

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER SITE NAME: CHURCH HILL QUARRY

DISTRICT: LEOMINSTER

SITE REF: 15WPP

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

Local Planning Authority: HEREFORD & WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL,
Leominster District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 412738

Area: 0.8 (ha.) 1.9 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 137

1:10,000: SO 47 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1989

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This quarry, on Church Hill, known as the 'Starfish Quarry', was the site where the earliest known heterostracan (agnathan vertebrate) from the Welsh Borders was found in the 1850s. This event was historically important because it proved that 'fish' existed in rocks underlying and thus older than the Ludlow Bone Bed. *Archegonaspis ludensis* remains the earliest known British heterostracan, and it is extremely rare, with only a few fragments found in slightly younger rocks near Ludlow. It occurs here in marine rocks, and is of great importance internationally because the species has frequently figured in discussions concerning the environment in which the early chordates originated.

The early Ludfordian Leintwardine Formation here contains a famous well preserved invertebrate fauna, notably containing echinoderms ('Starfish') which gave the quarry its name. Graptolite bearing shales are associated with derived blocks of Aymestrey Limestone as the infilling of a Ludlow age submarine canyon.

Church Hill has also produced a great many eurypterid specimens over the years, including numerous type and other important specimens, from its Lower Leintwardine age sediments. The eurypterid fauna is not known, at the species level, elsewhere in the Welsh Borderland, and is thus unique. The xiphosurans are of immense interest: *Limuloides* is unique, and *Pseudoniscus* is known from only a few specimens throughout the world. *Necrogammarus* is of historical interest; originally grouped with eurypterid pieces, Salter later referred the specimen to the Crustacea; then the myriapods, until finally it was recognised as part of a large pterygotid eurypterid.