

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER SITE NAME: COOMBHILL MEADOW

DISTRICT: MALVERN HILLS

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, Malvern Hills District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 839320 Area: 2.83 (ha.) 7 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150 1:10,000: SO 83 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1975 Date of Last Revision: 1975

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

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

An area of species rich neutral grassland divided into two sections. The southern and largest section is traditionally managed for hay and aftermath grazing. The northern portion is 'ridge and furrow' pasture with scattered old orchard trees. The meadow is noted for its large population of green winged orchids *Orchis morio*, one of the largest and finest colonies of this species in the West Midlands. Worcestershire is one of the last strongholds for this species in Britain, and even here it has become much rarer due to changes in agricultural practise in recent years.

The southern meadow is dominated by characteristic hay meadow grasses such as sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, crested dog's tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*. The northern meadow is drier in character and other species such as creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera* and quaking grass *Briza media* become more abundant.

Besides green winged orchids the meadows have many other interesting species including cowslips *Primula veris*, yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor* and common milkwort *Polygala vulgaris*. One of the most notable plants found in the meadow is adder's tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, one of the best 'indicator' species of ancient pasture.