

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

**SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION**

**MONMOUTHSHIRE**

**LOWER HAEI WOOD**

**Date of Notification:** 1981, 1982

**National Grid Reference:** SO 533075

**O.S. Maps:** 1:50,000 Sheet number: 162  
1:25,000 Sheet number: SO 50

**Site Area:** 17.6 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, eg 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.

Lower Hael Wood is an excellent example of a diverse and well structured mixed coppice with standards system including a wide range of woodland types on the steep east – north east facing slope of the River Wye gorge. Beech *Fagus sylvatica*, lime *Tilia cordata*, wych elm *Ulmus glabra*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and oak *Quercus robur* and *Q. petraea* are the dominant canopy trees with a rich ground flora particularly on the flushed lower slopes.

**Remarks:**

Within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

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