

COUNTY: EAST SUSSEX SITE NAME: HEATHFIELD PARK

DISTRICT: WEALDEN

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

Local Planning Authority: WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TQ 593210 Area: 40.8 (ha.) 100.8 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 199 1:10,000: TQ 52 SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

This is a new site.

Reasons for Notification:

This site is an example of an ancient Wealden ghyll woodland formed by the vigorous downcutting of a stream into the Ashdown Sand series of the Hastings Beds. A number of 'Atlantic' plants, uncommon in the south-east, are present and the lichen flora is also notable. The stream has been dammed to form a series of lakes, the northernmost of which are included in the site and add to its interest.

The woodland is dominated by mature beech *Fagus sylvatica* with both pedunculate and sessile oak *Quercus robur* and *Q. petraea*, holly *Ilex aquifolium* and scattered yew *Taxus baccata*. In the north and east birch *Betula* spp. becomes frequent and the stream valleys contain willow *Salix* spp. and alder *Alnus glutinosa*. Where beech is dense only the moss *Leucobryum glaucum* gives ground cover, but where the canopy is more open bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus* are found with rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum* invading in places.

Continuous woodland cover in this sheltered ghyll provides a moist, mild microclimate and a number of plant species occur here which are otherwise restricted to western counties, including Cornish moneywort *Sibthorpia europaea*, hay-scented buckler-fern *Dryopteris aemula* and the liverwort *Frullania tamarisci*.

The site is also of county importance for lichens: a total of 76 species have been recorded here, mostly from the old oaks.

The lakes add to the value of the site for dragonflies and birds. Great reedmace *Typha latifolia* forms fringing vegetation and the open water is dominated by white and yellow water-lilies *Nymphaea alba* and *Nuphar lutea*.