

**KENT LOCAL WILDLIFE SITE**

## Local Wildlife Site

KWT File No: 100515

<b>Site:</b>	Denge Wood Complex	<b>Site Ref. No:</b>	AS42
<b>LPA:</b>	Ashford / Canterbury	<b>Central Grid Ref:</b>	TR 100515
<b>Parish:</b>	Godmersham/Chilham/Chartham/ Petham/Waltham/Crundale	<b>Category:</b>	Woodland, grassland, scrub
<b>Owner:</b>	Private	<b>Natural Area:</b>	North Downs
<b>Area:</b>	740.20 ha	<b>AONB:</b>	Kent Downs
<b>First notified:</b>	1986		
<b>Last survey:</b>	2005		
<b>Last approved:</b>	Oct 2006		

**REASON FOR DESIGNATION**

The site comprises a large complex of ancient woodland with 58 ancient woodland indicator plant species recorded. Also included are areas of chalk grassland which hold a variety of orchid species.

**RATIONALE FOR SITE BOUNDARY**

The site boundary follows the Ordnance Survey boundary for the whole woodland complex, excluding SSSI areas.

**DESCRIPTION**

This large ancient woodland complex comprises broadleaved and coniferous woodland, unimproved chalk grassland, neutral grassland and scrub, with a rich and diverse flora and fauna. It is situated on high ground dissected by several dry valleys. The soils on the plateau are derived from clay-with-flints, with acidic clays and gravels, but calcareous soils are present on the valley sides and on perimeter slopes above the valley of the Great Stour and elsewhere.

Woodland

Much of the woodland, especially on the plateau, has been converted to chestnut coppice, with extensive beech plantations on the valley sides and some conifer, all actively managed. However, relict mixed coppice of hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, field maple *Acer campestre* and hazel *Corylus avellana* with standards of both pedunculate and sessile oak *Quercus robur* and *petraea* is present in parts. Relict sessile oak coppice also occurs. Mature beech *Fagus sylvatica* standards are a feature of several areas.

Eggring Wood is now largely conifer/beech plantation, but relict semi-natural broadleaved woodland remains here also along the margins and the ride edges. The chalk slopes at the south-western end of this area support relict beech/yew *Taxus baccata* woodland. This, and a similar area on the southeast of the complex, suffered storm damage in 1987 and now form a tangle of fallen dead and alive trees, regenerating scrub and secondary woodland.

The ground flora on the plateau areas within the broadleaved woodland is dominated by bluebell <sup>1</sup> *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg.



However, the many other species present include hairy wood-rush *Luzula pilosa*, southern wood-rush *L. forsteri*, bitter vetch *Lathyrus linifolius* and betony *Stachys officinalis*. Common cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense* is frequent in the more acid places.

The shaded damp plateau rides support several species of fern, including lady-fern *Athyrium filix-femina*, male-fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*, scaly male-fern *D. affinis*, broad buckler-fern *D. dilatata*, hard shield-fern *Polystichum aculeatum*, soft shield-fern *P. setiferum* and hard-fern *Blechnum spicant*.

Woodlands on the more calcareous soils have a rich ground flora. Although dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* is dominant, the many herbs present include several species of orchid, with colonies of lady orchid<sup>2,3</sup> *Orchis purpurea*, greater butterfly-orchid<sup>3</sup> *Platanthera chlorantha*, lesser butterfly-orchid<sup>4</sup>

*P. bifolia* and violet helleborine *Epipactis purpurata*. Herb-paris *Paris quadrifolia*, columbine *Aquilegia vulgaris*, sweet woodruff *Galium odoratum* and nettle-leaved bellflower *Campanula trachelium* also occur. A colony of martagon lily *Lilium martagon* grows in mixed coppice in the centre of Denge Wood.

Ancient woodbanks remain in a number of places.

58 ancient woodland indicator plant species have been recorded.

### Grassland

Areas of calcareous grassland are found within Denge Wood, at Broadham Down in the north of the complex and at the northern end of Eggringe Wood. The good variety of chalk grassland plants includes seven species of orchid (including fly orchid *Ophrys insectifera*, man orchid *Aceras anthropophorum*, greater butterfly-orchid<sup>3</sup> *Platanthera chlorantha* and white helleborine *Cephalanthera damasonium*), kidney vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, horseshoe vetch *Hippocrepis comosa* and cowslip *Primula veris*. The scrubby chalk bank below Eggringe Wood supports common rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, autumn gentian *Gentianella amarella* and chalk milkwort<sup>3</sup> *Polygala calcarea*. Large anthills occur. Slender bedstraw<sup>2,4,5</sup> *Galium pumilum* has been recorded from the site previously.

### Fauna

The chalky valley in Denge Wood supports a colony of the declining Duke of Burgundy fritillary butterfly<sup>1,5</sup>. Many other butterflies have been recorded from the complex as a whole, including ringlet, brown argus, common blue, marbled white, green hairstreak, dingy skipper and grizzled skipper. The nationally rare black-veined moth<sup>6,7</sup> has recently recolonised the area.

The complex is rich in bird life and includes large breeding populations of nightingale<sup>8,9</sup> and other warblers including willow warbler<sup>9</sup>. Stock dove<sup>9</sup>, turtle dove<sup>10</sup>, green woodpecker have been recently recorded. Hawfinch<sup>8,9</sup> is occasionally recorded.

