

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

MONMOUTHSHIRE

PIERCE, ALCOVE AND PIERCEFIELD WOODS

Date of Notification: 1971, 1983

National Grid Reference: ST 530958

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 162
1:25,000 Sheet number: ST 59

Site Area: 78.1 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.

Pierce, Alcove and Piercefield Woods is an area of mixed semi-natural woodland mostly of beech *Fagus sylvatica* /yew *Taxus baccata* /lime *Tilia cordata* with a relict coppice structure with some standards on steep slopes facing east. An interesting transition from acid to calcareous woodland types occur in Pierce Woods. There are a number of rare or local species of plants including large-leaved lime *Tilia platyphyllos* and several species of whitebeam *Sorbus spp.*. Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* and *Sorbus aria* are at the end of their range here. The cliffs support the only heronry in the lower Wye Valley and the caves are an important roost for a number of bat species.

Remarks:

Most of the site lies within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

*This document is **NOT** a definitive legal version and has been formatted, updated and partially edited for use on the CCW Web site. This document should not be used in any legal proceedings, public enquiry or any other hearing or appeal. If you require a full legal copy of the document please contact CCW in writing.*