

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

**SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST: CITATION**

**MERTHYR TYDFIL**

**CWM GLO A GLYNDYRYS**

**Date of Notification:** 17 July 2008

**National Grid Reference:** SO 040052

**OS Maps:** 1:50,000 Sheet number: 160  
1:10,000 Sheet number: SO 00 SW; SO 00 NW

**Site Area:** 181.3.ha

**Description:**

Cwm Glo a Glyndyrys is of special interest for its extensive areas of marshy grassland, species-rich neutral grassland and acid grassland, and for the association of these habitats with others including woodland and heath. It is also of special interest for its outstandingly diverse assemblage of grassland fungi, including 32 species of waxcap *Hygrocybe* spp, making it one of the best sites in Britain.

This large site is situated on the northeast and east facing slopes to the West of Merthyr Tydfil, at an altitude of between 200m and 370m, overlying Carboniferous mudstones and siltstones of the Middle Coal Measures. The site comprises a series of small enclosures surrounded by woodland, extensive areas of open land with scattered mature trees, scrub and woodland. A key part of the site is the series of remnant colliery spoil tips that are between one hundred and two hundred years old. These have been colonised by a variety of semi-natural habitats, providing a unique opportunity to study the colonisation of abandoned coal and iron workings from one of the earliest periods of the industrial revolution in the world.

In the north east of the site there are a series of small enclosures, sheltered by mixed woodland. Drainage is mainly impeded across this area, which supports base-rich fen-meadow communities characterised by meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, devil's bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and a number of sedge species, including glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*, carnation sedge *C. panicea*, common sedge *C. nigra*, tawny sedge *C. hostiana*, common yellow sedge *C. viridula* ssp *oedocarpa* and flea sedge *C. pulicaris*.

In places this fen-meadow community grades into drier species-rich neutral grassland. Typical species here include bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, black knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and a range of grasses including common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*. A slight acid nature to the soil is suggested by the presence of heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens* and tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, whilst, in places flushing is indicated by quaking-grass *Briza media* and great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*.

Elsewhere on the site, the landscape is more open, with pastures separated by steep, wooded streams and the remnants of former field boundaries. The fen-meadow community is present here also, but has a conspicuous ericoid element with cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and heather *Calluna vulgaris*. Other wet pasture communities also occur in this area, dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, sweet vernal grass, sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* and mat-grass *Nardus stricta*, with lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, tormentil and heath wood-rush *Luzula multiflora*.

In the drier areas, and on the ancient spoil heaps, two types of grassland have developed. Species-rich neutral grassland occurs where the soils are not too acidic. Typical grass species here include common bent, crested dog's tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and red fescue *Festuca rubra*. Bird's foot trefoil, black knapweed, autumn hawkbit *Leontodon autumnalis*, common cat's ear *Hypochaeris radicata*, eyebright *Euphrasia* sp., and, locally, wild thyme *Thymus praecox*, are all present, together with spring sedge *Carex caryophylla*, glaucous sedge and pill sedge *C. pilulifera*.

In places, this neutral grassland grades into vegetation more associated with dry, acid conditions. The main grass species are common bent and sheep's fescue, together with heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*. A variety of other herbs can be found in different areas of acid grassland across Cwm Glo a Glyndyrys. These range from daisy *Bellis perennis* and common mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum* where soils are only slightly acid, to heather and bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* where the grassland assumes a more 'heathy' character. Although acid grassland is generally a habitat of the uplands and upland fringe, in places at Cwm Glo a Glyndyrys it can have a marked 'lowland' character. These areas can be particularly species-rich, with plants such as bird's foot trefoil, betony *Stachys betonica* and devil's bit scabious.

The significant grassland fungal community has developed on the drier, more freely drained areas of the site, predominantly occurring in association with species rich neutral grassland and dry acid grassland habitats on site. The tips present throughout the site support much of the fungi interest. Species of note include three of the four grassland species listed on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan list – the big blue pinkgill *Entoloma bloxamii*, the olive earthtongue *Microglossum olivaceum* and the dark-purple earthtongue *Geoglossum atropurpureum*. Other species of note include smoky spindles *Clavaria fumosa* and the diverse assemblage of waxcap *Hygrocybe* spp. fungi. Some 32 species of waxcaps have been identified at Cwm Glo a Glyndyrys, including the pink waxcap *Hygrocybe calyptriformis* and such uncommon species in Wales as *H. ingrata* and the nitrous waxcap *H. nitrata*, making the area one of the best sites for these attractive fungi in western Europe.

Cwm Glo a Glyndyrys has a number of other habitats that add to the interest of the site. There are extensive areas of woodland, some of which is known to have been present at the site since at least 1800. This woodland is mostly oak *Quercus robur* and birch *Betula pendula* with occasional beech *Fagus sylvatica* and rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, together with alder *Alnus glutinosa* and willows *Salix* spp in the wetter areas. The ground flora includes several ancient woodland indicator species, such as bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*. Patches of heath can be found across the site where soils are acid. Characteristic species include heather, bilberry and a rich carpet of *Cladonia* lichens where soils are dry, and cross-leaved heath and deer-grass *Scirpus cespitosus* in damper areas. Small areas of flushes and springs are dominated by *Sphagnum* mosses or sedges such as flea sedge and tawny sedge. Other habitats include small ponds and small areas of swamp.

The grasslands and woodlands at Cwm Glo a Glyndyrys provide habitat for a range of scarce and local species. Several relatively uncommon plant species are present, including whorled caraway *Carum verticillatum*, petty whin *Genista anglica*, bladder sedge *C. vesicaria*, soft-leaved sedge *C. montana*, hairy lady's-mantle *Alchemilla filicaulis*, intermediate lady's-mantle *A. xanthochlora*, narrow buckler-fern *Dryopteris carthusiana* and adder's tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*. The marsh fritillary butterfly *Eurodryas aurinia* has been noted in the marshy grassland areas, where its food plant, devil's bit scabious occurs. A nationally scarce moth, the cloaked carpet *Euphyia biangulata*, has been recorded in the southern part of the site. A number of bird species are found at Cwm Glo a Glyndyrys and, including nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, tree pipit *Anthus trivialis*, whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*, wood warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* and redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*. Great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* have been recorded in ponds on the site.

### **Remarks:**

Cwm Glo a Glyndyrys SSSI lies within the Merthyr Tydfil Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest, identified on the CCW/Cadw/ICOMOS Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales and noted for its evidence of industrial activity that dates back to about 1750. The Cyfartha Canal Level (GM467) Scheduled Ancient Monument is within the boundary of the site.

Cwm Glo SSSI was originally notified in 2003. Cwm Glo a Glyndyrys SSSI includes this original site together with a significant extension to the South East and West.

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