

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: HORNINGTOFT WOOD

DISTRICT: Breckland

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

Local Planning Authority: Breckland District Council

National Grid Reference: TF 948238

Area: 9.05 (ha) 22.35 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 132

1:10,000: TF 92 SW, SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1972

Date of Last Revision: N/A

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

Horningtoft Wood is a fragment of a once much larger area of ancient woodland. The wood is situated on a boulder clay plateau and has a structure of coppice-with-standards. A stand-type rare in Norfolk, maple-ash-limewood is present and the ground flora is exceptionally diverse, containing a number of rare and local species.

Massive earthworks around the boundary and large stools of Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* are a strong indicator of the antiquity of the wood. The coppice was last cut in the 1930s and is now overgrown. Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Ash and Maple *Acer campestre* are the main coppice species with Ash and Oak *Quercus robur* standards scattered throughout the wood. Other tree and shrub species present include Small-leaved Lime *Tilia cordata*, Aspen *Populus tremula*, Elder *Sambucus nigra*, Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* and Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*.

The diverse ground flora is dominated by Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis* on the heaviest soils and by Bramble *Rubus agg.* on the lighter soils. Herb Paris *Paris quadrifolia* is common throughout the wood and other interesting species include Primrose *Primula vulgaris*, Common Cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense*, Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*, Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and Lily-of-the-Valley *Convallaria majalis*. Four locally rare or scarce species have been recorded in the wood: Crested Cow-wheat *Melampyrum cristatum*, Bird's-nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*, Broad-leaved Helleborine *Epipactis helleborine* and Greater Butterfly Orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*.