COUNTY: OXFORDSHIRE **SITE NAME:** OUT WOOD

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

Local Planning Authorities: West Oxfordshire District Council

National Grid Reference: SP408208

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 164 **1:10,000:** SP42 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1955 **Date of Last Revision:** 1977

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

Area: 19.2 ha 47.5 ac

Description and Reasons for Notification

Out Wood is an isolated fragment of the ancient Royal Forest of Wychwood which was disafforested during the Middle Ages. Unlike most of the outlying woods of Wychwood it retains its semi-natural character and exhibits a variety of stand types characteristic of base-rich clay soils. The soils are derived partly from the underlying oolite and the field and shrub layers are rich and varied.

Four woodland stand types are represented, these intergrading freely in many areas. Calcareous hazel-ash woodland is the commonest stand-type, although there are also large areas of wet maple woodland in which privet and dogwood are unusually prominent. There is a little dry ash-maple woodland in a better drained area centrally, and also some suckering elm along the northern edge. All of these stand-types are rare in Britain.

The woodland structure is overgrown coppice-with-standards. Close-spaced oak standards from about 30 to 150 years of age dominate the canopy with some birch, ash and large, dead wych elms. Hazel coppice with mixed scrub of hawthorn, dogwood, elder, spindle, redcurrant and privet occurs. Parts of the wood lack coppice and consist of oak standards with sycamore, ash and occasional wild service tree *Sorbus torminalis*.

The field layer is dominated by dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and, locally, brambles *Rubus* spp. In the mown rides of the wood and along a relatively open wet valley the field layer is more diverse and contains meadow saffron *Colchicum autumnale*, nettle leaved bellflower *Campanula trachelium*, sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, columbine *Aquilegia vulgaris*, sweet violet *Viola odorata*, early dog violet *V. reichenbachiana*, twayblade *Listera ovata*, broad-leaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine* and greater butterfly orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*. Out Wood is one of the few localities in Oxfordshire for the spiked star-of-Bethlehem *Ornithogalum pyrenaicum*. Other uncommon species include false oxlip *Primula vulgaris* x *veris*, toothwort *Lathraea squamaria* and bird's-nest orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*. Herb-rich flushes occur at the base of the valley and a limestone grassland flora has developed in the drier, more open parts of the wood.