

COUNTY: WEST SUSSEX

SITE NAME: PARHAM PARK

DISTRICT: HORSHAM

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

Local Planning Authority: HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL.

National Grid Reference: TQ 059148

Area: 263.4 (ha.) 650.9 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 197

1:10,000: TQ 01 NE, SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1965

Date of Last Revision: 1972

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

This site is listed in 'A Nature Conservation Review', D A Ratcliffe (1977), Cambridge.

Reasons for Notification:

Parham Park is a medieval deer park situated on Folkestone Sands at the foot of the South Downs. It has one of the richest epiphytic lichen floras in south east England. In the north east there is a relict lowland raised bog with adjacent alder carr. The site also contains a number of artificial ponds and ditches with marginal plant communities which add to its interest. This site is a locality for two rare beetles, and contains one of the largest heronries in Sussex.

The southern half of the site is open woodland and parkland with individual and small groups of oak *Quercus robur*, beech *Fagus sylvatica* and Scot's pine *Pinus sylvestris* trees scattered over permanent pasture grazed by deer, sheep and cattle. In some areas bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* has invaded and is dominant.

Ancient open oak woodland fringes the edges of the parkland grading northward into a range of Woodland types which have been modified to a greater or lesser extent by recent management. This includes the establishment of small areas of coppiced hazel *Corylus avellana* and sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*, plantations of oak or exotic conifers, and the underplanting of semi-natural oak-beech-Scot's pine woodland with larch *Larix spp.* or beech. The ground flora is dominated by bracken or bramble *Rubus fruticosus* depending on whether pine or hardwoods dominate the canopy.

The west of the wooded area is occupied by beech high forest with a typically sparse ground flora, whilst the southern part of Northpark Wood has retained an open canopied mature oak high forest with abundant holly *Ilex aquifolium*. The oaks here and in the southern half of the site carry an extremely rich lichen flora. Among the 165 recorded species is *Thelopsis rubella*, here in its only known locality east of the New Forest.

In the north east of the site part of a former raised bog has been planted with Scot's pine, and a secondary woodland of pine, oak and beech is becoming established. The remaining areas of bog are dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, with scattered heather *Calluna vulgaris* and bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* growing through a carpet of bog mosses *Sphagnum spp.* The moss *Hypnum imponens* also occurs here in probably its only Sussex locality.

The relict bog passes into a formerly coppiced alder *Alnus glutinosa* carr, with alder and birch *Betula pubescens* growing above an interesting ground flora which includes white sedge *Carex curta*, marsh violet *Viola palustris* and the moss *Sphagnum fimbriatum*. A

second former bog in the central woodland has been fully succeeded by wet woodland, where alder, birch and willows *Salix spp.* occur over purple moor-grass.

This site is the locality of two rare beetles *Ampedus cardinalis* and *Procrærus tibialis*. The mature Scot's pines of the managed woodland hold one of the largest heronries in Sussex.