

COUNTY: KENT            SITE NAME: SISSINGHURST PARK WOOD

DISTRICT: 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 803389    Area: 32.9 (ha.) 81.3 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 188    1:10,000: TQ 73 NE, TQ 83 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act) 1951    Date of Last Revision: 1981

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

Other Information:

The boundary of this site incorporates major deletions.

Reasons for Notification:

This site is important for the number of rare plant species which occur in the rides. The wood is predominantly sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa* coppice with large amounts of birch *Betula* spp., and contains very few standards. In places alder *Alnus glutinosa* woodland occurs along the lines of small streams and in seepage areas; the latter type being particularly restricted in Kent.

The ride flora is the outstanding feature of this woodland. The community of plants present is representative of wealden woodlands and varies with factors such as dampness, the shading effect of coppice and other trees, and the use of the ride by vehicles. Where well-developed the vegetation is dominated by grasses, and with bugle *Ajuga reptans*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, heather *Calluna vulgaris* and other plants locally abundant. Of the rare plants found here, ivy-leaved bellflower *Wahlenbergia hederacea* is the most notable, this being its easternmost locality in Britain. Allseed *Radiola linoides*, chaffweed *Anagallis minima*, and creeping forget-me-not *Myosotis secunda* all very rare in Kent, are also present.

The sweet chestnut and birch woodland has a ground flora with limited diversity of species; bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, and bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* are the most abundant plants, but others such as hard-fern *Blechnum spicant* do occur. In the damper areas of the alder woodland there is greater diversity; pendulous sedge *Carex pendula* is often dominant, and other species include dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, alder buckthorn *Frangula alnus*, and many other more locally-distributed species such as narrow-buckler fern *Dryopteris carthusiana*, and skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata*. The ground flora is best developed in the years immediately following coppice-cutting, and later in the cycle may be almost completely shaded-out.

A considerable area of the wood has been replaced in recent years by pasture and arable land.