COUNTY: BERKSHIRE **SITE NAME:** GREAT THRIFT WOOD

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

Local Planning Authorities: Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Berkshire County Council

National Grid Reference: SU871782

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 174 **1:10,000:** SU87 NE

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984 **Date of Last Revision:**

Area: 13.9 ha 34.3 ac

Description and Reasons for Notification

A predominantly damp, ancient, coppiced woodland on Reading Beds and alluvium in the Thames valley near Maidenhead.

Much of the site is on level ground and some areas are permanently waterlogged. A stream borders the north side of the wood. The site includes the remnants of Shrubbery Copse, a drier wood, most of which has been cleared for agriculture. No conifers are present and the lack of any tree planting in the past has allowed the native species to establish a near-natural distribution in relation to soils and drainage.

Great Thrift Wood displays a varied and relatively undisturbed stand structure with a rich shrub and ground flora, all indicating a very long continuity of woodland cover. The woodland is important for its representation of five semi-natural stand-types. The most characteristic is oak/hazel/ash woodland consisting of hazel and ash coppice under oak and ash standards of varying age. Other areas are dominated by stands of coppiced alder with grey and crack willows *Salix cinerea* and *S. fragilis*, ash and oak. Birch, aspen *Populus tremula* and alder buckthorn *Frangula alnus* are locally frequent. Field maple *Acer campestre* occurs mainly on boundaries and banks. The rare wild service tree *Sorbus torminalis* is present in small quantity with a particularly fine specimen in Shrubbery Copse.

The ground flora, although largely dominated by bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., contains many species characteristic of ancient woodland, such as enchanter's nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, early purple orchid *Orchis mascula*, yellow pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum* and goldilocks *Ranunculus auricomus*. The wetter areas are locally dominated by lesser pond-sedge *Carex acutiformis* and contain many other moisture-loving plants such as yellow-flag *Iris pseudacorus*, valerian *Valeriana officinalis*, ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, water mint *Mentha aquatica* and two grasses often found together on wood streamsides giant fescue *Festuca gigantea* and bearded couch *Agropyron caninum*.