

File ref: SD 74/3

County: Lancashire **Site Name:** Coplow Quarry

District: Ribble Valley

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

Local Planning Authority: Ribble Valley Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SD 751432 **Area:** 4.9 (ha) 12.2 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 103 **1:10,000:** SD 74 SW, SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1951 **Date of Last Revision:** 1979

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Other Information:

Boundary revised 1983 by a minor correction.

Reasons for Notification:

Coplow Quarry is a disused limestone quarry situated just north of Clitheroe. The geological interest of the site, in technical terms, may be defined as follows:

This site shows exposures of the Coplow Knoll, of Chadian age, and its associated sediments. These are the best exposures of their kind in the Lower Coplow Knoll “Series”, a sequence of rocks famous for their echinoderm fauna. This is one of the richest sites in the whole of the British Dinantian for such fossil material and it has yielded many type specimens. Coplow is a significant site in studies of carbonate facies relationships (between bank, inter-bank and flank deposits), and the controversial subject of the origins of the knolls in the Bowland Trough. A key Clitheroe Limestone site of outstanding interest for its faunas and carbonate sedimentology.

In layman’s terms, the interest of this site may be expressed more simply, and such a statement is provided below. This should not be taken as definitive and further information as to details of the interest can be obtained from the Nature Conservancy Council.

The faces of Coplow Quarry provide the best known exposures of a series of limestone layers, known as the Lower Coplow Knoll Series, originally formed in the Lower Carboniferous period of geological history, about 340 million years ago. The limestones formed on the bed of a warm, shallow sea which covered this area at that time and which contained a great variety of marine life. The rocks at Coplow Quarry are particularly noted for the rich and varied fossil remains they contain, some of which were first recognised here. An important feature of the Carboniferous limestones of this area is the occurrence of mound-like structures, generally referred to as “reef-knolls”, which formed during deposition of the sediments, partly as a result of the growth, on the sea-bed, of large colonies of marine animals. The precise origin of these features has been debated for many years and Coplow Quarry is important in this context also, as it provides valuable evidence of the form and nature of these structures.