

COUNTY: KENT            SITE NAME: PARSONAGE WOOD

DISTRICT: TUNBRIDGE WELLS

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

Local Planning Authority: TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TQ 797329    Area: 9.7 (ha.) 24.0 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 188    1:10,000: TQ 73 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1981    Date of Last Revision: –

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

Other Information:

This site is a reserve owned by the Kent Trust for Nature Conservation.

Reasons for Notification:

Parsonage Wood is a good example of a wealden ghyll woodland. The damp stream banks support many species of fern, moss and liverwort, some of which are rare in eastern Britain.

The woodland is predominantly hornbeam, sweet chestnut and ash coppice under pedunculate oak standards, with a rich ground flora dominated by brambles and bluebells. The coppice layer includes some hazel, field maple *Acer campestre* and wild service tree *Sorbus torminalis*. In the ground flora are plants which suggest that this is ancient woodland, subject only to traditional woodland management for many centuries; these include butcher's broom *Ruscus aculeatus*, violet helleborine *Epipactis purpurata*, and pendulous sedge *Carex pendula*. The last species is especially abundant around the ponds in the north and west of the wood, but these are largely shaded and have little aquatic vegetation.

The ghylls cut through the Wadhurst Clay to expose the hard Ashdown Sands. The steep-sided gullies are kept moist by their shape, the woodland canopy, and the streams flowing through them, so that plants, which otherwise are restricted to the damper western seaboard of Britain, can flourish here. Examples of these 'Atlantic' ferns and bryophytes are the hay-scented buckler fern *Dryopteris aemula* and the mosses *Fissidens celticus*, *Hookeria lucens* and *Dichodontium pellucidum*.