

COUNTY: KENT            SITE NAME: GREAT SHUTTLESFIELD DOWN

DISTRICT: SHEPWAY

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

Local Planning Authority: SHEPWAY DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TR 176410            Area: 21.8 (ha.) 53.8 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 179            1:10,000: TR 14 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1955 (pt)            Date of Last Revision: 1981

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

Other Information:

The site has been extended southwards.

Reasons for Notification:

The site is a good example of unimproved grassland. A variety of plants is found including the rare late spider orchid *Ophrys fuciflora*. The adonis blue butterfly *Lysandra bellargus* is well established on the lower slopes in the south of the site.

The grassland is dominated by sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, upright brome *Bromus erectus* and tor-grass *Brachypodium pinnatum*. The turf is kept short by cattle and sheep grazing, and is rich in other plants. Several are more or less restricted to undisturbed chalk pastures, such as yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata*, carline thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, autumn gentian *Gentianella amarella*, bee orchid *Ophrys apifera* and fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*. The more level ground at the top and bottom of the slopes lies on deeper soil, and is less rich in plants. There are a few areas of very scattered scrub, mainly of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, on the grassland and there are hedges along parts of the fence line.

The invertebrate interest of the area is centred on the adonis blue butterfly mentioned above. Other, more widespread species of moths and butterflies characteristic of short turf also occur, and two notable species of solitary wasp, *Crossocerus cetratus* and *C. styrius* have been recorded.

The small area of woodland consists of pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, and ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, with a dense understorey of hawthorn and hazel *Corylus avellana*. It is open to the grazing stock, and consequently the ground flora is sparse.