

COUNTY: GLOUCESTERSHIRE

SITE NAME: CRICKLEY HILL &
BARROW WAKE

DISTRICT: TEWKESBURY

SITE REF: 15WWB

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

Local Planning Authority: GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, Tewkesbury District Council

National Grid Ref: ST 929161, ST 931154 Area: 56.8 (ha.) 140.3 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 163 1:10,000: ST 91 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1974 Date of Last Revision: 1974

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Within the Cotswolds AONB.

Part of the site is a Country Park managed by the Gloucestershire County Council.

Site boundary alteration (extension & reduction).

Site formerly known as Crickley Hill and incorporates small part of former site known as Tuffleys Quarry.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

The site lies on the Cotswold scarp south of Cheltenham. A range of habitats characteristic of the Cotswold limestone are represented, including species rich grassland, scrub and semi-natural woodland, together with nationally important rock exposures.

Biology

Several types of grassland occur, from short fescue *Festuca* dominated swards, to lightly grazed and tall ungrazed tor-grass *Brachypodium pinnatum* and upright brome *Bromus erectus* grassland. The species rich turf contains many calcicole (lime-loving) herbs such as small scabious *Scabiosa columbaria*, clustered bellflower *Campanula glomerata* and chalk milkwort *Polygala calcarea*. Several orchids occur, including early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula* and bee orchid *Ophrys apifera* with the notable musk orchid *Herminium monorchis* locally frequent. Viper's-bugloss *Echium vulgare* is abundant in places, associated with open grassland and bare limestone.

The diversity of the vegetation contributes to a rich and varied invertebrate fauna.

Butterflies include the chalkhill blue *Lysandra coridon*, green hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*, marsh fritillary *Eurodryas aurinia* and Duke of Burgundy fritillary *Hamearis lucina*. Also recorded is the notable cistus forester moth *Adscita geryon* and the very local snail *Abide secale*.

Scattered and dense scrub occurs over several parts of the site. Species include hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, elder *Sambucus nigra*, wayfaring-tree *Viburnum lantana* and gorse *Ulex europaeus*.

The site includes the Scrubbs, an area of woodland dominated by mature beech, with abundant regeneration of beech *Fagus sylvatica* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior*. Hazel coppice occurs to the west of the wood, elsewhere the understorey is sparse. The ground flora includes dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, woodruff *Galium odoratum* and the notable wood barley *Hordelymus europaeus*. The wood is partly fringed by mixed scrub grading into open grassland, providing a valuable 'edge habitat' for birds and invertebrates.

North of the Scrubbs is a strip of woodland with old beech pollards, a remnant of the former Short Wood. This supports several local and notable beetles which are associated with dead wood. Four species of beetle occur which are recorded from nowhere else in the County, including the nationally rare *Ptenidium gressneri*.

Geology

The rock exposures along the southern slopes of Crickley Hill make up a key Jurassic locality showing a major section in the Lower Inferior Oolite. This shows extensive exposures of Lower and Middle Jurassic rocks, from the Upper Lias through the Lower Inferior Oolite. It exhibits the best sections in the Cotswolds in the Pea Grit and the overlying Coral Bed. The lowest portion of the sequence is one of the very few to show the basal Scissum Beds overlying the Lias.