

<b>Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Caerphilly County Borough Council</b>	
<b><u>LDP Policy Ref. NH 3.172</u></b>	<b>SINC name: Graig-y-rhacca Woodlands, Graig-y-Rhacca</b>
<b>Grid reference: ST192893</b>	<b>Area (hectares): 36</b>
<b>Survey date: 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2007</b>	<b>Surveyed by: Dr Peter Sturgess (Hyder Consulting Ltd.)</b>
<b>(UDP policy reference: C11.170)</b>	
<b>Summary description</b>	
<p>Several stands of broadleaved woodland and scrub, most of which are associated with small streams and damp areas. There are three small ancient semi-natural woodland remnants beside Red Brook in the west of the SINC. The older woodland areas have a canopy of Ash, Oak, Beech and Hazel, with ground flora species including Bluebell, Wood anemone, Wood speedwell, Pignut, Yellow archangel and Wood sedge. Much of the large central woodland block comprises Alder, Willow, Downy birch and Ash of relatively recent origin. The ground flora includes damp areas with Enchanter's nightshade, Marsh violet, Opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage and Remote sedge. There are several open areas supporting Birch and Willow scrub, and marshy grassland with Purple moor-grass and Heather. The western-most part of the SINC supports an area of neutral grassland and scrub at ST186889; known locally as "Red Brook Grassland". The flora includes a tussocky sward including Common knapweed, Common bird's-foot trefoil, Burnet saxifrage, Glaucous sedge and Tufted hair-grass. Nearby, there is a scrubby section of disused railway-line, and a shaded and rather stagnant pond/wetland at ST190890 containing Bulrush, Gypsywort, Brooklime and Floating sweet-grass.</p>	
<b>Qualifying features</b>	
<p>Broad-leaved woodland (including some ancient woodland) with an assemblage of semi-natural indicator species.</p> <p>Semi-improved neutral grassland with at least 8 indicator species.</p>	
<b>Secondary features</b>	
<p>Streams.</p> <p>Scrub.</p> <p>Bracken.</p> <p>Marshy grassland.</p> <p>Pond.</p> <p>Veteran trees (Oaks at ST198894 and ST191896).</p>	
<b>Potential value/ unconfirmed features</b>	
<p>The woodland is likely to provide good foraging and roosting opportunities for bats.</p> <p>Most parts of the woodland could potentially support Dormice.</p> <p>Further survey would undoubtedly confirm additional species of plants.</p> <p>The pond may be a breeding site for amphibians.</p> <p>The woodland margins/ clearings and grassland areas are likely to support reptiles.</p>	

### Current management (including problems and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement)

Most of the woodland shows no evidence of recent management. Most areas are ungrazed and do not appear to be actively managed, although livestock do access the small wood at ST188897. The large central woodland contains a high proportion of young trees with patches of Bracken and marshy grassland (e.g. ST192892 and ST195893). Scrub clearance and grassland management would be very beneficial for biodiversity in this area by maintaining a diverse mix of habitat types. 'Red Brook Grassland' does not appear to have been managed for several years and is becoming dominated by coarse grasses, tall herbs and scrub. Management would be required to maintain and increase the diversity here, possibly by patch-mowing and selective scrub control. Fires appear to be a regular occurrence in the wood at ST192893. 'Red Brook Grassland' had also been burned prior to the survey. Tipping of domestic and garden refuse was noted at several points near the roads. More active woodland and grassland management may help to reduce the incidence of vandalism and fire.

### Access/ community use

There is no formal public access to most of the site. Public footpaths run through the western woodland near Red Brook, and pass part of the northwestern boundary. Penllwyn Lane passes the southern side of the wood at ST200893. 'Red Brook Grassland' and the adjacent woodlands in the southwest of the SINC appear to be regularly used by the public on an informal basis.

### Additional information

Some areas of younger scrub woodland (e.g. beside 'Red Brook Grassland' and the disused railway) do not meet SINC criteria in their own right, but are included as linking habitat connecting larger areas of woodland. Aerial photography shows a nearby area of broadleaved woodland at ST201898. This also has potential to support woodland wildlife with nature conservation value and should be considered for inclusion at future SINC review.

