

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER SITE NAME: BRAMPTON BRYAN PARK

DISTRICT: LEOMINSTER

SITE REF: 15WNT

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

Local Planning Authority: HEREFORD & WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL,
Leominster District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 360716

Area: 165.0 (ha.) 409.0 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 148

1:10,000: SO 37 SE, SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1969

Date of Last Revision: 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1989

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

The site is listed in 'A Nature Conservation Review' edited by D A Ratcliffe, CUP 1977. Site boundary alteration (extension & reduction).

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Brampton Bryan Park is situated in North Herefordshire, close to the borders of Powys and Shropshire. It forms part of the Brampton Bryan Estate which has been in the same family since 1309, making it one of the longest continuous land ownerships in England. Close to the site lie the ruins of Brampton Bryan Castle which dates from the early 14th century. It is probable that the deer park was established at this time.

The park lies on a ridge known as Pedwardine Hill, which at its highest point is over 300 metres (1000 feet) above sea level. The ridge and western part of the Park is composed of mildly calcareous Upper Silurian Rocks, the central portion of the Park lies on Wenlock shales whilst the extreme eastern edge of the site overlies Precambrian rocks. The bedrock is overlain by drift material and the soils are acidic in character.

The site has been selected because of its national importance as a wood pasture, ranking alongside sites such as the New Forest, Windsor Great Park, Sherwood Forest and Moccas Park. Associated with this are important communities of lichens and invertebrates.

The trees in the park are predominantly oaks, both pedunculate *Quercus robur* and sessile *Q. petraea*, with some beech *Fagus sylvatica*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata*. On the steeper slopes are areas of scattered scrub composed mainly of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, elder *Sambucus nigra*, silver birch *Betula pendula* and rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*.

The ground vegetation over much of the Park consists of dense bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*. However, on the southern edge of the Park is an area of acidic dwarf-shrub heath, a habitat which is very limited in the county. The heath is dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris* with bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, western gorse *Ulex gallii*, wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* and early hair-grass *Aira praecox*.

On the eastern side of the Park are a number of ponds which have a wide range of aquatic and marginal plants including several which are rare or uncommon in Herefordshire, namely hornwort *Ceratophyllum demersum*, water-purslane *Peplis portula* and tall mint *Mentha × smithiana*. Heathy Park pool which lies on the western boundary of the site has a rich flora, including several species which are locally uncommon such as bogbean

Menyanthes trifoliata, bladder-sedge *Carex vesicaria*, marsh cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris* and common club-rush *Schoenoplectus lacustris*.

The ancient parkland trees support a rich lichen flora with 130 species having been recorded. In this respect, Brampton Bryan Park is now considered to be the best site in Central England. This is largely due to its remoteness from sources of atmospheric pollution. Two very rare lichens, *Lobaria pulmonaria* and *L. amplissima*, are present here with several other rare or uncommon species including *Rinodina isidioides*, *Thelopsis rubella*, *Lecanora quercicola*, *Bacidia biatorina* and *Pachyphiale cornea*.

There is a rich invertebrate fauna, particularly beetles *Coleoptera*, many of which rely on the plentiful dead and overmature timber in the Park. Several species are nationally rare including the scarlet longhorn *Pyrrhidium sanguineum* and *Lymexylon navale* – only known from four other sites, all in eastern England – as well as *Xyloterus signatus*, *Platypus cylindrus* and *Xyleborus dispar*.

The Park is also important for its butterflies and moths *Lepidoptera*. There is a strong colony of the nationally rare high brown fritillary *Argynnis adippe* as well as several locally uncommon species such as dark green fritillary *A. aglaja*, silver-washed fritillary *A. paphia*, small pearl-bordered fritillary *Boloria selene* and purple hairstreak *Quercusia quercus*. A number of the moths present are also uncommon in Herefordshire. These include pine carpet *Thera firmata*, small elephant hawk *Deilephila porcellus* and the micromoths *Shiffermuelleria subaquileia* and *Pseudatemelia josephinae*.

The Park is important for birds particularly for woodland species such as woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*, sparrowhawk *Accipiter nissus*, pied flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* and lesser spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopus minor*. The parkland trees provide nesting sites for raven *Corax corax*, little owl *Athene noctua* and hobby *Falco subbuteo*. The areas of open water have tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*, mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* and occasionally mute swan *Cygnus olor*. The mammals include badger *Meles meles* and polecat *Putorius putorius*.