

COUNTY: SURREY

SITE NAME: CHARTERHOUSE TO EASHING

DISTRICT: GUILDFORD; WAVERLEY

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

Local Planning Authority: GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL, WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: SU 950 444

Area: 66.8 ha (165.1 acres)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 186

1:10,000: SU 94 SW/SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1955

Date of Last Revision: 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986

Date of Last Revision:

Further Information: Formerly known as Charterhouse Alderholt SSSI, this site has been extended to include the total area of special interest.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

The flood plain of this section of the River Wey contains a series of finely graded wetland communities ranging from damp grassland to fen and alder swamp. All of these habitats have declined significantly in Britain since 1940. Numerous small ditches traverse the site, and there are a number of small ponds. In contrast to the wetland habitats are the ancient woodlands on the steep valley slopes. The area is nationally important entomologically with several rare flies (Diptera).

The site consists of a steep valley cut through the Bargate Beds and Hythe Beds (Lower Greensand) and a broad flood plain of river alluvium. The woods on the drier valley slopes are dominated by pedunculate oak Quercus robur and sessile oak Q. petraea, with hazel Corylus avellana, ash Fraxinus excelsior and wild cherry Prunus avium. The sparse scrub layer includes holly Ilex aquifolium, spindle Euonymus europaeus, elder Sambucus nigra and hawthorn Crataegus monogyna, with a ground flora consisting largely of dog's mercury Mercurialis perennis and ivy Hedera helix. Some of the woods were dominated by elm Ulmus procera, now dead, but have an undergrowth of elm saplings with dense growths of the shrub species, bramble Rubus fruticosus and common nettles Urtica dioica.

On the damper ground alder Alnus glutinosa is dominant, with grey willow Salix cinerea and ash. In these areas both opposite-leaved golden saxifrage Chrysosplenium oppositifolium and alternate-leaved golden saxifrage C. alternifolium are common. The alderwoods grade into tall fen, where there are dense growths of reed-grass Glyceria maxima, Cyperus sedge Carex pseudocyperus, greater tussock sedge C. paniculata and more locally, the common reed Phragmites australis. On the higher ground the fen grades into grassland, with species such as large birdsfoot-trefoil, Lotus uliginosus, water chickweed Myosoton aquaticum, and southern marsh orchid Dactylorhiza praetermissa.

The areas of standing water contribute greatly to the species diversity of the site, with yellow iris Iris

pseudacorus, water mint Mentha aquatica and brooklime Veronica beccabunga, growing in the ditches and ponds. Meadowsweet Filipendula ulmaria occurs here also, as well as along the river banks with common comfrey Symphytum officinale and teasel Dipsacus fullonum. Unbranched bur-reed Sparganium emersum, river water-crowfoot Ranunculus fluitans and yellow water-lily Nuphar lutea grow in the river itself.

The site supports a diverse fly (Diptera) fauna, especially of craneflies including the rare species Gonomyia bifida. Other rare fly species include Lonchoptera scutellata and Stratiomys potamida. Grass snakes Natrix natrix helvetica are abundant throughout the site.