

COUNTY: KENT                      SITE NAME:                      LYDDEN AND TEMPLE  
EWELL DOWNS

DISTRICT: DOVER

Status: Site of Special Scientific interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Part of this site is a Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

Local Planning Authority: DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference:      TR 277453                      Area: 69.3 Ha (171.2 acres)  
TR 287449

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 179                      1:10,000: TQ 24 SE, NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1951                      Date of Last Revision: 1978

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986                      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

This site lies within the South Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Part of the site is managed as a Local Nature Reserve by the Kent Trust for Nature Conservation. The boundary of the site includes two extensions.

Reasons for Notification:

This site includes some of the richest chalk grassland in Kent, with outstanding assemblages of plants and invertebrates. Four insects, a snail and one of the plants occurring here are all listed as having become so rare in Great Britain that they are now afforded special protection under the 1981 Act. Areas of scrub and woodland add to the site's interest.

Most of the grassland is situated on the steep south-west facing slopes on the thinnest soils. Over deeper soils on the shallower slopes, scrub and woodland has developed: principally of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and gorse *Ulex europaeus* on the drift at the top of the slope, and as modified oak-ash-beech woodland at the foot of the slope.

The grassland is dominated by tor grass *Brachypodium pinnatum*, sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, and upright brome *Bromus erectus*. Grazing pressure varies over the length of the site, resulting in a gradation within the habitat from a rank tor grass sward to a close-cropped fescue grassland. The history of continued grazing on this site has resulted in the retention of many characteristic downland herbs such as squinancywort *Asperula cynanchica*, horseshoe vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*, chalk milkwort *Polygala calcarea*, fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea* and autumn lady's tresses *Spiranthes spiralis*. A number of rarities also occur, most notably the early spider orchid *Ophrys sphegodes*, but also burnt orchid *Orchis ustulata*, musk orchid *Herminium monorchis*, and slender bedstraw *Galium pumilum*.

The abundance of food-plants supports an outstanding invertebrate fauna including a number of typical downland butterflies such as the marbled white *Melanargia galathea*, adonis blue *Lysandra bellargus*, chalkhill blue *L. coridon*, and the very rare silver-spotted skipper *Hesperia comma*. Two rare moths, the dew *Setina irrorella* and the straw belle *Aspitates gilvaria* are also present as well as the rare carthusian snail *Monacha cartusiana*. The spectacular great green bush-cricket *Tettigonia viridissima* can be found in areas of taller grass and light scrub, and the rare wart-biter bush-cricket *Decticus verrucivorus* has occurred in the past.

The dense scrub and woodland provides further habitats for different invertebrate communities and offers shelter for mammals and nesting birds. Linnet and yellowhammer breed here, and there is also an active badger sett.