

COUNTY: SOMERSET SITE NAME: VIADUCT QUARRY

DISTRICT: MENDIP

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

Local Planning Authority: MENDIP DISTRICT COUNCIL, Somerset County Council

National Grid Reference: ST 621443 Area: 0.3 (ha.) 0.8 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 183 1:10,000: ST 64 SW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:
New site.

Statement of Interest

An important locality as the best exposed and thickest section in the Downside Stone. This facies, developed here in its type area, is a localised limestone development which accumulated adjacent to the Lowest Jurassic 'Mendip Island'. This 'littoral' facies of coarse, often conglomeratic limestones is in marked contrast to the contemporary offshore Blue Lias facies which is developed elsewhere in southern Britain, with the exception of closely comparable marginal marine areas in south Wales.

Simplified Statement of Interest

Viaduct Quarry has provided geologists with important information on the disposition of land and sea which existed in Southern Britain some 200 million years ago. At this time, much of the area was covered by a warm shallow sea, which was rich in marine life. The Mendip Hills existed as a series of islands at this time and the strata exposed in Viaduct Quarry are interpreted as the 'littoral' or nearshore deposits which accumulated in the inter-tidal area adjacent to one of these islands. The conglomeratic limestones deposited in this environment contrast markedly with other sediments (e.g. the Blue Lias) which were laid down at the same time further offshore under deep water conditions.