

SITE NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON 3 APRIL 1987

COUNTY: SOMERSET      SITE NAME: POSTLEBURY WOOD

DISTRICT: MENDIP

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

Local Planning Authority: SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL, Mendip District Council

National Grid Reference: ST 740430      Area: 87.0 (ha.) 215.0 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 183      1:10,000: ST 74 SW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Postlebury Wood is a large and relatively undisturbed woodland of considerable antiquity, developed on poorly-drained Oxford Clays. A double bank and roadway bordering part of the wood probably represents the Anglo Saxon boundary. The first records of the woodland are from documents dated 1182, shortly after which it was incorporated in the Royal Forest of Selwood.

The wood is largely composed of Oak *Quercus robur*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and Hazel *Corylus avellana*, with Alder *Alnus glutinosa* alongside the small streams. Recent management has resulted in a high-forest structure, although it was formerly coppiced and has been used for charcoal production in the past. A wide range of trees and shrubs occur, including Maple *Acer campestre*, Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*, Birch *Betula sp*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Aspen *Populus tremula* and Sallow *Salix sp*, with Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, Spindle *Euonymus europaeus* and Guelder Rose *Viburnum opulus* on the more base-rich soils.

The ground flora is well developed, ranging from communities of Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea* and Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* on drier and more acid soils, to those of Wood Spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*, Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and Pendulous Sedge *Carex pendula* on wetter and basic soils.

Plants of particular interest recorded include Solomon's Seal *Polygonatum multiflorum*, Greater Butterfly Orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*, Bird's Nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*, Broad-leaved Helleborine *Epipactis helleborine* and Autumn Crocus *Colchicum autumnale*. At least two species present, Herb Paris *Paris*

*quadrifolia* and Woodruff *Galium odoratum* are generally confined to ancient woodland.

Postlebury Wood supports large populations of homostyle Primroses, a plant found in only one area outside south-east Somerset. These plants, which are unique in that they represent a self-fertile form of a normally self-sterile species, are of international significance in providing opportunities for genetic studies. Research involving four universities has been carried out in Somerset since 1940.

The woodland has a wide range of breeding birds, including Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, six species each of Warbler and Tit and the three British Woodpeckers. Mammals occurring in the wood include Badgers, Rose, Muntjac and Fallow Deer. A number of uncommon butterfly species have been recorded.