

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: FELBRIGG WOODS

DISTRICT: North Norfolk

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

Local Planning Authority: North Norfolk District Council

National Grid Reference: TG 196401                      Area: 162.5 (ha) 401.5 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 133                      1:10,000: TG 14 SE, 13 NE, 23 NW, 24 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1971                      Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987                      Date of Last Revision: N/A

Other Information:

This site is listed in 'A Nature Conservation Review'. Part of the site is under a forestry dedication agreement with the Forestry Commission.

#### **Reasons for Notification:**

Felbrigg Woods are situated on the edge of the Cromer Ridge on a plateau that slopes to the south. The Great Wood is one of only two known sites for acid Beech stands in Norfolk and probably represents an outlying native population of Beech *Fagus sylvatica* at the edge of its range. The ancient trees within the woodland and old deer park carry an interesting and diverse lichen flora including several East Anglian rarities. The site is also of considerable entomological and ornithological interest.

The natural Beech stands have been pollarded in the distant past and the resulting stools and boles are massive. The Beech pollards probably originated on medieval commonland when they were unlikely to have been planted and there is old documentary evidence for Beech in this part of Norfolk. There are few other tree species present with the Beech and the ground flora under the Beeches is poor, consisting chiefly of moss species. Maiden trees of Beech occur throughout the wood with frequent Pedunculate Oak and Sweet Chestnut. Most of these trees were planted in the 19th century but there are some old trees from earlier plantings. Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* dominate the ground flora here with Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* and Creeping Soft-grass *Holcus mollis*. In locally flushed zones, Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, Sanicle *Sanicula europaea* and Enchanter's Nightshade *Circaea lutetiana* occur. There is no shrub layer over much of the wood but it is well developed in an area of recently invaded parkland just north of Felbrigg Hall with Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Elder *Sambucus nigra* and Sallow *Salix caprea*.

Many of the rides are narrow but they support occasional Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* and Yellow Pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum*. Acidic grassland has developed on some of the wider woodland rides and is dominated by Sheep's Fescue *Festuca ovina* and Creeping Soft-grass with Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and Sheep's Sorrel *Rumex acetosella*.

The ancient trees in the park and woodland support over 50 species of lichen, a large total for East Anglia including species such as *Graphis elegans* and *Parmelia purlata* that are more commonly found in western and southern Britain. Many of the species are also indicators of ancient undisturbed woodland and provide further evidence for the continuity of old Beech forest.

The fungi and invertebrates are also probably of great interest but they have been little studied to date. Two rare flies have been recorded however, *Triphleba excisa* and *Mycetophila lubomirski*.

The wood supports a wide range of breeding birds including Wood Warbler and Redstart.