

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER

SITE NAME: PARK WOOD

DISTRICT: SOUTH HEREFORD

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

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

National Grid Reference: SO 588178

Area: 14.73 (ha.) 36.4 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 162

1:10,000: SO 51 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1975

Date of Last Revision: 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Lies within the Wye Valley 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'.

Reasons for Notification:

The woodlands of the lower Wye Valley form one of the most important areas for woodland conservation in Britain, comparable with the Caledonian pinewoods, the oceanic oakwoods of Western Britain, the New Forest and the mixed coppices of East Anglia. Semi-natural woodland is abundant and virtually continuous along the gorge. The woods are a mixture of many types, some of which are very localised, e.g. the lime-sessile oak stands on limestone, beech stands on both acid and alkaline soils in which lime *Tilia* spp., elm *Ulmus* spp., oak *Quercus* spp. and other species share dominance. Most woods are a rich mixture of stand types which are believed to be similar in composition to the original natural woods of the valley. Many rare and local species are present, including some of the rarest native tree species, e.g. large-leaved lime *Tilia platyphyllos*, whitebeams *Sorbus* spp. and trees close to the edge of their European range, e.g. hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* and beech *Fagus sylvatica*. Furthermore these woods sit in a matrix of unimproved grassland and other semi-natural habitats which, together with the woods, make the Wye Valley one of the most diverse, rich and attractive areas in southern Britain.

Park Wood lies on steep south facing slopes and cliffs above the River Wye. Its structure is very mixed and includes both standards and coppice. It is remarkable for the dominance of ash *Fraxinus excelsior* which is more common here than in any other Wye Valley woodland. Wych elm *Ulmus glabra* which has suffered badly from Dutch elm disease, is present as is sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* as an invading species. Pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and field maple *Acer campestre* also occur in small quantities.

The rich flora includes herb Paris *Paris quadrifolia*, stinking hellebore *Helleborus foetidus*, stinking iris *Iris foetidissima* and leopard's bane *Doronicum pardalianches*.