

COUNTY: GREATER MANCHESTER **SITE NAME:** COTTERIL CLOUGH

DISTRICT: MANCHESTER

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

Local Planning Authority: City of Manchester

National Grid Reference: SJ 805839 **Area:** 10.34 (ha.) 25.54 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 109 **1:10,000:** SJ 88 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1951 **Date of Last Revision:** 1965

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983 **Date of Last Revision:**

Other Information:

1. Part of the site is owned by the Royal Society for Nature Conservation and managed as a nature reserve by the Cheshire Conservation Trust.
2. No change to the boundary on renotification.

Description:

Cotteril Clough lies 15km south of Manchester city centre immediately to the west of Manchester Airport. The site comprises part of a ravine, or clough, cut into the Keuper Marl by the erosion of the Cotteril Brook. The majority of the site is woodland with associated stream habitat and is the most diverse clough woodland on base rich soils in Greater Manchester.

Three distinct zones exist within the woodland. The first of these occurs on the plateau edge and contains birch-oak woodland in which pedunculate oak and sycamore are the dominant tree species with holly, rowan and down birch also occasionally found. Bracken and bramble are abundant in the ground flora with hairy woodrush and foxglove locally frequent. This grades into ash-wych elm woodland with sycamore and pedunculate oak also commonly found. Wild cherry, hazel, honeysuckle and hawthorn are common in the understorey with aspen, bird cherry *Prunus padus*, whitebeam *Sorbus aria*, goat willow and guelder rose *Viburnum opulus* occasional. The ground flora is dominated by ramsons with honeysuckle, bluebell, wood anemone, lesser celandine and black bryony also commonly found.

Valley alder woodland dominates the bottom of the clough. Alder, which has been extensively coppiced in the past, sallow and ash are the main tree species. Ramsons is again the most abundant herb in the ground flora which also commonly includes marsh marigold and pendulous sedge. Less common plants present in the wood include goldilocks *Ranunculus auricomus*, alternate-leaved golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium alternifolium*, wood vetch, toothwort *Lathraea squamaria*, giant bellflower, twayblade, hard shield fern *Polystichum aculeatum* and thin-spiked wood sedge.

The embankment, which was created when the A358 was built, supports neutral grassland in which red fescue, sweet vernal grass and Yorkshire fog are the main grasses with tufted hair grass frequent in wetter areas. Common herbs include coltsfoot, ribwort plantain and creeping buttercup with common spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* occasionally present.

Cotteril Clough also has an interesting bird fauna with spotted fly-catcher, lesser spotted, greater spotted and green woodpecker, blackcap and whitethroat all known to breed in the woodlands. The invertebrate fauna is also diverse with 79 species of spider having been recorded as well as the rare beetle *Dropephylla grandiloqua*.