

## Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Caerphilly County Borough Council

**LDP Policy Ref. NH 3.118**

**SINC name: Mynydd Bach Slopes, east of Llanbradach**

**Grid reference: ST161917**

**Area (hectares): 60**

**Survey date: 21<sup>st</sup> June 2007**

**Surveyed by: Dr Peter Sturgess (Hyder Consulting Ltd.)**

**(UDP policy reference: C11.124)**

### Summary description

A west-facing valley side supporting a mix of broadleaved woodland, marshy grassland, acid grassland, Bracken and scrub. The woodland areas include some ancient woodland, most of which is dominated by Oak, Beech and Downy birch, and often supporting a ground flora with abundant Bracken and Bluebells, and a number of semi-natural indicator species. In some parts, particularly in the north, there is wet woodland dominated by Alder and Willow, with a ground flora including Greater tussock sedge and Marsh violet. The acid grassland is best classified as semi-improved acid grassland, but it still retains a diverse flora and often includes abundant anthills. Bracken is usually present at the field margins and locally covers large parts of the hillside as a mosaic with acid grassland and scrub. The marshy grassland areas are variable, with some dominated by Purple moor-grass and other parts by rushes. The marshy areas generally have a rich wetland flora with good numbers of indicator species.

### Qualifying features

Acid grassland with at least 7 indicator species.

Marshy grassland with at least 12 indicators.

Semi-natural woodland with an assemblage of indicator species.

Grassland with a high density of anthills.

### Secondary features

Streams.

Bracken.

### Potential value/ unconfirmed features

Further botanical survey would undoubtedly confirm the presence of additional species. In particular, the site has potential to support uncommon wetland plants and bryophytes.

Some of the grassland areas have potential to support populations of grassland fungi.

The site is likely to support a high diversity of invertebrates, and could potentially include Small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly.

The area is likely to support good numbers of reptiles, particularly at the woodland / scrub edges.

The woodland areas are likely to provide good foraging and roosting habitat for bats.

The well-connected woodlands and hedges have the potential to support Dormice.

Badgers are likely to be present.

### **Current management (including problems and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement)**

Horses, cattle and sheep graze most of the area, although these are excluded from some of the woodlands. The grazing levels and general land management appear to be optimal for a wide range of wildlife. Grazing in the ancient woodland area in the southeast of the site appears to be limiting the ground flora diversity as well as limiting regeneration of young trees. Fencing out the livestock would help to remedy this and enhance its biodiversity. There appear to be few ongoing threats to the area; Bracken encroachment may become a problem in some areas if it continues to expand over the more diverse habitats and part of the small northeastern woodland block has been affected by tipping rubble and soil from the track.

### **Access/ community use**

Several public footpaths cross the area.

### **Additional information:**

A few areas within the SINC are borderline with respect to the selection criteria and have only been included where they form links between more valuable areas and to simplify mapping. The wider area is very variable in its mix of habitats and some of the adjacent habitats are also of value for wildlife. These include connecting hedgerows and streams, semi-improved acid grassland supporting waxcap fungi and small patches of marshy grassland. These areas should be considered for inclusion at future SINC review.

### **Species list (Dominant species, SINC Criteria, RDB or other notable indicator species)**

(LBAP species shown in **bold**, species confirmed by 2007 survey in *italics*)

Woodland, hedge and scrub tree and shrub species: *Fagus sylvatica*, *Quercus petraea*, *Quercus robur*, *Corylus avellana*, *Sorbus aucuparia*, *Crataegus monogyna*, *Ilex aquifolium*, *Rubus fruticosus*, *Betula pubescens*, *Betula pendula*, *Hedera helix*, *Lonicera periclymenum*, *Prunus spinosa*, *Rosa arvensis*, *Sambucus nigra*, *Ulex europaeus*, *Ulex gallii*, *Cytisus scoparius*. *Wet woodland areas tended to merge gradually with the drier ones, and they included Fraxinus excelsior, Alnus glutinosa, Betula pubescens, Salix cinerea and Salix caprea.*

