

COUNTY: SHROPSHIRE

SITE NAME: WHITWELL COPPICE

DISTRICT: SHREWSBURY & ATCHAM, BRIDGNORTH

FILE REF: 15WC2

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

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

National Grid Reference: SJ 620020

Area: 15.9 (ha.) 39.2 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 127

1:10,000: SJ 60 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

New site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

As well as being an outstanding woodland this site has important geological exposures of Silurian age along the stream banks.

Biology

Whitwell Coppice is an example of the mixed deciduous woodland characteristic of the Wenlock Shales and Limestones. Woodland types include (i) sessile oak *Quercus petraea*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata*; (ii) ash and field maple *Acer campestre*; (iii) sessile oak, ash and hazel *Corylus avellana*; (iv) sessile oak, ash and wych elm *Ulmus glabra* and (v) alder *Alnus glutinosa*. These vegetation types are correlated with variations in soil type.

Small-leaved lime is comparatively abundant, and frequently occurs as pollards and coppice stools, some of which are extremely large. The wild service tree *Sorbus torminalis* is unusually frequent and the rare large-leaved lime *Tilia platyphyllos* is present.

There is a rich flora of shrubs and herbs, many of which are characteristic of base-rich soils; for example, spindle *Euonymus europaeus*, tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum*, ramsons *Allium ursinum*, sweet woodruff *Galium odoratum*, sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perenne* and nettle-leaved bellflower *Campanula trachelium*.

Geology

This is one of Britain's most important geological localities, internationally recognised as the standard reference section for the base of the Homeric Stage, the upper half of the Wenlock Series of the Silurian System. The base of the stage occurs here in the middle of the Coalbrookdale Formation and is defined by the changing make-up of assemblages of diagnostic fossils known as graptolites.