

COUNTY: AVON

SITE NAME: WRITHLINGTON

DISTRICT: WANSDYKE

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

Local Planning Authority: WANSDYKE COUNCIL, Avon County Council

National Grid Reference: ST 703553

Area: 0.5 (ha.) 1.24 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 172

1:10,000: ST 75 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1992

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A Geological Conservation Review Site.

A non-statutory Geological Nature Reserve

Description and Reasons for Notification:

The site is a rock store created by salvaging blocks of 'Coal Measures' mudrock from the tops of the former Writhlington Colliery. These tips are internationally famous for their rich Upper Carboniferous plant flora indicating a Westphalian D age.

The site has now yielded the largest ever collection of Carboniferous insects in Britain. The commonest forms belong to the order Blattodea (cockroaches) and include the extinct families Archimylacridae and Mylacridae; representatives of the insect orders. Protorthoptera and Palaedictyoptera also occur. Frequent chelicerates (arthropods) include trace and body fossils of xiphosurid merostomes and arachnids. The latter includes two extinct orders (Phalangotarbida and Trigonotarbida) and also true spiders (Araneida). Rare myriapods (millepedes) and occasional conchostracan crustaceans (clam-shrimps) also occur.

The Writhlington site is of national and international importance and has great potential for yielding further arthropod remains. The combination of rich flora and fauna gives a valuable insight into the structure of the world's earliest known 'tropical forest' ecosystem.