Notification Date: 19 August 1988

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER SITE NAME: HANLEY DINGLE

DISTRICT: LEOMINSTER SITE REF: 15 WQS

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

Local Planning Authority: HEREFORD & WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL, Leominster District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 685665 Area: 30.0 (ha.) 74.1 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 149 1:10,000: SO 66 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1971 Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1988 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:
Site boundary alteration (extension & reduction). The site is listed in 'A Nature Conservation Review' edited by D A Ratcliffe, CUP 1977.

Description and Reasons for Notification:
Hanley Dingle is an area of 'ancient' broadleaved woodland occupying a narrow side-valley of the River Terne in north-west Worcestershire. It has been selected as a nationally important example of extensive and remarkably diverse semi-natural woodland, which includes the finest wooded ravine in the county.

The ravine cuts through Old Red Sandstone rocks of Devonian age and this has resulted in a varied topography showing a transition from gently sloping valley tops, through steep valley sides, to the base of the ravine. This has given rise to a range of soil conditions and a diversity in the types of woodland present.

The flatter valley-top areas support relatively dry, acidic soils, where sessile oak *Quercus petraea* dominates the canopy with an understorey of hazel *Corylus avellana*. Both silver and hairy birch *Betula pendula* and *B. pubescens* occur here over an acidic ground flora with plants such as bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, great wood rush *Luzula sylvatica* and wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*.

The steeper slopes of the ravine and valley-side are covered by damper, more base-rich soils. Three types of woodland can be identified here of which two are nationally restricted. The first of these includes ash *Fraxinus excelsior* as the dominant canopy tree, together with remnants of the formerly abundant wych elm *Ulmus glabra*. The second is also dominated by ash, but includes both native species of lime in some abundance. The small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* occurs mainly as coppice, whilst the nationally rare large-leaved lime *T. platyphyllos* is represented by some particularly large and ancient pollards within the ravine. The third, less scarce type of woodland includes ash, sessile oak and field maple *Acer campestre*. Beneath the canopy of these ravine-side woodlands is a sparse shrub layer of elder *Sambucus nigra*, guelder rose *Viburnum opulus* and dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*. The ground flora is dominated in many areas by bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. However, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* is locally dominant in the base-rich areas, and some locally uncommon plants such as meadow saffron *Colchicum autumnale* and herb-Paris *Paris quadrifolia* also occur.

In the wettest areas near the base of the ravine another nationally restricted type of woodland occurs. This is dominated by alder *Alnus glutinosa*, over a ground flora of

pendulous sedge *Carex pendula*, great horsetail *Equisetum telmateia* and hemp agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum*. The damp stream-side banks support a rich fern and moss flora.

The site also includes a number of basic flushes with both opposite-leaved and the rarer alternate-leaved golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* and *C. alternifolium*. The lichen flora has a number of interesting species including *Thelotrema lepadinum*, a species indicative of ancient woodland.