

COUNTY: DORSET                      SITE NAME: OAKERS WOOD

DISTRICT: PURBECK

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

Local Planning Authority: PURBECK DISTRICT COUNCIL, Dorset County Council

National Grid Reference: SY 807916                      Area: 46.6 (ha.) 115.1 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 194                      1:10,000: SY 89 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1977                      Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984                      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

Oakers Wood lies on a narrow area of Reading Beds and London Clay between the Frome and Piddle Valleys. It is predominantly acid oak woodland but contains hazel coppice and stands of birch and ash. Although only a small part has a continuous history of woodland cover, the flora of Oakers Wood has many elements typical of ancient woodland including some uncommon species. It also has a rich fauna.

The Oak *Quercus robur* woodland is most acid in the north where it is mixed with Birch *Betula* and has a low understorey of Holly *Ilex aquifolium*. The banks support fine old specimens of Oak and Holly and mosses typical of acid woodland are abundant including *Leucobryum glaucum*, *Mnium hornum*, *Polytrichum formosum*, *Dicranum scoparium* and the local *D. majus*. Elsewhere Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and Hazel *Corylus avellana* are the most important scrub species and the latter forms a dense area of coppice in the centre of the wood. Other characteristic species of the shrub layer are Guelder Rose *Viburnum opulus* and Red Currant *Ribes rubrum*. The ground flora is varied. Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scriptus*, Barren Strawberry *Potentilla sterilis*, Pignut *Conopodium majus* and Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* are locally abundant. Wood Spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*, Tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum*, Yellow Archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*, Early Purple Orchid *Orchis mascula* and the uncommon Narrow-lipped Helleborine *Epipactis leptochyla* are other noteworthy elements and this site is especially important for the rare Narrow-Leaved Lungwort, *Pulmonaria longifolia* which favours the more open areas.

The lichen flora of Oakers Wood is of particular interest. Over 100 species have already been identified including several which are restricted in distribution. A group of species confined to smooth bark is especially well represented. Known

as the *Graphidetum scriptae*, this group includes genera such as *Graphis*, *Phaeographis*, *Arthonia* and *Opegrapha*. On unshaded oak bark the community *Parmelion perlatae* occurs in which *Parmelia perlata* and *P. caperata* are the most abundant species. Also on acid bark in more open sites the *Usneion* community is well developed with an abundance of *Usnea subfloridana*, *U. ceratina* and *U. rubicunda*. Oakers Wood is the only locality in England for the rare *Arthonia zwackii* var *zwackii*.

Open areas in close proximity to the woodland are especially favourable to butterflies and there are strong populations of White Admiral *Limenitis camilla*, Silver Washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia*, Pearl Bordered Fritillary *A. euphrosyne* and Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary *Argynnis selene*. Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*, an uncommon breeding bird in Dorset, nests here.