

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER **SITE NAME:** BIRMINGHAM
6. ROMSLEY HILL PLATEAU GRASSLANDS

DISTRICT: BROMSGROVE **SITE REF:** 15 P1Z

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

Local Planning Authority: Hereford and Worcester County Council,
Bromsgrove District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 960790 **Area:** 13.60 (ha.) 33.61 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 139 **1:10,000:** SO 97 NE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 22.2.94 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Other Information:

New site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Romsley Hill is a diverse series of pastures in north Worcestershire situated less than half a kilometre south of Romsley. The site slopes steeply to the south and less so to the east. The two north-westerly fields overlie a medieval ridge and furrow system, and the entire site is grazed by horses. The geology of the area is complex; the site overlies the Upper Coal Measures of the Carboniferous Period, with the higher ground over Clent Breccia and the lower ground over Red Marls and Sandstones.

The special interest of the site lies in the diversity of the mesotrophic (neutral) grassland sward characterised by crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, which forms a mosaic with mire and scrub communities. The vegetation of the lower ground in the northern half of the site conforms to the heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens* sub-community. Common grasses include abundant crested dog's-tail, red fescue *Festuca rubra*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*. Characteristic herbs, found particularly on the ridges, include common knapweed, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, autumn hawkbit *Leontodon autumnalis*, red clover *Trifolium pratense* and zigzag clover *T. dubium*. Occasional calcifugous (acidic) species are tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, heath woodrush *Luzula multiflora*, heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile* and sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella*. Small areas conform to the meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis* sub-community, with mosaics and intermediates between the two sub-communities.

Characteristic plants include bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, betony *Stachys officinalis*, devil's-bit scabious, spring sedge *Carex caryophyllea*, lesser hawkbit *Leontodon taraxacoides* and oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*. There are also areas of scrub within the fields.

The southern field and upper slopes of the other fields are dominated by acidic grassland conforming to the sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* and sheep's sorrel sub-community, with tormentil, heath bedstraw, mouse-ear hawkweed *Hieracium pilosella*, sheep's sorrel and abundant sheep's-fescue. The north-eastern and southern fields have extensive patches of the locally uncommon dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria*, one of the largest populations of this species in Worcestershire.

Springs in the western field give rise to marshy areas conforming to the soft rush *Juncus effusus* and common marsh bedstraw *Galium palustre* community, with bristle club rush *Isolepis setacea*, jointed rush *Juncus articulatus* and toad rush *J. bufonius*. Other characteristic species include greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus*, brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*, lesser spearwort *Ranunculus flammula* and ragged-robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*.

The pastures are bounded by hedges with scattered trees. Common hedgerow species are hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, field maple *Acer campestre*, elder *Sambucus nigra*, wych elm *Ulmus glabra*, dog rose *Rosa canina*, field rose *R. arvensis*, hazel *Corylus avellana* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior*.

The areas of scrub provide a rich environment for birds such as the grasshopper warbler *Locustalla naevia*, goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*, linnet *C. cannabina*, bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* and turtle dove *Streptopelia turtur*.