

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER      SITE NAME: BANK & COTHER HILL

DISTRICT: MALVERN HILLS

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

Local Planning Authority: HEREFORD & WORCESTER, Malvern Hills District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 756467      Area: 20.63 (ha.) 51 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150      1:10,000:

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1952      Date of Last Revision: 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

The site lies within the Malvern Hills AONB.

The Hereford & Radnor Nature Trust lease part of the site.

Boundary alteration (addition).

Description and Reasons for Notification:

An area of mixed woodland scrub and grassland situated on a ridge of Wenlock Limestone of the Silurian series lying on the north west flanks of the Malverns. Limestone grassland on the Silurian formations has always been limited in extent compared with those of other limestone formations. Modern agricultural developments have reduced these even further, and only a few such sites now remain. The grassland together with its associated woodland and scrub habitat at Bank and Cother Woods is one of these, and therefore has considerable importance for nature conservation both locally and nationally.

The woodland which covers some of the western and all of the eastern slope of the ridge is dominated by sessile oak *Quercus petraea* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior* with a rich variety of other tree and shrub species associated with its markedly calcareous soils. These include yew *Taxus baccata*, wild cherry *Prunus avium*, field maple *Acer campestre*, wych elm *Ulmus glabra* and the uncommon wild service tree *Sorbus torminalis*. The shrub layer is equally diverse and includes hazel *Corylus avellana*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and spindle *Euonymus europaeus*.

The limestone grassland communities found in the south west and north west of the site are dominated by upright brome grass *Zerna erecta* with other calcicole grasses such as quaking grass *Briza media*, sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* and golden oat grass *Trisetum flavescens*. The herb species of the grassland include rock rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, sainfoin *Onobrychis viciifolia* and various orchids such as pyramidal orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, greater butterfly orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* and bee orchid *Ophrys apifera*.

The grassland in the northern part of the site has been densely colonised by calcareous scrub species such as dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and privet *Ligustrum vulgare*.

The richness of the botanical habitats is reflected in the diversity of insect life, particularly butterflies. The marbled white butterfly *Melanargia galathea* is found here at one of its few stations in the county.