *Briza media* and meadow brome *Bromus commutatus* present. The top of the slope on the gravel is the driest part of the meadow and is less species rich than further down the slope. However, it supports an abundance of yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor* together with cowslip *Primula veris*, oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria*, harebell *Campanula rotundifolia* and bitter vetch *Lathyrus montanus*. Formerly, the snakeshead fritillary *Fritillaria meleagris* was native to the site, but is now represented by only an introduced population. Roughly two-thirds down the hillside there is a band of vegetation over a peaty soil where water rises to the surface. This area is dominated by a sparse cover of rushes *Juncus* species over a short sedge-rich *Carex* species sward. No less than fourteen species of sedge have been recorded including common yellow sedge *Carex demissa*, smooth-stalked sedge *C. laevigata*, common sedge *C. nigra*, pale sedge *C. pallescens*, carnation sedge *C. panicea* and pill sedge *C. pilulifera*. Here the flora is rich, with southern marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, bog pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, marsh arrowgrass *Triglochin palustris*, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica*. Below this flush zone, the vegetation merges into a grassland overlying a mildly acid, loamy soil. The flora is typical of unimproved acid pastureland with sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, green-winged orchid *Orchis morio*, meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* and devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*.

Two adjacent fields have been included within the SSSI since they support plant communities rare or absent in the large hay meadow. In particular, certain ancient meadow indicator species,

such as greater burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, are present here as large populations, but are otherwise very rare through the remainder of the site.

The site supports a diverse bird and mammal fauna, which greatly contributes to the overall value of the site. Birds present include breeding snipe, lapwing and skylark, whilst the mammal fauna includes water and bank voles, yellow-necked mouse and hare. The invertebrate interest has not been fully studied but is likely to be species-rich in light of the botanical diversity of the site.