South Wales RIGS Group Site Record
RIGS Description

SECTION A

General	South Wales
Site Name: Ysgyryd Fawr	**File Number:** Site_AB_36
RIGS Number: 777	**Surveyed by:** South Wales Geologists Association
Grid Reference: SO 3300 1780	**Date of Visit:**
RIGS Category: Aesthetic, scientific	**Date Registered:**
Earth Science Category: Landslide and startigraphy	Owner: National Trust Planning Authority: Monmouthshire County Council and Brecon Beacons National Park
Site Nature: Hill and landslide	**Documentation prepared by:** Rhian Kendall
Unitary Authority: Monmouthshire County Council	**Documentation last revised:** June 2012
OS 1:50,000: OL13	**Photographic Record:** Attached
OS 1:25,000: 161	
BGS 1:50,000: 232	

RIGS Statement of Interest:

Ysgyryd Fawr (The Skirrid) is a distinctive elongate hill to the North of Abergavenny. On its north Western corner is a classic example of a rotational landslip, for which this site is recommended as a RIGS. There are also many examples of quarries and outcrops in which the Senni Formation rocks can be examined.

Ysgyryd Fawr is a great example of how a geological feature has influenced local folk law and the site has a long tradition of use by people over hundreds of years.

Geological setting/context:

Ysgyryd Fawr has been suggested as a RIGS because of its spectacular landslide. There are also many small quarries and outcrops exposing the Senni Formation. It is the most easterly hill of the Back Mountains. The name is often Anglicised to The Skirrid and is also know and the Holy Mountain or Scared Hill. The hill is 483m high and is a distinctive elongate shape orientated approximately north south.

There are an “apron” on slips across the western side of the hill which include a “classic” example of a rotational slip. This is the main landslide that is obvious at the northern end of the hill.

Ysgyryd Fawr is comprised of Senni Formation rocks, underlain by the St Maughans Formation. The slide is thought to occur where basal sandstones of the Senni Formation are have slipped at their contact with the beds of the less competent argillaceous St Maughans Formation.

The Senni Formation occurs as an outlier at this site. The formation consists of fluvial sandstones with minor mudstones and siltstones. The sandstones are typically cross bedded and lenticular and vary in colour from olive green to purple. Generally fine to medium grained the formation gradually become coarser upwards but individual beds fine upwards. The sandstones are often calcareous.Calcrete nodules are present in mudstone layers. This formation is interpreted to have a fluvial origin. The sandstones were deposited in river channels and the finer grained sandstones are attributed to crevasse splay deposits. The mudstones are over bank floodplain deposits from temporary lakes (Barclay 1989).

On the summit of the hill is an elongate enclosure which makes use of the landslide backscar for some of its length. Within the enclosure are the remains of a medieval chapel site.

There are lots of local stories associated with the Ysgyryd. The name is Welsh for “Shattered”. Local legend states that the hill was broken at the moment of Jesus crucifixion leading to a tradition of using earth from the mountain to be scattered on fields to improve fertility, to bless coffins, to heal ailments, and used in the foundations of Churches. There were even Christmas pilgrimages. Other stories claim that the landslide was a resting place for Noahs Arc! More pagan traditions describe Jack o’kent who bet the Devil that a local hill: the Sugarloaf, was taller than the Maverns. Apparently upset that Jack was right the devil tried to make the Malverns taller by adding stones, carried in an apron! The apron broke and the stones fells to form the landslide at the northern end of the hill! There are many more tales.

The numerous stories go to prove how important this geological feature is in the social history of the area!

References:

Barclay, W. J. [1989]. Geology of the South Wales Coalfield, Part II, the country around Abergavenny. Memoir of the British Geological Survey, Sheet 232, (England and Wales) Third Edition.

Dunnill and Leather. Folklore, Vol. 24, No. 1. (Mar., 1913), pp. 106-110.

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales – COFLEIN. http://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/400378/details/SKIRRID+FAWR%2C+SUMMIT+ENCLOSURE/, accessed June 2012.

Varnes, D.J. (1978). Slope movement types and processes. In: Schuster R.L. and Krizek R.J. (Eds.). Landslides, analysis and control. Transportation Research Board Special Report No. 176, National Academy of Sciences. p.11–33.

