

Notification Date: 24 March 1986

COUNTY: GLOUCESTERSHIRE

SITE NAME: SELSLEY COMMON

DISTRICT: STROUD

SITE REF: 15 WXR

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

Local Planning Authority: GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, Stroud District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 829030

Area: 39.4 (ha.) 97.4 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 162

1:10,000: SO 80 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1966

Date of Last Revision: 1974

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Within the Cotswold AONB. Boundary alteration (reduction).

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This is one of a series of sites overlying the Jurassic limestone of the Cotswolds supporting the herb-rich calcareous grassland habitat once widespread in this area. Leigh's Quarry, in the southern part of the SSSI, is notified for its geological significance.

Biology

The grassland vegetation on the slopes of the Common, traditionally managed by grazing, is dominated by grasses such as upright brome *Bromus erectus* and sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* with comparatively little tor-grass *Brachypodium pinnatum*, a feature which distinguishes it from other similar grassland sites in the Cotswolds. A wide range of other herbs includes an abundance of rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor* and wild thyme *Thymus praecox*. The disused quarries also support a rich flora including autumn lady's tresses *Spiranthes spiralis*. Among other orchids on the Common are green-winged orchid *Orchis morio* and fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*. Some scrub, mostly of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, has developed and a few trees, mostly ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, are scattered over the site.

A wide range of invertebrate species occur on the Common, including the nationally rare mollusc *Abida secale* and butterflies such as the small blue *Cupido minimus*, grayling *Hipparchia semele* and Duke of Burgundy fritillary *Hamearis lucina*.

Geology

Leigh's Quarry is a classic geological locality providing one of the most extensive cross-sections of the Middle Jurassic Inferior Oolite of the South Cotswolds. The succession here includes the Oolite Marl, the Upper *Trigonia* Grit and the *Clypeus* Grit. The Oolite Marl here is capped by a superb example of a 'hardground', a thin layer of tough limestone formed when environmental changes caused deposition of the limestones to slow down or cease altogether. The Oolite Marl here makes its most southerly appearance beneath the *Trigonia* Grit; southwards, it is cut out as the Upper Inferior Oolite comes to rest on successively older units of the Lower Inferior Oolite. In conjunction with more southerly outcrops, Leigh's Quarry serves as an indispensable illustration of Cotswolds Jurassic geology of great value for both research and education.