

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS

COED ABEREDW

Date of notification: 1967, 1980, 1983, 1986, 1998

National Grid reference: SO 081472

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 147
1:25,000 Sheet number: SO 04 NE

Site Area: 17.6 ha

Description:

Coed Aberedw lies to the south of Aberedw village near Bwlth Wells and is of special interest as part of a nationally important series displaying the range of semi-natural woods occurring in Britain. It contains particularly good examples of four woodland types dominated by ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and oaks *Quercus spp.*. The variety of woodland vascular plants and liverworts is exceptional and includes the nationally scarce Welsh poppy *Meconopsis cambrica*. The site includes extensive rock outcrops which support a range of lichens, including the nationally rare *Sticta canariensis s. str.*, and a good population of the scarce endemic whitebeam *Sorbus porrigentiformis*. The River Edw provides other special interest in supporting Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar* and otter *Lutra lutra*, species that require special protection in Europe.

The woodland occupies both sides of the short gorge section of the River Edw close to its confluence with the River Wye and extends onto steeply rising rocky ground to the south of the river which comprises a series of cliffs and terraces. The river cuts through fossiliferous flaggy siltstones belonging to the Ludlow Series of the Upper Silurian. Soils within the site vary from leached acidic podzols and thin base-rich soils on the upper outcrops to deep rich loams beneath the lower cliffs. Such variation, together with varying aspect and slope, has led to the development of a rich variety of plant communities.

Where calcareous rock outcrops the woodland is dominated by ash, with occasional hybrid oak *Quercus petraea x robur* and field maple *Acer campestre* over a shrub layer of hazel *Corylus avellana* and wych elm *Ulmus glabra* with occasional dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*. The ground beneath supports a rich and varied flora with frequent dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, herb robert *Geranium robertianum*, hart's-tongue fern *Phyllitis scolopendrium*, false brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, wood melick *Melica uniflora*, enchanter's-nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*, lords-and-ladies *Arum maculatum* and a range of mosses and liverworts, including *Eurhynchium praelongum*, *Thamnobryum alopecurum*, *Brachythecium rutabulum* and *Plagiochila asplenioides*. Welsh poppy and the locally uncommon mossy saxifrage *Saxifraga hypnoides* are locally abundant in this community.

In the remainder of the wood the canopy is dominated by hybrid oak but there are considerable variations in the shrub layer and ground flora which reflect differences in soil type and humidity. The deepest, richest soils support a dense understorey of hazel, ash saplings and some holly *Ilex aquifolium* over a ground flora dominated by bramble and bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*. On the deeper, more acidic soils of the shady north-facing slopes the shrub layer includes downy birch *Betula pubescens* and rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*. Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* replaces bramble and the ground flora is characterised by the presence of frequent wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* and creeping soft-grass *Holcus mollis*.

On the steepest slopes the soils are thinner and have been leached of minerals. Hybrid oak remains the dominant tree but the shrub layer is sparse. The ground flora is generally grassy with abundant wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* but there are well developed bryophyte carpets, especially on the shady northern slopes. Characteristic species here include the mosses *Rhytidiadelphus loreus*, *Polytrichum formosum*, *Dicranum majus*, *Hylocomium splendens*, *Pleurozium schreberi*, *Plagiothecium undulatum*, *Isoetecium myosuroides*, *Hypnum cupressiforme*, *Leucobryum glaucum* and *Rhytidiadelphus triquetrus* and the liverworts *Bazzania trilobata*, *Saccocyna viticulosa* and *Plagiochila asplenioides*. Bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* is locally prominent where grazing pressure has been light and small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* can be found on rocky outcrops above the Edw.

Rock outcrops at the southern end of the site are less shaded and support *Sorbus porrigentiformis*, *Sticta canariensis s str.* and other locally uncommon plants including meadow saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata* and burnet rose *Rosa pimpinellifolia*, the only record for Radnorshire.

The wet riverside rocks support a range of characteristic mosses and liverworts including *Amblystegium fluviatile*, *Cinclidotus fontinaloides*, *Fontinalis antipyretica*, *Hygrohypnum ochraceum* and *Chiloscyphus polyanthos*. The river itself is important for spawning and migrating Atlantic salmon and also provides excellent otter habitat. The River Wye and its tributaries, including the River Edw, is a nationally important site for both these species.

Additional interest is provided by the invertebrate fauna which includes many ancient woodland indicator species. The nationally rare pill woodlouse *Armadillidium pictum* is present at one of only nine known recent British sites. The beetles and spiders are also of interest, with three nationally scarce species recorded.

Remarks:

The site supports the following species covered by EC Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild flora and fauna:

Common otter *Lutra lutra* - Annex II & IV

Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar* - Annex II & IV

Otter is also listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended.

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