

COUNTY: KENT SITE NAME: ROBINS WOOD

BOROUGH: 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 768338 Area: 53.9 (ha.) 133.2 (ac.)
 TQ 767335

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

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1968 Date of Last Revision: 1981

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

There are minor extensions to this site.

Reasons for Notification:

Robins Wood is typical of the linear woodlands which have developed along deep stream valleys (ghylls) in the weald. The humid conditions prevailing in such places support a rich assemblage of ferns, mosses and liverworts including species which are rare in Kent.

The two main ghylls follow parallel lines of fracture (faults) in the underlying geological strata, and these fractures have brought contrasting beds of the Wealden series into contact along the stream bed, Wadhurst clays and the Ashdown sands. The valleys are likely to have retained a woodland cover since natural colonisation following the last ice age, and may thus be termed 'ancient woodland'.

The woods consist mainly of mixed hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and hazel *Corylus avellana* coppice below oak *Quercus robur* and occasional beech *Fagus sylvatica* standards. In some areas the coppice layer has been restocked with sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*, and here birch *Betula* spp. and aspen *Populus tremula* are also common. Guelder rose *Viburnum opulus*, and midland hawthorn *Crataegus laevigata* are present in the shrub layer, above a ground flora dominated by bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*. Other more locally-distributed species include wild daffodil *Narcissus pseudo-narcissus*, violet helleborine *Epipactis purpurata*, imperforate St John's wort *Hypericum maculatum*, and early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula*.

Over the streams alder *Alnus glutinosa* coppice becomes dominant, with willows *Salix* spp. frequent above a ground flora reflecting the wetter conditions.

Opposite-leaved golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, yellow archangel *Galeobdolon luteum* and many species of fern occur here including the

rare hay-scented buckler fern *Dryopteris aemula*. The damp, mild microclimate is ideal for bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) and a rich assemblage of species has been recorded. Several are more commonly found in the west of Britain and are present in Kent at the eastern-most extent of their national distribution; these include *Hookeria lucens*, *Trichocolea tomentella* and *Campylosteum saxicola*. Several ponds add to the habitat diversity of the site.