

SITE NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON 22 MAY 1987

COUNTY: SOMERSET SITE NAME: BARRINGTON HILL MEADOWS

DISTRICT: YEOVIL

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended. National Nature Reserve declared under Section 19 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

Local Planning Authority: SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL, South Somerset District Council

National Grid Reference: ST 300170 Area: 16.1 (ha.) 39.5 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 193 1:10,000: ST 21 NE, ST 31 NW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site is an outstanding example of a traditionally managed unimproved neutral grassland of a type now rare in Britain. Only 22 hectares of this species-rich community are known to remain in Somerset. Additional interest lies in the occurrence of an extremely rare grass species.

The gently undulating meadows have neutral to calcareous soils derived from the underlying Lower Lias Shales. Drainage is slightly impeded in several areas and at one point two fields are divided by a heavily shaded pond.

The meadows belong to a type characterised by the widespread occurrence of Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, Crested Dog's Tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, Cowslip *Primula veris* and Green Winged Orchid *Orchis morio*. A total of 74 different species have so far been recorded. These include Meadow Barley *Hordeum secalinum*, Adder's Tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, Corky-fruited Water-dropwort *Oenanthe pimpinelloides* and Early Purple Orchid *Orchis mascula*.

This site is one of only 3 localities in Britain in which the grass *Gaudinia fragilis* is a prominent feature of the sward. *Gaudinia fragilis* has hitherto been regarded as an uncommon alien species in Britain. However, its occurrence as a well established component in 3 different sites in south east Somerset, suggests that it may be a native species with an extremely local distribution. Barrington Hill Meadows therefore provide an important opportunity for research into the ecology of this grass.