

County: Cornwall

Site Name: Carrick Heaths

District: Carrick

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

Local Planning Authority: Cornwall County Council
Carrick District Council

National Grid Reference: SW 711462, SW 729478 **Area:** 42.71 (ha) (ac)
SW 748482, SW 752463
SW 755456, SW 791514
SW 788501, SW 796489
SW 803473, SW 852535

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 203, 204 **1:10,000:** SW 74 NW, NE, NW,
SW 75 SE, SW 85 SW, SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1973 **Date of Last Revision:** 1999

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

Other Information:

As a further notification with extension, the site incorporates Silverwell Moor SSSI, renotified in 1985.

Southern Atlantic Wet Heath is listed in Annex 1 of the EC Habitats and Species Directive (92/43/EEC).

Barn owl is listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, as amended, on Annex 1 of the European Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC), and in Appendix 2 of the Berne Convention.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

The Carrick Heaths comprise of ten sites, all situated within a 12 km radius of Truro. The underlying soils at each site are largely derived from slaty mudstones, siltstones and shales which have given rise to clay soils with variable drainage regimes. These conditions have led to the development of mosaics of wet and dry heathland vegetation types, characterised by populations of Dorset heath *Erica ciliaris*, a nationally rare plant species and a prime constituent of Southern Atlantic Wet Heath, an internationally important vegetation type. Other noteworthy species recorded include the nationally scarce yellow centaury *Cicendia filiformis* and Cornish moneywort *Sibthorpia europea*. Royal fern *Osmunda regalis*, the rare hybrid *Erica* × *watsonii* and upright hedge bedstraw *Galium album* are also all of note. Nationally scarce moss and liverwort species respectively include *Brachythecium mildaenum* and *Calliergon sarmentosum*.

Areas of heath are characterised by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* tussocks. The main associates are black bog-rush *Schoenus nigricans* and Dorset heath, with some cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* also present. The wettest areas are often characterised by abundant bog moss *Sphagnum* species, frequent sedges such as green-ribbed sedge *Carex binervis*, common yellow-sedge *C. demissa* and carnation sedge *C. panicea* and rushes such as soft rush *Juncus effusus* and sharp flowered rush *J. acutiflorus*.

The rushes and the purple moor-grass form low hummocks which support many other wetland herbs such as devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, water mint *Mentha aquatica*, bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, common cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, greater bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*, marsh thistle *Cirsium palustre* and cuckoo flower *Cardamine pratensis*.

Of particular interest are common sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, hay-scented buckler-fern *Dryopteris aemula*, occasional stands of bog myrtle *Myrica gale* and creeping willow *Salix repens* and broad-leaved cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium* var. *elatius*. Bog pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius* and marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* are locally abundant in waterlogged runnels between the hummocks along with lesser spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, marsh St John's-wort *Hypericum elodes* and bog pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*. Other herbs and grasses recorded include lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, heath spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, common milkwort *Polygala vulgaris*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, and bristle bent *Agrostis curtisii*. Species more typical of damp grassland include common fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*, tufted vetch *Vicia cracca*, selfheal *Prunella vulgaris* and yellow bartsia *Parentucellia viscosa*.

In drier areas, bell heather *Erica cinerea* and western gorse *Ulex gallii* are often co-dominant, in some areas with cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and in others with heather *Calluna vulgaris*. Dorset heath can also be found in these areas, but is more abundant on the wetter soils.

Overall habitat and species diversity are increased by further areas of adjoining rush pasture, oak *Quercus* spp. woodland, streams and willow *Salix* spp. carr. However, grey willow *Salix cinerea*, birch *Betula pendula*, gorse *Ulex europaeus*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. and bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* are encroaching on heathland in places and need to be contained.

The Carrick Heaths also support a range of characteristic fauna. Invertebrate interest includes the nationally scarce pearl-bordered fritillary *Boloria euphrosyne* and the uncommon moth *Pammene obscurana* as well as two locally important species of dragonfly – the emperor dragonfly *Anax imperator* and the broad-bodied chaser *Libellula depressa*. A range of bird species have also been recorded including willow warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, chiffchaff *P. collybita*, snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*, mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, teal *Anas crecca*, garganey *A. querquedula*, shoveller *Anas clypeata* and coot *Fulica atra*. The Red Data Book listed barn owl *Tyto alba* has also been recorded from Penstraze Moor.

≡