

COUNTY: SURREY SITE NAME: QUARRY HANGERS

DISTRICT: TANDRIDGE

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

Local Planning Authority: TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TQ 316536, TQ 327534 Area: 33.5 (ha.) 82.8 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 187 1:10,000: TQ 35 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1955 Date of Last Revision: 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Quarry Hangers SSSI is within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the boundary of the site has been modified at renotification by extensions and deletions.

Reasons for Notification:

This site encompasses an area of chalk downland on the scarp slope of the North Downs near Caterham. It includes a mixture of species-rich chalk grassland, scrub and woodland, and supports a number of plants which are rare or local in Surrey, as well as local invertebrates.

The complex semi-natural plant communities of the North Downs have developed over a long period through traditional management, mainly sheep grazing. This has resulted in rich chalk grassland, with some scrub and woodland areas. In more recent years modern agricultural techniques and a high demand for building land have caused the destruction of much of Britain's chalk grassland, and only about 25% of that remaining in 1934 was found to remain in 1972.

Where the grassland areas within this site are heavily grazed by sheep or horses, the turf is short and dominated by red and sheep's fescue *Festuca rubra* and *F. ovina*, with plants such as horseshoe vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*, bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and wild thyme *Thymus praecox*. Where grazing is less intense, a taller sward is found, dominated by grasses such as upright brome *Bromus erectus* and wood false-brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*. All of the grassland in the central part of the site is of this type. In common with much North Downs grassland this area is not grazed and is becoming overgrown with scrub. Locally-distributed plants growing in the grassland areas include man orchid *Aceras anthropophorum* and early gentian *Gentianella anglica*, and the Surrey rarities green-winged orchid *Orchis morio*, which is very scarce on chalk downland habitats, and wild liquorice *Astragalus glycyphyllos*.

In addition to several small areas of secondary ash *Fraxinus excelsior* woodland, the site includes a beech *Fagus sylvatica* hanger beside White Hill Lane. Here there is a well developed woodland structure, with a rich variety of plants. The tree canopy is composed

of beech, ash and field maple *Acer campestre*, and the shrub layer of holly *Ilex aquifolium*, yew *Taxus baccata* and hazel *Corylus avellana*. The ground flora is dominated by dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, ivy *Hedera helix* and locally by ramsons *Allium ursinum*. Other notable plants include white helleborine orchid *Cephalanthera damasonium*, spurge laurel *Daphne laureola* and stinking hellebore *Helleborus foetidus*.

The site also supports many notable invertebrates which are characteristic of downland habitats, including the rufous grasshopper *Gomphocerippus rufus* and the Roman snail *Helix pomatia*.