

**County:** Somerset

**Site name:** Quants

**District:** Taunton Deane

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

**Local Planning Authority:** Taunton Deane Borough Council  
Somerset County Council

**National Grid Reference:** ST 185175                      **Area:** 50.6 (ha) 125.0 (ac)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet:** 1:50,000:193                      1:10,000: ST 11 NE

**Date notified (under 1949 Act):**                      **Date of last revision:**

**Date notified (under 1981 Act):** 1988                      **Date of last revision:**

**Other information:**

A new site

**Description:**

A wide range of semi-natural habitats occur at Quants. These include unimproved neutral grassland, ancient woodland, secondary woodland, and small areas of heathland and fen. A number of plants and lichens with a local distribution in Somerset are present and the site also supports an outstanding invertebrate fauna.

Quants occupies the steep north westerly facing slopes of a spur of the Blackdown Hills. Situated close to the point at which the Greensand Springline meets the Keuper Marl, the site has a complex hydrology with some of the slopes being heavily flushed. Neutral to acid soils of the whimple and Hense Soil Associations predominate, but more calcareous soils derived from the underlying Keuper Marl are also present.

The field to the north of Farm Wood bungalow supports a neutral grassland community of the Crested Dog's-tail – Common knapweed type. Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, and Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* are the dominant grasses but Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* also occur. Herbs include Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, Cowslip *Primula veris* and Fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*. This area is used for feeding and display purposes by invertebrates from the adjoining wood.

Unimproved neutral grassland of the False Oat-grass – Wild Parsnip type is present in the north-eastern part of the site where the soils are more calcareous. False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* is the dominant grass. The butterfly foodplants Devil's-bit Scabious, Cowslip, Hairy Violet *Viola hirta*, and Common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* occur in this species-rich sward. Other plants with a restricted distribution in Somerset include Autumn Lady's Tresses *Spiranthes spiralis*, Greater Butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*, and Bird's-nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*.

The soils become more acid in the southern part of the site where Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* is common. Small areas of heath occur here too and these are dominated by Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, Gorse *Ulex europaeus* and Western Gorse *U. gallii*. Creeping Cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, Tormentil *P. erecta* and the lichen *Cladonia portentosa* are

also present. Further diversity is provided by a small area of fen vegetation growing in a shallow trench. This is dominated by Common Reed *Phragmites australis* and Hemp-agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum*. The local Marsh Helleborine *Epipactis palustris* and Brookweed *Samolus valerandi* also occur.

The ancient woodland is not uniform and 4 stand types can be distinguished (i) Pedunculate Oak-Hazel-Ash, (ii) Ash-Field Maple, (iii) Slope Alderwood and (iv) Valley Alderwood. Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* are the dominant canopy species. Alder *Alnus glutinosa* and Silver Birch *Betula pendula* are restricted to the wetter areas, whereas Field Maple *Acer campestre* is only found on the drier and more neutral soils. Many of these trees have been coppiced in the past but Pedunculate Oak is the only species to have been pollarded. Wild Service Tree *Sorbus torminalis* is rare. The understorey is mostly dominated by Hazel *Corylus avellana*, but many other species are also present including Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* and Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*.

The ground flora is variable and is usually dominated by Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* or Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis* in the drier areas and by Pendulous Sedge or Giant Horsetail *Equisetum telmateia* in the wetter parts. Other species include Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*, Wild Strawberry *Fragaria vesca*, Sweet Woodruff *Galium odoratum*, Early Dog-violet *Viola reichenbachiana*, Ivy *Hedera helix* and Common Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*. The woodland supports a rich lichen flora and Quants is the only Somerset location at which *Ochrolechia inversa* is known to occur.

Secondary woodland of Silver Birch, Pedunculate Oak, Ash, Goat Willow *Salix caprea* and Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* has developed on areas to the south of the site that were common land.

The various habitats together with the generally sheltered and damp conditions provide an ideal environment for a wide range of invertebrates. To date 30 species of resident breeding butterfly have been recorded. Of these, Marsh Fritillary *Euphydryas aurina*, High Brown Fritillary *Argynnis cydippe*, Pearl-bordered Fritillary *A. euphrosyne*, Duke of Burgundy *Hamearis lucina*, and Wood White *Leptidea sinapis* all have a local distribution in Somerset. Other invertebrates of interest include Hornets *Vespa crabro*, and the rare Hoverfly *Criorhina asilica*.

Site Notified to Secretary of State on 1 July 1988