

COUNTY: KENT SITE NAME: SHORNE AND ASBENBANK
WOODS

BOROUGH: GRAVESHAM

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

Local Planning Authority: GRAVESHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TQ 682700 Area: 184.6 (ha.) 456.1 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 178 1:10,000: TQ 66 NE, 67 SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1988 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Part of the site is owned and managed by the County Council as Shorne Country
Park. Part is owned by the Woodland Trust. There are extensions and deletions to
this site.

Reasons for Notification:

Shorne and Ashenbank Woods form a complex of ancient and plantation
woodland, and include a variety of stand-types associated with Tertiary gravels,
clays and sands. The site supports an important and diverse invertebrate fauna,
especially its Coleoptera (beetles), Hemiptera (true bugs), and Odonata
(dragonflies).

The woodland varies from pure sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa* coppice, in
places heavily invaded by sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, to a more mixed
broadleaved community, consisting of mature oak *Quercus* spp., sweet chestnut,
and hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*. Although holly *Ilex aquifolium*, and yew *Taxus
baccata* are frequent in the understorey, dense aggregations of rhododendron
Rhododendron ponticum sometimes suppress the development of a shrub and
field layer. Elsewhere bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-
scriptus*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, and bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*
dominate the ground flora, together with typical indicator species of ancient
woodland such as wood spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*, wood sedge *Carex
sylvatica*, and wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*. The locally-scarce caper
spurge *Euphorbia lathyris* also occurs, often in abundance in recently cut
compartments.

At Randall Heath an open area of former heathland is now dominated by bracken
with occasional ancient oak and sweet chestnut pollards. Within Shorne Country
Park an old series of clay-workings has been landscaped to provide wildlife
habitats including a network of shallow ponds, which are developing an
increasingly interesting flora and fauna. These include the plants blinks *Montia*

fontana and wood small-reed *Calamagrostis epigejos*, both rare in Kent, and several nationally scarce insects including the ruddy darter dragonfly *Sympetrum sanguineum*, and the satin lutestring moth *Tetheela fluctuosa*.

The site has been well-recorded for its insect fauna in the past, with both Coleoptera (beetles) and Hemiptera (true bugs) being well-represented. Rare species include the beetles *Mordella holomelaena* and *Peltodytes caesus*.

The woodland breeding bird community includes hawfinch, marsh tit and all three British woodpeckers.