

COUNTY: BEDFORDSHIRE **SITE NAME:** DROPSHORT MARSH

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

Local Planning Authorities: South Bedfordshire District Council
Bedfordshire County Council

National Grid Reference: TL 005277

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 166 **1:10,000:** TL 02 NW

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

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

Area: 2.73 ha 6.74 ac

Other information: This site is a nature reserve of the Wildlife Trust.

Description and Reasons for Notification

Dropshort Marsh represents a type of wetland habitat once common in South Bedfordshire where a series of springs issue at the junction of glacial gravels with the underlying impervious Oxford clay.

The Marsh has a mosaic of vegetation associations merging into neutral grassland and the flora is rich with both marsh and meadow species. An unusual feature of the marsh is a small area of 'quaking bog'.

The type of habitat, although widely distributed in lowland Britain has been greatly reduced both in extent and quality as a result of drainage and changes in agricultural practice. Many of the characteristic species are also therefore now uncommon.

Surrounding the springs, floating sweet-grass *Glyceria fluitans* and brooklime *Veronica beccabunga* are common but quickly grade into area dominated by rushes *Juncus* spp. with sedges *Carex* spp. and a rich variety of typical marsh plants including water horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*, ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, lesser spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris* and fen bedstraw *Galium uliginosum*.

Locally dominant is lesser pond sedge *Carex acutiformis* with meadow sweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and the area of quaking bog is characterised by greater tussock sedge *Carex paniculata*. Wetland species now uncommon in the county include marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, marsh arrowgrass *Triglochin palustris*, bristle scipus *Isolepis setaceus* and marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica*.

Species of the drier meadow include field woodrush *Luzula campestris*, sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, crested dog's tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, quaking grass *Briza media*, hairy sedge *Carex hirta* and a variety of broadleaved species including ladies bedstraw *Galium verum*, betony *Stachys officinalis* and lady's mantle *Alchemilla filicaulis* spp. *vestita*, a plant now uncommon in the county.

Additional valuable habitats are provided by a mature mixed hedge which bounds part of the site and several old pollarded willows.

Re-presentation of details approved by Council. Re-typed September 1998.

Site Area calculated by GIS 19 April 1998.