

County: Gloucestershire **Site Name:** Astridge Wood

District: Forest of Dean

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

Local Planning Authority: Gloucestershire County Council
Forest of Dean District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 547088 **Area:** 19.42 (ha) 48 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet: 1:50,000:162 1:10,000: SO 50 NW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 **Date of Last Revision:**

Other information:

New site.

Within the Wye Valley Are of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Reasons for Notification:

The woodlands of the lower Wye Valley form one of the most important areas for woodland conservation in Britain, comparable with the Caledonian pinewoods, the oceanic oakwoods of Western Britain, the New Forest and the mixed coppices of East Anglia. Semi-natural woodland is abundant and virtually continuous along the gorge. The woods are a mixture of many types, some of which are very localised, eg the lime-sessile oak stands on limestone, beech stands on both acid and alkaline soils in which lime (*Tilia* spp), elm (*Ulmus* spp), oak (*Quercus* spp) and other species share dominance. Most woods are a rich mixture of stand types which are believed to be similar in composition to the original natural woods of the valley. Many rare and local species are present, including some of the rarest native tree species, eg large-leaved lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*), whitebeams (*Sorbus* spp) and trees close to the edge of their European range, eg hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) and beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). Furthermore these woods sit in a matrix of unimproved grassland and other semi-natural habitats which together with the woods, make the Wye Valley one of the most diverse, rich and attractive areas in southern Britain.

Astridge Wood, lying mainly over Carboniferous Limestone but with Old Red Sandstone forming the lower slopes, is one of the best examples of rich calcareous mixed coppice woodland in the Wye Valley. The tree cover consists of species such as ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), elm (*Ulmus* spp), small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*) and hazel (*Corylus avellana*) with occasional alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*) and field maple (*Acer campestre*). Most of the trees have been subject to coppice management and there is a relatively small number of maiden trees in the wood. The rich field layer vegetation is dominated by dog's mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and hart's

tongue fern (*Phyllitis scolopendrium*) but also includes a number of locally rare species such as broad-leaved helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*), spurge laurel (*Daphne laureola*), tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*) and wild daffodil (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*). This wood is also noted for its variety of mosses and liverworts.