

COUNTY: WILTSHIRE/HAMPSHIRE SITE NAME: BRICKWORTH
DOWN AND DEAN HILL

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

Local Planning Authorities: SALISBURY DISTRICT COUNCIL, Test Valley
Borough Council Wiltshire County Council, Hampshire County Council

National Grid Reference: SU 246259 Area: 118.6 (ha.) 293.9 (ac.)
 SU 213251
 SU 213248
 SU 206249

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 184 1:10,000: SU 22 NE, NW & SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1951 Date of Last Revision: 1977

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

Other Information:

In part owned by the National Trust, this site was previously notified as
Brickworth Down and West Dean Hill.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Brickworth Down and Dean Hill SSSI occupies a long north facing scarp of Upper
Chalk to the south west of Salisbury. It comprises high quality chalk grassland
with nationally restricted plant and invertebrate species, extensive and healthily
regenerating juniper scrub, and the largest yew wood in Wiltshire and Hampshire.
The site demonstrates the succession of chalk grassland through juniper scrub to
yew woodland and is the best example of this transition in the two counties.

While some areas of chalk grassland are ungrazed allowing upright brome *Bromus
erectus* to dominate, the majority of the sward is regularly grazed, with frequent
sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina*, meadow oat-grass *Avenula pratensis* and glaucous
sedge *Carex flacca*. Species indicating a long period of favourable uninterrupted
management include devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, chalk milkwort *Polygala
calcareae*, frog orchid *Coeloglossum viride* and autumn lady's tresses *Spiranthes
spiralis*. Plants with a nationally restricted distribution are represented by dwarf
sedge *Carex humilis*, bastard-toadflax *Thesium humifusum*, field fleawort *Senecio
integrifolius* and the diminutive burnt orchid *Orchis ustulata*.

The large areas of juniper scrub represent one of the largest colonies of this
declining species in Wiltshire and Hampshire. Regeneration is vigorous, and there is
a wide range of age classes from seedlings to old plants, an uncommon feature of
colonies in southern England. Under light grazing regimes, juniper is avoided by
livestock and consequently protects other shrubs allowing their seedlings to
develop. Sapling yews, in particular, have been 'nursed' here and exhibit this stage

in the succession to yew wood. Additional scrub species include hawthorn, wayfaring tree, dogwood, spindle and buckthorn.

Extensive yew woods have developed along the scarp and although most of the trees range in age from 80 to 150 years, saplings and older trees are present. Yew occurs as pure stands and also mixed with common whitebeam, holly and ash. The ground is characteristically bare beneath the yew while, elsewhere, it supports typical woodland herbs including dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, wild strawberry *Fragaria vesca* and sweet woodruff *Galium odoratum*. Surviving within the wood are small glades of chalk grassland and scrub, including juniper.

The site has long been recognised as important for insect populations. Butterflies occurring include chalkhill blue, marsh fritillary, grizzled skipper, Duke of Burgundy and green hairstreak. Older records exist for some unusual flies such as the nationally rare and endangered *Platypalpus tonsus*, and a number of invertebrates solely associated with juniper including the shield bug *Cyphostethus tristrialis* and the nationally restricted plant bug *Dichroscytus valesianus*. Several mammals have been recorded including brown hare and harvest mouse.