

COUNTY: SHROPSHIRE

SITE NAME: MARTON POOL, CHIRBURY

DISTRICT: South Shropshire

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

Local Planning Authority: SHROPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, South Shropshire District Council

National Grid Reference: SJ 296027                      Area: 17.21 (ha.) 41.6 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 126                      1:10,000: SJ 20 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1963                      Date of Last Revision: 1963

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983                      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Site boundary amended in 1983.

Reasons for Notification:

The Meres and Mosses of the north west Midlands form a nationally important series of open water and peatland sites. These have developed in natural depressions in the glacial drift left by the ice sheets which covered the Cheshire-Shropshire plain some 15,000 years ago. The majority lie in Cheshire and north Shropshire, with a small number of outlying sites in adjacent parts of Staffordshire and Clwyd.

The origin of most of the hollows can be accounted for by glaciation but a small number have been formed at least in part by more recent subsidence resulting from the removal in solution of underlying salt deposits.

There are more than 60 open water bodies known as 'meres' or 'pools' and a smaller number of peatland sites or mires known as 'mosses'. They range in depth from about one metre to 27 metres and have areas varying between less than a hectare to 70 hectares.

Although the majority of the Meres are nutrient rich (eutrophic) the water chemistry is very variable reflecting the heterogeneous nature of the surrounding drift deposits. Associated fringing habitats such as reedswamp, fen, carr and damp pasture add to the value of the meres. The development of these habitats is associated with peat accumulation which in some cases had led to the complete infilling of the basin. During this process the nutrient status of the peat surface changes and typically becomes nutrient poor (oligotrophic) and acidic thus allowing species such as the bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) to colonise it. The resulting peat bogs are the mosses. In a few cases colonisation of the water surface by floating vegetation has resulted in the formation of a quaking bog known as a 'schwingmoor'.

Marton Pool is a natural lake of moderate fertility, somewhat detached from the main series of Shropshire meres. There are extensive areas of reedswamp and carr. It is among the most valuable of the Shropshire meres for aquatic plants, and the flora includes fan-leaved water crowfoot *Ranunculus circinatus*, blunt-leaved pondweed *Potamogeton obtusifolius* and small pondweed *P. berchtoldii*. Water-lilies, both white, *Nymphaea alba* and yellow, *Nuphar lutea* are present, but not abundant.

There is a rich invertebrate fauna in which water bugs are particularly well represented.

The site includes extensive reed beds, mainly of common reed *Phragmites communis* but also including lesser reedmace *Typha angustifolia* and bulrush *Schoenoplectus lacustris*. There is also a fringe of alder carr and a small area of fen.

Breeding birds include great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, little grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, water rail *Rallus aquaticus* and reed warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, for which this is probably the most important site in Shropshire.