

COUNTY: SOMERSET      SITE NAME: ALLER AND BEER WOODS

DISTRICT: YEOVIL

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

Local Planning Authority: YEOVIL DISTRICT COUNCIL, Somerset County Council

National Grid Reference: ST 404305      Area: 56.9 (ha.) 140.6 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 182      1:10,000: ST 43 SW, ST 42 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1952      Date of Last Revision: 1972

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Site extended during 1983 revision to include Beer Wood.

Description:

Aller and Beer Woods are outstanding examples of ancient, escarpment woodland managed in a traditional coppice-with-standards system. The woodland is a variant of the Calcareous Ash/Wych Elm stand-type, with Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*, and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* the dominant canopy trees throughout, and with scattered concentrations of Wych Elm *Ulmus glabra*. There are some exceptionally large specimens of Field Maple *Acer campestre* present, these contributing to Dry Ash/Maple woodland in places. Ancient woodland indicators include Small-leaved Lime *Tilia cordata*, and Wild Service Tree *Sorbus torminalis*, both of which are locally common.

The understorey consists of coppiced Hazel *Corylus avellana* and scattered calcicole shrubs, including Guelder Rose *Viburnum opulus*, Wayfaring Tree *V. lantana*, Spindle *Euonymus europaeus*, Dog-wood *Cornus sanguinea*, Privet *Ligustrum vulgare* and Spurge Laurel *Daphne laureola*. The ground flora varies in conjunction with difference in soils, which are derived from rocks ranging from Rhaetic Clays, Kemper Marls to Lower Lias Limestone and Clays. Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis* is dominant, and Bluebell *Endymion non-scriptus*, Stinking Iris *Iris foetidissima*, Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and Primrose *Primula vulgaris* are all locally common.

Plants of particular interest include Bird's Nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*, Greater Butterfly Orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* and the very rare Red Data Book species Purple Gromwell *Buglossoides purpurocaerulea*.

Between Aller and Beer Woods is an area of species-rich calcareous scrub and ungrazed limestone grassland. It has an interesting butterfly fauna, and forms a feeding and display site for invertebrates and birds from the adjoining wood.