

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

SWANSEA

NICHOLASTON WOODS

Date of Notification: 2001

National Grid Reference: SS 510881

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 159
1:10,000 Sheet number: SS58 NW

Site Area: 26.7 ha

Description:

Nicholaston Wood is of special interest for its semi-natural broadleaved woodland.

The site is comprised of mainly broadleaved woodland with a substantial shrub layer. It forms a band running along the northern edge of Oxwich Bay, 14 km to the west of Swansea. The site has a southerly aspect and is on a steep slope ranging between 10m to 70m. The underlying geology of Carboniferous Limestone is overlain by shallow brown mineral soils.

Nicholaston Wood has a tree canopy that is characterised by a mix of ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and oak *Quercus robur*. Patches of dense shrub occur throughout including hazel *Corylus avellana*, wych elm *Ulmus glabra*, spindle *Euonymus europaeus* and sycamore saplings. The base-rich nature of the soils is reflected in the field layer, which comprises a mix of ivy *Hedera helix*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, hart's-tongue fern *Phyllitis scolopendrium*, herb robert *Geranium robertianum* and enchanter's nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*; wild garlic *Allium ursinum* is locally abundant. Many areas of the woodland have an open canopy resulting in prolific regeneration of saplings. There are several small glades dominated by bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg.

Several areas within the wood are dominated by planted beech *Fagus sylvatica*, with wild cherry *Prunus avium* and a sparse shrub layer of holly *Ilex aquifolium*. In these areas, dog's mercury dominates the field layer along with bramble and hart's tongue fern. Other species include bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and ivy. Lords-and-ladies *Arum maculatum*, enchanter's nightshade and herb robert are also present.

Notable woodland species found in Nicholaston Wood are small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata*, which is at the western edge of its range, wild-service tree *Sorbus torminalis*, and butcher's-broom *Ruscus aculeatus*.

Rocky outcrops are present throughout, including some large cliffs. Shaded outcrops are colonised with ivy, hart's tongue fern and abundant bryophytes including *Isoetecium myosuroides*, *Ctenidium molluscum*, *Brachythecium rutabulum* and *Thamnobryum alopecurum*. The more open exposures are characterised by blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and wild privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, with small patches of calcareous grassland.

Remarks:

Nicholaston Wood is adjacent to Crawley Wood, part of the Oxwich Bay Site of Special Scientific Interest. The site is part of Oxwich Bay National Nature Reserve and is within the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Nicholaston Wood is part of Gower Ashwoods candidate Special Area of Conservation which supports woodland vegetation assignable to the habitat type '*Tilio-Acerion* forests of slopes, screes and ravines' listed on Annex 1 of the EC Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna).