

**COUNTY:** CAMBRIDGESHIRE **SITE NAME:** MONKS WOOD AND THE ODD QUARTER

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

**Local Planning Authorities:** Huntingdonshire District Council

**National Grid Reference:** TL 200800, TL 185804

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 142                      **1:10,000:** TL 18 SE, TL 28 SW  
TL 17 NE, TL 27 NW

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):**                      **Date of Last Revision:**

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

**Area:** 169.8 ha 419.5 ac

**Other information:** Monks Wood is a National Nature Reserve and is listed in 'A Nature Conservation Review' (Cambridge University Press, 1977). The entire area was added to the SSSI schedule, for the first time, at the 1986 revision.

### **Description and Reasons for Notification**

Monks Wood has been identified as one of Britain's most important lowland woods. It has been a National Nature Reserve since 1953 and is used as a demonstration site for visiting naturalists from abroad. Its outlier, The Odd Quarter, was part of the same forest as Monks Wood until the two areas were isolated from one another by clearance for agriculture in the 19th Century.

The woodland is primarily a high forest of the wet ash-maple type with acidic pockets holding stands of pedunculate oak-hazel and pedunculate oak-hazel-ash woodland types. Small-leaved elm *Ulmus minor* is dominant in a few areas. The tree canopy is predominantly of ash *Fraxinus excelsior* with some pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*. The shrub layer is rich and was formerly coppiced and includes species such as hazel *Corylus avellana*, Midland hawthorn *Crataegus laevigata* and field maple *Acer campestre*. Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* occurs in dense thickets. Of particular interest is the presence of wild service tree *Sorbus torminalis* and The Odd Quarter holds an exceptionally fine stand of this species.

The ground flora is characteristic of ancient woodlands in this area with species such as primrose *Primula vulgaris*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula*.

Additional habitats include ponds, streams, herb-rich neutral grassland and woodland rides, and these are also of high wildlife value. The grassland holds three species of orchid including two marsh orchids *Dactylorhiza* spp. and adder's-tongue fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum*.

Monks Wood is also highly important for its invertebrate fauna and for its birds which include good breeding populations of woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* and nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*.