

**COUNTY:** BEDFORDSHIRE

**SITE NAME:** TOTTERNHOE CHALK QUARRY

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

**Local Planning Authorities:** South Bedfordshire District Council  
Bedfordshire County Council

**National Grid Reference:** SP 986225

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 165                      **1:10,000:** SP 92 SE

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):**                      **Date of Last Revision:**

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 1990                      **Date of Last Revision:**

**Area:** 13.41 ha 33.14 ac

**Other information:** This site is referred to in the book *Wild Flowers of Chalk and Limestone* by J.E. Lousley.

### **Description and Reasons for Notification**

The site is situated on a north-west facing slope of the Chilterns escarpment which has been much quarried in the past. It supports species-rich unimproved chalk grassland which has close affinities with that of the nearby Totternhoe Knolls SSSI. The grassland includes a mosaic of plant associations related to the uneven terrain and variety of aspects. The rich assemblage of characteristic chalk grassland plants includes several county and national rarities. In the central part of the site the grassland has been replaced by dense shrub. Chalk grassland is a habitat under threat, having been greatly reduced in extent both locally in Bedfordshire and nationally.

Three main calcareous grassland communities occur on the site. These are characterised by sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* and meadow oat-grass *Helictotrichon pratense*, upright brome *Bromus erectus*, and tor grass *Brachypodium pinnatum*. A wide variety of other species occur on the site. These include yellow wort *Blackstonia perfoliata*, clustered bellflower *Campanula glomerata*, autumn gentian *Gentianella amarella*, horseshoe vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*, large thyme *Thymus pulegioides*, squinancywort *Asperula cynanchica*, pyramidal orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, and bee orchid *Ophrys apifera*.

Other notable species are cypress spurge *Euphorbia cyparissias*, a plant rare in Bedfordshire, chalk eyebright *Euphrasia pseudokernerii* and man orchid *Aceras anthropophorum*, both nationally scarce species, and the nationally rare great pignut *Bunium bulbocastanum*.

The site has invertebrate interest including butterflies such as chalkhill blue *Lysandra coridon*, small blue *Cupido minimus*, dingy skipper *Erynnis tages* and the nationally scarce Duke of Burgundy *Hamaeris lucina*.

Re-presentation of details approved by Council. Re-typed December 1998.

Site Area calculated by GIS 19 April 1998.