

SITE NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON 17 DECEMBER 1986

#### CITATION

COUNTY: ISLES OF SCILLY SITE NAME: SHIPMAN HEAD & SHIPMAN  
DOWN (BRYHER)

#### DISTRICT:

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

Local Planning Authority: COUNCIL OF THE ISLES OF SCILLY

National Grid Reference: SV 877158 Area: 40.7 (ha.) 100.6 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 203 1:10,000: SV 81 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1971 Date of Last Revision: 1976

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

#### Other Information:

The site lies within the Isles of Scilly Heritage Coast and Area of Outstanding Natural  
Beauty. Renotification covers land above Mean High Water Mark.

#### Description and Reasons for Notification:

Shipman Head forms the north end of the island of Bryher on the north-western margins  
of the Isles of Scilly archipelago. From Shipman Head a ridge runs south towards the low  
plateau of Shipman Down. Hercynian granite underlies the site forming mainly shallow  
podzolic soils. These soils and the extreme maritime exposure have led to the  
development of ‘waved’ maritime heathland containing some rare lichen species.

Hell Bay, between Shipman Head and Shipman Down, exhibits an important fossil shore  
platform with associated raised-beach deposits. Pleistocene glacial outwash gravels with  
abundant erratic pebbles outcrop cover much of the site.

‘Waved’ maritime heath covers much of the central part of Shipman Head Down. Here the  
vegetation is dominated by low prostrate ridges of Heather *Calluna vulgaris* together with  
Bell Heather *Erica cinerea* and Western Gorse *Ulex gallii*. Additional species include  
Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, Common Bird’s-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Heath  
Bedstraw *Galium saxatile*, English Stonecrop *Sedum anglicum* and Sheep’s-fescue  
*Festuca ovina*. European Gorse *Ulex europaeus* forms more extensive scrub along the  
south side of the Downs whilst on some of the margins on the plateau, where the soils are  
deeper, Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and Honeysuckle  
*Lonicera periclymenum* are more abundant.

Above some of the coves and along the coastal edge areas of more species rich maritime  
grassland occur. Thrift *Armeria maritima*, Buck’s-horn Plantain *Plantago coronopus*,

Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus* and Sorrel *Rumex acetosa* are common together with a small population of Spring Squill *Scilla verna*.

Two plants of particular importance on this site are the nationally rare Orange Bird's-foot *Ornithopus pinnatus* and the notable Hairy Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus subuliflorus*. In addition there are certain lichen species on the heathland, such as *Lobaria pulmonaria* and *Teloschistes flavicans*.

The isolated promontory of Shipman Head is an important seabird colony site with seven species of breeding seabirds. There is a large colony of Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* and Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* together with Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus*, Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*, Razorbill *Alca torda*, Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* and Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*. In addition Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* breed on the open heathland.