

**KENT LOCAL WILDLIFE SITE**

KWT File No. 268492

<b>Site:</b>	The Knees and Railway Line, Shepherdswell	<b>Site Ref. No:</b>	DO 40
<b>LPA:</b>	Dover	<b>Map Ref:</b>	TR 269490 TR 267490
<b>Parish:</b>	Shepherdswell with Coldred Eythorne	<b>Category:</b>	Woodland, scrub, grassland
<b>Owner:</b>	BRB (Residuary) Ltd / Private	<b>Natural area:</b>	North Downs
<b>Area:</b>	18.5 ha	<b>AONB:</b>	No
<b>First notified:</b>	1992	<b>TPO:</b>	
<b>Last revised:</b>	2005	<b>Public rights of way:</b>	Part
<b>Last approved:</b>	March 2007		

**REASON FOR DESIGNATION**

A varied mosaic of wildlife habitats including chalk grassland with 15 indicator species recorded and species rich woodland.

**RATIONALE FOR SITE BOUNDARY**

The boundary includes The Knees, the railway embankments and the area known as Golgotha stopping at the edge of the larch plantation to the north.

**DESCRIPTION**

This is a varied site which includes woodland, scrub, chalk grassland and a linear strip with chalk cliff grassland and scrub along the railway line between Shepherdswell and Eythorne.

Part of the woodland within the site was formerly managed as coppice-with-standards, and is shown on the earliest Landmark maps. Other areas are secondary woodland with dense hawthorn and dogwood scrub.

The Knees

The coppice species include hazel, ash and field maple and occasionally hornbeam. The shrub layer is dense in parts, containing both species of hawthorn, elder and bramble. The ground flora includes many common woodland species such as bluebell <sup>1</sup> *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina* and yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*. Common orchids such as early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula* and common twayblade *Listera ovata* are widespread and common, while greater butterfly-orchid <sup>2</sup> *Plantanthera chlorantha* occurs rarely. Secondary woodland of sycamore, ash, hawthorn and downy birch is found along the woodland margins.

Areas of dense scrub interspersed with chalk grassland occur to the east of the woodland and support a wide range of chalk species including abundant common rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, common milkwort *Polygala vulgaris*, greater knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa* and small scabious *Scabiosa columbaria*. Common-spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* is frequent and man orchid <sup>3</sup> *Aceras anthropophorum* occurs rarely. Scrub includes dog rose, dogwood, hawthorn and wayfaring-tree.

A larger area of rough, damper scrub with tall herbs adds interest to the site, as does a further rough unmanaged meadow near the level crossing. The woodland and adjacent scrub is rich in birdlife, and many warbler species,



nightingale <sup>4,5</sup>, turtle dove <sup>6,7,8</sup> and green woodpecker <sup>4</sup> are present. Common butterflies including speckled wood, common blue, meadow brown, gatekeeper, ringlet and marbled white were abundant on the day of visit.

#### Railway embankments

The linear area associated with the old railway has tall vertical cliffs on either side in some parts; elsewhere, the surrounds are lower, with scrub, woodland and rough grassland. A rich mix of chalk herbs and grasses with chalk shrub species clothes the cliffs, scree and lower ground in the railway cutting. Kidney vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, basil thyme *Clinopodium acinos*, common restharrow *Ononis repens*, common milkwort *Polygala vulgaris*, carline thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, cowslip *Primula veris*, lady's bedstraw *Galium verum* and bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* are present. The sheltered habitat is ideal for invertebrates, and many common butterflies and day-flying moths are present. The scrubby areas support a good common bird fauna, including yellowhammer <sup>5,7</sup>, tits and finches.

#### Golgotha

An area of unmanaged woodland and scrub with rough patches of relict chalk grassland to the west of Shepherdswell has also been included in the site. The former grassland at the south-eastern end is invaded by dense chalk scrub species and only the taller, more robust chalk grassland species such as hedge bedstraw *Galium mollugo* and greater knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa* remain. Elsewhere, the byway edges support a range of chalk meadow grasses including yellow oat grass *Trisetum flavescens* and quaking grass *Briza media*. Flowering plants such as restharrow *Ononis repens*, small scabious *Scabiosa columbaria* and salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor* occur with common meadow species. Narrow-leaved everlasting pea <sup>2</sup> *Lathyrus sylvestris* which is scarce in Kent is well established.

The wooded area is largely composed of mature pedunculate, turkey and holm oaks and ash with some Scots pine. It is dense with fallen branches, a tangle of wild clematis, blackthorn and chalk scrub species. The ground flora includes sanicle *Sanicula europaea* and wall lettuce *Mycelis muralis*.

The site supports many common invertebrates. Grasshoppers, butterflies and day-flying moths are abundant.

Slow worm <sup>1</sup> and common lizard <sup>1</sup> have been recorded.

- 1 Protected under Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.
- 2 County Scarce. Atlas of Kent Flora. Philp. 1982.
- 3 Nationally Scarce. Scarce Plants in Britain. JNCC. 1994.
- 4 Amber List. Birds of Conservation Concern 2002-2007.
- 5 Kent Red Data Book Status 3. A. Waite (Ed.) 2000.
- 6 Priority Species, UK Biodiversity Action Plan. 1998.
- 7 Red List. Birds of Conservation Concern 2002-2007.
- 8 Kent Red Data Book Status 2. A. Waite (Ed.) 2000.

