

COUNTY: CLEVELAND

SITE NAME: SALTBURN GILL

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

Local Planning Authority: LANGBAURGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: NZ 676205 Area: 18.9 (ha.) 46.7 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheets 1:50,000: 94 1:10,000: NZ 61 NE and NZ 62 SE

First Notified: 1986

Other Information:

Part of the site is managed as a nature reserve by the Cleveland Nature Conservation Trust.

Description:

Saltburn Gill is a steep sided coastal dene, incised into glacial clays, shales and sandstones of the Lower Jurassic period. The site comprises the eastern slopes of the gill which are of particular importance in supporting one of the few relatively undisturbed areas of mixed deciduous woodland in Cleveland.

Coppiced oak *Quercus robur* with standards dominates the canopy with ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and small pockets of wych elm *Ulmus glabra* and wild cherry *Prunus avium*. The shrub layer is composed of hazel *Corylus avellana*, scattered hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, with occasional holly *Ilex aquifolium*, gooseberry *Ribes uva-crispa*, guelder rose *Viburnum opulus* and spindle *Euonymus europaeus*. Dense patches of regenerating sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* are also present.

The species-rich ground flora varies considerably throughout with the nature of underlying soils. Towards the narrow northern end of the gill damp calcareous shales, on steep slopes beneath widespread wych elm, support locally abundant ivy *Hedera helix*, ramsons *Allium ursinum*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and false brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum* with many ferns including hard shield fern *Polystichum aculeatum*, harts-tongue fern *Phyllitis scolopendrium*, broad buckler fern *Dryopteris dilatata* and male fern *D. filix-mas*. Flushed plant communities dominated by pendulous sedge *Carex pendula*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris* are also common in such areas. Further south, loamy soils on more gentle slopes within the gill complex support carpets of bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and sanicle *Sanicula europaea* with hairy brome *Bromus ramosus* as well as scattered primrose *Primula vulgaris*, Lord's-and-Ladies *Arum maculatum* and wood forget-me-not *Myosotis sylvaticum*. Of particular interest are locally abundant populations of early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula*, wood vetch *Vicia sylvatica*, goldilocks *Ranunculus auricomus* and rough horsetail *Equisetum hyemale*.

South of Darn Bottle a small bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* dominated clearing with scattered hawthorn and goat willow *Salix caprea* has developed over a boggy area dominated by meadowsweet, hard rush *Juncus inflexus* and great willow herb *Epilobium hirsutum* with a small population of spotted orchids *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*. The shady banks and boulders of the beck and its tributaries within Saltburn Gill are covered with a profusion of mosses, leafy liverworts and ferns as well as opposite-leaved golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* and wavy bittercress *Cardamine flexuosa*. These are shaded by large alders, whilst large patches of butterbur *Petasites hybridus*, and ground elder *Aegopodium podagraria* are present with water avens *Geum rivale* on flat areas beside the beck.