Wikipedia - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ysgyryd_Fawr accessed June 2012

SECTION B

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS: Please score Accessibility and Safety Red Amber or Green			
Accessibility:			X
Comment: National trust property with open access			
Safety:			X
Comment:			
Conservation status: Part of the Brecon Beacons National Park			

OWNERSHIP/PLANNING CONTROL:

Owner/tenant: The National Trust

Planning Authority: Brecon Beacons National Park and Monmouthshire County Council

Planning status/constraints/opportunities:

CONDITION, USE & MANAGEMENT:

Present use: Open access landscape

Site condition: Good

Potential threats: None

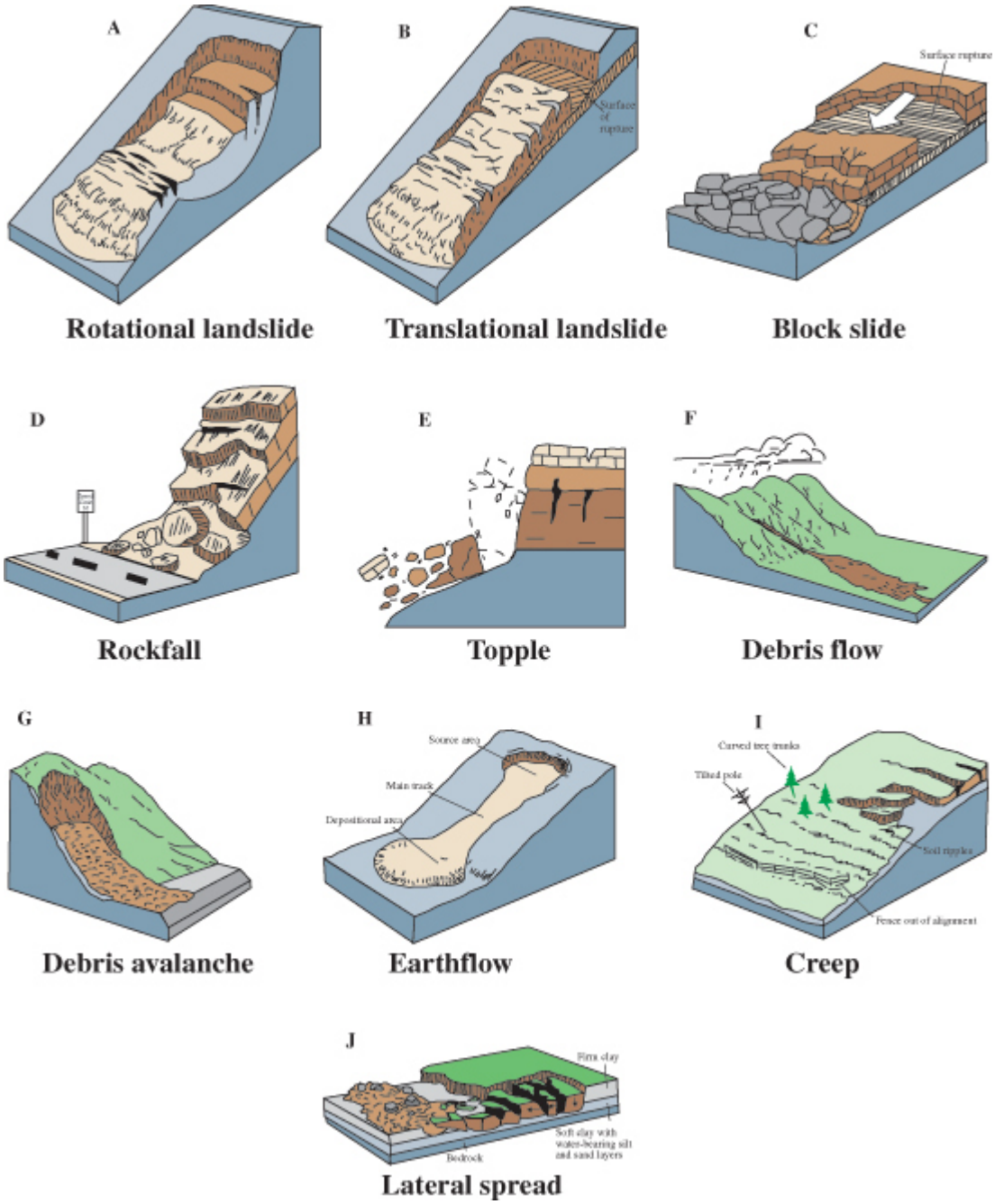
Site Management: maintain as at present

SITE DEVELOPMENT:

Potential use (general):

Potential use (educational): Educationally important to illustrate rotations landslips. Could be added to walks leaflets produced by the National Park to illustrate the local geology and traditions relating to landscape.

Other comments:



Simplified Varnes (1978) classification – Ysgyryd Fawr landslide is primarily Type A – Rotational Landslide.

Photographic Record

View from the top of the landslip looking north (Photograph by Lynda Garfield)

View from the top of the landslip looking north-west (Photograph by Rhian Kendall)

Ysgyryd Fawr from the east (Photograph Andy Kendall)

Calcrete rich mudstone overlain by sandstones of the Senni Formation

Ysgyryd Fawr from the north and its landslide visible to the right of the summit (© Copyright Jonathan Billinger and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence)

Annotated Sketch