

Hampton Meadow sssi

Hampton Bishop SO 560 390 (Explorer 189)

Lammas Meadow



Visitor Guidelines

Entrance to the reserve is not restricted, but while the *hay* crop is growing in June and July, please keep to the rights of way. Dogs must be kept on a lead or under strict control at all times to avoid disturbing nesting birds and livestock. During winter the entire site may be flooded. Take care when walking near the river as there are numerous steep banks.



Description

The reserve consists of two fields; Hampton Meadow, a large area of old, traditionally managed *hay meadow*, and Big & Little Million Common, a much smaller area of permanent *pasture*. Hampton Meadow is one of a very few surviving examples of a *Lammas meadow* (see entry for Lugg Meadow). Big & Little Million is also a registered *common* and is grazed all year by livestock. The name comes from a medieval mill that once stood on the Back Brook.

The reserve occupies a triangular section of Lugg Valley *flood plain* at the confluence of the rivers Lugg and Frome. The whole area is low-lying and floods annually, during which time silt carried by the rivers is deposited across the plain. These deposits have developed into a fertile, alluvial soil which readily drains each summer because of deep beds of underlying river gravels. The annual *hay* crop removes large quantities of minerals from the soil, which are replenished by the next winter flood.

The land at Hampton has been a *meadow* since at least the time of Domesday, and the long continuity of hay crop management has produced a rich and diverse flora similar to that of the Lugg Meadows. There is the same mix and density of the dominant *meadow* grasses, including crested dog's tail, red fescue, sweet vernal grass and meadow foxtail. This backdrop is enriched by a tapestry of colourful flowers, including dandelions, lady's smock, three species of buttercup, pepper saxifrage, common knapweed, ox-eye daisy, a variety of hawkweeds and large quantities of the scarce narrow-leaved water-dropwort.

The reserve has a nesting pair of curlew in most years, while skylarks can be heard singing over the *meadow* on sunny days in spring. The winter floods attract flocks of gulls and ducks like mallard, teal and wigeon, and occasionally bewick's swans from the Russian Arctic. The steep banks of the rivers provide nesting sites for kingfishers

and sand martins, while reed buntings can be found among the overgrown willows bordering the water. There are many fine old willows on the reserve, including some ancient *pollards*. Reed canary-grass, bulrush and branched bur-reed are plants to look out for along the river banks. A walk along the Lugg may be rewarded by the brief glimpse of an otter, sightings of which have become more numerous recently. On warm days in July, the air above the slow-moving rivers may be full of the beautiful banded demoiselle damselfly.

Present Management

The Trust has now restored the *hay*-making regime and the *aftermath* is grazed by the *Commoners'* animals. It is hoped that the flora will benefit from this change.

Acquisition Details

Freehold bought in 1994 with generous grants from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Lankelly, Hamamelis and Alan Evans Charitable Trusts. The River Lugg, Back Brook and Hampton Meadow (22.3ha) are designated as a *SSSI*.

General Information

Best time to visit: Early spring to late summer.

Habitat: *Lammas meadow* and permanent *pasture*.

Size: 25 hectares (62 acres).

Specialities: Narrow-leaved water-dropwort (6-8), winter wildfowl, breeding curlew and skylark, otters, white-legged damselfly, banded demoiselle damselfly.

Parking: At Hampton Bishop.

Nearby reserves: Lugg Meadow, Lea & Pagets Wood, Wessington Pasture, Common Hill and Nupend Wood.

