

Site Notified to The Secretary of State on 5 November 1986

COUNTY: AVON SITE NAME: MIDDLE HOPE

DISTRICT: WOODSPRING

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

Local Planning Authority: AVON COUNTY COUNCIL, Woodspring District Council

National Grid Reference: ST 322659, ST 325662, ST 350670 Area: 84.1 (ha.)
207.8 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 182 1:1.0,000: ST 36 NW, ST 36 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1952 Date of Last Revision: 1974

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

Other Information:

Area greatly reduced since last revision.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Middle Hope supports a calcareous grassland community with a restricted British distribution. Additional interest lies in the occurrence of a plant species considered to be endangered in Britain. The geological interest of the site is great as Middle Hope affords some fine carbonate exposures and features of fundamental importance for geological demonstration.

The site is situated on an east/west protuberance of land which extends into the Severn Estuary.

a. Geological

This locality exposes a sequence of Carboniferous Limestone, and includes limestones, thick volcanic tufts and lavas. These volcanic rocks fall within the Black Rock Group, of Courceyan age, and the group shows a variety of storm and fair weather carbonate shelf-deposits, associated with evidence of local igneous activity. Middle Hope affords some of the finest Tournaisian carbonate sections in South West England.

The site contains a Pleistocene aged fossil cliff and shore platform; overlain by slope deposits containing *in situ* terrestrial and recycled marine mollusca; above this younger raised-beach deposits with abundant mollusca and foraminifera are overlain, in turn, by slope deposits. The raised-beach deposits are correlated with the last (Ipswichian) Interglacial, on both geomorphological and amino acid dating grounds, and the slope deposits with the Wolstonian and Devensian glacial periods. This is the only Pleistocene raised-beach site where such a sequence can be demonstrated and as such is of fundamental importance.

b. Biological

The site supports an area of interesting calcareous grassland dominated by *Festuca* species and *Dactylis glomerata*. This is especially species rich on the thin calcareous soils of the south facing slopes and around the numerous limestone outcrops. The sward is dominated by Salad Burnet *Poterium sanguisorba* and Common Rock-rose *Helianthemum chamaecistus* with frequent Common Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*, Fairy Flax *Linum catharticum* and Squinancywort *Asperula cynanchica* and occasional Green Winged Orchid *Orchis mario*, Yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata* and Common Centaury *Centaureum erythraea*.

The scrub towards the west of the site is dominated by Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, while that to the east consists of Common Gorse *Ulex europaeus* and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg.