

COUNTY: SURREY

SITE NAME: DUMSEY MEADOW

BOROUGHS: SPELTHORNE BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

Local Planning Authorities: SPELTHORNE BOROUGH COUNCIL

National Grid References: TQ 057 665

Area: 9.62 ha (23.77 acres)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 176

1:10,000: TQ 06 NE

Date Notified (under 1981 Act): 1994

Reasons for Notification:

Dumsey Meadow is an unimproved, cattle and pony-grazed riverside pasture situated on the flood-plain of the River Thames close to Chertsey Bridge. The site consists mainly of crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* - common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, grassland, a plant community now rare in Surrey. Marshy depressions and semi-natural vegetation along the river bank contribute to the species diversity of the site.

Unimproved neutral grasslands are now very rare in SE England, and almost all those in the Thames Valley have been lost to agricultural improvement, gravel extraction, urban development or conversion to formal recreation areas. This site is the only remaining grazed unimproved Thames-side meadow in Surrey and is situated in an otherwise largely urban area on the south-western fringe of London.

The site consists of species-rich grassland locally dominated by a mixture of grasses, notably rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, with smooth meadow grass *Poa pratensis*, meadow barley *Hordeum secalinum*, cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, small cat's-tail *Phleum pratense* sub-species *bertolonii* and crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* frequently present. The most frequently occurring herbs include yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, bird's foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, lesser hawkbit *Leontodon taraxacoides*, red clover *Trifolium pratense*, white clover *Trifolium repens*, creeping cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata* and oval sedge *Carex ovalis*, with small amounts of common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, ox-eye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, marsh ragwort *Senecio aquaticus*, selfheal *Prunella vulgaris* and autumn hawkbit *Leontodon autumnalis*. There are scattered bushes of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and parts of the site have become invaded by creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*.

The grassland is very variable in character ranging from tall vegetation in damp depressions to dry ridges with a short turf. In some places calcium-rich soil supports lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*, salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, black medick *Medicago lupulina*, glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*, hoary plantain *Plantago media*, meadow oat grass *Avenula pratensis*, upright brome grass *Bromus erectus* and downy oat grass *Avenula pubescens*. Meadow crane's-bill *Geranium pratense* has also been recorded. Burnet saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga* and strawberry clover *Trifolium fragiferum* occur on dry banks near the river. By contrast damp hollows support patches of willows *Salix* species or a marshy sward with frequent yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus* and marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*. Other species in the wetter areas include hairy sedge *Carex hirta*, marsh ragwort *Senecio aquaticus*, water mint *Metha aquatica*, marsh horsetail *Equisetum palustre* and amphibious bistort *Polygonum amphibium*. The Surrey rarities marsh arrow-grass *Triglochin palustris* and meadow-rue *Thalictrum flavum* have been recorded.

The river bank, although intensively used for recreation, still supports tall marsh plants including stands of greater pond sedge *Carex riparia* and sweet flag *Acorus calamus*.