

Selsley Common

Selsley Common is managed by Stroud District Council under a Scheme of Management. This is a legal device whereby a District Council can take responsibility for common land which it does not own. The ownership has been vested in SDC for the regulation and management of the above mentioned land made by the Stroud District Council under the Commons Act 1899 and approved by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries on the 26th day of February 1942, (then under the Commons Registrations Act 1965 Section 9, then Section 45 of the Commons Act 2006).

Effectively in the absence of any owner we are able to act as landowner for the Common. Under Section 45 of the Commons Act 2006 The local authority may –

- (a) take any steps to protect the land against unlawful interference that could be taken by an owner in possession of the land; and
- (b) institute proceedings against any person for any offence committed in respect of the land (but without prejudice to any power exercisable apart from this section).

A large portion of the Common – the sloping parts – are a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and the whole site falls within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The SSSI was designated on 24/03/1986 and consists of 2 units; 39.64 ha of unimproved Lowland calcareous grassland and Leigh Quarry; 0.236ha in size of Earth Heritage, consisting of layers of exposed inferior Oolite of geological significance. Natural England monitor the condition of the SSSI's.

The Long Barrow in the centre of the Common, called The Toots, is a Scheduled Ancient Monument managed by the County Council.

The Common lies within the Parish of Kings Stanley and the Parish Council take an active interest in its' ongoing conservation.

Selsley Common also includes those pieces of land known as, The Knapp, The Pound, Wigmore Green, the Selsley War Memorial, the end of the New Road, The Green, three pieces of land known as The Borough, the King's Stanley War Memorial and a piece of land situate in front of the Middle Farm.

There is a set of byelaws dealing with a Scheme of Management for Selsley Common & its associated lands.

The byelaws, permit and encourage the use of the commons by the community for recreation purposes but there is also a misconception amongst the public that Common Land is wholly for the enjoyment of the public. The public have a right to use public rights of way which may exist across Common Land but they do not have an automatic right to use the remainder of the land unless they have Grazing Rights.

Community Services and Licensing Committee
INFORMATION SHEET (CS&LC.001)
18 May 2020

Selsley is actively grazed, each grazier has a registered number of animals that he is allowed to graze. The rights usually go with the property in which they live. The grazing season normally runs from 1st May to 31st October, but a few of the graziers may put their animals out a few weeks early and keep them on a few weeks later.

In recent years however many of the graziers do not choose to exercise their right which has resulted in only one main grazier regularly exercising their rights and in the last couple of years positive TB tests have reduced the amount of time the cows have been out.

Additional mechanical cutting and collecting of the grass can be carried out on the Common but this is not possible on the steep slopes of the SSSI so infrequent grazing would be a concern.

The other main issues on the Common arise from its increasing use by the public for recreation such as dog walking and rambling, hang gliding and parascending, and model aeroplane flying. There is also a waymarked section of the Cotswold Way crossing the Common and a permissive horse route out of Penn Wood to the south of the Common.

The Council's main responsibilities are to keep the Common in good condition and conserve the grazing. Every year we cut back the scrub with a mechanical flail. The volunteers from the Cotswold Wardens carry out removal by hand of cotoneaster encroachment especially on the quarry faces in the SSSI areas and removal of pernicious weeds such as thistle.

The grassland vegetation on the slopes of the Common, traditionally managed by grazing, is dominated by grasses such as upright brome, *Bromus erectus* and sheep's fescue, *Festuca ovina* with comparatively little tor-grass *Brachypodium*, a feature which distinguishes it from other similar grassland sites in the Cotswolds. A wide range of other herbs includes an abundance of rock-rose, common bird's foot-trefoil, salad burnet, and wild thyme. The disused quarries also support a rich flora including autumn lady's tresses. Among other orchids on the Common are green-winged orchid, bee orchid and fragrant orchid. Some scrub, mostly of hawthorn has developed and a few trees, mostly ash, *Fraxinus excelsior*, are scattered over the site.

A wide range of invertebrate species occur on the Common, including the nationally rare mollusc *Abida secale* and butterflies such as the small blue, grayling, and Duke of Burgundy fritillary.