Woodland and hedge ground flora: ***Hyacinthoides non-scripta***, *Oxalis acetosella*, *Digitalis purpurea*, *Lysimachia nemorum*, *Lamium galeobdolon*, *Viola riviniana*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Holcus mollis*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Deschampsia flexuosa*, *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Carex sylvatica*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Blechnum spicant*, *Dryopteris filix-mas*, *Dryopteris dilatata*, *Mnium hornum*, *Kindbergia praelonga*, *Polytrichum formosum*, *Pseudotaxiphyllum elegans*, *Diplophyllum albicans*.

Ground flora of wet woodland and damp shaded stream banks: *Viola palustris*, *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, *Oxalis acetosella*, *Circaea lutetiana*, *Valeriana officinalis*, *Lysimachia nemorum*, *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Holcus lanatus*, *Carex remota*, *Carex paniculata*, *Juncus effusus*, *Athyrium filix-femina*, *Blechnum spicant*, *Mnium hornum*, *Plagiomnium undulatum*, *Sphagnum fimbriatum*, *Sphagnum subnitens*, *Diplophyllum albicans*, *Plagiochila cf asplenioides*.

Marshy grassland species: *Ranunculus flammula*, *Lotus pedunculatus*, *Stellaria alsine*, *Potentilla erecta*, *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, *Myosotis secunda*, *Myosotis scorpioides*, *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, *Veronica scutellata*, *Ajuga reptans*, *Epilobium palustre*, *Succisa pratensis*, *Valeriana officinalis*, *Oenanthe crocata*, *Filipendula ulmaria*, *Molinia caerulea*, *Agrostis canina*, *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Carex viridula*, *Carex paniculata*, *Carex ovalis*, *Carex echinata*, *Juncus acutiflorus*, *Juncus effusus*, *Juncus bulbosus*, *Luzula multiflora*, *Athyrium filix-femina*, *Dryopteris carthusiana*,

*Aulacomnium palustre*, *Polytrichum commune*, *Thuidium tamariscinum*, *Sphagnum palustre*, *Sphagnum subnitens*, *Sphagnum fallax*, *Sphagnum cf inundatum*, *Sphagnum squarrosum*, *Calliergonella cuspidata*.

Acid grassland / semi-improved grassland: *Potentilla erecta*, *Galium saxatile*, *Veronica officinalis*, *Trifolium repens*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Pilosella officinarum*, *Rumex acetosella*, *Stellaria graminea*, *Achillea millefolium*, *Digitalis purpurea*, *Hypochaeris radicata*, *Festuca rubra*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, *Danthonia decumbens*, *Festuca ovina*, *Cynosurus cristatus*, *Phleum pratense*, *Luzula campestris*, *Carex pilulifera*, *Luzula multiflora*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Scleropodium purum*, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*, *Polytrichum juniperinum*, *Dicranum scoparium*, *Hypnum jutlandicum*, *Hypnum lacunosum*.

