

Notification date: 18 July 1990

COUNTY: DERBYSHIRE

SITE NAME: MERCASTON MARSH &
MUGGINTON BOTTOMS

DISTRICT: AMBER VALLEY

SITE REF: 15 W4J

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

Local Planning Authority: DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, Amber Valley District Council

National Grid Reference: SK 269435, SK 272430 Area: 13.0 (ha.) 32.1 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 128

1:10,000: SK 24 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1990

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

New site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Mercaston Marsh and Mugginton Bottoms lie some 3 km north-east of the village of Brailsford. These extensive areas of marshland have developed on poorly draining soils on the bottoms and shallow sides of two small valleys which run parallel to each other through an area of sand and gravel before joining Mercaston Brook. The variable conditions and soils, ranging from nutrient-rich to nutrient-poor, have resulted in an outstanding mosaic of lowland wetland habitats, comprising tall fen and swamp, marshy grassland and valley mire. Together they form the largest and most species-rich marsh in Derbyshire.

The site consists of two separate areas. The western, Mercaston Marsh, has the most nutrient-rich part of the site. This is a small area of tall fen dominated by great willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum* and bottle sedge *Carex rostrata* while scattered throughout are stands of lesser pond-sedge *Carex acutiformis* and bulrush *Typha latifolia*. The greater part of the site is less nutrient-rich and has developed as marshy grassland with abundant herbs and rushes, especially sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus* and soft rush *Juncus effusus*. There is a wide range of marshland herbs such as large bitter-cress *Cardamine amara*, common marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, ragged-robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, water figwort *Scrophularia auriculata*, marsh violet *Viola palustris* and southern marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*. The most acidic and nutrient-poor part of the site is an outstanding area of valley mire dominated by hummocks of bog mosses *Sphagnum fimbriatum* and *S. palustre* with narrow buckler-fern *Dryopteris carthusiana* and common cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*. Heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile* and foxglove *Digitalis purpurea* grow on the tops of the hummocks. This is an exceptional habitat for lowland Derbyshire and is the largest known lowland valley mire in the county.

Mugginton Bottoms, to the east, has marshy grassland similar to Mercaston Marsh but, in addition, has a range of species more characteristic of acidic conditions such as bog mosses *Sphagnum* spp. and lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*. There are five species of rush *Juncus* spp. and seven species of sedge *Carex* spp. Prominent among these is the large number of tussocks of greater tussock-sedge *Carex paniculata*, locally scarce in the county. Other local species include bogbean

Menyanthes trifoliata, bristle club-rush *Isolepis setacea*, marsh arrowgrass *Triglochin palustris* and marsh pennywort.

Over the whole site scrub is encroaching in several places, particularly goat willow *Salix caprea* and alder *Alnus glutinosa*.

The site is important in lowland Derbyshire for breeding and wintering snipe. Limited invertebrate survey on part of Mercaston Marsh has identified three nationally rare beetles, *Quedius fulvicollis*, *Chaetarthria seminulum* and *Grypus equiseti*, and several locally uncommon ones.