

**COUNTY:** BEDFORDSHIRE

**SITE NAME:** FANCOTT WOODS AND  
MEADOWS

**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 026276

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

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):** 1951                      **Date of Last Revision:** 1970

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

**Area:** 13.26 ha 32.76 ac

### **Description and Reasons for Notification**

Fancott meadows are mainly ancient ridge and furrow, exhibiting the characteristic species richness of unimproved neutral grassland traditionally managed for hay and grazing. Such grasslands are confined to the south of the county where they have been severely reduced by changes in agricultural practice. Part of the site is surrounded by a strip of semi-natural woodland with a varied ground flora and providing shelter for the meadow.

The meadows exhibit a variety of vegetation types chiefly dependent on the drainage conditions. The wettest parts are dominated by meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* with ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis* and a good population of common spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*. The drier grassland has mostly red fescue *Festuca rubra* with quaking-grass *Briza media*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, meadow fescue *Festuca pratensis*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, sedges *Carex* spp. and a rich variety of herbs, including species characteristic of old meadows and now uncommon in the county such as pepper saxifrage *Silaum silaus*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris*, adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum* and green-winged orchid *Orchis morio* for which Fancott meadows are the best-known site in Bedfordshire.

The open woodland canopy is dominated by ash *Fraxinus excelsior* with other species including pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and alder *Alnus glutinosa* in the wetter area. The shrub layer is variable and includes field maple *Acer campestre* and hazel *Corylus avellana* over a ground flora with bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, primrose *Primula vulgaris* and wood sanicle *Sanicula europea*. The wood is the only recorded site in the county for the hybrid sedge *Carex pseudaxillaris*.

A small pond in the meadow provides additional interest.

Re-presentation of details approved by Council. Re-typed September 1998.  
Site Area calculated by GIS 19 April 1998.