MG13
Agrostis stolonifera-Alopecurus geniculatus grassland

Synonymy
Ranunculus repens-Alopecurus geniculatus Ass. R.Tx. 1937; *Rumici-Alopecuretum geniculati* R.Tx. (1937) 1950 *p.p.*; *Rumex crispus-Alopecurus geniculatus* nodum Ivimey-Cook & Proctor 1966 *p.p.*; Wet alluvial meadows Duffey *et al.* 1974; Washlands and wet alluvial meadows Ratcliffe 1977; *Alopecurus geniculatus* vegetation Lee 1977.

Constant species
Agrostis stolonifera, *Alopecurus geniculatus*.

Physiognomy
The *Agrostis stolonifera-Alopecurus geniculatus* community comprises open and closed swards dominated by mixtures of the two constant grasses with a variety of occasionals which may be abundant in particular stands. These include *Ranunculus repens*, *Holcus lanatus* and *Poa trivialis*, *Glyceria fluitans* and, less frequently, *G. plicata* and *G. declinata*, a variety of Junci (most frequently *J. effusus* but also *J. articulatus*, *J. acutiflorus*, *J. bufonius* and *J. gerardi*) and the tall Rumices, *R. crispus* and *R. conglomeratus*. *Polygonum hydropiper*, *Ranunculus sceleratus* and *Oenanthe fistulosa* are distinctive at low frequency. Bryophytes are uncommon, although *Brachythecium rutabulum* is occasionally conspicuous.

Habitat
The community occurs typically on silty circumneutral soils kept moist and sometimes waterlogged by periodic inundation with fresh water. Often it is found as fragmentary stands alongside sluggish streams and rivers and around pools in lowland pastures, especially where there is moderate poaching by stock. In some areas, however, as in the lowlands of eastern England, it occurs more extensively on the seasonally-inundated alluvium of the flood-plains of large rivers and its often lush herbage can provide valuable summer grazing and an occasional hay crop. On the washlands associated with the drainage systems of the Fens, the community forms part of the patchwork of vegetation associated with a traditional regime of winter flooding and summer grazing. On the Ouse Washes, Cambridgeshire–Norfolk, the largest surviving stretch of washland, now managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, stands are sheep-grazed in summer to produce a short, tight sward which provides grazing for gathering wigeon (*Anas penelope*) and Bewick's swan (*Cygnus bewickii*). Controlled shallow flooding from dykes then creates ideal conditions for dabbling ducks and a further spring flooding transforms the sward to the renowned 'silver meadows' which, when re-exposed, are very rich in aquatic fauna attractive to migrant waders.

Zonation and succession
Small stands commonly form part of the often fragmentary sequences of communities which develop around fluctuating open waters in relation to frequency of inundation and the amount of disturbance by sediment movement and trampling. A frequent pattern is for an intact pasture sward (such as the typical variant of the typical sub-community of the *Lolio-Cynosuretum*) to give way through an intermediate (the *A. geniculatus* variant of the same vegetation) to the *Agrostis-Alopecurus* community on puddled soil around a pool or stream that is used by stock for watering. On moister silts which are more frequently inundated, this in turn may pass to more ephemeral inundation vegetation or to the *Glycerietum fluitantis* or related assemblages in the Glycerio-Sparganion.

In washlands, the community occurs in mosaics with the *Glycerietum fluitantis*, the *Festuca rubra-Agrostis stolonifera-Potentilla anserina* inundation grassland and, around dykes, the *Phalaridetum arundinaceae* and *Glycerietum maximae*.

Where the community occurs around areas of freshwater seepage on the upper salt-marsh, it may pass to more halophytic vegetation types in which *A. stolonifera* remains prominent.

Distribution
The community is widely distributed throughout the British lowlands with the most extensive stands in eastern England.

Affinities
The *Agrostis-Alopecurus* community can be seen as one of the more stable inundation communities generally placed in the Elymo-Rumicion crispi. Floristic variation within this alliance is closely related to frequency of inundation and the particle size of the inundated sediments and this community comprises the more intact and permanent swards developed on occasionally inundated substrates of fine particles. As such, its closest affinities among other mesotrophic grasslands are with the *Festuca-Agrostis-Potentilla* community.

Floristic table MG13

Agrostis stolonifera	V (3–9)	*Alopecurus pratensis*	I (2)
Alopecurus geniculatus	V (3–9)	*Festuca pratensis*	I (1)
Ranunculus repens	II (2–9)	*Atriplex prostrata*	I (1)
Holcus lanatus	II (2–5)	*Dactylis glomerata*	I (2)
Poa trivialis	II (2–7)	*Caltha palustris*	I (3)
Juncus effusus	II (2–5)	*Deschampsia cespitosa*	I (5)
Glyceria fluitans	II (1–5)	*Carex ovalis*	I (5)
Glyceria declinata	I (3–7)	*Leontodon autumnalis*	I (1)
Glyceria plicata	I (5–8)	*Juncus acutiflorus*	I (3)
Juncus bufonius	I (2–4)	*Carex panicea*	I (3)
Juncus articulatus	I (3–5)	*Bromus hordeaceus hordeaceus*	I (2)
Festuca rubra	I (3–4)	*Cirsium arvense*	I (2)
Ranunculus flammula	I (2–3)	*Stellaria alsine*	I (2)
Rumex crispus	I (1–3)	*Oenanthe fistulosa*	I (4)
Anthoxanthum odoratum	I (1–3)	*Myosotis scorpioides*	I (3)
Mentha aquatica	I (2)	*Valeriana dioica*	I (1)
Polygonum hydropiper	I (2–4)	*Ceratodon purpureus*	I (2)
Triglochin palustris	I (1–5)	*Montia fontana*	I (2)
Triglochin maritima	I (2–3)	*Brachythecium rutabulum*	I (5)
Juncus gerardi	I (3)	*Stellaria neglecta*	I (1)
Ranunculus sceleratus	I (3)	*Rumex conglomeratus*	I (1)
Potentilla anserina	I (2–5)	Number of samples	17
Poa annua	I (2)	Number of species/sample	8 (3–15)

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