

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

**CARDIFF  
RHONDDA CYNON TAFF**

**CASTELL COCH WOODLANDS  
AND ROAD SECTION**

**Date of Notification:** 1972, 1983, 1990

**National Grid reference:** ST131827

**O.S. Maps:** 1:50,000 Sheet number: 171  
1:25,000 Sheet number: ST 18

**Site Area:** 17 ha

**Description:**

The woodlands surrounding Castell Coch occupy steep south and west facing slopes overlooking Cardiff and the Taff Vale. They form part of the "Taff Gorge complex" of woodlands of which beech is a major constituent species, and this is thought to be one of its most westerly natural sites in Britain.

The woodland is dominated by mature beech *Fagus sylvatica*. Herbaceous species abundant here include dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, ramsons *Allium ursinum* and sanicle *Sanicula europaea*. In terms of the National Vegetation Classification, the woodland type represented is the *Mercurialis perennis* sub-community of *Xagus sylvatic a - Mercurialis- perennis* woodland.

Although these woods have been intensively managed in the past, they continue to support species that reflect their "ancient" nature. A number of the herbaceous species present are now also of limited distribution in Mid and South Glamorgan. These include bird's-nest orchid *Neottia nidusavis*, greater butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* and yellow bird'snest *Monotropa hypopitys*.

Within the site is a locality of importance for showing a sequence from the Devonian Old Red Sandstone into the Carboniferous Limestone. It shows a comparatively complete section in the Lower Limestone Shales with a number of faunally-rich horizons. Here the base of the thick lowest Carboniferous Limestone corresponds to the base of the Carboniferous Period, in contrast to sections on the north crop of the South Wales Coalfield. A key site with sections crossing the Devonian-Carboniferous boundary.

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