

**COUNTY:** OXFORDSHIRE

**SITE NAME:** LITTLE TEW MEADOWS

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

**Local Planning Authorities:** West Oxfordshire District Council; Oxfordshire County Council

**National Grid Reference:** SP 377281

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 164                      **1:10,000:** SP 32 NE

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 9 November 1995    **Date of Last Revision:**

**Area:** 40.0 ha 98 ac

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

One of the largest continuous areas of agriculturally unimproved grassland in Oxfordshire with several locally uncommon plants. The site has four adjoining fields of which one is managed as hay meadow while the others have a long history of management by low-intensity summer cattle grazing. Two of the fields have prominent ridge and furrow topography. The site is situated on Jurassic limestone which gives rise to a calcareous influence to the flora. It is located in the valley of the River Dorn, a tributary of the River Evenlode.

The grassland is generally moderately calcareous in character but some areas are strongly calcareous. The range of calcicoles present includes salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, hoary plantain *Plantago media*, downy oat *Avenula pubescens*, quaking grass *Briza media*, dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris* and rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*. Other locally uncommon plants present are adder's-tongue fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, lady's mantle *Alchemilla filicaulis*, spiked sedge *Carex spicata* and restharrow *Ononis repens*. There is also an abundance of more widespread meadow plants such as bulbous buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus*, cowslip *Primula veris*, lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*, pignut *Conopodium majus* and hairy sedge *Carex hirta*.

A particularly notable feature of the site is the presence of extensive flushes. These are dominated by hard rush *Juncus inflexus* and associated plants include ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, square-stemmed St John's wort *Hypericum tetrapterum* and brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*. The margins of these flushes support patches of very species-rich grassland with numerous notable plants including betony *Stachys officinalis*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, water avens *Geum avens*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and common spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*.

Limestone outcrops are present around the site of an old quarry in one of the fields. The very shallow soils here support plants such as meadow saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*, parsley-piert *Aphanes arvensis*, thyme-leaved sandwort *Arenaria serpyllifolia* and knotted clover *Trifolium striatum*.

In addition to the botanical interest the site is also of value in providing a habitat for wintering jack snipe and common snipe and reed bunting have been recorded as regularly breeding in the tall vegetation of the flushes.