

County: Devon

Site Name: Torbryan Caves

District: Teignbridge

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

Local Planning Authority: Devon County Council
Teignbridge District Council

National Grid Reference: SX 815675 **Area:** 19.09 (ha) (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 202 **1:10,000:** SX 86 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1964 **Date of Last Revision:** 1976

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1997 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Other Information:

The site is of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site comprises a series of caves, in a ridge of Devonian Limestone, that are of importance to the study and dating of Pleistocene fossil fauna. Several of the caves are also bat roosts.

The caves (including the famous ‘Tornewton Cave’) represent one of the most important Pleistocene localities in Britain and provide a clear sequence of the fossil fauna representing the Wolstonian Cold Stage/Ipswichian Interglacial/Devensian Cold Stage Cycle.

Equally significant is the occurrence of the remains of species long extinct in Britain and seldom found as fossils in this country. Fossil evidence of the clawless otter *Aonyx antiqua* and steppe lemming *Lagurus lagurus* is unique to this site, while fossil remains of glutton *Gulo gulo* and hamsters *Cricetus cricetus* and *Allocricetus bursae* are only rarely found elsewhere. The last named species is extinct.

Many of the faunistically older deposits (The Glutton and Bear Strata) remain *in situ* within the cave deposits. The Devensian horizons, including the Reindeer Stratum which are the youngest deposits, occur extensively in sediments at the front of the cave entrances.

The caves are also used by several species of bat: greater horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, lesser horseshoe *R. hipposideros* and long-eared *Plecotus* spp. bats have been recorded at this site.