

Date Notified: 27 March 1996

File ref: (L) SD 75/10

County: Lancashire **Site Name:** Barn Gill Meadow

District: Ribble Valley

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

Local Planning Authority: Ribble Valley Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SD 735548 **Area:** 5.58 (ha) 13.78 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 103 **1:10,000:** SD 75 NW

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 27 March 1996 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Other Information:

1. This is a new site.
2. The site lies within the Forest of Bowland AONB.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Barn Gill Meadow is an area of grassland close to Stocks Reservoir approximately 3 km to the north east of the village of Slaidburn. It lies at an altitude of 180 m and supports two types of herb-rich neutral grassland in which over 73 species of plants have been recorded.

The meadow is situated on the slope of a small valley, at the foot of which flows Barn Gill. Surrounding fields contain semi-improved grassland which is also mown for hay. The grassland plant communities present support many species characteristic of old hay meadows which have been traditionally managed and left unimproved for many years. Such communities are now scarce nationally and are a highly vulnerable habitat which, in Lancashire, has been severely reduced by agricultural intensification.

The majority of the field supports a hay meadow community with sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and red fescue *Festuca rubra*. Other grass species present include meadow foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus* and common bent *Agrostis capillaris*. Herbs are well represented within the sward and include such species as great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Smooth lady's-mantle *Alchemilla glabra*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis* and pignut *Conopodium majus* which are frequent throughout.

Wetter areas towards the bottom of the meadow contain hairy sedge *Carex hirta*, brown sedge *Carex disticha*, lesser pond sedge *Carex acutiformis*, sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica* and various species of rush together with marsh marigold *Caltha palustris* and Bistort *Polygonum bistorta*.

The grassland is typical of a sweet vernal-grass – wood crane's-bill meadow community. There are also some elements of the meadow foxtail – great burnet flood meadow community which has survived due to the lack of drainage. These two communities are characteristic of uplands where traditional hay meadow management has been carried out. Unlike the great majority of hay meadows in Lancashire, this site has escaped extensive agricultural improvement

and continues to support a diverse grassland flora. The presence of soft-brome *Bromus hordeaceus*, rough meadow-grass *Poa trivialis* and perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne* in the sward indicates some agricultural improvement of the field, although unusually, brown sedge *Carex disticha* and lesser pond sedge *Carex acutiformis* are still present towards the bottom of the site, suggesting that only minor agricultural improvement has been carried out in the past with no modification of the drainage. Nevertheless, this site is the only example of this particular vegetation combination remaining in the county.