

COUNTY: SOMERSET      SITE NAME: PRIOR'S PARK AND ADCOMBE WOOD

DISTRICT: TAUNTON DEANE

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

Local Planning Authority: SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL, Taunton Deane Borough Council

National Grid Reference: ST 225170      Area: 103.6 (ha.) 256 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 193      1:10,000: ST 21 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1952      Date of Last Revision: 1971

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Site area greatly reduced since last revision with a small extension to the north. Part managed by the Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation.

Description:

Prior's Park and Adcombe Wood have excellent examples of several of the broadleaved semi-natural woodland types associated with the Blackdown Hills. Additional interest lies in the occurrence of several areas of unimproved marshy grassland.

This site is situated on the north facing slopes of the Blackdown Hills, overlooking the Vale of Taunton Deane. The soils are derived from rocks which range from Keuper Marl in the valley, through Rhaetic Limestones and Marls, Lower Lias Shales and Limestones on the higher slopes, to Upper Greensand at the head of Feltham Valley.

Approximately half of the scheduled woodland is ancient, the remainder having established during the last 150 years on former common land and fields. Most of the site is dominated by Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and Hazel *Corylus avellana*, formerly managed in a traditional coppice-with-standards system. Shrub species present include the calcicoles Spindle *Euonymus europaeus*, Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and Wayfaring Tree *Viburnum lantana*. The ground flora contains abundant Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, Lords-and-Ladies *Arum maculatum*, Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and Stinking Iris *Iris foetidissima*. There is an extensive area of Slope Alderwood, which is unusual in Southern Britain, associated with the Keuper Marl in Prior's Park Wood. It is dominated by Ash and Alder *Alnus glutinosa* coppice and has a wet ground flora with abundant Pendulous Sedge *Carex pendula* and Greater Horsetail *Equisetum telmateia*. Small-leaved Lime *Tilia cordata* is locally dominant as coppice in Adcombe Wood which also has occasional Wild Service Tree *Sorbus torminalis*. Wych Elm *Ulmus glabra* forms small stands in some of the secondary woodland. The most recently established areas contain abundant young Ash and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*.

Marshy flushes and boggy ground support a wetland flora which includes Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Betony *Stachys officinalis*, Common Fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*, Common Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* and Early Marsh-orchid *D. incarnata*.