### Species list (Dominant species, SINC Criteria, RDB or other notable indicator species)

(LBAP species shown in **bold**, species confirmed by 2007 survey in *italics*)

Tree and shrub species (a combined list as the site is so complex): *Quercus robur*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Fagus sylvatica*, *Salix caprea*, *Alnus glutinosa*, *Corylus avellana*, *Betula pubescens*, *Rubus fruticosus*, *Hedera helix*, *Acer pseudoplatanus*, *Lonicera periclymenum*, *Crataegus monogyna*, *Ilex aquifolium*, *Prunus spinosa*, *Rosa canina*, *Viburnum opulus*, *Ulmus glabra*, *Betula pendula*, *Sorbus aucuparia*, *Malus sp.*, *Prunus avium*, *Ulex europaeus*, *Cytisus scoparius*.

Woodland ground flora species (similar in all areas, but the greatest density of semi-natural indicators in the woodland nearest to Red Brook): ***Hyacinthoides non-scripta***, *Anemone nemorosa*, *Mercurialis perennis*, *Circaea lutetiana*, *Oxalis acetosella*, *Ranunculus ficaria*, *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, *Viola riviniana*, *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*, *Conopodium majus*, *Veronica montana*, *Valeriana officinalis*, *Geum urbanum*, *Lysimachia nemorum*, *Stellaria holostea*, *Chamerion angustifolium*, *Ajuga reptans*, *Galium palustre*, *Viola palustris*, *Scrophularia nodosa*, *Fragaria vesca*, *Potentilla erecta*, *Melampyrum pratense*, *Hypericum pulchrum*, *Rumex sanguineus*, *Oenanthe crocata*, *Tamus communis*, *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, *Carex sylvatica*, *Carex remota*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Athyrium filix-femina*, *Dryopteris dilatata*, *Dryopteris filix-mas*, *Blechnum spicant*, *Mnium hornum*, *Kindbergia praelonga*, *Pogonatum aloides*, *Rhynchoslegium riparioides*, *Fissidens bryoides*, *Atrichum undulatum*, *Polytrichum formosum*, *Polytrichum juniperinum*, *Pellia sp.*, *Diplophyllum albicans*.

*Clearings within the central woodland area support a mix of scrub, Bracken and grassland, including Willow and Birch seedlings, Calluna vulgaris, Ulex gallii, Succisa pratensis, Potentilla erecta, Pedicularis sylvatica, Epilobium tetragonum, Lotus corniculatus, Euphrasia sp., Molinia caerulea, Anthoxanthum odoratum, Carex viridula, Carex ovalis, Pteridium aquilinum and Blechnum spicant.*

Grassland species (ST186889): *Centaurea nigra*, *Potentilla reptans*, *Plantago lanceolata*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Rumex acetosa*, *Epilobium tetragonum*, *Pimpinella saxifraga*, *Lathyrus pratensis*, *Ranunculus acris*, *Ranunculus bulbosus*, *Epilobium hirsutum*, *Hypochaeris radicata*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*, *Vicia sativa*, *Vicia cracca*, *Trifolium pratense*, *Stellaria graminea*, *Senecio jacobaea*,

*Heracleum sphondylium*, *Cardamine pratensis*, *Achillea millefolium*, *Lotus pedunculatus*, *Trifolium dubium*, *Arrhenatherum elatius*, *Dactylis glomerata*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Holcus lanatus*, *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Festuca rubra*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Danthonia decumbens*, *Poa pratensis*, *Carex flacca*, *Carex hirta*, *Carex pilulifera*, *Carex nigra*, *Luzula campestre*, *Scleropodium purum*, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*.

