

SITE OF NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON 16 MARCH 1988

COUNTY: DURHAM

SITE NAME: MIDDRIDGE QUARRY

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

Local Planning Authority: SEDGFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: NZ 252252

Area: 1.9 (ha.) 4.7 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheets 1:50,000: 93

1:10,000: NZ 22 NE

First Notified: 1979*

Renotified: 1988

Description:

A small quarry in magnesian limestone, the lower level of which exposes fossils-rich marl slate.

This is a key site with the richest and most diverse Permian flora in Britain. Its conifer-dominated flora compares with the Kupferschiefer flora of Germany and Hungary. The assemblage of Middridge is of great interest for yielding the oldest British ginkgo (probably the oldest member of the Ginkgoaceae found anywhere) and probably the oldest British Cycad. Equally famous for its vertebrate faunas, Middridge has yielded 11 species of fossil fish, reptiles and superbly preserved invertebrates.

Middridge quarry is the best British Permian tetrapod locality. Three species of fossil reptile were collected from the vicinity during the last century: two species of *Proterosaurus* and a *Lepidosaurus*. Recent finds of bone indicate the potential of the site for further higher vertebrate discoveries.

This is an internationally significant palaeontological locality.

*Under Section 23 of the National Park and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949.