

File ref:

**County:** Leicestershire **Site name: Breedon Cloud Wood and Quarry**

**District:** North West Leicestershire

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

**Local Planning Authority:** North West Leicestershire District Council

**National Grid Reference:** SK 415214 **Area:** 63.4 (ha) 156.6 (ac)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000:** 129 **1: 10 000:** SK 42 SW

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):** 1956 **Date of Last Revision:** 1981

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 1987 **Date of Last Revision:** -

**Other Information:**

This site was formerly known as Breedon Cloud Quarry Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

**Description and Reasons for Notification:**

Cloud Wood is an ancient semi-natural woodland of a type which is now scarce in lowland Britain. It supports a ground flora that is exceptionally diverse and includes several species which are rare in Leicestershire. Cloud Quarry is a nationally important geological locality.

**Biological:**

Cloud Wood lies on deposits of Keuper Marl and Boulder Clay which overlie the Carboniferous Limestone on the upper slopes of Cloud Hill.

The canopy is largely dominated by ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, although silver birch *Betula pendula* is locally abundant. Coppice species include wych elm *Ulmus glabra*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, field maple *Acer campestre*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and, in places, small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata*.

Variations in soil moisture and pH are reflected by the richness and variety of the ground flora. Dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and woodruff *Galium odoratum* are locally dominant. Tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, giant bellflower *Campanula latifolia*, pendulous sedge *Carex pendula*, yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*, wood-sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* and wood speedwell *Veronica montana* are all locally frequent. Several cont...

### **Breedon Cloud Wood and Quarry (cont...)**

species of orchid are present including broad-leaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*, early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula* and violet helleborine *Epipactis purpurata*, which is at the extreme north-eastern limits of its British range.

### **Geological:**

The Breedon Cloud Quarry complex exposes an attenuated Dinantian (Lower Carboniferous) succession which was deposited in shallow seas on the northern margin of the Wales-Brabant Massif. These strata, ranging in age between the Tournaisian and the Asbian, include a variety of limestones and dolomites, with bioherms and with shelly faunas. Megaspores have been extracted from the ancient sediments here, proving the proximity of this area to land at that time. This is a key site for studies of early Carboniferous paleogeography, sediments and faunas.