

COUNTY: EAST SUSSEX/KENT SITE NAME: HIGH ROCKS

DISTRICT: WEALDEN/TUNBRIDGE WELLS

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

Local Planning Authority: WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

National Grid Reference: TQ 560382 Area: 3.2 (ha.) 7.9 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 188 1:10,000: TQ 53 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1953 Date of Last Revision: 1979

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 Date of Last Revision: –

Further Information:

This site is to be mentioned in 'A Geological Conservation Review' (publication pending).

Reasons for Notification:

High Rocks is a key geomorphological site for sandstone weathering features developed on the highest cliffs in the Weald. The Ardingly Sandstone is gently cambered (deformed) and the joints have opened out to form spectacular gulls (tension cracks) which are wide enough in places for a person to enter. Open gulls are comparatively rare in Britain, except in the central Weald, and they are nowhere better displayed than in the great extent of open passages at High Rocks. The Ardingly Sandstone is friable and poorly cemented, but the surface develops a protective crust and displays a variety of micro-weathering features, notably honeycombing and polygonal cracking. The origin of this cracking is problematic but may relate to freezing and thawing under periglacial conditions during the Pleistocene. It is found in Britain only on the sandstone outcrops in the central Weald, and is nowhere better displayed than at High Rocks.