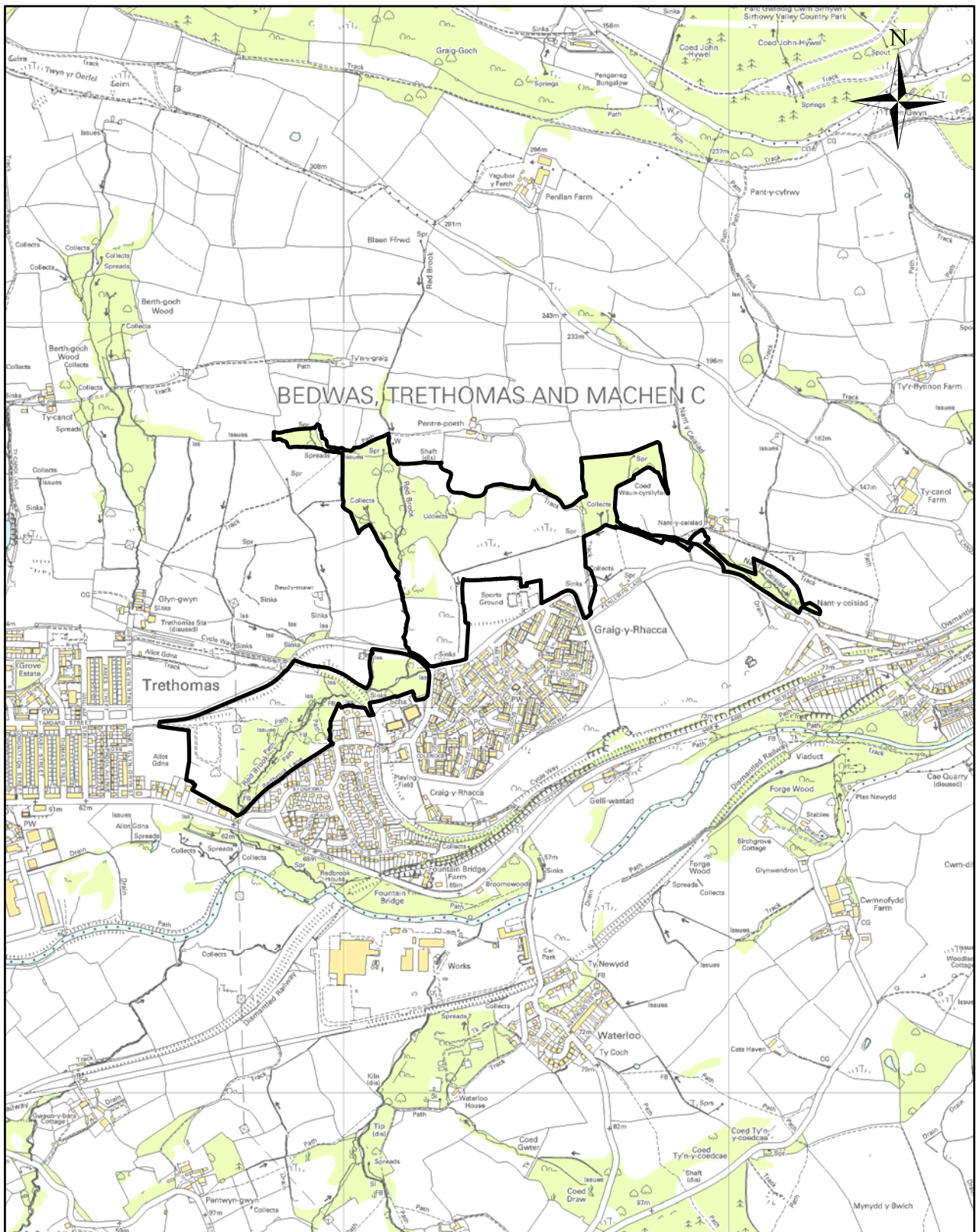
Pond/ wetland species (ST190890): *Apium nodiflorum*, *Typha latifolia*, *Callitriche* sp., *Circaea lutetiana*, *Solanum dulcamara*, *Ranunculus repens*, *Cardamine hirsuta*, *Lycopus europaeus*, *Veronica beccabunga*, *Urtica dioica*, *Rubus idaeus*, *Epilobium hirsutum*, *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, *Glyceria fluitans*, *Deschampsia cespitosa*.

Fauna observations: **Badger**, Rabbit, **Buzzard**, **Green Woodpecker**, **Song Thrush**, **Bullfinch**, Great Tit, Wren, Chaffinch, Blackbird, Greenfinch, Blue Tit, Mistle Thrush, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, **Common Lizard**, Brimstone Butterfly, Green-veined White Butterfly, Common Blue Butterfly, Speckled Wood Butterfly, Burnet-companion Moth.

Additional records from desk study: **Linnet**, **Brown Trout**, Long-tailed Tit, **Dactylorhiza fuchsii**, *Crassula helmsii*, *Teucrium scorodonia*, *Sanicula europaea*, *Stellaria nemorum*, *Viola canina*, *Cirsium dissectum*. **Bat** roosts in 2 nearby properties.

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LDP Policy Ref: NH 3.172 (SINC 170)  
Graig-y-Rhacca Woodlands, Graig-y Rhacca 36 Ha

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Gall hyn arwain at erlyniad neu achos sifil. Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili, 100025372, 2008.