

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER

SITE NAME: SHARPNAGE WOOD

DISTRICT: MALVERN HILLS

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

Local Planning Authority: HEREFORD & WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL, Malvern Hills District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 603368

Area: 18.85 (ha.) 46.6 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 149

1:10,000: SO 63 NW, SO 53 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1975

Date of Last Revision: 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

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, eg 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, eg large-leaved lime *Tilia platyphyllos*, whitebeams *Sorbus* spp. and trees close to the edge of their European range eg 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.

Sharpnage Wood lies on Silurian rocks of the Woolhope dome. Its soils are slightly calcareous and free draining. The woodland is composed of mixed coppice with standards. The canopy is dominated by ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, sessile oak *Quercus petraea*, field maple *Acer campestre* and occasional wych elm *Ulmus glabra*. The shrub layer is mainly hazel *Corylus avellana* but birch *Betula pendula*, yew *Taxus baccata* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* are also present.

The ground flora is very rich and includes many rare and unusual species including herb paris *Paris quadrifolia*, wild daffodil *Narcissus pseudo-narcissus*, columbine *Aquilegia vulgaris*, birds nest orchid *Neottia nidus-avis* and greater butterfly orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*.

The interest of the site is further enhanced by a small stream and pond which supports a characteristic flora.