

Notification date: 15 August 1989

COUNTY: DERBYSHIRE

SITE NAME: CLOUGH WOODS

DISTRICT: DERBYSHIRE DALES

SITE REF: 15 WKF

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

Local Planning Authority: DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, Peak Park Joint Planning Board, Derbyshire Dales District Council

National Grid Reference: SK 255615

Area: 108.8 (ha.) 268.8 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 119

1:10,000: SK 26 SW & SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1964

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1989

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Site boundary alteration (extension and deletion).

Site formerly known as Clough Wood, Cowley Knoll, Hill Wood, Sabine Hey Wood and Stanton Moor Edge.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Clough Woods comprises the combined woodlands of Clough Wood, Cambridge Wood, Cowley Knoll, Sabine Hay Wood, Hill Wood and Painters Way Wood, on the hillside overlooking Darley Dale some 4 km north-west of Matlock. The topography is complex as a result of large areas of landslipping between Millstone Grit to the north and Carboniferous Limestone to the south. This has produced a range of hummocks, hollows and slopes of variable steepness and aspect, with many areas where seepage gives rise to locally wet ground conditions. Soils range from highly acidic to base-rich with corresponding variation in woodland and grassland vegetation. Vein minerals have been previously worked over part of the land and the associated spoil heaps with toxic concentrations of heavy metals contain an unusual and important 'metallophyte' flora. The wide range of ground conditions and vegetation support one of the richest invertebrate faunas in the county.

The greater part of the site supports ancient woodland which is predominantly semi-natural, although substantial modification has been made to some areas by felling and replanting or underplanting with conifers. Most of the woodland, which is of a type now unusual in the county, lies on acidic soils where the principle species are oak, predominantly pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and hazel *Corylus avellana*. Wych elm *Ulmus glabra* was formerly common but sites where it grew are now largely occupied by sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* or planted beech *Fagus sylvatica*. These woods have a diverse shrub layer with hazel, rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, holly *Ilex aquifolium* and occasional crab apple *Malus sylvestris*. The ground flora is characteristically dominated by creeping soft-grass *Holcus mollis*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* with great wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica* locally abundant. North facing slopes have particularly dense growths of male-fern *Dryopteris filix-mas* and broad buckler-fern *D. dilatata*. The woodland fungus flora is known to be of considerable interest with some 75 species recorded. A large number of these are associated with oak.

Associated with local seepage zones and watercourses are areas of wet valley alderwood characterised by alder *Alnus glutinosa* and goat willow *Salix caprea* with great horsetail *Equisetum telmateia* and wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris*.

To the south of the site, where glacial clays have slumped over shales and limestones, oak remains the dominant species with birch *Betula* spp. becoming more frequent over a denser and more species-rich shrub layer with guelder-rose *Viburnum opulus*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*. The ground flora is equally diverse with dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, enchanter's-nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*, water avens *Geum rivale* and broad-leaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine* which is locally abundant.

The grasslands are mainly ungrazed with scattered or dense hawthorn and blackthorn scrub which has developed locally. The open grasslands are generally acidic in character with wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa*, sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina*, heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile* and areas of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*. These merge into areas of more neutral grassland in the valley bottom. Being ungrazed, there is also an abundance of flowers throughout the year which provides a very important pollen and nectar source for the wide range of invertebrates.

Of special interest within the matrix of grassland and scrub are areas of old mine spoil which retain high concentrations of heavy metals such as lead and support a distinctive flora. These 'metallophyte' communities are characterised here by spring sandwort or 'leadwort' *Minuartia verna* and alpine penny-cress *Thlaspi alpestre*; a particularly vigorous form which is found only in this area. On less toxic soils, the nationally uncommon narrow-leaved bitter-cress *Cardamine impatiens* and small teasel *Dipsacus pilosus* are found.

The larger fauna have not been well studied. There is a large herd of unusually dark coloured fallow deer and great-crested newts *Triturus cristatus* occur in one pond.

The invertebrate fauna is well documented and of very considerable interest in relation to equally well documented sites elsewhere. Some 260 species of moths and butterflies have been recorded, with several nationally uncommon species, including pimpernel pug moth *Eupithecia pimpernellata* and the lunar hornet moth *Sesia bombeciformis*. The alder woodland flushes contain three molluscs that are considered to be indicators of ancient woodland, *Limax cinereoniger*, *Vertigo substriata* and *Leiostryla anglica*.