

Notification Date: 31 July 1987

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER      SITE NAME: HILL HOLE DINGLE

DISTRICT: LEOMINSTER      SITE REF: 15 WQX

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 537540      Area: 35.9 (ha.) 88.7 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 149      1:10,000: SO 55 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1969      Date of Last Revision: 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Hill Hole Dingle is an area of ancient natural woodland with associated grassland and scrub occupying a steep secluded section of the Humber Brook valley to the south east of Leominster.

The site lies for the most part on basic soils derived from the underlying limestones of the Old Red Sandstone Series. The upper slopes however are acidic in nature as are a few other localised areas whilst the valley bottom contains extensive alluvial deposits.

Hill Hole Dingle has been selected as an example of a rich, mixed deciduous woodland of a type which is characteristic of this part of the Welsh Borderlands. It is dominated by ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, which together with wych elm *Ulmus glabra*, pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and silver birch *Betula pendula* form the main canopy species. The shrub layer includes hazel *Corylus avellana*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, wild privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, spindle *Euonymus europaeus* holly *Ilex aquifolium*, yew *Taxus baccata* and several other lime loving species. The ground flora contains many locally uncommon species including broad-leaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*, early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula* and wild daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*.

On the alluvial soils of the valley bottoms, alder *Alnus glutinosa* is common, associated with goat willow *Salix caprea* and guelder rose *Viburnum lantana*.

In the wet areas bordering the Humber brook, the vegetation includes uncommon species such as small teasel *Dipsacus pilosus* and the alternate-leaved golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium alternifolium*.

In one of the steepest parts of the dingle, considerable deposits of tufa, or petrified limestone, occur. These support a rich variety of mosses with 32 species having been recorded. Ferns include the soft fern *Polystichum setiferum*.

The Brook itself, being heavily shaded for most of its length, has an impoverished flora, but at its northern end, where it becomes more open, the banks and surrounding grassland are noted for the large colony of the uncommon green hellebore *Helleborus viridis*.

Native polecat *Mustela putorius* has been recorded on the site.