

Notification Date: 15 January 1990

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER SITE NAME: OSEBURY ROCK

DISTRICT: MALVERN HILLS SITE REF: 15 WSE

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, Malvern Hills District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 738555 Area: 2.9 (ha.) 7.2 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150 1:10,000: SO 75 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1955 Date of Last Revision: 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1990 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Site boundary alteration (extension & reduction).

Description and Reasons for Notification:

The site consists of an area of ancient woodland covering a cliff on the south bank of the River Teme seven miles west of Worcester. The wood lies on the Haffield Breccia (Upper Carboniferous), a mixture of volcanic rock and limestone fragments set in a sandy matrix. It is an example of a western valley ash – wych elm wood. The rock exposures are an important geological feature.

Biology

The characteristic species in this type of woodland are ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, field maple *Acer campestre* and wych elm *Ulmus glabra*. Sessile oak *Quercus petraea* is present as standard trees throughout most of the wood. Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* is present only locally on the lower slopes.

Of particular interest is the presence of the nationally restricted large-leaved lime *Tilia platyphyllos*, which is particularly abundant on the upper slopes and cliff ledges. Small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* is also present. The local wild service-tree *Sorbus torminalis* is here abundant and associated with the stands of lime.

On the lower slopes the shrub layer is mainly dominated by hazel *Corylus avellana* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*. Holly *Ilex aquifolium* and a few small trees of yew *Taxus baccata* occur on the cliffs.

The ground flora varies with the transition from dry acidic conditions on the rocks and upper slopes to a more base rich, flushed state lower down. The upper part of the site supports a dense growth of the greater wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica*, and wood sage *Teucrium scorodonia*. The shaded rocks and cliff faces support abundant polypody *Polypodium vulgare* and navelwort *Umbilicus rupestris*. On the lower slopes the flora is dominated by ramsons *Allium ursinum*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and nettle *Urtica dioica*, with yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galaeobdolon* unusually abundant. The narrow-leaved bitter-cress *Cardamine impatiens*, a nationally restricted plant and rare in Worcestershire, occurs in one small area.

The woodland along the river bank consists of a narrow strip of willow *Salix* spp. and alder *Alnus glutinosa*.

Geology

Osebury Rock provides significant exposures of Permian sediments along the western margin of the Permo-Triassic Worcester basin. The Haffield Breccia, comprising texturally-immature, ephemeral stream conglomerates, was the product of marginal alluvial fans developed along the fault-bounded margin of the Malverns. Overlying the Haffield Breccia is the Bridgnorth Sandstone, a lower Permian, aeolian dune sandstone.