

COUNTY: NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

SITE NAME: BIRKLANDS AND BILHAUGH

DISTRICT: NEWARK

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

Local Planning Authority: NEWARK DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: Area 1 SK 620 683 Area: 554.63 (ha.) 1370.47 (ac.)
Area 2 SK 640 694

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 120 1:10,000: SK 66 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1954 Date of Last Revision: 1981

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

This site is a remnant of the historic Sherwood Forest and contains the best remaining examples of oak-birch woodland in Nottinghamshire together with tracts of acid grassland and heath. The invertebrate faunas, particularly those associated with old trees and dead wood, are exceptional. The site is included within the Nature Conservation Review.

Biology

A very fine remnant of Sherwood Forest developed on freely-draining, acidic, sandy soils derived from the Triassic Bunter Pebble Beds. The vegetation comprises an actively regenerating population of oak and birch together with extensive areas of grass heath. The oak population consists of approximately equal numbers of the pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and the sessile oak *Q. petraea* covering a wide range of size and age, including an exceptional population of ancient standing oaks. Although birch (mainly *Betula verrucosa*) forms groves between the oaks the canopy is, over large areas, still rather open allowing a dense bracken field layer to develop. A wide variety of fungi are present; many of the old oaks have been attacked by such bracket fungi as *Grifola sulphurea* and the beefsteak fungus *Fistulina hepatica*, while many of the mature birches have been attacked by such fungi as *Piptoporus betulinus* and *Polyporus brumalis*.

Within the woodland occur glades of acid grassland dominated by the tussock-forming wavy-hair grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* and which contain such characteristic herbs as heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile* and tormentil *Potentilla erecta*. In parts of Budby South Forest this acid grassland is replaced by heath dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris*, and also by a mosaic of heath and acid grassland. On the periphery of the heathland occur species-rich heath verges containing such plants as petty whin *Genista anglica* and harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*.

The invertebrate fauna of the site is exceptional. In particular it contains outstanding populations of beetles and arachnids, being especially notable for species, including many rare species, characteristic of ancient trees and dead wood. The grassland and heathland invertebrate fauna is also outstanding, containing many species which are typical of heath and of sandy and coastal habitats. Additional interest is provided by the variety and quality of the bird community of both woodland and heathland.