

COUNTY: KENT

SITE NAME: CHEQUERS WOOD AND OLD PARK

DISTRICT: CANTERBURY

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

Local Planning Authority: Canterbury City Council

National Grid Reference: TR 174587

Area: 106.9 (ha.) 264.1 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 179

1:10,000: TR 15 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1968 (part)

Date of Last Revision: 1981

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

This site includes Fordwich Pit, a 'Geological Conservation Review' site.

Reasons for Notification:

The woodland in the valley is a good example of a base-rich springline alder wood. Unimproved acidic grassland is present on the dry sandy plateau in the western part of the site. In addition a variety of other habitats are present including pedunculate oak-birch woodland, dense scrub and a pond. Some uncommon plants occur and the area also supports a diverse breeding bird community.

The mosaic of grassland, scrub and woodland gives this site considerable interest. The acidic sandy soils of the plateau contrast with the base-rich peaty soils of the valley bottom. There is consequently a wide variety of plants present.

The alder wood follows the stream along the valley bottom. Large bitter-cress *Cardamine amara*, lesser pond-sedge *Carex acutiformis* and the two British species of golden-saxifrage, opposite-leaved golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* and alternate-leaved golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium alternifolium* are characteristic of this type of woodland. Small areas have been cleared at intervals along the stream and here plants such as southern marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza majalis* sub species *praetermissa*, ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* and lesser spearwort *Ranunculus flammula* occur.

The grassland is dominated by grasses such as fescues *Festuca* species and bents *Agrostis* species and also contains a variety of other plants. The acidic nature soil is reflected by the presence of plants such as sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella* and heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*. Among the uncommon plants present are slender parsley piert *Aphanes microcarpa*, annual knawel *Scleranthus annuus*, bird's foot *Ornithopus perpusillus* several clovers. The scarce greater broomrape *Orobancha rapum-genistae* occurs in the areas of gorse and broom scrub and is parasitic on both these species. The scrub is developing into hawthorn and oak woodland in places.

The site is attractive to birds and supports a diverse breeding community. The three British woodpecker species breed here as do several kinds of tits and warblers. The alder woodland in particular is important as a breeding site for cetti's warbler and nightingale.

Fordwich Pit

This site exposes gravels of a high (probably pre-Boyn Hill) terrace of the Kentish Stour. The gravel here has yielded a rich Acheulian industry of primitive type, and seems likely to represent a rare example of the Early Acheulian culture in Britain. It compares with the Middle Acheulian archaeological site in a lower terrace at nearby Sturry. As yet no faunal or palynological (pollen) evidence for dating the Stour terraces has been discovered and their relationship to those of the Thames remains uncertain. Assigning the Fordwich gravels and their Early Acheulian industry to their correct position in the Thames chronology is one of the key requirements for the formation of a convincing Palaeolithic stratigraphy in the London Basin. The Fordwich Pit is therefore of considerable importance.