

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER

SITE NAME: LEA & PAGETS WOODS

DISTRICT: SOUTH HEREFORD

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

Local Planning Authority: HEREFORD & WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL, South Herefordshire District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 598343

Area: 28.32 (ha.) 70 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 149

1:10,000: SO 53 SE, SO 63 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Lies with the Wye Valley 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'.

Part owned and managed by the Herefordshire & Radnorshire Nature Trust. New site.

Reasons for Notification:

The woodlands of the lower Wye Valley form one of the most important areas for woodland conservation in Britain, comparable with the Caledonian pine-woods, the oceanic oakwoods of Western Britain, the New Forest and the mixed coppices of East Anglia. Semi-natural woodland is abundant and virtually continuous along the gorge. The woods are a mixture of many types some of which are very localised, eg the lime-sessile oak stands on limestone, beech stands on both acid and alkaline soils in which lime *Tilia* spp., elm *Ulmus* spp., oak *Quercus* spp. and other species share dominance. Most woods are a rich mixture of stand types which are believed to be similar in composition to the original natural woods of the valley. Many rare and local species are present, including some of the rarest native tree species, eg large-leaved lime *Tilia platyphyllos*, whitebeams *Sorbus* spp. and trees close to the edge of their European range, eg hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* and beech *Fagus sylvatica*. Furthermore these woods sit in a matrix of unimproved grassland and other semi-natural habitats which, together with the woods, make the Wye Valley one of the most diverse, rich and attractive areas in southern Britain.

Lea and Pagets Woods lie on the Silurian limestone of the Woolhope Dome.

They form one of the richest areas of woodland in the northern part of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The wood has a complex structure consisting mainly of coppice with standards. It is dominated by sessile oak *Quercus petraea* which is associated variously with birch *Betula pendula* ash *Fraxinus excelsior* wych elm *Ulmus glabra* and, in a small valley, alder *Alnus glutinosa* which here is the dominant species. Both wild service tree *Sorbus torminalis* and small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* are found scattered throughout the wood.

The shrub layer is relatively dense and consists mainly of hazel *Corylus avellana* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*.

The ground flora although dominated in parts by bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. has much dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and ferns and includes such notable species as herb Paris *Paris quadrifolia*, golden rod *Solidago virgaurea*, bird's-nest orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*, twayblade *Listera ovata*, greater butterfly orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* and broad-leaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*.