Toad, common frog and slow worm<sup>1</sup> have been recorded recently on the damp plateau areas, while common lizard<sup>1</sup> and are present on the chalk slopes. Grass snake<sup>1</sup> and adder<sup>1</sup> are also present.

There are several very large active badger setts<sup>11</sup> within the complex. Dormouse<sup>1,6,7</sup> has been recorded in Down Wood.

A large and varied fungus flora reflecting the different habitats has been recorded throughout the complex, including several uncommon species.



The Kent Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust manage some parts of the area.

- 1 Protected under Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.
- 2 Nationally Scarce. Scarce Plants in Britain. JNCC. 1994.
- 3 County Scarce. Atlas of Kent Flora. Philp. 1982.
- 4 County Rare. Atlas of Kent Flora. Philp. 1982.
- 5 Kent Red Data Book Status 2. A. Waite (Ed.) 2000.
- 6 Priority Species UK Biodiversity Action Plan 1998
- 7 Priority Species Kent Biodiversity Action Plan 2004
- 8 Kent Red Data Book Status 3. A. Waite (Ed.) 2000.
- 9 Amber List. Birds of Conservation Concern 2002-2007.
- 10 Red List. Birds of Conservation Concern 2002-2007.
- 11 Badger Protection Act 1992.

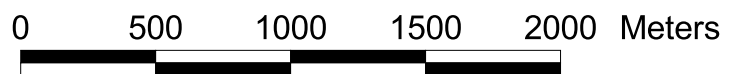
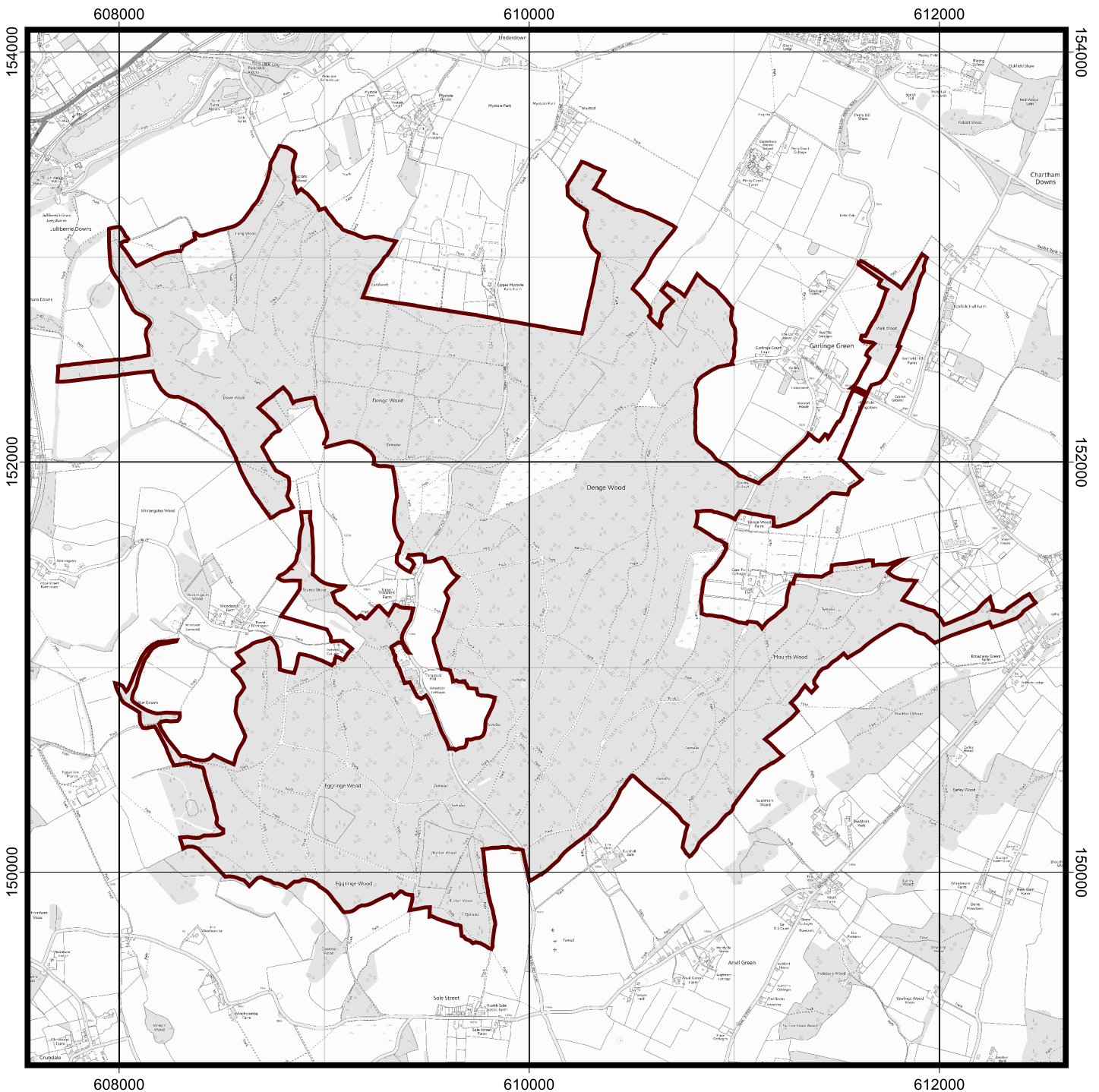


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Site Ref No: **AS42**

Site: DENGE WOOD COMPLEX

Map ref: TR 100515



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