

Notification Date: 19 March 1991

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER

SITE NAME: HAY WOOD &
TINKERS' COPPICE

DISTRICT: MALVERN HILLS

SITE REF: 15 WPR

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

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

National Grid Reference: SO 738574

Area: 29.5 (ha.) 72.9 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150

1:10,000: SO 75 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1991

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

New site.

The site includes the former Collins Green Quarry SSSI, no longer of special interest for its geological features but of biological importance.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site lies on the steep west-facing slope at a ridge overlooking the River Teme. The ridge is formed largely of Wenlock Limestone (Silurian) overlain by the more acidic Haffield Breccia (Upper Carboniferous). The site is important for its semi-natural woodland and unimproved grassland.

The site includes two separate areas of ancient semi-natural woodland known as Hay Wood and Tinkers' Coppice. On the upper slopes the woodland is dominated by sessile oak *Quercus petraea* whereas on the lower slopes sessile oak is associated with ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* and wych elm *Ulmus glabra*. The woodland is exceptionally rich, containing over twenty species of trees and shrubs. Other tree species include field maple *Acer campestre*, wild service-tree *Sorbus torminalis* and the nationally scarce large-leaved lime *Tilia platyphyllos* which occurs as large old coppice stools. The shrub layer is dominated by hazel *Corylus avellana* and contains a range of other species including holly *Ilex aquifolium*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* spurge-laurel *Daphne laureola* and alder buckthorn *Frangula alnus*.

Variations in the geology are reflected in the woodland ground flora. On the upper slopes where the soil is more acidic the ground flora is dominated by bramble *Rubus fruticosus* with a diverse range of calcifuge (lime hating) herbs such as wood sage *Teucrium scorodonia*, betony *Stachys officinalis* and hairy woodrush *Luzula pilosa*. On the lower slopes where the soil is less acid the ground flora is dominated by dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* together with a range of calcicole (lime loving) herbs such as yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*, ramsons *Allium ursinum*, herb-Paris *Paris quadrifolia*, goldilocks buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus* and bird's-nest orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*.

Between the two woodland blocks is an area of grassland and scrub and an old limestone quarry with associated spoil heaps which support dry calcareous grassland. Limestone grasslands on Silurian rocks in the West Midlands are small in extent and of particular interest as their vegetational communities are considered to be an important link between the grasslands of the oolitic limestone of the Cotswolds and those of the Carboniferous

Limestone of the Wye Valley and South Wales. The grassland here is one of the few remaining examples in Worcestershire. The sward is dominated by upright brome *Bromus erectus* associated with red fescue *Festuca rubra*, quaking-grass *Briza media* and small amounts of tor grass *Brachypodium pinnatum*. Many of the herbs found here, though typical of such grassland, are uncommon in Worcestershire. These include carmine thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, autumn gentian *Gentianella amarella*, fairy flax *Linum catharticum*, yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata* and dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria*.

On the lower part of the grassland are blocks of scrub and scattered trees which are thought to be the relics of former woodland. The grassland beneath still contains many woodland species such as bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and a number of orchids such as greater butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*, early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula* and twayblade *Listera ovata*.

The woodlands and scrub are also of ornithological interest with a breeding bird community which includes four species, of raptor, all three British woodpeckers, nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* and wood warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*. The dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*, a nationally restricted species, also occurs in the woodland, as does the wood white butterfly *Leptidaea sinapsis*, another scarce species.