

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER SITE NAME: COOKSHOLME MEADOWS

DISTRICT: WYCHAVON

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

Local Planning Authority: HEREFORD & WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL,
Wychavon District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 889505 Area: 8.2 (ha.) 20.3 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150 1:10,000: SO 85 SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1989 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:
New site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site consists of an unusually large block of unimproved grassland a few miles south-east of Worcester city. Two of the meadows are traditionally managed for hay, the other consists of damp grazing pasture. The soils are neutral being derived from the underlying Keuper Marl.

The type of grassland represented in these hay meadows, characterised by crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, is now nationally restricted. In addition to crested dog's-tail, the sward contains a number of grasses, the dominant ones being red fescue *Festuca rubra*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus* and sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*. The rich herbaceous flora includes pepper-saxifrage *Silvaum silaus*, wild carrot *Daucus carota*, lady's bedstraw *Galium verum* and yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor*. In addition there are several locally uncommon species such as grass vetchling *Lathyrus nissolia*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* and an abundance of dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria*. Wood small-reed *Calamagrostis epigejos* occurs around the perimeter of the meadows. This species is scarce in the county and is more usually found in woodlands.

The southernmost field from which over 115 plant species have been recorded, is damp and the sward is dominated by tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* associated with hard rush *Juncus inflexus*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, common fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*, sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica* and brown sedge *Carex disticha*. The latter species, most commonly found in eastern England, is scarce in Worcestershire. The diversity of the site is enhanced by the presence of a small pond fringed by white and crack willow *Salix alba* and *S. fragilis*. The muddy edges support water-starwort *Callitriche* agg. and celery-leaved buttercup *Ranunculus sceleratus*.

The meadows are surrounded by tall, species-rich hedges chiefly of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* together with privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, field maple *Acer campestre*, buckthorn *Rhamnus catharticus* and English elm *Ulmus procera*.

The meadows support an abundance of Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) including grizzled skipper *Pyrgus malvae*, marbled white *Melanargia galathea*, common blue *Polyommatus icarus* and both five and six spot burnet moths *Zygaena trifolii* and *Z. filipendulae stephensi*.