

COUNTY: SHROPSHIRE      SITE NAME: TICK WOOD AND BENTHALL EDGE

DISTRICT: BRIDGNORTH/SHREWSBURY & ATCHAM

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

Local Planning Authority: SHROPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, Bridgnorth District Council, Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SJ 650030      Area: 142.45 (ha.) 352 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 127      1:10,000: SJ 60 SE, SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1954      Date of Last Revision: 1963

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Benthall Edge Wood is owned by Telford Development Corporation.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

An extensive area of ancient native mixed deciduous woodland on north and west facing scarp slopes overlooking the Severn Gorge. Most of this woodland lies on soils derived from Wenlock Limestone and Wenlock Shale of the Silurian Period, but an area at the eastern end of Benthall Edge wood is underlain by the clays and sandstones of the Coal Measures.

The variation in geology is reflected in the vegetation. On the Coal Measure sandstones, acidic soils have developed, and these support sessile oak *Quercus petraea* and birch *Betula* spp. woodland with a ground flora which includes wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa*, greater woodrush *Luzula sylvatica*, bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* and hard fern *Blechnum spicant*.

The more base-rich soils on the Wenlock Limestone and Shale support more mixed woodland which includes a number of stand types dominated by (i) ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and wych elm *Ulmus glabra*, (ii) ash and hazel *Corylus avellana* and (iii) ash and small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata*. There is also an area dominated by wild cherry *Prunus avium*. The ash/wych elm stands which contain abundant sessile oak are a woodland type characteristic of the Silurian limestones and calcareous shales of Shropshire and are particularly well developed. The ground flora includes plants such as ramsons *Allium ursinum*, sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, sweet woodruff *Galium odoratum* and dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* which are characteristic of base-rich soils.

Several uncommon plant species have been recorded, including fingered sedge *Carex digitata* in its only known Shropshire locality, wood barley *Hordelymus europaeus*, toothwort *Lathraea squamaria*, violet helleborine *Epipactis purpurata* and wild service tree *Sorbus torminalis*.

Although most of the woodland is believed to be primary, there are some areas of secondary woodland which have developed on ground disturbed by quarrying for limestone and clay. There are also areas of scrub and grassland with a rich flora which includes dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria* and a number of lime-loving plants (calcicoles) including salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, burnet saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga*, greater knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa*, marjoram *Origanum vulgare* and pyramidal orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*.