

COUNTY: WILTSHIRE      SITE NAME: INWOOD, WARLEIGH

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

Local Planning Authorities: WEST WILTSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL, Wiltshire County Council

National Grid Reference: ST 800633      Area: 56.9 (ha.) 140.5 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 172, 173      1:10,000: ST 76 SE, ST 86 SW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1988      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Inwood is a structurally varied and botanically rich example of southern calcareous ash-wych elm and dry ash-maple woodland. It supports an extremely rich ground flora including populations of two nationally uncommon plants. The extensive ride system incorporates an area of unimproved neutral hay meadow which adds considerably to the interest. Both woodland and grassland elements of the site represent habitat types which have greatly declined in extent in recent years and remain under threat.

The wood lies on a gentle east facing slope of the oolitic limestone in the southern Cotswolds. Immediately to the west the land drops steeply into the Avon Valley.

Much of the site comprises derelict mixed coppice of ash, hazel and field maple with large areas also holding coppiced wych elm. The elm has been badly affected by Dutch elm disease and is now largely represented by young regrowth and a little standing and fallen dead timber. Some English elm has survived the disease in the form of root suckers only. Standards of mature oak and ash are widespread although the latter are far less frequent. Large beech trees occur sparingly near the top of the slope.

Beneath the relatively dense canopy there is a diverse shrub layer which includes hawthorn, elder, dogwood, wayfaring tree, spindle and some holly. Many of these shrubs offer support for the vigorous wild clematis *Clematis vitalba*.

A rich ground flora is variously dominated by dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus*. In the eastern part of the site, especially, there are large numbers of spiked star-of-Bethlehem *Ornithogalum pyrenaicum*, a species virtually restricted to a small area of south west England. Other plants indicative of long-established woodland occur less commonly and include moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina*, enchanter's nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*, sanicle *Sanicula europaea*,

wood spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*, yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* and stinking iris *Iris foetidissima*. Woodland grasses and sedges are widespread, for example wood melick *Melica uniflora*, wood false-brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, giant fescue *Festuca gigantea*, wood-sedge *Carex sylvatica* and thin-spiked wood-sedge *C. strigosa*. The shady, slightly damp nature of the wood has allowed many ferns to flourish, such as hart's-tongue *Phyllitis scolopendrium*, broad buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilatata*, scaly male-fern *D. affinis* and male-fern *D. filix-mas*.

Inwood is dissected by a ride system incorporating a wide stretch of grassland normally cut for hay in summer. This diverse area supports woodland field layer plants such as bluebell, wild strawberry *Fragaria vesca* and pignut *Conopodium majus* as well as more typical grassland plants including oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, common cat's-ear *Hypochoeris radicata*, dwarf thistle *Cirsium acaule* and common milkwort *Polygala vulgaris*. Of particular note are the large populations of both spiked star-of-Bethlehem and the scarce meadow saffron *Colchicum autumnale*, which also grows along some of the narrow rides.

The wood supports a characteristic breeding bird community including the commoner tits and warblers and the more localised lesser spotted woodpecker. A wide range of woodland and grassland butterfly species are also present, including purple hairstreak, holly blue, gatekeeper and small skipper.