

**CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES**

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

MONMOUTHSHIRE

PENARTH BROOK WOODLAND

Date of Notification: 1981, 1982

National Grid Reference: SO 483046

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 171
1:25,000 Sheet number: SO 40

Site Area: 4.3 ha

Description:

The woodlands of the lower Wye Valley form one of the most important areas for woodland nature conservation in Britain, comparable with the Caledonian pinewoods, the oceanic oakwoods of western Britain, the New Forest and the mixed coppices of East Anglia. Unlike most other regions, semi-natural woodland is abundant and virtually continuous along the gorge. The woods are a mixture of many types, some of which are very localised, e.g. the lime-sessile oak stands on limestone; beech stands on both acid and alkaline soils in which lime, elm, oak and other species share dominance. Most woods are a rich mixture of stand types, which are believed to be similar in composition to the original natural woods of the valley. Many rare and local species are present, including some of the rarest native tree species (e.g. large-leaved lime, whitebeams), and trees close to the edge of their European range, e.g. hornbeam, beech. Furthermore, these woods sit in a matrix of unimproved grassland and other semi-natural habitats which, together with the woods, make the Wye Valley one of the most diverse, rich and attractive areas of southern Britain.

Penarth Brook Woodland is an area of woodland on the steep valley slopes of Penarth Brook with a wide range of soil types. The beech *Fagus sylvatica* with pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* on the acid soils of the upper slopes is a woodland type of restricted distribution in the county. The ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and wych elm *Ulmus glabra* dominated lower slopes have strong flushed areas with an interesting ground flora including alternate-leaved golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium alternifolium*, narrow-leaved bitter-cress *Cardamine impatiens* and smooth sedge *Carex laevigata*.

A small stream, cliffs and boulders are additional habitats within the wood.

Remarks:

Within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

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