

**COUNTY:** LANCASHIRE

**SITE NAME:** THRANG WOOD

**DISTRICT:** LANCASTER

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

**Local Planning Authority:** Lancaster City Council

**National Grid Reference:** SD 484771

**Area:** 4.79 (ha.) 11.75 (ac.)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 97

**1:10,000:** SD 47 NE

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 1 December 1999

**Other Information:**

1. This is a new site.
2. The site lies within the Arnside/Silverdale AONB.
3. The site lies immediately adjacent to Gait Barrows NNR.
4. The site is covered by a Limestone Pavement Order made under Section 34 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended.

**Description and Reason for Notification:**

Thrang Wood lies immediately to the east of Gait Barrows NNR at an altitude of 38m OD, approximately 1km north-west of Yealand Storrs. The site contains important limestone habitats including wooded limestone pavement and scars, yew woodland and broad leaved woodland, and forms an integral part of the Gait Barrows woodland complex.

Limestone pavements were formed by the scouring action of glaciers during the last Ice Age and slow weathering over the subsequent ten thousand years. The variation in morphology of the pavements produces a variety of niches and microclimates allowing the development of a mosaic of different plant communities. Limestone pavements are a rare habitat of international importance.

The majority of Thrang Wood consists of wooded limestone pavement, with a low scar in the west of the site. Most of this is dominated by spectacular ancient yew woodland, with small areas of fringing ash-hazel woodland, especially within the northern most part of the site, with birch *Betula pendula* and frequent rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, holly *Ilex aquifolium* and sessile oak *Quercus petraea* over limestone pavement. Shrubs present include hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, crab apple *Malus sylvestris* and spindle *Euonymus europaeus*. Yew woodland is a rare habitat of international importance.

The grikes of wooded pavements support shade tolerant plants such as herb-Robert *Geranium robertianum*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, male fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*, hart's-tongue fern *Phyllitis scolopendrium* and hard shield-fern *Polystichum aculeatum*. Elsewhere the herb layer is characterised by dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, false brome grass *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, primrose *Primula vulgaris*, sanicle *Sanicula europaea* and common dog violet *Viola riviniana*. Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. is frequent beneath canopy openings.

The well studied fungal flora of the Gait Barrows woodland complex is exceptional, and Thrang Wood provides shaded woodland habitats for a rich variety of fungi.

The invertebrate fauna of the Gait Barrows complex is also outstanding, and Thrang Wood compliments this by supporting colonies of wood ant, which occur near the northern limit of its distribution range in Great Britain, as well as various species of butterfly which are rare and undergoing significant national decline. Of particular note are populations of Duke of Burgundy, pearl-bordered fritillary and high brown fritillary butterflies, which occur

within Thrang Wood although their main breeding colonies are present within areas of active coppice woodland immediately adjacent within Gait Barrows NNR. The commencement of active coppice work within the ash-hazel woodland of Thrang Wood will most certainly enhance these populations in the years to come, as with populations of purple hairstreak, which is also well represented within the Gait Barrows/Thrang Wood complex of woodland habitats.

Additional features of interest within Thrang Wood include breeding hawfinch, as well as roosting long-eared owl which regularly frequent the yew woodland.