

File ref:

County: Hampshire
SSSI

Site Name: Galley Down Wood

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

Local Planning Authority: Hampshire County Council, Winchester City Council

National Grid Reference: SU 572190

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 185

1:10,000: SU 51 NE

Area: 16.5 (ha) 40.7 (ac)

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): -

Date of Last Revision: -

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 25 March 1988 **Date of Last Revision:** -

Confirmed: 24 November 1988

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

Galley Down Wood comprises a plantation beech wood *Fagus sylvatica* occupying a scarp slope and plateau on the Upper Chalk. The beech was planted some sixty years ago and under-planted with larch *Larix decidua* which has now largely been removed. Despite its 'unnatural' origins, the site's flora is rich, with exceptional orchid populations.

The dense beech canopy has resulted in a relatively sparse ground flora over a deep leaf-litter layer. Ivy *Hedera helix* and sanicle *Sanicula europaea* are the main components of this vegetation, together with bird's-nest orchid *Neottia nidus-avis* and white helleborine *Cephalanthera damasonium*, both present in their largest known Hampshire populations. In areas with increased illumination butcher's-broom *Ruscus aculeatus* and fly orchid *Ophrys insectifera* occur, together with the nationally rare long-leaved helleborine *Cephalanthera longifolia*. The site was originally planted in part on agriculturally unimproved chalk grassland: locally, where the plantation has grown poorly, this vegetation persists. Scrub species such as privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, wayfaring tree *Viburnum lantana*, whitebeam *Sorbus aria* and buckthorn *Rhamnus catharticus* are abundant. Common spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* and greater butterfly orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* are present in small populations.

Galley Down Wood is a remarkable example of a plantation beech wood in that the specialised beech wood flora is very well developed, despite the comparative youth of the wood.