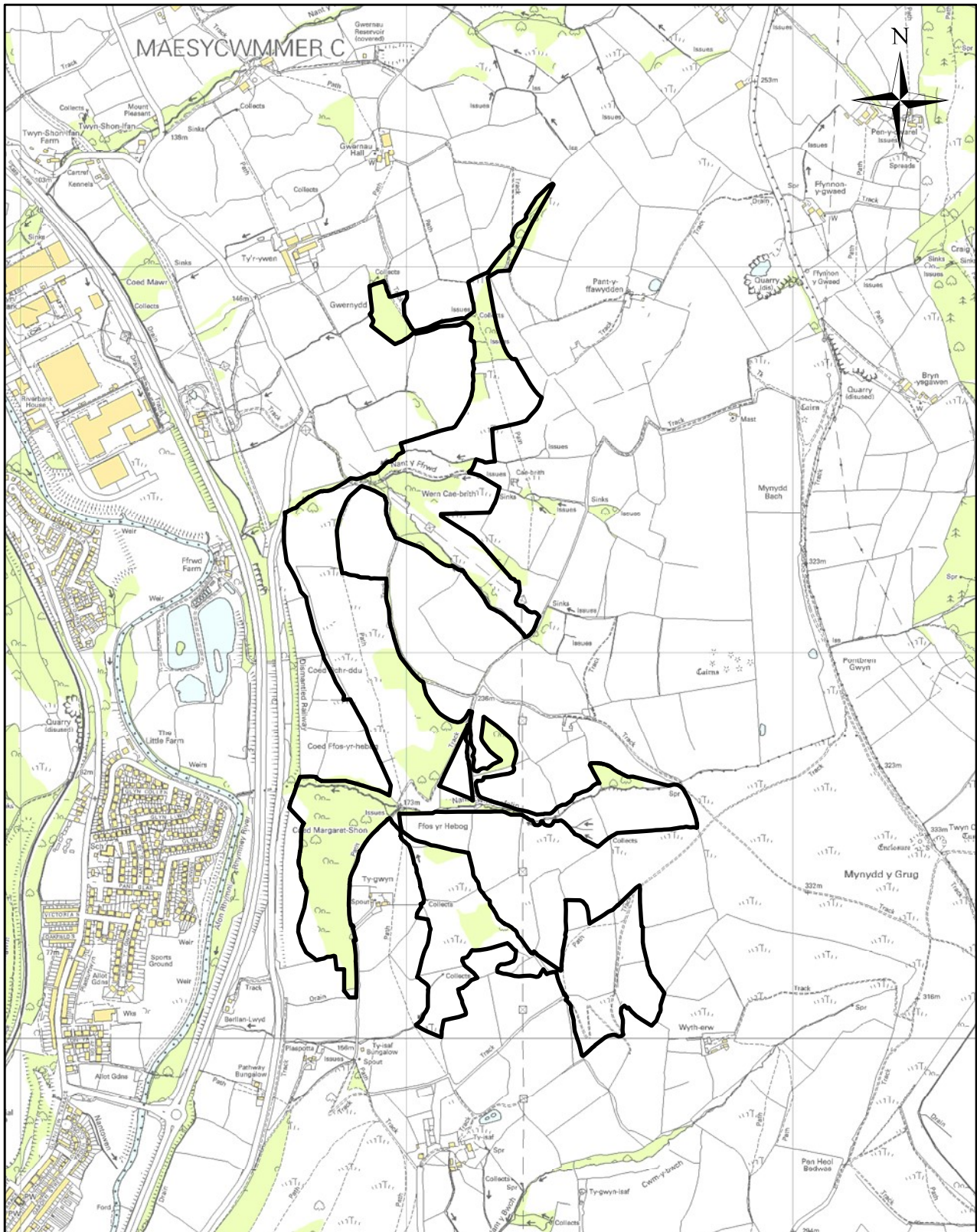
Several specimens of the waxcap *Hygrocybe intermedia* were noted just outside the SINC boundary at ST162915.

Fauna observations: Fox, Grey Squirrel, Rabbit, **Common Frog**, **Buzzard**, **Skylark**, **Song Thrush**, Meadow Pipit, Chaffinch, Redstart, Willow Warbler, Robin, Dunnock, Wren, Grey Wagtail, Wheatear, Willow Warbler, Goldcrest, Blue Tit, Jay, Meadow Brown Butterfly, Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly.

Additional species noted from desk study: **Great Crested Newt** (approx. 500m from north-eastern boundary), **Green Woodpecker**

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Mynydd Bach Slopes, East of Llanbradach 60 Ha

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Gall hyn arwain at erlyniad neu achos sifil. Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili, 100025372, 2008.